



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](#)). In relation to students on franchised, licensed or validated courses, see also QA38 Induction of Students, section 8.
- 1.3 Prior to the 2023/24 academic year, course handbooks or specifications may be issued as programme handbooks or programme specifications respectively. All requirements apply equally regardless of the term used.

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

- 3.1. All students on taught courses will have access to a comprehensive resource in the form of a Course 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.
- 3.2. For the 2023/24 academic year onwards, the Course Handbook will include the relevant Course Specification(s) to provide clear information on a student's course. Handbooks for courses approved prior to this may instead contain relevant sections of course specifications as outlined in the relevant templates. Course Specifications included in Handbooks must be up-to-date.
- 3.3. By default, a separate Course Handbook should be produced for each year of delivery on a course. Where course expectations and specifications are the same for students across multiple years of study, a common Course Handbook covering those years may be produced. Course Handbooks must specify which year or years of study they apply to.
- 3.4. Students will be asked to agree to access and read their Course Handbook in order to complete the registration process online at the start of the academic year.
- 3.5. Departments/School/the Learning Partnerships Office (LPO) will email (to University email accounts) a link to a Course (or student) 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 Handbook that covers a number of related courses. Such handbooks must include the required course information for each course covered separately.
- 3.6. The 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 are able to provide advice on the production of alternative formats.
- 3.7. 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).
- 3.8. Academic Registry is responsible for the annual update and circulation of common sections of information for incorporation into Course Handbooks. Academic Registry will circulate the common sections after the final meeting of Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC) each academic year.
- 3.9. The expected format and content for Course Handbooks are outlined in Annex A.

- 3.10. 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
 - mechanisms for making available courses 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 the course of 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

- 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 point of contact and detail for prospective students. Course Handbooks augment Course Specifications with more detailed information on the delivery as the key point of day-to-day reference for current students.
- 4.3. Course Specifications must be generated from approved course records. Heads of Department, Directors of Studies and Unit Conveyers 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.
- 4.5. Directors of Studies are responsible for reviewing Course Specifications on an annual basis.

- 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

- 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 a number of stakeholders, including prospective and current students.
- 5.2 Review of the standards of provision of course information relating to particular course will form part of the periodic review process, Degree Scheme Review (see [QA13 Degree Scheme Review](#)) or equivalent.

Statement Details			
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Antecedents:	<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
	<i>Individual Mitigating Circumstances & Assessment (IMCA)</i>	08/06/11	Minute
		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)	
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<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 & Standards Committee</i>	17 May 2022	(Minute 199)	
Related Documentation:	Statement of Equality Objectives 2019-21 University of Bath Student Protection Plan New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulation (NFAAR) University of Bath Quality Assurance Code of Practice Individual Mitigating Circumstances & Assessment: Principles and Procedures within and outside NFAAR Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) consumer law advice for Higher Education providers		
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QA44 Annex A

Format of Course Handbooks

1. Format of Course Handbooks for 2023/24 onwards

1.1 Course Handbooks issued for the 2023/24 academic year or later must use the current format of Handbook as outlined here. Departments may choose to issue handbooks for 2022/23 in this format or the previous format outlined in section 2.

1.2 The Handbook is composed of 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
 - registration
 - Regulations for Students
 - Students' Union membership
 - attendance monitoring
 - change in circumstances
 - University email
 - DDaT and computing facilities
 - SAMIS and the student record
 - data protection
- Student support
 - the Library
 - Skills Centre
 - Student Services and the Wellbeing Service

- Students' Union Advice and Support Service
- advice for international students
- Careers Service
- 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
- Academic integrity
 - academic misconduct definitions and penalties
 - referencing and plagiarism
 - academic integrity training and test
- Learning and teaching
 - academic year timetable
 - examinations guidance
 - understanding assessment regulations
 - understanding the programme and unit catalogue
 - how your course is reviewed and monitored
 - student representation
 - course and unit changes

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 and course teams
 - key staff contacts
 - departmental information
 - personal tutoring
 - details of External Examiners for each course
 - the Doctoral College (where applicable to PGT courses)
- Expectations of students
 - Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (where applicable)
 - attendance expectations for teaching activities
 - assessment processes
 - deadlines, extensions and late submission
 - word counts
 - feedback to students on assessment
 - department prizes
 - health and safety
 - research ethics (where applicable)
 - switching courses
- Learning and teaching delivery
 - timetables

- marking criteria and grade descriptors
- learning resources, Moodle and recorded lectures
- option choices
- placements and placement support (where applicable)
- study abroad and study abroad support (where applicable)
- further study

1.6 The relevant **Course specification(s)** should be included for each course covered by a Handbook.

2. Format of Course (or Programme) Handbooks prior to 2023/24

2.1 For Handbooks issued before 2023/24, Departments may use the previous format of Handbook as outlined here. This format does not include Course Specifications, with relevant content from these specifications integrated into the Handbook.

2.2 The common sections to be included in the Handbook for taught provision are detailed below:

Cover Page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Bath logo ● Faculty/School name ● Department Name ● Programme Name(s) ● date effective (and any further reference required, eg to distinguish versions produced for each year of the programme, or versions reflecting in-year changes) ● statement that the Handbook is available online or in alternative formats on request
Table of Contents	
Welcome	Welcome to University/Department/Programme team About this Handbook
Your Programme (mainly programme/departmental specific information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● key contacts/staff list ● departmental information ● expectations ● programme aims and learning outcomes ● programme description ● unit and programme catalogues ● professional body accreditation ● timetables ● option choices ● placements ● student exchange/study abroad ● submission deadlines ● marking criteria ● prizes ● further study ● unit and programme changes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how your programme is reviewed and monitored <p>For PGT (as applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PG team • Doctoral Training Centre • research ethics
Study and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessing University email • your student record: SAMIS • Moodle • personal tutoring • Skills Centre • the Library • DDaT and facilities • recording of lectures • student representation • Students' Union membership • student support (Student Services, Students' Union Advice and Support Service, Wellbeing Service) • advice for international students • dealing with a problem involving the University • disabilities, long-term illness and specific learning difficulties • pregnancy and maternity • care-leavers, estranged students, refugees and young adult carers • equality, diversity and inclusion • Careers Service
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feedback to students on assessment • academic integrity: referencing and plagiarism • academic integrity initiative: training and test • academic integrity: penalties • word counts • late submission of coursework • Individual Mitigating Circumstances • assessment processes • examinations: information and guidance • External Examiners • assessment regulations • procedures for Academic Appeals
General Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the academic year timetable • University Regulations for Students • registration status • attendance monitoring • change in circumstances • Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks • health and safety • data protection

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	
Professional accreditation	
Alternative courses and Exit Awards	
Course assessment regulations	
Course owning School/department	
Course Director of Studies	
COURSE DESCRIPTION	
Course summary	
Course approach	
Learning and Teaching delivery and contact time	
Assessment	
Specialist facilities	
Additional costs and extra requirements	
Professional development	
Placement/study abroad	
Careers	

COURSE STRUCTURE					
Year 1					
Period of study (AY/S1/S2)	Unit code	Unit title	Unit status (Compulsory/ Optional/ Designated Essential)	Credits	Option choice rules
Year 2					
Period of study (AY/S1/S2)	Unit code	Unit title	Unit status (Compulsory/ Optional/ Designated Essential)	Credits	Option choice rules
Year 3					
Period of study (AY/S1/S2)	Unit code	Unit title	Unit status (Compulsory/ Optional/ Designated Essential)	Credits	Option choice rules

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					
EXEMPTION FROM COURSE ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS					