



This document is primarily intended for:  
Directors of Studies

**Queries:**  
**First point of contact**  
Assistant Registrars or equivalent

*Specialist contact*  
Academic Registry

## Quality Assurance Code of Practice

### Course Handbooks and Course Specifications: provision of course information to students

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## 1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This statement sets out the University's expectations regarding the provision of definitive course information to students. This information is delivered through the combination of two core elements, for which this statement establishes requirements:
- the **Course Handbook**
  - the **Course Specification**
- These requirements apply to all taught courses of study leading to an award of the University and to research degree courses containing a taught element.
- 1.2 Particular versions of Course Handbooks may be produced for distance-learning students, students on online courses, or Student Apprentices, to support their additional needs (see also [QA41 Distance Learning Provision and QA3 Annex I for Degree Apprenticeships](#)). In relation to students on franchised, licensed or validated courses, see also [QA38 Induction of Students](#), section 8.

## 2. Principles

- 2.1 The University is committed to providing students with clear, accurate, complete, current, and readily accessible information about their course of study, and the learning opportunities, sources of support and guidance available to them. The aim is to support student achievement

and informed student choice, and to fulfil the University's responsibilities under consumer protection law.

### 3. Course Handbooks

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- 3.1. All students on taught courses will have access to a comprehensive resource in the form of a Handbook containing clear information about the delivery of their course, the sources of support and guidance available to them and the standards of achievement expected of them.

For the 2023/24 academic year onwards, the Handbook will comprise three elements: Course information, University information relating to the student academic experience, and the Course Specification(s). Handbooks for courses approved prior to this may instead contain relevant sections of course specifications as outlined in the relevant templates.

- 3.2. By default, a separate Course Handbook should be produced for each cohort. .
- 3.3. Students will be asked to agree to access and read their Course Handbook to complete the registration process online at the start of the academic year.
- 3.4. Departments/School/the Learning Partnerships Office (LPO) will email (to University email accounts) a link to a Course Handbook as part of their induction arrangements ([QA38 Induction of Students](#)). Where there is a large amount of common material, a Department/School/LPO may opt to produce a single document that covers several related courses. Such handbooks must include the required course information for each course covered separately.
- 3.5. The Course Handbook should be provided in electronic pdf format. Where, exceptionally, in-year changes are necessary, affected students must be notified of the changes made and provided with an updated Handbook, also in electronic pdf format, distinguishable from the previous version by a reference on the title page (see also 3.11). Alternative formats (such as paper copies) must also be provided where required. Imaging, Design and Print Services can provide advice on the production of alternative formats.
- 3.6. Directors of Studies (or equivalent) are responsible for ensuring Course Handbooks be published online for each cohort of students and be accessible to all staff (and therefore should not be made available only through Moodle).
- 3.7. Academic Registry is responsible for the annual update and circulation of common sections of information for incorporation into Course Handbooks, and for production and publication of the University information. Academic Registry will circulate the common sections after the final meeting of Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC) each academic year.
- 3.8. The expected format and content for Handbooks are outlined in Annex A.
- 3.9. In order to draw up Course Handbooks that can be of maximum benefit to the whole student cohort, Departments/the School are expected to give consideration to the following:
- making clear the relevant procedures and regulations, sources of advice and guidance for courses involving collaborative provision or for apprenticeship courses
  - mechanisms for making available course information in alternative formats for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties
  - ensuring that the information provided is accessible to students who may be new to (British) higher education

- considering particular information requirements and issues of accessibility of services and advice that may be particular to distance learners and/or part-time students.
- 3.11. Directors of Studies (or equivalent) are responsible for:
- ensuring that each student is emailed (to their University email account) a link to the definitive pdf version of the relevant Course Handbook at the start of each year and advised of where it is located online
  - ensuring that each student is notified, in writing, of any substantial changes to the content of the Handbook during an academic year, and provided with a link to the updated version of the Handbook
  - ensuring that the common sections provided by Academic Registry for the relevant academic year are incorporated into Course Handbooks
  - approving the final version of any Course Handbooks issued to students
- 3.12. In liaison with the Director of Studies, a designated member of staff (as nominated by the Assistant Registrar/Director of Administration or the Head of LPO) will be responsible for authorising and ensuring in-year amendments to Course Handbooks are recorded and previous versions archived appropriately for students and staff to access.

#### 4. Course Specifications

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- 4.1. Course Specifications are definitive, formal and concise descriptions of courses that are comprehensible to a general audience and are intended to support external accountability. The University's student and course records management system (SAMIS) is the definitive source of course and unit information for all courses.
- 4.2. Course Specifications are multi-stakeholder documents, which form one of the sources of course information available to current students. The University prospectus is the primary source of information for prospective students. Course Handbooks complement Course Specifications by providing more detailed information on the delivery of the course.
- 4.3. Course Specifications must be generated from approved course records. Course descriptions used in the prospectus will be the same as used in course specifications for the relevant cohort. Heads of Department, Directors of Studies and Unit Convenors are responsible for ensuring course content matches delivery, and any changes to courses are approved through the relevant approval route (as outlined in [QA4 Amendments to Courses of Study and Units and Approval of New Units](#)).
- 4.4. The template for a Course Specification is outlined in Annex B. Each cohort must be issued with a separate specification.
- 4.5. Directors of Studies are responsible for reviewing Course Specifications on an annual basis. Changes must be approved in accordance with the process set out in QA4.
- 4.6. Assistant Registrars in the Faculty/School (or equivalent) are responsible for ensuring that current Course Specifications are published online.

## 5. Monitoring and Review

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- 5.1 EQSC is responsible for:
- maintaining an overview of the adequacy of mechanisms for the provision of definitive course information for students, and
  - the assurance and enhancement of the provision of information to multiple stakeholders, including prospective and current students.
- 5.2 Review of the standards of provision of course information relating to particular courses will form part of the periodic review process, Degree Scheme Review (see [QA13 Degree Scheme Review](#)) or equivalent.

Statement Details			
<b>Issue Version:</b>	4.1		
<b>Date:</b>	October 2023		
<b>Antecedents:</b>	<i>Senate</i>	09/04/08	Minute 12740
	<i>New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR)</i>	11/06/08	Minute 12782
		21/10/09	Minute 13005
		14/04/10	Minute 13110
		08/06/11	Minute
	<i>Individual Mitigating Circumstances &amp; Assessment (IMCA)</i>	09/06/10	Minute 13141
	<i>Quality Assurance Committee</i>	Paper QAC 98/99 – 6	
		06/10/98	Minute 83(iv)
		06/12/02	Minute 318
		Paper QAC 06/07 - 94	
		19/03/07	Minute 705
		02/07/07	Minute 742(8)
		20/05/08	Minute 833(3)
		01/07/08	Minute 857(7),(8)
		03/07/09	Minute 976(7)
		29/09/09	Minute 1009
		13/07/10	Minute 1095(8)
	<i>University Learning Teaching and Quality Committee</i>	13/07/11	Minute 121
		10 July 2012	Minute 279
		15 May 2013	Minute 408
		8 July 2014	Minute 554
		7 July 2015	Minute 671
		5 July 2016	Minute 807
		11 July 2017	Minute 940
		22 May 2018	Minute 1040
		16 July 2019	Minute 1197
	<i>Learning and Teaching Committee</i>	21/11/06 Minute 28	
	<i>Education, Quality &amp; Standards Committee</i>	17 May 2022 (Minute 199)	
		19 October 2023	Minute TBC
<b>Related Documentation:</b>	<a href="#">Statement of Equality Objectives 2023-25</a> <a href="#">University of Bath Student Protection Plan</a> <a href="#">University Assessment Regulations</a> <a href="#">University of Bath Quality Assurance Code of Practice</a> <a href="#">Individual Mitigating Circumstances &amp; Assessment (IMCA): Principles and Procedures</a> <a href="#">Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) consumer law advice for Higher Education providers</a>		
<b>Author:</b>	Academic Registry		



## QA44 Annex A

### Format of Course Handbooks

#### 1. Format of Course Handbooks for 2023/24 onwards

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1.1 Handbooks issued for the 2023/24 academic year or later must use the current format of Handbook as outlined here.

1.2 The Handbook comprises three sections and a **cover page and introduction**:

- **University content**
- **Department content**
- **Course Specification(s)**

1.3 The **Cover page and introduction** will include:

- University of Bath logo
- Faculty/School name
- Course Name(s)
- applicable cohorts (i.e., which year of delivery and years of study the handbook applies to)
- a statement that the Handbook is available online or in alternative formats on request
- 'About this Handbook'

1.4 **University content** outlines key expectations, regulations, and central support applicable to all students. The required content headings are detailed below; where appropriate Handbooks may provide content for these headings in the form of a link to a University webpage:

- University expectations of students
  - registration
  - Regulations for Students or Regulations for Student Apprentices
  - Students' Union membership
  - attendance monitoring
  - change in circumstances
  - University email
  - SAMIS and the student record
  - dignity and respect
  - student conduct
- Student support
  - the Library
  - Skills Centre
  - Student Support and Safeguarding
  - Personal tutoring

- Students' Union Advice and Support Service
  - Careers Service
  - DDaT and computing facilities
  - Campus Security
- Dealing with a problem involving the University
  - Support and report tool
  - Student complaints
  - Academic appeals
  - Individual mitigating circumstances
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
  - disabilities, long-term illness and specific learning difficulties
  - pregnancy and maternity
  - care-leavers, estranged students, refugees and young adult carers
- Climate Action Framework
- data protection
- Support, equality, diversity and inclusion policies and procedures
- Learning and teaching
  - how your course is reviewed and monitored
  - student representation
  - course and unit changes
  - academic year timetable
  - examinations guidance
  - understanding assessment regulations
  - understanding the programme and unit catalogue
- Academic integrity
  - academic misconduct definitions and penalties
  - referencing and plagiarism
  - academic integrity training and test

1.5 **Department content** outlines key department expectations, policies and arrangements beyond those included in a Course Specification. The required content headings are detailed below; where appropriate, Handbooks may provide content for these headings in the form of a link to a department webpage:

#### The Department

- [Introduction to the Department](#)
- [Departmental information including course teams](#)
- [Personal tutoring](#)
- [Contact information](#)
- [External Examiners](#)
- The Doctoral College (where applicable to PGT courses)

#### The University's expectations of students

- [University regulations](#)
- [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\) checks \(OPTIONAL, must include if applicable\)](#)
- [Attendance expectations](#)

Learning and Teaching delivery

- [Timetables](#)
- [Learning resources, Moodle, and recorded lectures](#)
- [Option choices](#)
- [Placements and placement support \(OPTIONAL, must include if applicable\)](#)
- [Study Abroad and support \(OPTIONAL, must include if applicable\)](#)
- [Further study \(OPTIONAL\)](#)
- [Department prizes \(OPTIONAL\)](#)
- [Research ethics \(OPTIONAL\)](#)
- [Student Representation](#)

Assessment

- [Assessment Regulations](#)
- [Calculating your degree outcome](#)
- [Supplementary assessment](#)
- [Exit awards – CertHE and DiplHE](#)
- [Switching courses](#)
- [Additional Information](#)

Individual Mitigating Circumstances (IMCs)Coursework

- [Assignment briefs, word counts and deadlines](#)
- [Coursework extensions](#)
- [Late submission of coursework](#)

ExaminationsMarking and feedbackYour course

- [Professional Body Accreditation \(OPTIONAL, must include if applicable\)](#)
- [Programme and Unit Catalogue](#)
- [Course Specification](#)
- [Any other course specification information \(OPTIONAL\)](#)
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1.6 The relevant **Course Specification(s)** should be included for each course covered by a Handbook.



## QA44 Annex B

### Course specification template

COURSE AND AWARD DETAILS	
Course title	
Awarding body	
Award	
Award name	
Course mode of delivery	
Course length	
Entry point	
Main location of study	
Course owning School/ department	
COURSE DESCRIPTION	
Course summary	
Course description	
Learning and teaching	
Contact hours	
Delivery methods	
Assessment summary	
Assessment methods	
Specialist facilities	
Additional costs and extra requirements	
Careers and professional development	
Placement/study abroad	
Course accreditation(s)	
Course Assessment Regulations	
Assessment Regulations	
Exemptions from regulations	
Weightings towards final award	
Course Progression Requirements ( <i>relevant to NFAAR-PGT courses</i> )	
Is this Course Standalone or Co- Existent?	

COURSE STRUCTURE					
Year 1					
Period of study (AY/ S1/S2/ Dissertation)	Unit code	Unit title	Unit status (Compulsory or Optional, and state if also Must Pass/ Designated Essential)	Credits	Option choice rules  <i>Note: optional units are not normally permitted in Year 1 of an undergraduate course.</i>
Year 2					
Period of study (AY/ S1/S2/ Dissertation)	Unit code	Unit title	Unit status (Compulsory or Optional, and state if also Must Pass/ Designated Essential)	Credits	Option choice rules
Year 3					
Period of study (AY/ S1/S2/ Dissertation)	Unit code	Unit title	Unit status (Compulsory or Optional, and state if	Credits	Option choice rules

<i>S1/S2/ Dissert- ation)</i>			<i>also Must Pass/ Designated Essential)</i>		
Year 4					
<b>Period of study</b> <i>(AY/ S1/S2/ Dissert- ation)</i>	<b>Unit code</b>	<b>Unit title</b>	<b>Unit status</b> <i>(Compulsory or Optional, and state if also Must Pass/ Designated Essential)</i>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Option      choice rules</b>
Year 5					
<b>Period of study</b> <i>(AY/ S1/S2/ Dissert- ation)</i>	<b>Unit code</b>	<b>Unit title</b>	<b>Unit status</b> <i>(Compulsory or Optional, and state if also Must Pass/ Designated Essential)</i>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Option      choice rules</b>


LEARNING OUTCOMES					
By the end of the course, you will be able to:					
	Knowledge and understanding	Intellectual Skills	Professional and Transferable Skills	Placement	Study Year Abroad

DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE COURSES AND EXIT AWARDS	
Designated Alternative Courses (DAC)	
Exit awards	
Requirements for named exit award(s) (PGT only)	