

ANNEX A - THE UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK FOR TAUGHT COURSES (10 CREDITS)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University's Academic Framework (10 credits) is composed of decisions previously taken by Senate and supersedes the framework used for courses approved prior to curriculum transformation, which is provided in Annex B of [QA4](#) Amendments to Courses of Study and Units and Approval of New Units.
- 1.2 A course of study leading to a named award within the University's unitised Academic Framework comprises a defined number of discrete units. The design of new courses must align with the provisions of the Academic Framework as set out below under 'Terminology'. An approved exception is the use of Credit Accumulation & Transfer Scheme (CATS) credits to express credit values for postgraduate online courses that use [NFAAR-PGOLC](#) assessment regulations.

2 Terminology

- 2.1 Where the term **must** is used in the Academic Framework, all course design must meet this parameter. Exemptions will not be possible due to the nature of the parameter, which is either set externally by sector bodies, or a necessary requirement for all taught courses due to Senate-agreed institutional standards.
- 2.2 Where the term **may** is used, this describes what is permissible within certain limits.
- 2.3 Where the term **should** is used, it is expected that course design will follow this parameter. Requests for exemption from "should" elements of the University's Academic Framework require approval by the Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee (CPAC). Requests will normally be considered at Stage Two Full Approval, although approval may be sought earlier where appropriate from the same Committee. The exception to this is exemptions from assessment regulations, which are approved by the Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC).
- 2.4 Such requests should be accompanied by a clear rationale for the exemption being sought.

Exemption from unitisation is normally only permitted on the grounds that the provision requires collaboration with partner organisations or has constraints on the pattern of delivery dictated by the requirements of professional bodies.

3 External requirements

- 3.1 Course design must meet the following external requirements:
- a. [Sector-recognised standards](#) (as set out in [Condition B5](#) of the Office for Students Conditions of Registration)
 - b. [Subject Benchmark Statements](#) (where applicable)
 - c. Accrediting body requirements (where applicable)
 - d. Statutory reporting and student finance requirements (parameters advised by Academic Registry).

4. Credit and unit design

- 4.1 Units must be designed in ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System).
- 4.2 Courses must contain one or more units of study in a course year.
- 4.3 Each unit must be mapped to at least one of the Course Intended Learning Outcomes.
- 4.4 Each unit must have its own Unit Intended Learning Outcomes, and it must be possible for the Unit Intended Learning Outcomes to be achieved by all students.
- 4.5 Course design should be based on a standard unit size of 10 ECTS (200 notional study hours). Other unit sizes should be sized in increments of 5 ECTS. The minimum unit size should be 5 ECTS. An academic year for full time undergraduates of 60 ECTS will equate to 1200 notional study hours. An academic year for full time postgraduate taught students of 90 ECTS will equate to 1800 notional study hours.
- 4.6 Each unit must be designed to a specific FHEQ level. Unit Intended Learning Outcomes, content, and summative assessment must reflect that level.
- 4.7 Each course must be designed in accordance with the relevant requirements for total credit value and for credit at each FHEQ level (see QA3 Annex B).
- 4.8 There should be no shared teaching between undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses.
- 4.9 At FHEQ level 7 all units on a course must be offered at level 7.
- 4.10 Undergraduate courses should normally contain a maximum of eight units of study in a course year. Postgraduate taught courses should normally contain a maximum of twelve units of study in a course year.
- 4.11 Director of Studies approved units may be used as an optional unit, but must only be agreed, for a student, after the timetable has been finalised.
- 4.12 The FHEQ level 4 course year should not normally contain optional units.
- 4.13 Course years at FHEQ level 5 may contain a maximum of 10 ECTS at level 4 where this is pedagogically desirable and academic standards can be assured. Any level 4 credits taken at FHEQ course year level 5 must be outside the subject(s) of the award.
- 4.14 Course years at FHEQ levels 6 may contain a maximum of 10 ECTS taken at level 5,

where this is pedagogically desirable and academic standards can be assured. Any level 5 credits taken at FHEQ course year level 6 must be outside the subject(s) of the award.

- 4.15 In line with expectations on award titles set out in the FHEQ, an “and” course must be designed with an approximate 50% of credit from each subject in its title. A “with” course must be designed with at least 60% of credit in the lead subject and a minimum 25% of credit from the secondary subject.
- 4.16 Units must be designated as compulsory or optional course requirements. Any Designated Essential Units (DEUs) / Must Pass Units (MPUs) must also be specified in course design.
- a. **Compulsory** units are those components of a course of study which must be taken by all students; in the assessment regulations context some or all of these might also be DEUs/MPUs;
 - b. **Optional** units are those units that students can select from a prescribed range specified within the course of study or other, Director of Studies-approved units. In the assessment regulations context, some or all optional units might also be DEUs/MPUs.
- 4.17 Additionally, units may have the following features:
- a. **Generally available units** are units offered to students across all departments of the University.
 - b. **Extra-curricular** units are taken outside of and in addition to the course of study, up to a maximum of 5 additional credits per year (with the prior approval of the Director of Studies). They can be chosen by a student but do not contribute to progression requirements, or to the final degree classification. Credits achieved in these units may count towards an undergraduate award of Certificate of Higher Education or Diploma of Higher Education.

5. Placements and Study Abroad

- 5.1 Courses may incorporate a placement or study-period abroad that is described as a unit or set of units, with a total credit value that represents the approximate total period required (normally a credit value equivalent to a course-year or one semester).
- 5.2 For courses containing ‘sandwich years’ or ‘thin sandwich’ elements, course teams must refer to relevant guidance on definitions and parameters relating to fees, funding and statutory reporting, including in relation to the minimum duration of sandwich activity.
- 5.3 Placement and study-abroad units may contribute towards the final award classification. Course teams must specify whether they do so as part of course design and approval. Course teams must refer to guidance on the specification and features of placement/study-abroad units.
- 5.4 Credit achieved through a placement or study abroad unit does not normally contribute to an exit award, unless explicitly stated as part of the course approval.

6. Assessment

- 6.1 Each unit must be assessed through summative assessment designed to test the relevant unit intended learning outcomes. The level of achievement will be recorded as the unit mark.
- 6.2 Two or more units in a course year may be wholly or partially assessed by synoptic summative assessment. Course teams must seek guidance from the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT) and Academic Registry when designing such assessment.

- 6.3 Unit results must be calculated as specified in assessment regulations. The sum of the weightings of the summative assessments in a unit must add to 100%.
- 6.4 Pass/fail units must not carry a weighting and do not contribute to degree classifications.
- 6.5 The pass mark for FHEQ levels 4-6 must be 40%. The pass mark for level 7 units (both Undergraduate Integrated Masters¹, and Postgraduate Taught) must be 50%.
- 6.6 There should be no more than 12 Course Intended Learning Outcomes. An additional outcome should be in place for each placement/study abroad course variant.
- 6.7 The course structure should ensure that the course learning outcomes are met by all who would graduate under the normal assessment and award provisions, e.g. by using DEUs/MPUs to underpin requirements without which the named award could not be made.
- 6.8 Courses should contain formative assessment and feedback opportunities to support student learning.
- 6.9 The unit description must specify supplementary assessment requirements.

7. Progression/Award

- 7.1 There should normally be no progression requirements within an undergraduate course year.
- 7.2 Prerequisite units may be specified, but may not need to be passed prior to progression to the subsequent unit. Where a prerequisite unit is designated essential for progression (a DEU/MPU) the unit must first be passed before progression to the subsequent unit.
- 7.3 Course design may allow a proportion of unit credit that can be condoned. Course design may allow some unit failure in the final year. Where this is not desirable to course design, units (and their credit) may be designated essential to be passed before progression or award (DEUs/MPUs).
- 7.4 Unit credit must not be divided or partially awarded.
- 7.5 Courses should apply the University's agreed methods and weightings to calculate progression and award eligibility and classification, as described in assessment regulations.

8. Registration

- 8.1 Courses must be designed to meet maximum registration periods, which will be set out in regulation.

9. Assessment Regulations

- 9.1 Regulation 15.2.b states that "Schemes of Study" are those documents which set down the approved curriculum, rules, requirements and scheme of assessment for a course of study. This Regulation is normally realised in detailed Course Specifications (see QA44 Course Handbooks and Course Specifications).
- 9.2 Course structures are described in course specifications.

¹ The pass mark for Undergraduate Integrated Masters units must be 40% when delivered prior to 2026/27.

9.3 Course specifications will stipulate the assessment regulations that apply to a given course. Any approved additional requirements beyond those set out in assessment regulations and the Regulations for Students will be specified in the course specification.

9.4 Assessment regulations will specify:

- progression routes throughout a course and any requirements for a student at each stage to progress
- the timing and nature of any supplementary assessment, and mechanisms for retrieval of credit
- the criteria for how a final degree classification is reached
- the weighting of individual units in the calculation of the final award, including classification where appropriate
- the criteria for an interim award or transfer to another defined award
- where appropriate, any criteria for transfer points between courses (e.g. between a Bachelors and undergraduate Masters course)
- criteria for the award of generic exit awards (e.g. CertHE, DipHE, PGCert, PGDip)

9.5 Where the approved specific requirements of a course differ from those specified in the relevant assessment regulations, this must be detailed in full in the course specification.

9.6 Student visa requirements may constrain course transfer options for international students, therefore course designers wishing to make transfer from one course to another mandatory under specific circumstances must consult the Student Immigration Service.

10. Assessment at the unit level

10.1 Credit will be awarded for successful completion of a unit. This will normally be defined as the achievement of the pass mark for the aggregate of all summative assessment(s). Unit descriptions should specify and define any additional criteria for the award of credit to be applied at the level of individual components of assessment. In particular, where

- a candidate must pass each individual component of the assessment in order to complete the unit successfully;
- the candidate is required to reach a minimum threshold in any, or all, of the components of the assessment,

this should be specified in the unit description and will be recorded in the online unit catalogues.

10.2 In instances where the teaching of units at different FHEQ levels is shared, the learning outcomes and assessment must be appropriately differentiated. Sharing of UG and PGT teaching requires an exemption from this framework. The Academic Registry should be consulted if this need is anticipated.