

Principles of Programme Design and Delivery

1. Background and Context

1.1 This document sets out design and delivery principles for the University's credit-bearing undergraduate and taught postgraduate awards. These principles should be read in conjunction with the University's Academic Regulations which set out credit requirements, module types (core/compulsory/optional), progression requirements etc. The University's Academic Regulations align with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#).

Chapter 1 of the Quality Handbook sets out the University's procedures and processes for the development, approval and review of its taught provision.

1.2 These design principles set out to:

- create a strong cohort identity from the outset
- provide clarity for student expectation and experience
- deliver a stable relevant offer across levels 3 and 4 which supports new students on transition into higher education
- create a more stable timetable
- create a simpler, more coherent and consistent approach to programme and pathway structures
- enable more effective and efficient student administration and support
- enable more efficient curriculum delivery

1.3 The University's approach to learning and teaching is set out in its [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy](#).

2. Modules

2.1 The University's standard module size is 20 credits (UG dissertations 40 credits, PG dissertations 60 credits). The University's Academic Regulations set out other permissible module sizes (see Academic Regulations Section C3).

2.2 Using other module sizes impacts on progression and condonement regulations so other sizes should only be used in exceptional cases, for example Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) or commissioner requirements. A strong rationale for any deviation must be made through the programme approval, design and validation processes. Modules must be in multiples of 10. Any exceptions to 10-credit multiples must be approved by Academic Board at an early stage in curriculum planning.

2.3 Modules are classified as core, compulsory or optional. Core modules must be taken and passed for the named award to be conferred. Compulsory modules must be taken but assessment may be condoned within the defined limits set out in the regulations. Optional modules provide students with a choice of modules to study, they must be approved at validation and be pertinent to the validated award.

Optional Modules

2.4 Optional modules are permitted within the university's awards as follows:

Awards of 120 credits or more

Level 3	No student optional module choice (i.e. all modules core or compulsory)
Level 4	No student optional module choice (i.e. all modules core or compulsory)
Level 5	Up to 20 credits (exceptionally 40) of student optional module choice (i.e. a minimum of 80 credits core/compulsory)
Level 6	Up to 40 credits of student optional module (i.e. minimum of 80 credits core/compulsory – to include the dissertation)
Level 7	Up to 40 credits of student optional module choice (i.e. minimum of 80 credits core/compulsory for PGDip, minimum of 140 credits core/compulsory for MA/MSc- to include the dissertation)

Annex 1 provides detailed guidance for the range of University awards.

2.5 Awards of 60 credits or below should not normally include any optional modules. This should also apply to Postgraduate Certificates (i.e. optional modules at Level 7 should be provided through the Postgraduate Diploma stage).

2.6 Consideration must be given to likely cohort size and viability when developing optional modules within a programme. Within the limits set out in section 2.4, up to three choices can be given in each optional module instance. For example, in the case of a top up degree the programme structure could be as follows:

Semester 1	2 x 20 credit compulsory modules, 1 x 20 credit optional module, selecting from 3 choices
Semester 2	1 x dissertation module (40 credits), 1x 20 credit optional module, selecting from 3 choices

2.7 Optional choices may be subject to availability and viability. This must be made clear in all programme documentation (including pre-entry information).

Pre-Requisite Modules

2.8 Careful consideration must be taken, through programme design and development, to ensure that any pre-requisite modules within the same level are delivered in the first semester of study.

Independent Study/Research Modules

2.9 The University expects all undergraduate honours provision to include an element(s) of independent study or research at Level 6. This element may comprise single modules (20 credits) or larger module, allowing students to engage in the development of skills such as project management, academic research, time management and critical synthesis and study within an area that

they select (with agreement from programme/module leaders). Existing examples of such modules include Dissertations, Independent Study modules, Consultancy Projects and Critical Inquiry modules.

3. Module and Programme Viability

- 3.1 The University encourages the development of academic provision which allows for the sharing of modules and/or teaching across programmes.
- 3.2 All programmes must align with professional standards and QAA subject and qualification benchmark statements (as appropriate).
- 3.3 Where pathways or frameworks containing discrete programmes are developed at undergraduate level they should have a common entry level (Level 4) and should demonstrate levels of commonality at higher levels where appropriate.
- 3.4 Pathways and programmes within frameworks must be designed to provide sufficient amount of subject specific curriculum (including the dissertation) to warrant the award of the final award title. This will be tested through the University's validation processes.
- 3.5 Target awards should only be validated where there is strong evidence of market demand for the target award. It is expected that CertHE and DipHE awards will normally be approved as exit awards.

4. Learning Hours

- 4.1 The University's Academic Regulations set out the learning hours required for credit with one credit being equivalent to ten hours of notional academic learning time.
- 4.2 Module descriptor forms set out the nature and detail of learning hours attached to each module. Module descriptors are approved through the validation process.
- 4.3 Contact hours are an important factor for prospective students and information on contact hours forms part of the data set for the Key Information Set.
- 4.4 Contact hours can take the form of lecture, seminar, tutorial, project supervision, demonstration, practical classes and workshops, supervised time in studio/workshop, fieldwork, external visits.¹ Contact hours may take the form of activities which do not take place physically face to face but they must be synchronous (e.g. tutor-led live VLE activity).
- 4.5 Work-based learning hours contribute to placement activity for the purposes of the Key Information Set.

¹ Some contact hour activities can be face to face or virtual (e.g. online seminar or online project supervision).

- 4.6 Normal contact hours for academic levels 3-7 are set out below. Note: Hours may be determined by PSRB requirements.

Level 3	48 contact hours per 20 credit module
Level 4	48 contact hours per 20 credit module
Level 5	36 contact hours per 20 credit module
Level 6	36 contact hours per 20 credit module
Level 7	24 contact hours per 20 credit module (36 hours for PGCE L7)

Exceptions to this may be approved through the validation process.

- 4.7 PSRB requirements may require hours in excess of the University's learning hours and where this is the case, additional hours should be added to the Module Descriptor or captured in a 'Qualificatory Practice Unit'.
- 4.8 A Qualificatory Practice Unit (QPU) can be defined as a non-credit bearing activity necessary for the conferment of the professional award. Every QPU requires a Module Availability (MAV) and completion of this unit will be monitored through the University's assessment board processes.
- 4.9 Programmes which offer an alternative exit award for students failing to meet professional requirements must, through programme development and validation, consider alternative award titles for students exiting with an academic but not professional award (e.g. BSc (Hons) Health Studies).

5 Allocation of Modules to Semesters

- 5.1 All full-time programmes (UG and PGT) must designate modules to a delivery pattern e.g. Semester 1 (Autumn) or year-long.
- 5.2 Modules should normally be designated as semester-long modules unless there is a strong rationale for running them as year-long. Operating semester-long (or shorter) modules provides students with the opportunity for timely reassessment, when there is full support from academic teams. It also maximises students' ability to access all reassessment opportunities before final progression points.
- 5.3 Data collected through programme initiation and validation processes will be used for the purposes of marketing information and course setup on SITS. It will therefore have a direct impact on MAV data collection and timetabling processes.
- 5.4 This information must be agreed through the validation process and set out in curriculum maps. The information will then be used for the purpose of module diet creation.
- 5.5 Where a programme is validated to run in full-time, designated part-time mode (i.e. not infill), in accelerated mode and/or by distance learning, a separate curriculum map must be provided for each model.

6 Transitional Arrangements

- 6.1 When programmes are revalidated, subsequent new intakes of students will be admitted to the revalidated programme.
- 6.2 When programmes are revalidated, students already registered on the programme will normally see the existing programme out. They will not transfer to the revalidated programme unless every current student (including any intercalating students) agree to this. PSRB requirements may require students to follow the new curriculum, in these cases any current students be transferred (at the appropriate progression point) to the revalidated version and students will be advised of this.
- 6.3 Transitional arrangements for intercalating students must be set out through revalidation.

7 Validation Periods

- 7.1 Programmes are validated for up to 6-years. PSRB requirements may override this.

Annex 1

Cert HE (120 credits)

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
Level 4	120 credits		0 credits	120@L4

Foundation Degree, DipHE and DPS (240 credits)

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
Level 4	120 credits		0 credits	120 @L4
Level 5	0 - 120 credits		0-20 credits	120 @L5

Honours degrees (360 credits)

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
Level 4	120 credits		0 credits	120 @L4
Level 5	0 - 120 credits		0-20 credits	120 @L5
Level 6	0 - 120 credits (including dissertation)		0-40 credits	120@L6

Honours degrees with foundation entry (480 credits)

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
Level 3	120 credits		0 credits	120 @L4
Level 4	120 credits		0 credits	120 @L4
Level 5	0 - 120 credits		0-20 credits	120 @L5
Level 6	0 - 120 credits (including dissertation)		0-40 credits	120@L6

Top-up degrees and Graduate Diplomas (120 credits)

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
Level 6	0 - 120 credits (including dissertation)		0-40 credits	120@L6

Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
Level 7	0 – 120 credits		0-40 credits	120@L6

Masters degrees

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
Level 7	0 – 180 credits (including dissertation)		0-40 credits	180@L7