BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

The Rough Guide to Curriculum Design:

Course Development at Birmingham City University

4th Edition

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Forward

This fourth edition of the Rough Guide to Curriculum Design has been fully updated to take into account both the 'Owning Your Curriculum' document, published by EDS in 2018, aimed at ensuring that academic staff retain overall control and responsibility for curriculum design and implementation, and the revised QAA Quality Code. This version of the rough guide is again aimed directly at Birmingham City University staff, although obviously much of what is written here will apply in most institutions.

The guide is hopefully useful to all members of course teams and stakeholders involved in the curriculum design process, but for consistency's sake, the general approach is to speak directly to the course leader. A statement from the introduction to the first edition bears re-stating here. The name of this guide was carefully chosen - it is designed to be 'rough' - it is deliberately descriptive and enabling rather than prescriptive and directive. There is, of course, some content in the guide relating to regulatory requirements and expectations that are a non-negotiable aspect of the course approval process and you may also have subject specific (and possibly professional body) requirements specifically relevant to you which need to be taken into account. However, the emphasis remains on offering guidance on design approaches to facilitate effective curriculum design. The decision to follow the order suggested or to use any of the resources or starting points is yours. There is no fixed path, the Guide is designed to map a possible route to take you where you need to be.

The original version of The Rough Guide to Curriculum Design was produced by members of the Centre for Enhancement of Learning & Teaching at Birmingham City University, the majority of the writing work being undertaken by Paul Bartholomew and Sonia Hendy-Isaac. Since then, the department has gone through several re-structures and name changes. The guide is now published and supported by the Academic Practice Team in the Education Development Service. Paul and Sonia have since moved on and the task of editing and revising the guide later editions was undertaken by Dr Graham Lowe, Head of Academic Practice in EDS.

Introduction & Background

New courses are generally created in response to a market opportunity or institutional directive. The design process often focuses on producing the relevant paperwork necessary to obtain approval. This process relies on the assigned course leader and course team designing a set of modules and working towards a fixed date for a panel approval sometimes leading to a rush to produce documentation as the approval event date approaches.

This mode of working can lead to tried and tested pedagogies winning out over more innovative approaches. The approval event itself can be an underexploited opportunity. Although discussion at such events can often lead to good ideas and suggestions, this is usually met with the realisation that it is too late to incorporate these into the first running of the course because, in reality, the implications of those ideas needs to be carefully worked through.

Similarly, re-approval of an existing course is often centred on adjustments and moderations of existing provision sometimes incorporating student evaluation, regulatory requirements as appropriate and new market approaches or considerations. This approach tends to focus on the redevelopment of existing modules, often in isolation from one another, followed by the creation of an updated version of the paperwork. Many academics 'inherit' the course or modules that they teach, and more often than not, simply maintain 'content' because 'it's always been there'. There can be a reluctance to attempt a 'blank page' approach to courses or courses that have a reasonable track record in terms of academic quality assurance and student satisfaction and courses can often end up with new modules and pathways 'tacked on' as a result.

This guide presents an alternative, more holistic, 'blank page' approach to curriculum design whereby all stakeholders are fully involved and a course is perceived in its entirety, rather than merely as a collection of modules.

Academic staff can sometimes be reluctant to ask for support because they feel they are expected to know how to create curriculum. There may also be a fear that by asking for support we might relinquish some aspects of control over the course itself and this can create political tensions which can ultimately impact on the design experience and the effectiveness of the stakeholder approach. Curriculum design is a complex and difficult process requiring a wide range of knowledge and skills and by default, you cannot expect to be expert in every aspect of it. It is important, therefore, to remember that the Academic Practice Team in the Education Development Service can support you and your team through the design and validation whenever and wherever you feel you need it.

A (Very) Brief History of the Rough Guide

A comprehensive review of course design and approval was made by Birmingham City University as part of the JISC-funded T-SPARC project between 2009 and 2013, which ultimately led to the development and pilot of a new approach to curriculum design.

The project delivered two main outputs:

- A new approach to curriculum design
- The Design and Approval of Courses System (DAPS)

DAPS was a customised MS SharePoint-based system developed to offer an online environment for course design and approval mirroring the curriculum design and approval process, developed as part of the project. It was intended to encourage parts of the course to be 'signed off' by those conferring approval as the work was completed without having to wait for an approval event. Input from other stakeholders, such as student representatives and external advisors, during the design process allowed for suggestions to be built into the design rather than emerging as 'recommendations' or 'conditions' from a traditional approval event.

Although the DAPS system offered solutions to facilitate interactions with stakeholders and to allow progressive sign off, the interface and system itself created different problems for those using it and eventually the DAPS system was abandoned for more individual methods of managing the process at a local level. The final validation event continues to be the focus for the approval and re-approval of courses but it was found to be possible to replicate some of what the system did through other means (Moodle, Wikis, Mahara, WordPress, etc.) and ultimately, the most critical finding of the DAPS experience was that the conversations that take place about curriculum design are more important than the systems that support it.

Therefore, although the project initially started as a technology project, the lessons learned about the processes of curriculum design meant that the most significant outcome of the project was the new approach to curriculum design described in the document you are now reading.

A Holistic Approach to Curriculum Design

Historically, most course review processes might best be described as following a 'distributed model' (Figure 1). Here the course is broken into modules at the beginning the design process, immediately allocating these to relevant course team members. Module design often takes place in isolation of the wider course until the modules are brought back together (often just) prior to approval. Although this may offer a swift distribution of the design workload, it does not provide the best environment for constructive alignment of course/course aims, the learning, teaching and assessment strategy, and the strengths of the course team, which can create a diffuse and disjointed course identity and offer.

One of the approaches identified during the BCU project was the need to adopt a more 'holistic' perspective in relation to curriculum design with all stakeholders being involved as early as possible in the process and across every aspect of course development (Figure 2). This was found to deliver higher levels of course ownership across the whole course development team (including those stakeholders who are not part of the teaching team).
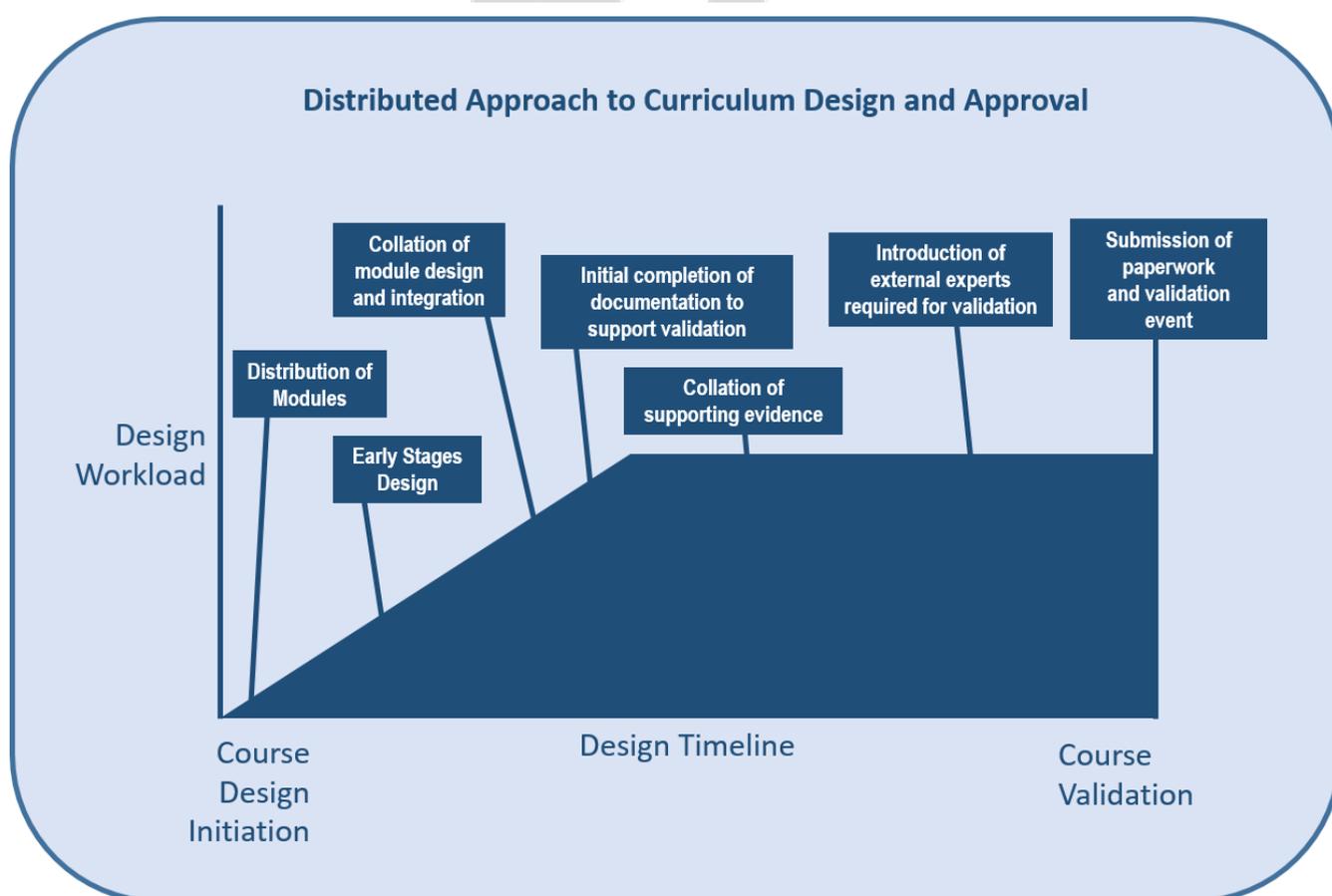
Figure 1 Historical Approaches to Curriculum Design and Approval

Whilst the historical 'distributed' processes can lead to a 'race' to complete the paperwork (together with an increase in workload leading up to that date) and introduction of stakeholders beyond the course team often happening too late in the process to be influential or effective, in the more iterative 'holistic' approach shown below, and used as the backbone of the Rough Guide, all stakeholders are engaged and the workload is more balanced as the documentation emerges from the process.

Holistic Approach to Curriculum Design and Approval

Submission of paperwork and validation event

Design Workload

Documentation emerges from the design process

Course and module design is iterative and interactive

Active stakeholder engagement throughout the entire process

Overall course designed 'as a course' before any modular decisions made

Course Design Initiation

Design Timeline

Course Validation

Figure 2 Rough Guide Approach to Curriculum Design and Approval

The key challenge with this approach is that decisions require a consensus of opinion and therefore this is a more time consuming exercise. However, we have found that the benefits in terms of the quality of the finished product far outweigh any disadvantages in terms of the need for careful time management.

It should be clear by now that there is a fundamental principle underlying the approach being suggested here. That is, a course should be designed 'as a course' and *then* divided into components (modules) for

delivery, rather than be seen a series of distinct components (modules) created separately and then collected together to create a course.

The guide that follows, then, attempts to provide a model of a holistic approach to curriculum design to get the maximum engagement from all stakeholders and ensure that the validated course can live up to the high ideals that all dedicated academics start with.

Programmes and Courses

The words course and programme can be confused. For clarity, in this document…

A *course* is the single pathway, route or delivery mode that is experienced by an individual student.

A *programme* is an overarching structure designed by academics (with other stakeholders) and may incorporate multiple pathways, routes, options and/or delivery modes.

Only when a programme consists of a single course could the terms be used interchangeably, therefore when working with students it is sensible to only use the term 'course' as that is what they experience. Course is also the term used by the sector in relation to the NSS, DLHE and other student surveys and therefore **Course** is the favoured term in this document.

As regards course leadership, there are many different titles across the sector for essentially the same role, the most common being Course Leader, Course Director and Course Convener. For the purposes of this document we use the generic term **Course Leader**.

General Principles

One of the key differences in this approach to curriculum design is the drive to evidence how design decisions have been made, and to demonstrate how these decisions have been informed through robust stakeholder engagement. The Rough Guide approach recommends that you 'scrapbook' the artefacts that emerge from your discussions and activities and have the whole team involved in the whole process. That might mean voice recording/filming meetings, taking photos of the flipcharts/whiteboards used to

document your discussions, or simply the notes taken at meetings. These can be held on a virtual space so that everyone within the team (and potentially your validation panel) can access them to explain the process of designing the curriculum as well as the product that emerges. If you can also incorporate these into a forum type setting, you can explain and encourage evolution of the product through an open and transparent discussion method. If you also give access to these forums to your external and internal stakeholders then everyone involved in the design process can engage with the discussion and help to inform the design decisions. This ensures that all inputs contribute to the iterative process and it is possible to exploit the type of feedback/suggestions which would normally have come from the panel event at the design stage and not after the paperwork has been completed.

The Rough Guide works on the principle that there are a number of stakeholders involved in course design but that the degree to which each party is integrated into the process varies greatly. The integration of a broader number of stakeholders at an early stage enables co-creation of the Course and attempts to avoid the confirmation approach whereby the course paperwork is presented as almost complete and then certain stakeholders are asked to comment on its fitness for purpose. The confirmation approach tends to bring limited innovation and ownership from those outside the course team, primarily because the product already seems fully formed and unless there are regulatory and/or professional body issues, the question posed is often based on whether or not this 'looks ok?'

Below is a model of stakeholder engagement (

Figure 3), initially produced to get real engagement of stakeholders in project work. Indeed, the whole Course design process can be conceived as a project. It has a deadline, there is work to be done (broadly in a sequence) and there is a product at the end of the activity. As such, the model is useful in showing how more effective stakeholder engagement can be achieved just by changing the sorts of activities you choose to do with your stakeholders. Clearly, higher levels of engagement, which we have found to result in the best conceived courses, are obtained when activity is focussed to the right hand side of the grid.

The intention behind involving a wider group of people to support good design is to benefit from the broadest possible expertise. For ease of reference here are the generic key stakeholders (in alphabetical order) and a description of their possible roles and responsibilities in the process (Figure 4). There may be additional stakeholders for your individual course, but they are likely to fall into one of these categories.

	Notify	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Level of Engagement	Stakeholders may encounter project publicity.	Stakeholders are regularly and reliably informed, made aware of their rights and ways of participating in the project.	Project staff obtain views of stakeholders. Stakeholders receive full feedback on decisions taken.	Project staff work with stakeholders throughout decision making process to ensure views are understood and taken into account	All aspects of decision making processes are undertaken in partnership with stakeholders	Stakeholders set agendas for change. Self-organisation and responsibility over management is held by stakeholders.
	Information made available	Stakeholder informed	Stakeholder consulted	Stakeholder input	Stakeholder shaped	Stakeholder owned
Stakeholder roles	Stakeholders as passive recipients of un-contextualised information. Dialogue with project staff is not expected.	Stakeholders as passive recipients of broadly contextualised information. Dialogue with project staff is implicitly welcomed but not explicitly invited.	Stakeholders as respondents. Designated consultation/space/time in meetings. Feedback/right of reply strategies. Some dialogue with project staff is expected.	Stakeholders as project team members Participation in skills training.	Stakeholders as collaborators. Stakeholders on management committees. Stakeholder shaped policy making. Stakeholder interest/action groups.	Stakeholders as designers (independent). Distributed decision making. Stakeholder managers. Stakeholder 'ownership' of resources, events, policies and learning.
Engagement tools	Occasional newsletters. Access to minutes/documents. Static website.	Briefings. Regular blogs. Targeted letter.	Comment/opinion polls. Focus groups (stakeholders as respondents). Project staff led consultation workshops. Project staff led questionnaires, interviews.	Workshops. Voting. Active focus groups. Joint-led consultations. Interviews (open-staff directed).	Stakeholder-led consultations. Interviews open/closed (stakeholder directed). Open forums Rich picture activities. Away days with stakeholders and project teams.	Stakeholder managed programmes. Stakeholder agenda setting. Stakeholder managed consultation activities and tools development.
Anticipated effect	Potential for peripheral general awareness.	Potential for informed, contextualised awareness.	Confirmed widespread contextualised awareness. Emergence of reaction data.	Emergent reaction data is not framed exclusively by project staff. Stakeholder agendas are collected and recognised.	Agendas emerge only from collaborative activity with stakeholders.	New mechanisms are established which are stakeholder owned. Project is self-sustainable with no expectation of project team intervention.

Adapted by Freeman, R. & Bartholomew, P. (2009) as part of T-SPARC at Birmingham City University. From 'Levels of learner voice participation' in Rudd, T, Colligan, F. & Naik, R. (2006) *Learner Voice: a handbook from Futurelab*, Bristol, Futurelab.

Figure 3 Model for Stakeholder Engagement

Title	Roles & Responsibilities
Academic Services Quality Lead	Academic Services will have a number of experts able to support you in terms of QA processes and regulatory matters. They also responsible for setting up and running the validation event and overseeing all QA matters.
Dean/ Associate Dean/ Head of School	The Dean, Associate Dean or Head of School can be a key champion in terms of supporting innovation and evolution of course offers. S/he may also be responsible for completing and/or approving some of the pre-design checks and for maintaining coordinating oversight of the course development in line with Faculty policies and the School Learning, Teaching & Assessment Policy.
External Academic Advisors	External Academic Advisers should be asked to contribute throughout the design process. The principal role of an external adviser is to assure the University that the academic standards of the proposed course(s) of study are set at the appropriate levels and are equivalent to those adopted across the sector for similar awards. EEAs are expected to liaise with the Course Leader throughout the design phase and may form part of the validation panel.
External Practitioner Advisors	External Practitioner Advisers help ensure courses produce graduates who meet the needs of industry or the profession. They should be able to comment on the appropriateness of the course structure and content to a professional or industrial area and/or should be in a position that involves the recruitment of graduates from the discipline area being considered. EPAs are expected to liaise with the Course Leader throughout the design process and may form part of the validation panel.
Education Development Service	The Education Development Service can offer support and guidance to the course team, providing advice about the design process, resources, and issues relating to learning and teaching. They might also be able to act as a neutral facilitator for the Course Leader as this can sometimes help to alleviate tensions and negotiate areas of potential conflict.
Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body Representatives	Where a course offers additional accreditation, PSRB representatives will need to be identified by the Course Leader. Their views on the suitability of the course in relation to students gaining professional registration/approval are often instrumental in the validation process, and having interactions at an early stage can avoid the need to make adjustments at the last stage or have conditions pending on approval.
Course Leader	The Course Leader is responsible for engagement with all stakeholders and co-ordination of course development. S/he will specifically oversee and facilitate Course Team activity, appoint EPAs, EAAs, PRSB Representatives and student representatives as appropriate.
Course/ Teaching Team Members	It is essential that *all* members of the course team have input, access and ownership of the design process. The course team are responsible for key contributions in developing course philosophy, aims & outcomes, module development and learning and teaching strategy / implementation. Members of Library and Learning Resources, IT Services and/or members of faculty administration should also be co-opted onto the course team as appropriate.
Student/ Alumni Representatives	Student representation is crucial throughout the design process. A combination of current students and recent graduates will ensure that a focus on the student experience is explicit. You may also wish to consider asking the Students Union to offer support and input.
Validation Panel	Validation panel membership varies according to need but will normally include a senior academic to chair (usually not from the same faculty), a member of Academic Services, an external examiner, an employer, a PSRB representative (if relevant to course), and a student/alumni representative. Academic Services will advise you on the membership of this and will make all the arrangements.

Figure 4 Roles and Responsibilities of key stakeholders

The Design and Approval Process

Overview

1	Initial Action by the Course Leader	Identify Course Team and other stakeholders Confirm expected approval date and begin to consider and plan the timescales for design Regulatory/PSRB/Institutional pre-design checks to be completed Prepare for Design Initiation Event Prepare virtual space with key documents which may inform design, such as reports (NSS, External Examiners Reports, etc), course/module evaluation and/or feedback, PSRB guidelines or Regulatory requirements, FHEQ, QAA Subject Benchmarks, market indicators and/or other market research. Seek out support from Education Development Service

2	Design Initiation Event	Structure activity around key components: Briefing on the approach to course design, Stakeholder Induction, Introduction to the Design Space, Course Philosophy, Aims & Outcomes, Course Structure, Approaches to Learning, Teaching & Assessment, Initial discussion around the design challenges Gather evidence from the discussions and activities at the event which will help to inform design decisions.
	After Design Initiation Event	Upload evidence from the day to the Virtual Design Space Use the forum discussions online to progress the key outputs and begin to refine them

3	Stage One Sign Off & Design Progression to Module Writing	Final working draft of the Course Philosophy, Aims and Outcomes Final working draft of Course Structure Diagram. Statements of Intent around the Design Challenges Responsibility for module development distributed to members of the Course Team Iterative module writing process begins Consideration and adjustment of Philosophy, Aims, Outcomes and Structure as modules take shape.

4	Stage Two Sign Off	Completed modules aligned with the Course Philosophy, Aims and Outcomes. Completed module information should normally include Learning Outcomes, Feedback and Assessment Methods, Indicative Content, Resources and Teaching Schedule. Stakeholder input and evidence of discussions demonstrates the rationale for the design decisions taken. Modules can then be 'signed off' (either one by one or as a collective).

5	Creation of Course Specification and Other Definitive Documentation	The Course Specification is completed and will usually incorporate items such as: Course Philosophy, Aims & Outcomes, Module Descriptors and Course Structure Diagram. Other documents such as the Context Document, mapping documents (for course pathways, or course themes), resources documents, assessment schedules, student handbooks and professional body requirements also be required.

6	Course Approval	The completion of the design process will have generated the relevant paperwork for the approval event. The evidence generated through the process acts as the rationale for the design decisions made. The online forums and the wiki/Moodle/SharePoint space should act as your 'evidence scrapbook' for both external and internal validators to review your design and decision making processes and lead to a shorter, more focused approval panel process.

Figure 5 Design and Approval Process - Overview

Stages of Design and Approval

For an overview of the entire process, please see Figure 5.

1 Initial Action by the Course Leader

Documentation

A good starting point is to gather together key documents which may inform your design. This will include QAA guidance including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Framework for Higher HE Qualifications (FHEQ) the 12 Advice and Guidance Documents (especially Course Design and Development) and Subject Benchmark Statements, PSRB guidelines or Regulatory requirements, local reports (NSS, External Examiners Reports, DHLE stats. etc), course/module evaluation and/or feedback, market indicators and/or other market research. You should also upload the university templates for the course specification, module specification and the context document. A copy of this guide should also be provided. Prior to any design activity, certain permissions may need to be sought by the Course Leader. The level of permissions will depend largely on whether this is a revalidation or a new course and whether PSRB accreditation is being sought. The Dean/Associate Dean/Head of School responsible for portfolio development and/or academic practice will be a key contact at this early stage in terms of university and faculty procedures.

Stakeholder Identification

In the initial stages, the Course Leader should spend time identifying key stakeholders and representatives. The Course Leader will need to confirm the date of the Design Initiation Event (DIE – team away day) and ensure that everyone is invited and available to attend. Key stakeholders include:

- The Teaching/Module Writing Team
- Academic Services/Administration representative
- Dean/ Associate Dean/ Head of School
- External Academic Advisor(s)
- External Practitioner Advisor(s)
- Member of Education Development Service
- PSRB Representative(s)
- Library & Learning Resources representative

- IT Department representative
- Student/ Alumni Representative(s)

Planning the Design Initiation Event

We have found that the initiation of course design is best facilitated by an all-day event (The Design Initiation Event) involving all Course Team members and associated stakeholders such as students, employers and professional body representatives. This type of event offers an essential opportunity to begin the design work with a holistic approach, enabling a contribution from the entire course team and relevant stakeholders. Although it is ideal, they do not all need to be physically present on the day. Their input might rather include reports such as External Examiners Reports, course/module evaluation and/or feedback, PSRB guidelines or Regulatory requirements along with QAA Subject Benchmarks, the results of focus group discussions etc. may inform discussion and design decisions throughout the day. Arranging for this event to be hosted away from the usual working environment and possibly by someone from outside of the normal course team can provide a level of objectivity that can sometimes be helpful. The Education Development Service at BCU are available to support if requested.

Design Challenges

One of the principles of the Rough Guide approach is to consider what we call, 'Design Challenges'. We have listed a series of generic design challenges appropriate to most situations that can be used to trigger discussion and act as anchors for design structure. Some may be much more important than others in your context, some may not be appropriate at all and you may well have your own design challenges specific to your situation. Each of the design challenges we have identified has a brief explanation, some suggestions for starting points and links to resources available in the Appendix.

Before the event itself, it is recommended that course leaders develop a definitive list of design challenges to be considered on the day. In each case it is also worth considering how *you* might approach each design challenge ahead of the design initiation event and whether there are any 'non-negotiables'. You should ensure that the course team will have had access to any relevant documentation/information that may help to inform discussion on the day.

Our suggested Design Challenges are:

- ❖ Widening Participation
- ❖ Effective induction
- ❖ Sustainability

- ❖ Learning and Teaching
- ❖ Inclusivity
- ❖ Personal Development Planning (PDP)
- ❖ Retention and Progression
- ❖ Student Engagement
- ❖ The Needs of International Students
- ❖ Embedding Employability in the Curriculum
- ❖ Engaging Employers in Design and Delivery
- ❖ Work Based Learning
- ❖ Engaging PSRBs in Curriculum Design
- ❖ Engaging students in Curriculum Design
- ❖ Education Technology & Digital Capability
- ❖ Information Literacy
- ❖ Writing Good Learning Outcomes
- ❖ Module Assessments
- ❖ Assessment Literacy
- ❖ Designing Feedback Mechanisms

Remember that some may be more important to you than others and there may be other design challenges specific to your course to consider.

Initial Structure Design

It is worth considering early on how the course might be structured and begin to map possible alternatives. A diagrammatic representation of the course structure is often more helpful in demonstrating the overall structure than a list of potential modules. Any diagram should cover the structure of the course, the modules, levels and credit values, and the awards that can be gained at each stage (if relevant). There are certain university regulations to consider when constructing this, such as the CAT point levels for each module, the academic calendar, rules on the use of optional modules and requirements for joint honours provision. Advice and guidance on the rules at BCU can be sought from Academic Services.

Preparing the Course Team

It is essential to ensure that the course team are aware of the deadlines involved and that they have sufficient time to engage in the process. A good way to start this is to require the teaching team to complete a Learning & Teaching Review Grid to bring to the DIE (Figure 6). An up to date CV from each member of the team may also prove useful.

Name	Experience of teaching in the following areas:	Would like to (or be willing to) teach or lead in the following areas:	Course expertise (e.g. e-learning, problem based learning, assessment design, placements etc.)

Figure 6 Learning & Teaching Review Grid

Virtual Design Space

The creation of some kind of virtual space (perhaps a wiki, VLE page or MS Sharepoint site) will provide a focus for both discussion and emerging documentation throughout the process and should be made available to all stakeholders, so this should be done as early as possible and populated with the key documents already collected for ease of access to all parties. Support from the Education Development Service is available to help set this up.

Setting the Agenda

The Course leader needs to set the agenda for the day. There are a number of required outputs for the Design Initiation Event, so it is worth working backwards from there when deciding on the structure of the day. The agenda might look something like this:

09.00 - 09.30	Arrival & refreshments
09.30 – 09.50	Briefing on the philosophy and approach to course design being used
09.50 – 10.10	Welcome to all stakeholders and explanation of roles and responsibilities
10.10 – 10.30	Introduction to the Design Space to evidence the journey
10.30 – 11.00	Break
11.00 – 12.30	Course Philosophy, Aims and Outcomes
12.30 – 13.15	Lunch Break
13.15 – 14.00	Generation of Course Structure
14.00 – 15.00	Course Approaches to Learning, Teaching & Assessment
15.00 – 15.30	Break
15.30 – 16.30	Discussion around the design challenges
16.30 – 17.00	Review of progress so far and reminder of Design Space and where next activities
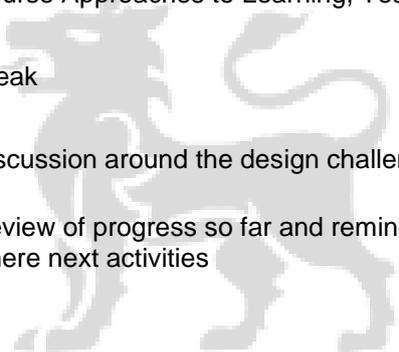
You will also need to ensure there are sufficient resources to 'capture' activity for the virtual space. This might include large paper and pens, post-its, still cameras, note-takers, etc.

2 The Design Initiation Event

There are a number of elements to the Design Initiation Event:

- Briefing to the team on the philosophy and approach to course design being used
- Stakeholder Induction
- Introduction to the Design Space
- Generation of Course Philosophy, Aims & Outcomes
- Generation of Course Structure
- Deciding on Course Approaches to Learning, Teaching & Assessment

- Generation statements of intent around the design challenges

Here we suggest ways in which each of these outcomes might be achieved. You will also have your own ideas as to how best to work towards these outcomes, whichever way is best for you and your team is the way to go. Also remember that the Education Development Service can be available to help facilitate these activities – that facilitation role can ease the path of the initial discussions.

Briefing on the Course Design Process

When introducing a new approach to curriculum design, it isn't necessarily a good idea to offer a *solution* where people aren't aware there is a *problem*. Consequently, if a course team is more used to a distributed approach, it is worth exploring the full rationale for this more holistic approach. Essentially, the team need to have an understanding of 'why', 'what' and 'how'. This approach is richer in experience than the paperwork completion route that they may have previously encountered and as such, it requires a slightly different mind-set for it to be effective. Therefore, explaining to your colleagues why you think this approach will enrich the design experience and, perhaps more importantly, the quality of the student experience your course delivers is a great opportunity to engage with any objections or confusion as to why this approach is being taken.

Stakeholder Induction

There has been significant discussion already around why we feel that a broad range of stakeholders is crucial to good curriculum design. As the course leader you will need to particularly ensure that external stakeholders are given sufficient time to understand the nature of this design process. It is suggested that early introduction to the processes suggested and the principles that underpin them will help everyone to clarify their expected roles, responsibilities and commitment to the design experience. As many of the external stakeholders (PSRB reps, students, alumni, industry reps. etc.) will be unfamiliar with the team and the surroundings, explicitly making them feel welcome and valued is essential.

Introduction to the Design Space

Whatever virtual environment you choose to support your evidence scrapbook, it is sensible to try to pick one that your team are already familiar with. Using a new technology on top of implementing new design principles can throw people out of the process and the technology can quickly become both a barrier for

engagement and a scapegoat for returning to the 'way we've done it before'. If you decide not to use a virtual space – try isolating a large wall to act as a literal pin board – just having a visual representation of the discussions and key areas for development can offer some clarity to the process. Whatever your choice, show the team exactly how it will work. Having most of the pre-existing documents already available via the space will help and you can point out particularly useful or important documents such as analyses of NSS results, QAA guidance, the FHEQ and subject benchmarks. You will need to return to this at the end of the day to reinforce the next steps and how everyone is expected to interact with the space.

Generation of Course Philosophy, Aims and Outcomes

The development of your philosophy, aims and intended outcomes is a crucial aspect of the design process and at the very least, you should aim to have a working draft of these by the end of the Design Initiation Event. Agreeing an overall Course Philosophy and set of general Aims will allow for subsequent development of modules to be undertaken in a way that reflects and supports the overall course. The Philosophy and Aims should act as a vehicle to communicate the key characteristics and distinguishing principles of the proposed course. A Course Philosophy and set of Aims might include statements that relate to:

- Defining principles and values;
- Distinctiveness within the sector;
- Pedagogical approaches that are adopted throughout the course, such as problem based learning, student negotiated curriculum, e-learning support, flexible delivery modes etc.;
- How the course articulates with professional registration (where appropriate);
- Intended characteristics of graduates.

The course philosophy and general aims should then be reflected in the outcomes for the course. Whilst the aims state quite general ambitions for the course you should also create more explicit course level learning outcomes related to 'Knowledge and Understanding' and 'Skills and Other Attributes'. Align the aims and learning outcomes as much as possible and try not to make this too complex. It can be difficult in the later stages of design to align every course level learning outcome to the modular level if there are too many of them and this not only disrupts the constructive alignment, but it also makes it difficult for students to map their own learning. Whilst there are no hard and fast rules, a set of 10 course level outcomes will be about right but more may be needed especially if there is PSRB accreditation attached

to the course. One way to facilitate these discussions is to prepare several sheets of flipchart paper/whiteboards with the following headings placed around the room and ask the course team members to add their thoughts to each section:

We value…

What is important to us? Examples of the things we may want to consider include approaches to learning and teaching, PSRB requirements and expectations, broader 'real world' contexts etc.

Our course USPs are…

What should the unique aspects/distinguishable features of our proposed course be? What do we want to be known for?

Our graduates will know…

List the key areas of knowledge, experience and expertise (indicative content) students will need to be exposed to be successful both on the course and as a graduate. How will they demonstrate this knowledge, experience and expertise?

Our graduates will be able to…

List the skills, attributes and attitudes you expect our students to be able to demonstrate as a result of completing the course. How will they demonstrate these skills, attributes and attitudes?

Use these concept boards to act as triggers for further group discussion (this can be done in smaller sub groups and fed back into the broader team if necessary) to begin constructing a narrative version of the Philosophy and Aims. Outcomes are best expressed in a bullet pointed list. Remember that anything you create on the day can be tweaked later. The iterative approach invariably means that, as a course team, you will continue to develop your thinking as the design process continues.

Generation of Course Structure Diagram

One of the things to consider as a course team is how the key characteristics of your course will actually thread through your course. A good way to structure and visualise this is through the development of a Course Structure Diagram. A Course Structure Diagram is a requirement for (re)approval as part of the Course Specification, but we also see it as a tool that can help to support good design.

When used in conjunction with the Philosophy and Aims, the course level outcomes and your decisions relating to the approaches to learning and teaching, the Course Structure Diagram can really help to plan and develop the course in a holistic way. It can enable members of the course team to jump more easily

between the macro and micro levels of course design without losing sight of either. As a course leader, you may already have some firm ideas about the structure, possibly due to known constraints, but try to be open minded about other suggestions. Sometimes presenting two or three possible alternatives can generate a valuable discussion and often a new version arises out of that.

Discuss the time structures and other constraints you have to play with and how they fit into the academic calendar year. Think about whether you are structuring the course using 'long and thin' modules or 'short and fat' ones, or more likely, a combination. You may have sandwich years or placements to incorporate and you should have a sense of where these will fit into the overall structure. You may have a particular desire to include optional modules, or to avoid them. You will then need to think about broad topic domains and how they might best be sequenced. You can then overlay these broad topic domains onto the overall structure. The details of each module will come later.

Once you have refined your Course Structure Diagram from being a development aid into a clear structure with module working titles and their relevant credits, this should be uploaded into your virtual Design Space for inclusion within the Course Specification at a later stage in the process.

Deciding on Course Approaches to Learning, Teaching and Assessment

One of the reasons for taking a holistic approach to curriculum design is that modules are often designed and delivered in isolation from each other. That can lead to low levels of transparency between module teams and frequently academics are not aware of how their peers teach, what their specific areas of expertise are, or what pedagogic innovations they have deployed in their teaching. Sharing of expertise can begin with the course team discussing the 'learning and teaching review', allowing the team members to ascertain the experience they have within their team and to put it to best use within the course.

The L&T review grid (Figure 6 Learning & Teaching Review Grid) should not be seen as an audit tool. It is designed to enable discussion and facilitate course design based on sharing of experience and expertise. This is important for both a new course and a re-approval but sometimes for slightly different reasons. A new course would use the review in order to consider and align the potential offer with the market research. There is little point responding to market demands, exploiting a new area of provision and creating a course without the expertise to deliver it. Similarly, for a re-approval, there is sometimes an expectation that a 'revision' of existing modules will be sufficient, the design of those modules is often inherited and may not always be delivered in full alignment with a course team member's experience or research interests. This misalignment can impact negatively on the student experience. In this holistic, distributed approach module 'ownership' at the inception stages can create disruption so should be avoided.

It is suggested that each team member complete the L&T Review prior to the Design Initiation Event allowing for some discussion during the day as the course structure is being drafted. It may also serve as a way to consider resource distribution within teams and identify areas of strength and possible gaps in course team expertise. For example, a member of staff with a keen interest and expertise in blended learning could become a key player if a decision is made to dramatically increase the use of learning technology but knowing that a large proportion of the team have little awareness of blended approaches may have implications for both design and staff development. An up-to-date CV from all members of the PT may also be useful and help generate discussion around areas of expertise. In our experience, the most commonly heard phrase during these discussions is, 'I never knew that!'.

During these discussions you will begin to discuss your approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. Some choices, like choosing a problem-based learning curriculum, or removing all exams, will have ramifications for many of the design decisions you will make. Take note of the expertise and experience of your team there as there will be elements of pre-existing effective practice at a modular level that could be implemented more widely to good effect.

Thoughts and ideas relating to delivery and assessment will also come out of other discussions during the Design Initiation Event, but you may feel that you need to 'capture' some of this discussion separately. One approach is to maintain a Learning, Teaching and Assessment 'open board' throughout the day with one member of the course team (or a number on rotation) that will take responsibility for writing up any of the key contributions/issues that get raised throughout the day.

Statements of Intent around the design challenges

To help capture the course philosophy around the design challenges, as part of the design initiation event the course team should develop 'Statements of Intent'. These statements, which should be brief and clear, will help you to articulate your understanding of the challenges for your own course and should facilitate discussions around how you will implement these principles within the delivery of the course.

Use the list of design challenges you have developed to trigger discussion and act as anchors for design structure. Remember that some may be much more important than others in your context, some may not be appropriate at all and you may well have your own design challenges specific to your situation. As course leader, you will probably have completed a near definitive list for discussion before the day but you may wish to have discussion of what should (and should not) be in your course list as part of the DIE discussion. Discussion can take part in small groups assigned specific challenges and then reported back

to the whole group for further discussion. More information, including starting points and further resources, can be found in the [appendix](#).

At the DIE, you may find that some of these (e.g. writing good learning outcomes) are better held over to later stages of the process. You may even have entirely different needs depending on the type of curriculum you are designing (e.g. online or virtual provision will require additional consideration of appropriate technology). Whatever YOUR design challenges are, you should aim to spend some time on the day formulating Statements of Intent for each area to aid articulation, and alignment of them across the course.

During the DIE you will capture a range of evidence. You may have a series of photographs captured from the whiteboards. If you had a number of breakout sessions perhaps they were voice recorded or have generated numerous notes. You may even capture conversations via a smartphone video camera. Whatever you have, upload it all into forums for discussion in your Design Space with a suitable title of your choice. Structure the space logically to mirror the processes within the Rough Guide or choose appropriate headings of your own.

When uploading the evidence from the DIE activities, try to remember that forum discussion should be led by a summary of the discussions that took place and show how the evidence supported the discussion, not the other way round. Remember that the confirmation approach described earlier can sometimes apply to forums too so try to ensure that the forums are a fluid space and not a place to simply ask 'I've done this now - does this look ok'? It's fair to say that there will probably be a considerable amount of uploading needed after the DIE so make sure you put time in your diary for this and try to distribute responsibility across the course team if possible.

The main advantage of a Design Space is that everyone has access. It's a transparent process, so bombarding your team with constant updates isn't always necessary (or welcome!). Over the next few weeks, try only to update or 'nudge' others to contribute when there is something substantial to discuss otherwise people can feel overwhelmed or irritated by the volume of information and their expected input. If the DIE was successful in its aims, the team should already feel that much of the content already reflects the collective opinions and as such the online input is about honing and iterating the design rather than asking for feedback on everything. However, if you have external/internal stakeholders that weren't physically present at the DIE, try to summarise the activity to date and then invite discussion on the forums. The transparency of this type of discussion is crucial to effective stakeholder ownership and engagement.

Encourage everyone to comment, support and evidence within the forums on your virtual design space but do bear in mind that there may be some areas that only the Course Director and/or allocated Project Manager should be able to edit, especially if you are trying to maintain 'version control'.

3 Stage One Sign Off & Design Progression to Module Writing

Key Documentation

Following the DIE and the subsequent online discussions, the course leader will draw together the comments and suggestions from the team. Out of this work will come three important documents that will underpin all the work to follow. They are:

- Final working draft of the Course Philosophy, Aims and Outcomes
- Final working draft of Course Structure Diagram
- Statements of Intent around the Design Challenges

These should be uploaded to the design space and agreed by all members of the writing team.

The documents are described as 'Final working Drafts' as there will naturally be some consideration and adjustment of the outcomes and structure (and perhaps to a lesser extent the philosophy and aims) as the modules begin to take shape.

Assigning Modules

Now the responsibility for module development can be distributed to members of the Course Team using the discussions around experience and expertise as a guide. Module spaces should be created in the Design Space and allocated to the appropriate course team members by the Course Director. Blank copies of the official template should be provided. Module writers should upload drafts of modules to the Design Space for comment and review. Comments can be invited from across the team, including external stakeholders or specific modules could have assigned reviewers. Either way, the design of modules should take place in an open, transparent and iterative way always underpinned by the three key documents.

Module Design Challenges

Just as at course level, there are design challenges for module development. Decisions around these should reflect the Statements of Intent developed earlier. Key Challenges to ensure alignment with the course philosophy are:

- ❖ Learning and Teaching
- ❖ Personal Development Planning (PDP)

- ❖ Education Technology & Digital Capability
- ❖ Information Literacy
- ❖ Writing Good Learning Outcomes
- ❖ Module Assessments
- ❖ Assessment Literacy
- ❖ Designing Feedback Mechanisms

As well as meeting these challenges, there are some specific expectations that will need to be addressed in module development. These are described below.

Module Overview

This should provide a general description of the module identifying key features and requirements. Access to resources or placement, and learning requirements should be outlined alongside the employability skills a student will acquire through the module which are relevant to an employment environment. The learning experience and assessment activities of the module should be described. If the module is delivered through blended or distance learning there is a need to specify how the student will access the learning experience. The Module Description should be written in plain English (suggested max 300 words) for an applicant, student and tutor readership and should contain essential detail for delivery of the module by a tutor and selection of the module by a student.

Indicative Content

Indicative content is exactly that. Ensure that the themes and broad topic areas of study for the module are included. You do not need to provide a fully detailed teaching schedule here but you should have a good idea about how the module will work in practice in terms of lectures, workshops, online work, private study etc. which you will need later.

Module Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes generally define student achievement in four areas:

Cognitive skills
Technical skills

Communication skills

Interpersonal skills

Each of these may vary in importance across different domains. The FHEQ tends to focus on the cognitive skills and communication skills whereas subject benchmarks will often be more focussed on the underlying knowledge and associated technical skills. PSRB requirements often focus heavily on technical skills and interpersonal skills.

We recommend a number of learning outcomes as follows:

20 Credit Module – normally up to 4 Learning Outcomes

40 Credit Module – normally up to 5 Learning Outcomes

60 Credit Module – normally up to 6 Learning Outcomes.

All learning outcomes must be assessed, but one assessment will probably cover more than one learning outcome. The learning outcomes should inform both the module content and the choice of assessment methods used.

Learning outcomes should be designed to ensure that a range of knowledge, skills and learning experiences are developed and assessed. Try not to make the learning outcomes overly complex or too detailed as this can make it difficult to align both your content and assessment approach. Writing good learning outcomes is one of the most important and challenging parts of the process, so do find ways to support the team by, for example, providing workshops from the Education Development Service. For more detail about writing good learning outcomes, see the appendix.

Module Assessment

You will need to be able to identify both the nature and the timing of the summative assessment(s) within the module. Remember that these ought to be considered in light of the discussions around your course's overall approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Further advice, guidance and resources to support the design of assessment and feedback are included in the appendix.

As students excel in different ways, we recommend that, when multiple assessment points are used, each point should be a different type. The number of assessment points will depend on the learning outcomes to be assessed. At level 3 and 4 knowledge and understanding might better be assessed using multiple points to re-inforce the learning and assist the student to build confidence in transitioning to University. Including a learning outcome that encourages a student to prepare for class and to engage with their peers

can be helpful at level 3 and 4 with a small but significant percentage (for example, 10-30%) of credit allocated to condition the student to working independently and with groups. As level 3 and 4 modules do not usually contribute to degree classification the marks awarded will not distort degree outcomes but may improve retention and achievement in future years.

Assessment Types		
Type	**Examples**	**Description**
Exam	**Unseen Exam**	Traditional timed written exam where students have no prior knowledge of the questions and are not allowed to bring in their own materials. Questions are usually a mixture of MCQ, short answer and long answer.
	Prepared Exam	Timed written exam where students know the questions and can prepare materials. Often a single, or choice of, long answer questions. Some materials are allowed – often a plan. Sometimes called a 'timed essay'.
	Open-book Exam	Timed written exam where students have knowledge of the question content and are allowed to bring in defined materials. Questions are usually short to long answer types.
	E-Exam	An exam taken by students working at a computer. Can be a mixture of seen/unseen and question types. May include specific software related tasks. Can include 'Just In Time' exams where students take the exam when they feel ready (within an allotted widow) rather than as a cohort.
Coursework	**Written Response**	Students prepare and submit individual written response to a question or given topic. Includes essays, reports, journal articles, reflective diaries and dissertations.
	AV	Students produce an individual or group AV presentation often in video form. Includes screen casting and podcasting.
	Portfolio	Presentation (perhaps electronically through e-portfolio software) of a collection of assessment products or ongoing tasks, possibly including text, audio and visual material, to provide an insight into the skills the student possesses. Could include a final presentation of a series of (formative) patchwork tasks.
	Artefact or Object	Production of a physical artefact or object to demonstrate, through its creation, knowledge or skills. Common in creative arts. Includes artwork, designs, jewellery, printed posters, web sites, leaflets and books. Some examples can be submitted electronically but others require a physical submission.
In-person	**Individual**	A student individually presents to a tutor or tutors to address a task/brief. Includes PowerPoint style presentations, sales pitches, audition pieces, musical solo, demonstrations and viva.
	Group	Students in pairs or groups of 3+ collaboratively present to a tutor or tutors to address a task/brief. Includes PowerPoint style presentations, sales pitches, theatre, music recitals, demonstrations and leading seminars.
	Observed Practice	Observation by an expert of a student carrying out practical, often professional, practice. Includes Objective Structured Clinical Examinations, Teaching Practice Observation and observation of engagement within class.

Figure 7 Assessment Types

Traditionally assessment scope is expressed in the currency of word count for coursework and hours for examinations. If you are using more innovative methods such as presentations, posters, videos and observed activity an equivalency must be determined. Try to consider the scope of the activity in terms of the amount of time and effort that students are likely to need to put in, in order to be successful. Where the scope of an assessment is defined by a PSRB requirement this will take precedence.

For the purposes of the module document you only need to state the main type of assessment, e.g. Exam, Coursework or In-Person – see Figure 7 Assessment Types - but again, you should have some idea of how that will look in practice. For example, whilst the document might say 'exam', in light of your discussions around course philosophy, you should have a good idea about whether that will be an unseen exam, open book exam, MCQs or long answer etc.

Where there is more than one summative assessment, show the learning outcomes that will be assessed by each item of assessment, and consider the weighting of each assessment item. At this stage, although levelled assessment criteria may not need to be developed in detail, it is worth doing this as early as possible in preparation for constructing the student-facing assessment brief following validation. There should certainly be some thought given to the pass/fail boundary at this stage.

It is important to identify the timing of the summative assessment points. These may be taken partway through the module (when students have had the opportunity to complete the learning needed for that assessment) or at the end of the module. For example, where you have some outcomes focussed on knowledge and understanding, and this content is front loaded in the module teaching, these might be better assessed mid-way through the module, leaving the assessment of more complex cognitive skills to the end after students have had practice at those skills in the latter part of the module.

Also consider the points at which formative assessments can take place to facilitate enhanced student understanding of their progression. These opportunities are key to generating feedback and feedforward to offer better levels of student support and to enable greater and more effective intervention if students are not progressing as expected. It also enables the module tutor to consider (or sometimes reconsider) the effectiveness of the methods being employed to both deliver and assess the module. This is an invaluable opportunity to review and evaluate the module experience by adopting an iterative approach.

You must also consider how students will receive feedback/forward throughout the learning experience and it is important to identify the modes of this too (will it be face-to-face during lectures/seminars, workshops, tutorials or electronic for example, through VLE forums?).

Finally, consider assessment in terms of student and staff workloads. A significant number of courses focus on back-ended assessment, that is to say, at the end of the module. This can create problems for students and staff alike, so use your Course Structure Diagram to map potential flashpoints. This approach often means that the team have more time to deliver iterative and supportive feedback in a timely manner and that students have the opportunity to stagger and manage their assessment loads.

Learning & Teaching Activities

Here you should consider the range of delivery methods you intend to utilise and how students will experience the module. You should consider this in relation to the design challenges for module development and the approaches to learning and teaching and assessment you discussed as a course team earlier in the process. The information will likely contain a combination of approaches and should be broken down into:

Scheduled Learning (SL)

Including lectures, practical classes and workshops, peer group learning, Graduate+ (if specified in timetable)

Directed Learning (DL)

Including placements, work-based learning, external visits, on-line activity, Graduate+ (if directed), peer learning, as directed on VLE

Private Study (PS)

Work carried out at student discretion including preparation for exams and other assessments

Remember that the nominal total study time for a 20 credit module is 200 hours. Private study should account for a minimum of 40 hours to allow sufficient time for assessment preparation.

For campus based courses, scheduled learning activity will probably fall into one of several categories as shown in Figure 8.

Teaching Types – Scheduled Learning	
Type	**Description & Examples**
Non-Specialist Teaching Space	
Keynote Lecture	Presentation to large groups in a raked lecture theatre. Opportunity for discursive activity is limited.
Interactive Lecture	Small (<41) or Large group teaching (≥ 41) where students sit in groups and lecturing is combined with interactive and discursive group activity, such as in The Hive.
Workshop	Medium group (11 – 40) or Large group (>40) of students, in a standard teaching room allowing for a variety of approaches. Usually seated in table groups, this

	combines interactive and discursive activity with occasional lecture style presentation.
Seminar	Small group (2–10) discursive activity, usually based on pre-prepared reading or study. Led by the students, supported by a member of staff.
Tutorial	One-to-one or small group (<10) discussion between tutor and student(s), usually around a key problem or specific task, often related to project work and/or assessment.
Offsite visit	Teaching carried out at a location not controlled by BCU. Organised by module tutor. Includes industry visits, museums, art galleries, conference events, theatre and sporting venues.
General Computer Lab	Group of students working individually/ or in groups at computer workstations under direction of a tutor using standard university provided software.
Specialist Teaching Space	
Specialist Computer Lab	Group of students working individually or in groups at computer workstations under direction of a tutor using specialism defined software
Laboratory	Group of students working individually, paired or in small groups using specialist equipment. Provides a practical opportunity to investigate, test and apply theoretical work taught elsewhere.
Studio/Workshop	Individual or small group practical activity, taught in discipline defined spaces using discipline appropriate equipment. Used for learners to acquire, develop and practise skills. Includes, Music, Drama, TV, Radio, Photography, Art, Design and Engineering.
Simulation	Individual or small group-based activity involving the practice of work-related techniques. A physical simulation will require specialist materials and/or spaces. Typically situated within clinical disciplines. Includes workplace simulations such as crime scenes and court room.

Figure 8 Teaching Types

Key Texts and other Learning Resources

Here, it is crucial to include indicative reading and refer to any electronic or other resources the student will need access to. You should also consider whether these resources are readily available and liaise with Library and Learning Resources to discuss this, especially if this is a new course or you have updated the materials following a shift in design or emphasis from a previous module within a reapproved course. Particular reference should also be given to any non-standard critical resources – i.e. those resources which are essential to the delivery of the module and which are not part of the University's core provision.

For example, you may wish to identify specialised teaching space which is required to run the module, such as a computer lab. It is vital not to assume that colleagues in the library, academic services, estates, timetabling etc. will automatically be able to make significant changes without significant notice. Early communication is essential to avoid problems later.

4 Stage Two Sign Off

Reviewing the Modules

Once all the design challenges have been explored, and the module templates have been completed they should be reviewed in a holistic manner across the stakeholder group. This is likely to be an electronic exercise, however, if time and availability permits, another physical meeting of all stakeholders can be useful to continue to ensure a team ethos and course coherence. Depending on the size of the course, a couple of hours/half day should suffice. Presentations from the course leader can reinforce the community decisions that have been made and each module leader can show how their module fits in with the course philosophy and aims.

Module Sign-Off

Once everyone is satisfied that the documentation reflects the design process and the course you want to deliver, this can be considered as an interim sign off for this stage. The key components of this sign-off is to ensure that:

- Completed modules are aligned with both the Course Philosophy and Aims
- Completed module information includes the Overview, Indicative Content, Learning Outcomes, Assessment methods, and Resources
- Stakeholder input and evidence of discussions demonstrates the rationale for the design decisions taken.

If this process is handled electronically then modules can be signed off either one by one or as a collective.

Philosophy, Aims and Outcomes Sign-Off

Previously the following documents were described as 'Final working drafts'

- Course Philosophy, Aims and Outcomes

- Course Structure Diagram
- Statements of Intent around the Design Challenges

As a result of the module writing process it is possible that some changes have been made in your thinking around the philosophy, aims, structure and other design challenges. Any changes now need to be agreed and these documents confirmed as final versions.

5 Creation of Course Specification and Other Definitive Documentation

Final Documentation

This is the stage where all the work that has gone before is pulled together. The Course Specification and other definitive documentation including the Student Handbook and the Context Document is a combination of much of the content you have already developed, but it will take some time to gather all of this into coherent documents. It is always a time consuming business, but the more engaged your stakeholders have been throughout the process, the easier it should be. Doing this is essentially the responsibility of the course leader, although it is likely you will want to get support from other members of the team, not least in terms of proof reading and consistency checking. BCU has a recommended format for this (although there may be some local variation so do check)

Context document

The context document is the introduction to the course and how you have developed it for the panel members, none of who have been involved in the curriculum design process. The context document will likely cover the following items:

Strategic Context   Describing the course, its key attributes and qualities and how it meets the needs of BCU in relation to the Academic Plan, University strategy and Faculty development plans.

Review Process   Describing the processes the team undertook to review and develop the course including detail of which external and internal stakeholders were consulted, why and how. There should be a particular focus on the role of

students and alumni and how they have influenced the proposed curriculum content and course structure.

External References   Describing how the team used the Quality Code, the relevant subject benchmarks and any other external reference points in the development of the course and module design.

Data   Detailing the impact and influence of quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. annual monitoring, course and module performance statistics, DLHE, module evaluation and student feedback and NSS outcomes) used to support the development process and on the final proposal.

Resources   Confirming that the course has sufficient resources required for successful delivery. New courses will have provided and had approved a resource statement by APG. Revised curriculum will have considered and ensured that any new or additional resources required will have been authorised by the time of approval by the appropriate authority e.g. Executive Dean or appropriate Professional Services Director.

Derogations   Listing any exemptions to the academic regulations or other standard BCU processes (including the academic calendar) you wish to have applied because of PSRB or other similar governance requirements. Evidence will be required.

Further Information   Providing any further or additional information that is pertinent to the development and/or re-design of the courses or modules that have not been covered elsewhere.

Course specification

The course specification is the document that sets out most of the decisions you have made the course. The current BCU template requires the following:

Course Summary   Including title, course code, teaching institutions (if a partner is involved), and PSRB accreditation.

Course Description   Identifying the core values of the course, philosophy, aims and graduate outcomes in terms of skills, abilities, attributes, attitudes, and knowledge.

Course Awards　　　Including the final award title and any interim or exit awards, the levels these apply at and the number of credits required.

Derogation　　　Statement of what, if any, derogation from the standard university regulations is required due to PSRB requirements.

Delivery Patterns　　　Including whether full-time, part-time, sandwich options etc. are available, the locations where study will take place, and the duration of the course.

Entry Requirements　　　Including, for example, UCAS tariff points, minimum grades for specific subjects at 'A' Level or GCSE, IELTS score for international students, undergraduate results for postgraduate courses and any other requirements such as DBS checks or professional registration.

Course Outcomes　　　These should be divided into 'Knowledge and Understanding' and 'Skills and other attributes'.

Course Requirements　　　Showing the modules that must be studied. This can be divided up into 'Core' modules that all students will need to take and 'Optional Modules'.

Structure Diagram　　　This shows how the course appears to the students in terms of what modules are delivered when.

Workload　　　While actual contact hours may depend on the optional modules selected, the information given here should indicate how much time students will need to allocate to different activities at each level of the course.

> **Scheduled Learning** includes lectures, practical classes and workshops, contact time specified in timetable
>
> **Directed Learning** includes placements, work-based learning, external visits, on-line activity, [Graduate+](), peer learning
>
> **Private Study** includes preparation for exams

The balance of assessment by mode of assessment (e.g. coursework, exam and in-person) depends to some extent on the optional modules chosen by students. The approximate percentage of the course assessed by coursework, exam and in-person should be calculated.

Staff CVs

It is usual to provide the curriculum vitae for each member of the teaching team.

Language

Whatever the expectation in terms of the content, do try to be conscious of the potential audiences for these documents. They need to be understandable by students, employers, professional body representatives, internal and external academics and your own course team. As such, try to write concisely in plain English. Where there are specialist terms, jargon or acronyms, be sure to explain them on first usage. Remember that sometimes a diagram (for example showing routeways, provisional awards, options etc.) can be much better at explaining a process than a page of text.

The Statements of Intent generated from the discussion around the Design Challenges will support the creation and articulation of most of this documentation but you may need to arrange some further discussions either online or in person to tie down some of the more specific requirements and to take into account changes in professional service provision.

Internal Scrutiny

There will be internal processes for review, usually through the Dean, Associate Dean or Head of School/Department, before the course is able to go to the final panel for approval. Ensure you know what the expectations are, including timescales. Following the internal scrutiny, you may need to make some amendments or changes to the documentation. Hopefully this will be minor such as correcting typographical errors which you can handle yourself, but if there is a major issue, you may need to consult with the writing team or other stakeholders more widely.

6 Course Approval

The Panel Event

For final approval to take place, the course will be subject to a panel event. This is the culmination of all the hard work and an opportunity for you and the team to share with your peers not just the final course that you have designed but the processes you have been through to get there. You can expect a robust but positive and friendly event. You will need to confirm the date, agenda and structure of the event with your Dean, Associate Dean or Head of School/Department beforehand. Panel members are sent the final documentation and are encouraged to provide written comments and questions to the course leader before the event.

Make Up of the Panel

As already mentioned, membership and the processes of the panel will vary according to context, especially where PSRB requirements are to be concerned. However, the panel will generally look like this:

- Panel Chair (a senior member of academic staff from another Faculty)
- Panel members (including university and faculty reps. - the number to be determined by the size of the course)
- External representation (usually relating to common sector employment routes)
- PSRB representation (where applicable)
- Student representation
- Member of the Quality Office (who will act as secretary)

The Presentation and Questions

All members of the course team will need to attend along with as many representatives of the stakeholder group as possible. After introductions, the event will begin with a presentation from the course leader to the validation panel briefly covering the process you have been through and the resulting decisions. The panel will have seen the documentation in advance and it is also possible that they will have submitted some questions before the event, so if possible, do your best to address these during the presentation. After that, the team will normally be asked to leave the room so that the panel can discuss what they have seen so far. When you return to the room the panel will ask a series of detailed questions to you and the team about the design and structure of the course. The more the team were involved in the creation of the course, the more able they will be to respond. The questions will be a mix of philosophical & practical,

course & module level questions. You can expect the PSRB representative to ask about PSRB requirements, the student representative to ask about student matters and so on.

The Outcome

Following the questioning session, you and the team will again be asked to leave whilst the panel considers what they have heard and what the outcome should be. You will then be invited to return to hear the outcome. The panel will highlight any areas of particularly good and/or innovative practice and make some suggestions for the team to consider. They may make one or more of the suggestions a condition of approval. In essence, there are three main outcomes possible:

Approved	The Panel considers that the course may run as presented. They may make some recommendations for minor changes and improvements which you must consider, but are not obliged to accept.
Approved with Conditions	The Panel considers that the course may run pending some essential changes. After the event you will need to provide evidence to the chair of the panel that the changes have been made before the course can run.
Not approved	The panel considers that the number, range and/or significance of any changes they consider essential is such that another approval panel is necessary before the course can run.

At the end of the validation event, the most likely outcome is that the programme will be approved with conditions. In rarer circumstances the programme is approved 'as is' and, providing you have followed all the available guidance, non-approval is highly unlikely.

Appendix 1 - Design Challenges

This appendix is designed to be dipped into as and when necessary rather than read through in order. Each of the design challenges has a brief discussion, some suggestions for exploring the issues with your stakeholders and some online resources to get you started.

[Widening Participation](#)

[Effective induction](#)

[Sustainability](#)

[Learning and Teaching](#)

[Inclusivity](#)

[Personal Development Planning (PDP)](#)

[Retention and Progression](#)

[Student Engagement](#)

[The Needs of International Students](#)

[Embedding Employability in the Curriculum](#)

[Engaging Employers in Design and Delivery](#)

[Work Based learning](#)

[Engaging PSRBs in Curriculum Design](#)

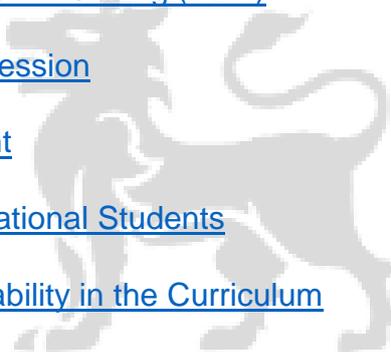[Engaging students in Curriculum Design](#)

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Widening Participation

Widening participation is a broad expression that covers many aspects of participation in HE, including fair access and social mobility. We have a responsibility to recruit and support students from all walks of life and backgrounds. We should aim to ensure that all those who have the ability to benefit from higher education have the opportunity to do so.

The HEA (2010) suggest that this covers the full student life cycle:

- raising knowledge about and aspiration to participate in higher education;
- influencing the individual's decision to participate in higher education;
- helping individuals make an informed choice of course and institution best suited to their needs;
- encouraging and facilitating entry to higher education;
- supporting inclusion and successful continuation in higher education;
- facilitating exit from higher education to employment.

Widening participation must be built into the curriculum – it isn't just about offering financial support to those with disadvantaged backgrounds. You should also consider that some students may need additional support, such as academic mentoring, confidence building and pastoral care. It is important to consider the widening participation agenda when reviewing your course admission policy, induction process, academic support and interventions to support better progression and retention and also team awareness of the support available through Student Affairs.

You may also want to consider whether you wish to include interactions and activities with schools and FE environments. This might include live project work with other educational stakeholders, talks or workshops in schools/FE colleges from students to encourage aspiration levels of children in disadvantaged environments or encouraging students to work with mentoring courses in both education and community groups and charities. This type of activity could carry academic credit and/or occur as an extra-curricula activity for inclusion in CVs or as part of Graduate+.

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/admissions-recruitment-and-widening-access**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/widening-participation-why-bother
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/embedding-widening-participation-and-promoting-student-diversity-summary
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/widening-participation-postgraduate-study-decisions-deterrents-and-creating-success

Effective Induction

Student induction sets the foundations and expectations of the experience to come and as such, its importance should not be underestimated. Students' initial perceptions and attitudes towards their university experience is often grounded in course induction. There are also links between effective induction and progression and retention rates. Effective induction (especially with those experiencing their first year of HE) can facilitate a learning community and not simply a cohort of students. There is also some value in considering whether induction should take place at all levels, that is to say, a re-induction at the beginning of years two and three respectively.

Most courses have an induction cycle that goes beyond Freshers'/Welcome Week and any new course should be designed to include or incorporate such activity. The degree to which this is central to the learning experience and the time allocated to this activity will obviously vary from course to course. It is essential to find the right balance for your course. Some teams will feel it important to dedicate a significant amount of time (and perhaps an entire module) to induction/foundation activities and combine this with a philosophy underpinned by approaches to Personal and Professional Development. Others will feel that short bursts of learning community activity (not assessed and/or structured within module learning outcomes) will be sufficient.

Give some time to consider what you'd like the induction to look like. Ask yourselves, as a course team, '*What are the aims of the induction? What information do we want you students to know at the end of the induction process? What activities might facilitate this? What resources will we need to support this? How does the induction experience align with the learning and teaching approaches our course team has adopted?*' Commit some time to construct a Statement of Intent which will help you to articulate both your philosophy for this activity and help you to structure the delivery of it.

For re-approval, do you have any data relating to course induction available to you? Any student evaluation of previous induction experiences is useful – perhaps used in conjunction with progression and retention figures. Is there any correlation between the satisfaction levels found in the evaluations and the number of students that progress beyond their first year? If progression figures are healthy, you may feel that your induction processes are sufficiently rigorous – but it never hurts to ask for further feedback - consider asking your student representatives for their thoughts about existing induction activities.

Key Document	**https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/first-year-experience**
Other Useful Resources	http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resources/publications/first-year-experience
	http://www.improvingthestudentexperience.com/essential-information/undergraduate-literature/first-year-experience/

Sustainability

Like many institutions BCU has made a commitment to Sustainability.

Birmingham City University is committed to sustainability, improving our environmental performance while encouraging and embedding a sustainable way of life for students and staff. As an educational establishment, we have a responsibility not only to educate our students and staff on more sustainable practices, but also to lead by example by improving our own performance.

The notion that we should look to find ways to support reduced waste, increase recycling, and lower levels of environmental impact will be familiar to us all. Ask yourself the question as to how this general view of sustainability can apply to course design and delivery by, for example, looking at ways you can reduce things such as paper waste by providing electronic resources rather than printed handouts or exploring options for online delivery of certain learning activities to reduce the carbon footprint of both you and your students.

In addition to demonstrating our values and explaining our decisions about reducing handouts etc., the greatest impact we can have, is through educating our students to live and work more sustainably as part of the curriculum. You should look for ways to bring sustainability issues out through the content and context of your subject matter. For example, an English student may be asked to explore the progression of e-books and the environmental impact of this form of publishing. This will offer them the opportunity to review an area of interest, present their findings and increase their sustainability literacy. An integrated, embedded approach to sustainability that is directly relevant to the subject specialism and can be applied to real world professional or personal practice has the best chance of engagement with both staff and students alike. This sustainability literacy will also contribute to employability, as most industries now have a commitment to operating more sustainably, and welcome individuals able to think laterally around this issue.

Key Document	**https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/environment-sustainability**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.aashe.org/resources/
	http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/

Learning & Teaching

Each School or Department will have its own Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy and this should be the starting point for discussions around this area. However, sticking rigidly to what has been done before can stifle creativity and innovation, so whilst the local policy acts as a starting point, you should not feel wholly constrained by it.

Understanding something of how students learn is central to making decisions about how we teach. At Birmingham City University we consider theories generally described as constructivist or social constructivist to be the most compelling. For constructivists learning is considered to be a change in schemata (structures of understanding). Knowledge and understanding is constructed within the mind of the individual through an active process of making meanings. Although assimilation (the fitting of new information into existing structures) is a key process in learning, accommodation (the changing of pre-existing structures) is a more important consideration when considering deep approaches to learning (Marton and Säljö 1976, Biggs 1993). Constructivism asserts that both processes happen simultaneously and where accommodation fails, learning approaches tend to be surface in nature. Social constructivists assert that the construction of knowledge is an active process that happens at a socio-cultural level first and foremost and then later in the mind of the individual. As constructivism and social constructivism provide the best general descriptions of how students learn, we believe that pedagogic decisions should bear that in mind and that, therefore, active rather than passive approaches are generally best.

Active learning does not just mean that students should be physically active, although this is clearly the case when developing practical skills. Students should be expected to be 'mentally active' rather than passive in their learning. An active approach to learning can be encouraged by group work, focussed practical tasks, live projects, discussion and feedback etc. Formative learning opportunities are crucial to building confidence, understanding and a partnership approach to the learning experience. The following five tasks are key to creating a successful formative teaching environment (Wiliam & Thompson, 2007):

i. Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions
ii. Engineering effective discussions, activities and tasks that elicit evidence of learning
iii. Providing feedback that moves the learner forward
iv. Activating learners as resources for one another
v. Activating learners as owners of their own learning

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/learning-and-teaching**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/blended-learning-0
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/flipped-learning-0
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/large-group-teaching

Inclusivity

Broad consideration of what 'inclusive' actually means will enable you to incorporate the full diversity of your students - whether that is a consideration of disability, sexuality, religion, gender or other socio-cultural identities – is important when constructing a Statement of Intent. This should help to guide you so that we do not have to 'build things in' or redesign learning activities/assessments whilst the course is running to 'accommodate' particular students. There are, of course, legal and regulatory requirements as to why we need to design our courses to be accessible for all students. For example, the Equality Act 2010 brought together previous legislation found in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001, and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005. This legislation states that the needs of disabled students must be anticipated within the Higher Education sector and this is endorsed through most institutions Learning and Teaching strategies. But on the philosophical level, it is important to understand that diversity in all its forms leads to a richer learning experience for us all. Consideration should be given to the following key questions:

Have you embedded 'diversity' into your core philosophy and how does this manifest itself in the course content? Will there be opportunities to broaden student (and staff) engagement with the notion of inclusivity? Are there learning activities that encourage discussion and understanding of these issues – perhaps in induction, PDP or core module activities.

Can all students participate in the activities? If the course/module includes field trips, are they all accessible? Could you provide a virtual field trip as an alternative?

Have you considered your potential adjustments for disabled students? You will need to factor in additional time for some students for exams – could you create an alternative assessment? Have you considered your feedback mechanisms? Would audio feedback work better for certain students?

How will students will receive course/modular content? Are systems in place to produce information in a variety of alternative formats without unreasonable delay? E.g. large print/electronic/ Braille, video, audio, podcast.

The Disability Support Team can advise and support your design decisions. You may wish to consider integrating a member of that team into the design stakeholders.

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/enabling-student-achievement**
Other Useful Resources	http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/Pages/inclusion-equality-diversity.aspx
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/embedding-equality-and-diversity-curriculum-0

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

PDP is an expected regulatory requirement from the QAA and effective PDP integrated into academic practice has been shown to improve student employability and their broader learning experience. PDP is most effective when it is practice-led and where the institutional culture anticipates, values and encourages full engagement. If PDP is considered as a 'bolt-on' module, students may perceive it as something separate to their academic, subject specific activities when, in fact, PDP can actually help students to reflect and critically evaluate their progression, achievements and development areas within their academic pursuits. Effective PDP increases student abilities to identify their aspirations and ambitions, to construct action plans, to seek support and advice and create autonomy around their own personal, educational and career development. PDP can also be used as a foundation for Personal Tutoring as it helps to focus discussions and benchmark self-defined, student progression.

According to the QAA, PDP is:

A structured process that is integral to learning at all levels concerned with learning in a holistic sense (in academic, personal and professional contexts)

An inclusive process, open to all learners

Something that an individual does with guidance and support which decreases as personal capability is developed so that it becomes self-sustaining

A process that involves self-reflection, the creation of personal records, and planning and monitoring progress towards the achievement of personal objectives

Intended to improve the capacity of individuals to communicate their learning to others (for example, academic staff and employers).

Ask the following questions of course and module design:

Can you track PDP throughout your course at all levels? Is it integrated and embedded across the course as a whole or isolated within one module?

Is there sufficient 'scaffolding' for PDP during its introduction to the learning experience? The intention is to reduce the scaffolding across the levels to create self-sustaining practice.

Does your approach to PDP aid student articulation of their skills and abilities? Particular attention should be given to the medium used to communicate and/or assess PDP within the course – try to ensure the vehicle for articulation is the most suitable on for the aim.

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Personal-development-planning-guidance-for-institutional-policy-and-practice-in-higher-education.pdf**
Other Useful Resources	http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/flexible-learning/personal-development-planning

Retention and Progression

Progression and retention within HE has become a key indicator of success for both the institution and from a regulatory perspective. There are obviously financial and reputational considerations of low retention and progression for the institution, but there can also be a huge emotional and financial cost to students as well. The marker of progression and retention can sometimes be perceived as a controversial one and, if taken in isolation, it can give a distorted view of the course performance. However, progression and retention encompasses many aspects of successful course design - from effective induction, to assessment and feedback practices and the mechanisms for supported intervention by course teams to facilitate better student experience.

As for inclusion, it is important to consider progression and retention in the broadest sense. It is not as simple as just improving the statistics by getting students 'through to the next level'. It may be useful to think of progression and retention in conjunction with other challenges - induction, assessment and feedback and student support. You might also include the Widening Participation concern, as research shows that students from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to suffer from a higher rate of attrition.

At induction stage, consider the routes of communication available to students who may need additional support - can you strengthen this message? You may wish to integrate this into the course team approach to Personal Tutoring and pastoral support. Have you considered introducing peer mentoring (both pastoral and academic) into your course offer? Might there be a way in which this process of peer support could be embedded throughout your course philosophy and aims, or even be included as a module activity?

Key Document	**https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/supporting-student-success-strategies-institutional-change**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/individuals/strategic-priorities/retention
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/studentaccess-retention-attainment-progression-in-he.pdf
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/individuals/strategic-priorities/retention/what-works
	http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/paper/effective-action-strategies-to-improve-retention-progression-and-completion-of-transitioning-students.pdf?sfvrsn=6

Student Engagement

High levels of student engagement facilitate a more coherent, active and vibrant learning community, which increases student ownership of their learning experience (both at course and institutional level) which in simple terms, leads to better student satisfaction levels. You should consider 'learning experience' in the broadest sense which incorporates engagement with Students' Union activities, extra-curricular (Graduate+) activities and participation in schemes such as SAP, Peer or Employer Mentoring and volunteering.

Student engagement needs to be considered and integrated from pre-induction to post-graduation. The primary issue is to see the student as a partner in the learning experience. If you construct curricula with that in mind, it is more likely to offer opportunities to develop learning communities.

Ask yourself the following questions as an initial scoping activity;

How are students able to influence, shape and contribute to the learning experience itself? Are students involved in the design process? How do they see their role? How do you make it clear their voice is valued?

Using the stakeholder model **Where are your students in terms of engagement and ownership at the moment?** Where would you like them to be? What activities could you integrate into the course/modules that would aid this progression?

Are students rewarded for 'engaging'? Should/Could they be? How?

Are students actively encouraged to learn from each other? To what extent is peer mentoring, peer assisted learning or peer assessment used within your course/modules?

Try to encourage an environment that fosters partnership. Not all students will want to engage at all levels, but you should find ways to support them if they do.

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/student-engagement**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/individuals/strategic-priorities/student-engagement
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/studentengagementliteraturereview_1.pdf
	http://tsep.org.uk/
	http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2009/Student,engagement/
	http://www.guildhe.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/6472-Guild-HE-Student-Engagement-Report-36pp.pdf

The Needs of International Students

It is important to recognise that we have a diverse student population and that we should design curriculum that reflects this. Internationalising a course should be holistic in its approach and consider the potential cultural differences and ways to address these to ensure that international students enjoy the best possible learning experience regardless of culture. This can also be seen as an extension of inclusive design. A Statement of Intent will help you to articulate the approach appropriate to your course and to encourage better marketing to international students.

It is worth considering the international students' life cycle as being defined by 5 key stages and structure your design decisions around these areas.

- ⇨ Pre-arrival and pre-sessional support
- ⇨ Induction
- ⇨ Teaching and Learning in the classroom
- ⇨ Life outside the classroom
- ⇨ Employability and next steps

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/International-Students-Guide-15.pdf**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/internationalising-higher-education-framework
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/internationalisingheframeworkfinal.pdf
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/internationalisation/Supporting_international_students

Embedding Employability in the Curriculum

Here are two definitions of employability that you can share with the team that may help to establish a broader application of employability within your course:

> *[Employability is] A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.*

> Learning & Employability Yorke, M (2004) *Employability in higher education: what it is - what it is not.* Learning and Teaching Support Network

> *Employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on 'employ' and more on 'ability'. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner.*

> Harvey, L (2003) *Transitions from higher Education to work.* Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team & LTSN Generic Centre

Employability should be considered in conjunction with student induction, PDP, Personal Tutoring, reflective practice, student engagement activities, diverse employer engagement and integration of lifelong learning strategies. The Course Structure Diagram should map where these activities take place to ensure a consistent approach is adopted throughout. Consider integrating additional activities such as career management workshops or providing networking opportunities within course delivery. This might incorporate employer/peer mentoring experiences which will extend the range of activities that contribute towards holistic development of the student's employability.

The most important aspect of this process by far is consideration as to how students can articulate their learning experiences and translate these into a professional context. This can be supported through active PDP, encouragement of critical reflection and presentation tools such as e-Portfolios or even external blogs/personal websites. It is important to help students analyse their experiences to isolate skills, attributes and attitudes that employers are looking for. Find out more about the Graduate+ scheme and consider embedding this into the course.

Key Document	**https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/employability_framework.pdf**
Other Useful Resources	http://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/improving-student-employability.pdf
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/pedagogy_for_employability_update_2012.pdf
	http://www.employability.ed.ac.uk/documents/Staff/HEABriefings/HEA-Briefing5-Helping_depts_develop_employability.pdf

Engaging Employers in Design and Delivery

In the current economic climate, the employability of our students is more important than ever. One of the ways in which HE is addressing this is to involve employers in a more active way within the university. In terms of traditional provision at Under/Postgraduate level this should include the integration of employers into the design team to ensure that the course reflects practice. This is also an opportunity to broaden and deepen relationships with employers and create a reciprocal relationship.

The following questions will help to initiate discussion with employers and to encourage opportunities to discuss potential to develop areas such as guest lectures, employer mentoring, networking opportunities, student placements, etc.

What are the three key attributes you would expect to find in a new graduate employee?

Which of the following are the most important? Why?

- level of qualification
- amount of work experience
- type/quality of work experience
- personality/disposition/attitude
- sector specific knowledge

Was there anything your most recent graduate employee was unable to do upon commencing their employment that you had expected them to be able to? If so, what training and support was required?

What would be the top three things that students studying to join your sector should learn before graduating?

If you could structure a two-hour teaching session for future graduates in your industry, what would be the main focus?

In your experience, how effectively do universities engage with employers? What works well? What could be improved?

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise**
Other Useful Resources	http://www.ncub.co.uk/reports/strategies-for-effective-he-employer-engagement.html
	https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/114714

Work Based Learning

Work based learning is a broad term that describes a variety of types of activity from occasional short term placements, longer training placements (such as in initial teacher education or nurse training), sandwich courses with a 'year in industry', higher level and degree apprenticeships and courses that are taught exclusively in the work place. In any case, the goal is to provide authentic, structured learning experiences that enhance the student experience and develop a range of academic, generic and specific employability skills.

If the course is regulated by a PSRB there will likely be specific requirements to meet, often around both the amount of time spent in the workplace and the specific learning that is expected to happen there.

As a general principle, when working with other organisations, you will need effective arrangements to ensure that there is a common understanding of the purpose of the placements and, if appropriate, how work based assessment should be carried out to ensure a consistency of standards.

In addition to the educational issues that must be addressed, work based learning brings along other challenges such as health and safety considerations, data protection, disability awareness and inclusion. There will also be considerations around travel arrangements for students and any potential additional costs that may be incurred as a result.

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/work-based-learning**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/introduction-work-based-learning
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/work-based-learning-impact-study

Engaging PSRBs in Curriculum Design

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are those organisations that oversee specific subject, industry or sector standards that are aligned with some higher education awards.

PSRBs include:

- Ofsted
- Nursing & Midwifery Council
- British Psychological Society
- The Engineering Council
- Architects Registration Board
- Bar Standards Board
- Chartered Management Institute
- Association of Business Executives

Each PSRB will have its own rules and regulations. Some are very 'light touch' in their expectations, whereas some go so far as to define curriculum content and assessment methods. Each will have its own preference in terms of contact and some representatives will be used to the 'confirmation approach' discussed in Section One. Try to approach representatives by explaining the stakeholder approach if possible – it may be a breath of fresh air for some.

Remember that nothing is set in stone. Just because you are proposing to try something new in your approach or delivery, doesn't mean that the PSRB won't support it. If the stakeholder approach has been taken, these design decisions should be evident to those conferring accreditation. Compromise may be necessary, but don't assume that just because it hasn't been done, it can't be done.

Ensure your information is accurate and up to date. As with all organisations, things change. PSRBs often draft new guidelines or change structures of accreditation so be sure you are using the most up-to-date information to inform your choices rather than some member of the team's version of 'received wisdom'.

You should be able to find contact information for any appropriate PSRB through your department.

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16061/accreditation_guidance
	http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/hebrg-professional-bodies.aspx

Engaging Students in Curriculum Design

The Design Initiation Event can be little overwhelming for students, especially for a large course with a large team. Some students may also feel nervous about voicing what may be seen as criticisms of the current course and, by association, teaching team. It might be sensible to do some small group focus work with your students/alumni separately. Here are some suggestions for conversation starters. You probably wouldn't want to use all of them and you may have some of your own specific questions to ask.

What advice/information would you give to a new student beginning your course with regards to the following:

> Induction
> Learning and teaching methods
> Use of technology
> Access to resources (library, student services, careers, etc)
> Relationships with course team
> Feedback and assessment
> Work experience
> University life on campus

What three things would you focus on more closely if you had the opportunity to do your course again?

Was there anything in your course experience that you wished there was more/less of? What and why?

How well were your views taken into account by the course team? Were you aware of the communication routes?

What has been/was the most challenging part of your course?

Can you identify three skills and/or attributes developed within the course that are directly transferable to your chosen career path?

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/student-engagement#**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/glasgow_caledonian_university_-_student_as_partners_1.pdf
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/student-engagement-curriculum-design-developing-practice

Education Technology & Digital Capability

As part of your course philosophy and your LT&A strategy, you should consider both how you will support the learning experience *through* technology and how you will develop students' digital capabilities as *part of* the curriculum. Figure 9 - Digital Capability Checklist provides a digital capability checklist (Jisc, 2019) to help you think about how digital capability is/can be embedded in the course.

Digitally capable learners should be able to...	What does this mean in the context of your course?	How in your course do learners encounter, practice and get feedback on this?
Use digital tools appropriate to their subject area		
Use digital tools effectively to achieve subject-related goals		
Find, evaluate and manage digital information		
Use digital media to learn and to present the outcomes of learning		
Find, analyse and use digital data		
Create digital artefacts		
Use digital tools to gather and assess evidence, reach decisions and solve problems		
Take part in authentic digital research or professional practice		
Communicate digitally		
Collaborate digitally including with learners in other settings		
Build and participate in digital networks		
Develop digital learning skills and habits eg note-making, referencing, tagging, curation, review		
Support, mentor, coach or develop others using digital media or resources		
Develop and manage their digital identity		
Consider their digital safety, privacy, health and wellbeing		

Figure 9 - Digital Capability Checklist

Using new technologies such as hosting materials on the VLE and linking to e-books and e-journals in the library can make traditional pedagogies more effective. However, technology also enables you to change pedagogies by blending online and face-to-face activities. Flipped approaches, whereby students watch video lectures, study materials and take part in discussion forums before they attend interactive workshops are becoming increasingly popular as a replacement to the traditional lecture/seminar approach. Embracing educational technology to facilitate learning will also help you to address flexibility and inclusion issues.

Use of technology may well be a point for staff development across the team and, as such, you may wish to seek out the educational technology specialists in your institution. However, before deciding on what technology to use, it is important to first decide what problem educational technology is the solution for. The following questions about the use of technology on the course are a good starting point:

What technology do the students want/need? What are their expectations and prior educational experiences?

What capabilities do the students have? How digitally literate are they? What aspects of digital literacy will need to be developed?

What do you use 'technology' for at the moment? How well does it work?

Who are the technology champions on the team? How do/can they support others?

How confident are the team with trying out new technologies? What have people tried? What has worked, what has not?

How is the VLE used? How could it be used more effectively?

To what extent is technology embedded in the learning outcomes of the modules you are designing? How will the development of digital capability in students be measured and rewarded?

Key Document	**https://digitalstudent.jiscinvolve.org/wp/fe-and-skills-digital-student-study/fe-digital-students-key-outputs/**
Other Useful Resources	http://oro.open.ac.uk/36675/1/TEL%20in%20Higher%20Education-What%20is%20enhanced%20and%20how%20do%20we%20know.pdf
	http://edtechnology.co.uk/
	https://www.ucisa.ac.uk/groups/exec/learning_spaces/chapt5

Information Literacy

Students should develop high levels of Information literacy both within an academic environment and beyond. It is an essential 'life skill' to be able to access, process and assimilate information in the broadest sense. The ability to articulate that information and to construct new understanding is also critical. It is important that we go beyond the notion of simply expecting students to find the right resources within the library and to know how to correctly reference them. The development of the idea of 'Information Literacy' requires a collaborative and integrated approach to curriculum design and delivery based on close co-operation between academic, library and staff development colleagues.

Students must be encouraged to recognise types of information and resources, to develop their ability to question the validity of that information or resource, to recognise the importance of both print and online resources to facilitate development of their own knowledge and to know where they can find them. Information literacy can be defined as, 'knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner' (CILIP – The library & information association). The key is to encourage high levels of activity around guided and independent research in induction activities and throughout the course. This can include information searches within seminar/workshop activities, research and critique activities which incorporate peer debate around resources, and student generation of resource packs for specific learning activities. The course should allow as many opportunities as possible to develop the following skills:

- recognising a need for information
- distinguishing ways in which the information 'gap' may be addressed
- constructing strategies for locating information
- locating and accessing information
- comparing and evaluating information obtained from different sources
- organising, applying and communicating information to others in ways appropriate
- synthesising and building upon existing information, contributing to the creation of new knowledge

Remember, your library & learning contact should be an integral part of your design team and they will be able to provide you with extensive resources relating to your own library resources.

Key Document	**https://www.cilip.org.uk/research/topics/information-literacy**
Other Useful Resources	http://skil.stanford.edu/intro/research.html
	https://www.lynda.com/Higher-Education-tutorials/What-information-literacy/368046/420105-4.html

Writing Good Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes generally define student achievement in four areas:

> Cognitive skills
> Technical skills
> Communication skills
> Interpersonal skills.

Each of these may vary in importance across different domains. The FHEQ tends to focus on the cognitive skills and communication skills whereas subject benchmarks will often be more focussed on the underlying knowledge and associated technical skills. PSRB requirements often focus heavily on technical skills and interpersonal skills.

'Levelness' of the learning outcomes against the FHEQ (see appendix 2) and subject benchmarks and against the standards set down in any PSRB documentation is an essential part of ensuring standards, so this must be the starting point for writing learning outcomes.

In a constructively aligned curriculum (Biggs & Tang, 2011) the learning outcomes of each module form the basis of both the teaching content and the summative assessment. The essence of constructive alignment is to ensure that all three aspects of the module are in sync. Outcomes need to be clear, concise, and measurable. Outcomes are usually expressed as the application of knowledge, skills, or attitudes to a specific situation. The best learning outcomes do not merely express what a student knows, but what they can do with that knowledge. Learning a skill is only valuable if the student can apply that skill.

A common and useful way of both designing and levelling cognitive learning outcomes is through the application of Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The taxonomy divides up learning outcomes into two domains:

> **The knowledge domain has four increasingly challenging components:**
>
> Factual ⇨ Conceptual ⇨ Procedural ⇨ Metacognitive
>
> **The six cognitive processes, from easiest to most challenging are:**
>
> Remember ⇨ Understand ⇨ Apply ⇨ Analyse ⇨ Evaluate ⇨ Create.

Once the knowledge content has been selected, using appropriate verbs can help with the creation of appropriate outcomes.

For example, consider these learning outcomes all based on students having studied and gained a knowledge of two methodologies:

List the key features of methodology A and methodology B…

Explain the difference between methodology A and methodology B…

Demonstrate how methodology B is superior to methodology A…

Compare and contrast methodology A and B…

Revise the processes for methodology A to take account of the benefits of B…

Propose a new methodology combining the best of both A and B…

Listing requires *remembering* facts; Explaining something shows *understanding*; Demonstrating something is a form of *application*; Comparing and contrasting are forms of *analysis*; Revision requires *evaluation;* and Proposing something new is a form of *creation.*

So careful selection of verbs can help to ensure the level of the learning outcomes is appropriate to the level expected of the student. Use these verbs (Figure 10) to apply Bloom's (revised) Taxonomy to learning outcomes:

Remember Retrieving relevant information from long term memory	**Understand** Explaining important information	**Apply** Carrying out or using a procedure in a given situation	**Analyse** Solving open-ended problems	**Evaluate** Making critical judgements based on a sound knowledge base	**Create** Creating 'unique' answers to problems
Define Repeat Record List Recall Name Relate Underline	Translate Restate Discuss Describe Recognise Explain Express Identify Locate Report Review Tell	Interpret Apply Employ Use Demonstrate Dramatize Practise Illustrate Operate Schedule Sketch	Distinguish Analyse Differentiate Appraise Calculate Experiment Test Compare Contrast Criticize Diagram Inspect Debate Question Solve Examine Categorize	Judge Appraise Evaluate Rate Compare Revise Assess Estimate	Compose Plan Propose Design Formulate Arrange Assemble Collect Construct Create Set up Organize Manage Prepare

Figure 10 Verbs for levelling outcomes by Bloom's Taxonomy

Not all learning can be planned, and on occasion it may be more beneficial to allow students to negotiate their own learning outcomes and sometimes assessment type, this is, in essence, student-centred learning in action. It is unusual for this to happen in Undergraduate courses, although a Dissertation/Independent Learning type module will include elements of this. As with all aspects of Learning and Teaching, the Academic Practice Team in EDS will be happy to provide support and advice.

Once completed, mapping your learning outcomes on a grid (Figure 11) will further help with levelling.

Modules where the assessment criteria are more to the right and down are more challenging, and therefore pitched at a higher level, than those where the criteria are to the left and up.

If you find you have higher level assessments at lower levels of the course, consider adjusting the criteria using verbs from a more appropriate process or knowledge domain.

	1 Remember	2 Understand	3 Apply	4 Analyse	5 Evaluate	6 Create
A Factual Knowledge		*Assessment Criterion 1*				
B Conceptual Knowledge				*Assessment Criterion 2*		
C Procedural Knowledge			*Assessment Criterion 3*			*Assessment Criterion 4*
D Metacognitive Knowledge						

Figure 11 Mapping grid for levelling module outcomes

Key Document	**https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks**
Other Useful Resources	http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/assessment-of-learning-outcomes-in-higher-education_244257272573#.WbZ8ZrKGPns
	https://www.ets.org/education_topics/learning_outcomes
	http://www.gavilan.edu/research/spd/Writing-Measurable-Learning-Outcomes.pdf

Module Assessments

Consider the impact of the choice of assessment methods and their alignment with your course Learning, Teaching & Assessment strategy and your School/Department's own assessment guidelines. By choosing the right type of assessment for the learning outcomes, you will ensure that students are evidencing the learning that has taken place.

Ask yourself the following questions in relation to module assessment:

Will the assessments really allow students to demonstrate the learning outcomes?

Is it possible/sensible to offer students a choice of assessment types?

Are there any constraints on assessment types for PSRB requirements?

How do formative activities support summative assessment success?

How are multiple assessment activities weighted? Why?

How will you make reasonable adjustments to the assessment to incorporate students with Special Educational Needs?

How will retakes be managed?

What role do External Examiners have in agreeing assessment tasks?

You should also liaise with other members of the team and ensure that student assessment is staggered across the course as much as possible. This type of distribution of assessment activity helps students plan and structure their workload.

See also the section on writing good learning outcomes.

Key Document	**http://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/framework-transforming-assessment-higher-education
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/transforming-assessment
	http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/understanding-assessment.pdf
	https://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/different-ways-to-assess/eia-what-can-different-assessment-methods-do.aspx

Assessment Literacy

For students to be able to succeed we ask them to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes for a course or module. To do this they need to understand the assessment criteria that are being applied to their work and be able to judge their own progress against these criteria.

The transition into HE is widely recognised as a challenging period for all students as our expectations may differ from those of their previous educational experiences. Induction processes are necessary, but not sufficient to enable students to succeed in their chosen subject. As each new area is encountered, and as students' progress through levels, the assessment criteria change and students need to understand what we expect of them.

As part of the work with students and alumni, you could seek to find out their understanding of these issues and see what lessons can be learned from their experience. Try the following questions:

Did you always understand the assessment procedure?

How were assessment criteria introduced to you? What worked well? What not so well?

Did you ever get a mark or feedback wildly different from your expectation? Why? What did you do as a result?

Successful workshop activities generally involve students practising applying the criteria to their own, and others' work, explaining their reasoning, and getting corrective feedback on their interpretations. This can take many forms depending on the discipline, level and context. For example:

- Building in opportunities for students to assess samples using assessment criteria, discuss and share their findings with the class, and review after tutor comment and explanation;

- Allowing students to submit drafts with their own evaluation of their performance against the assessment criteria, for discussion;

- Timetabling student-led tutorials on assessment preparation, led by students from a previous year who have been trained in the application of the assessment criteria to the particular assignment.

The distinctive feature of all these suggestions is student engagement over and above receiving an explanation of the criteria.

Key Document	**https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/transforming-assessment-and-feedback/assessment-literacies**
Other Useful Resources	https://ioelondonblog.wordpress.com/2016/04/06/more-than-marking-what-is-assessment-literacy/
	http://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/?p=644

Designing feedback mechanisms

Feedback features prominently in all aspects of student satisfaction (NSS, PTES etc.) and QAA expectations, so it should be no surprise that feedback mechanisms are an essential consideration for curriculum design. Students are often unsure as to what is meant by 'feedback' and can sometimes perceive this as either the mark given to their assessments, or to any text attached to that returned assessment. It is important that we are explicit about when we are providing feedback (and also feedforward). Any Statement of Intent should be aligned with your course philosophy and aims and your School or department Learning & Teaching strategy.

As a course team, map what you view as 'feedback' activity that will feature in your course. Consider any forms that you don't currently use but would like to (this might include audio, video or online formats). If you have any concerns about using a new approach/method, use this as a development opportunity. Seek out specialists in your own institution that can help. Does the feedback actually need to come from the module tutor? For example, if you are doing a peer reviewed activity, is peer feedback more appropriate?

The mode, tone and volume of feedback needs to be carefully considered. The most effective mechanisms try to mirror the feedback to the activity and manage the student expectation of this as well. Is the feedback formal or informal? Will the students know that feedback has been given? Is there an expectation of student development following the feedback? Can we be sure that the student will interact with the feedback – in other words, go beyond 'what's my mark'? How might you go about doing this?

Is it also feedforward? Is there a consequence to the transaction? Can the student use the feedback to improve the outcome of subsequent (similar) activity or other aspects of their own learning experience? If there is an expected impact – is the student aware of this?

Key Document	**https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/heav/assessment-and-feedback**
Other Useful Resources	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/assessment-and-feedback-higher-education-1
	https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/individuals/strategic-priorities/assessment

Appendix 2 – Summary of FHEQ level statements

FHEQ Level 4 (Exit awards include: Certificate of HE; HNC)

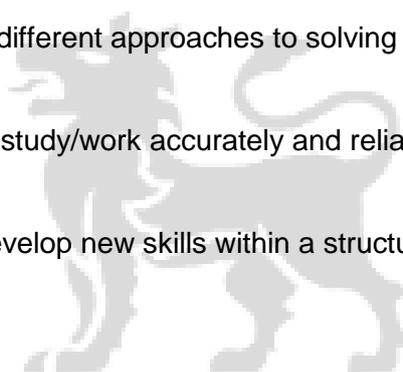**Certificates of Higher Education are awarded to students who have demonstrated:**

- knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study
- an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work
- communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments
- undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

FHEQ Level 5 (Exit awards Include: Diploma of HE; Foundation Degree; HND)

Diplomas of Higher Education are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed
- ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context
- knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study
- an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis
- effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively
- undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

FHEQ Level 6 (Exit awards Include: Bachelor's Degrees; Graduate Diploma)

Bachelor's degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student: - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline - to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
- an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge
- the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

And holders will have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

FHEQ Level 7 (Exit awards Include: postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas)

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
- the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

FHEQ Level 8 (Exit awards Include: MPhil)

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

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