Owning your curriculum

A guide for academic staff in enhancing learning, teaching and assessment at Birmingham City University during 'Academic Amnesty' period scheduled for summer 2018.

Education Development Service 2018

Foreword

Your creativity and hard work through your engagement with 'Transforming the Curriculum' (TtC) has refreshed and refined our portfolio of courses across the University from 2017/18. The TtC principles are positive and fundamentally sound in their ambition for BCU to provide a practice-led, knowledge applied education that is interdisciplinary, employability-driven and internationalised.

Our level 4 and level 7 students are approaching the end of the first year of the transformed curriculum and this offers course teams an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of the revised provision. However, I have been made aware that the TtC process appeared rushed for some and that further reflection has brought new approaches and ideas to the fore. In particular, some of the rules around writing learning outcomes and the limitations on assessment design, scope and scheduling have been counter-productive. This guidance document is provided to enable academic teams to refine curricula during the proposed 'academic amnesty' period (summer 2018) and provide guidance going forward.

I believe that placing the power of academic transformation in the hands of the subject expert staff who design and deliver courses is important to the university in ensuring we provide creative, engaging and relevant courses for our students.

This guidance advises you – schools, departments and course teams – about what you need to consider as you make these changes. With this ownership comes accountability and so each school or department needs to clearly articulate its own position on learning, teaching and assessment. Hence, whilst the first part of this guide sets out some key principles for the university as a whole, the first challenge is for you to help write a school or departmental learning, teaching and assessment policy to guide your future curriculum developments.

I invite you to embrace this opportunity and encourage you to utilise this guidance and the further resources and experience of colleagues in your schools, and within EDS, to work with students and other stakeholders to complete the transformation of your courses during this period (summer 2018) and to use this guidance to inform your thinking during this period and beyond. Following that, the development of curricula, the design of courses and the student experience will be your responsibility.

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June 2018

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Introduction

This document sets out guidance for academic staff in the creation of local policies for learning, teaching and assessment and for developing subject/discipline specific curricula and approaches to learning and teaching.

It is written for school and department teams, course and module leaders and other academic staff responsible for learning, teaching and assessment at BCU.

Please note the use of the word 'guidance' throughout this document. Its content provides suggestions and starting points to help you make the most of your subject expertise and knowledge and skills in learning, teaching and assessment.

A word on naming conventions:

The words programme and course can be confused. For clarity,

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

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

Only when a programme consists of a single course could the terms be used interchangeably, therefore when working with students going forward we will 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.

The BCU Framework for Taught Courses are the only rules that apply:

1. **Courses must have outcomes that align with the descriptors provided by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ descriptors see appendix 1).**
2. **Courses are comprised of modules that can be defined as core or optional such that the core modules alone map against the course learning outcomes.**
3. **Credit is calculated based on the credit framework for England (10hours= 1 credit)**
4. **Module credit is set at a minimum of 20 credits and normally multiples of 20 (20,40,60) delivered short fat (one semester) or long thin (two semesters) to avoid excessive administration associated with small modules.**

Part One – School Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policies

A local learning, teaching and assessment policy should identify and explain how the general principles set at a university level are applied in a specific school context. Some Schools have subjects that would not fit into a single policy – it is your decision whether you want to have one or more policies to meet the distinctive pedagogic approaches taken by your disciplines. However, academic schools are the units that will be responsible for the organisation and management of teaching across all disciplines within the school so approval for all policies will sit at School level.

The School policy/policies for learning, teaching and assessment should provide staff and students with a framework that shows how common and specialist pedagogical approaches and assessment practices are applied in the school and discipline.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Principles

For ease of use, the principles have been divided into 1) learning and teaching principles and 2) assessment principles. There are 5 key principles that underpin our approach to learning and teaching (Table 1).

1	The [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#), [QAA benchmark statements](#) (and, where appropriate, PSRB requirements) underpin all learning, teaching and assessment activity.
2	Decisions about curriculum design should be made at a course level in line with the School Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy/Policies.
3	All teaching and learning experiences should be part of a constructively aligned curriculum (Biggs & Tang, 2011). An aligned curriculum is one in which there is a clear and direct link between the intended module learning outcomes, the summative assessment and the teaching methods and materials.
4	Learning should be an active rather than passive experience. An active approach to learning should be encouraged through a range of activities such as: group work, focussed practical tasks, live projects, discussion and feedback.
5	The learning & teaching experience should place the student at the core and deliver an approach that recognises the diversity and strengths of those individuals through formative learning opportunities and personal support.

There are 9 key principles that underpin our approach to assessment (Table 2).

1	Decisions about assessment design should be made at a course level in line with the School or Department Learning, Teaching & Assessment Policy.
2	Course leaders should be responsible for ensuring that decisions about assessment design are based on up to date, accurate knowledge of sector requirements (including PSRB) and common HE norms.
3	Assessment should be based on clearly defined learning outcomes. No student should be assessed against a learning outcome that they have not had the opportunity to demonstrate.
4	Learning outcomes and associated assessment design should be the focus of the planned student experience. The delivery pattern, size and shape of modules (across one or two semesters) should be created to support that focus, not constrain or define it.
5	A proportion of marks should be available for 'ongoing' assessment activity, including engagement (not attendance alone), as well as 'high stakes' final assessment.
6	Assessment design should always start from the principle of, 'Inclusivity and success for all', with an aim of reducing the need for reasonable adjustments.
7	Course level assessment design should incorporate a wide range of methods and include some level of choice for students in terms of assessment methods.
8	Opportunities for students to receive, and be taught to understand the value of, feedback focussed on improving future performance must be built into the assessment design.
9	Assessment, marking and feedback are to be regarded as vitally important learning & teaching activities within course delivery. Workload allocation must provide defined, ample time for academic staff to engage appropriately.

Your School learning, teaching and assessment policy

The structure of the LT&A policy is a local matter, however each school or discipline should, through their local LT&A policy, state clearly:

- What the underpinning philosophical approach to LT&A is (based on the general principles but also local knowledge of student backgrounds, experiences and challenges).

- How the BCU principles (above) are applied in practice.

- Where and why any of those principles do not apply in the school/department.

- What specific frameworks (subject benchmarks and/or PSRB requirements) apply and the impact these have on the curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment.

- What subject specific approaches to learning, teaching & assessment are used (including use of learning technology, use of specific resources and specialist teaching spaces, how in-person assessment scope is defined and how feedback on summative assessments is provided).

- School/discipline approaches to information literacy.

- How student transitions are managed and the role of personal tuition (and/or other support mechanisms).

- Expectations of student partnership, engagement, attendance and the relationship between scheduled activity, directed activity and private study.

- The approach to employability (including links to Graduate+) and how work experience and placement is managed.

- How learning, teaching & assessment practices are developed and improved over time (through, for example, partnership with students, student voice, staff development activity, module evaluation)

- Any other aspect of learning, teaching and assessment deemed of particular note to the school/discipline.

The School LT&A policy/policies should be subject to cyclical review (aligned to University cycle of periodic review) to ensure it remains up to date and should be widely shared with staff and students.

During the 'academic amnesty' period, course teams are asked to use the guidance in this document to make changes to the following aspects of their provision:

- language used in learning outcomes;

- number of module learning outcomes (for modules of 40 or 60 credits);

- assessment of learning outcomes (using 3 high level assessment types: Coursework, Exam, In-Person Assessment) with no restriction on number;

- number of assessment points within a module (and weighting of each);

- scope of assessments;

- scheduling of time constrained/unseen examinations in semester one, level 4;

- indicative content.

Changes that normally* cannot be made in this period include;

- changes to course/module titles;

- credit value of existing modules;

- no pre-requisite or co-requisite modules may be specified, as OfS/CMA compliance is driving accessibility for students and simplification (plain English) of the regulatory structure and curriculum presentation; and
- changes which impact on PSRB approval/accreditation (e.g. modifications that cannot be signed off by September 2018).

  *Such changes can be made exceptionally via Faculty approval if needed.

Part Two – Curriculum Design Principles

It is important that academic staff, in this case principally course and module leaders, own the curriculum and are free to make important decisions about the content, learning, teaching and assessment.

Philosophy

The development of a clear philosophy is a crucial initial aspect of the curriculum design process. Agreeing a programme/course philosophy amongst the teaching team at the point of creation will allow for subsequent development of modules to be undertaken in a way that reflects and supports the overall programme and the courses that students will follow. The philosophy should act as a vehicle to communicate the key characteristics and distinguishing principles of the proposed programme/courses to any and all stakeholders. It is a summarised version of this that sits on the programme template and the marketing website. A programme philosophy might include statements that relate to:

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

Structure

The course structure is best represented in diagrammatic form, showing how modules and other aspects of the course fit together to create a holistic and engaging student experience. When deciding on a course structure the following should be considered:

- How the learning and knowledge can be best divided across modules.
- The pattern of formative and summative assessment as experienced by students to demonstrate knowledge and skills acquisition.
- The role and place of placements or other work experience.
- How the course maps to the academic calendar.

Curriculum Content

The [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#), [QAA benchmark statements](#) (and, where appropriate, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements) are the starting point for deciding on curriculum content. The [FHEQ](#) sets out generic criteria for all levels (L4 – L8, Appendix 1) and is the primary reference when deciding on the level of ability required for a student to be successful. The [QAA subject benchmarks](#) are created by the sector and suggest more specific criteria for the knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions required in different areas. PSRB requirements provide detailed 'rules' relating to content and assessment that must be followed in order to gain accreditation with that body. In addition, course teams may want to incorporate additional content, or emphasise some areas of content over others, possibly through the use of optional modules, to better reflect local priorities.

Teaching Types

When planning the curriculum programme/course teams should consider not just the content but how it will be delivered. Consideration of the use of space is essential for campus based courses just as consideration of the technical infrastructure available is essential for online courses.

Modules will normally have hours of study (based on a nominal figure of 10 hours per credit) broken down into:

Scheduled learning – including teaching and organised timetabled group work.

Directed learning – including placements, online activity and core reading.

Private study – including preparation for exams and other assessments.

For campus based courses, scheduled learning activity will probably fall into one of several categories.

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.

Formative Assessment/Formative Teaching

Formative teaching is at the heart of a student centred approach. Formative learning opportunities are crucial to building confidence, understanding and a partnership approach to the learning experience. Formative assessment is not merely the provision of feedback on submitted work (although this is important), it is an approach that can be used in day-to-day teaching, whether in lecture theatres, seminar rooms, tutorials, specialist spaces or online.

The following five tasks are key to creating a successful formative teaching environment (Wiliam & Thompson, 2007):

Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions

Engineering effective discussions, activities and tasks that elicit evidence of learning

Providing feedback that moves the learner forward

Activating learners as resources for one another

Activating learners as owners of their own learning.

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 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 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.

The following is a useful, but not exhaustive, list of process verbs (Table 4):

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	Translate	Interpret	Distinguish	Judge	Compose
Repeat	Restate	Apply	Analyse	Appraise	Plan
Record	Discuss	Employ	Differentiate	Evaluate	Propose
List	Describe	Use	Appraise	Rate	Design
Recall	Recognise	Demonstrate	Calculate	Compare	Formulate
Name	Explain	Dramatize	Experiment	Revise	Arrange
Relate	Express	Practise	Test	Assess	Assemble
Underline	Identify	Illustrate	Compare	Estimate	Collect
	Locate	Operate	Contrast		Construct
	Report	Schedule	Criticize		Create
	Review	Sketch	Diagram		Set up
	Tell		Inspect		Organize
			Debate		Manage
			Question		Prepare
			Solve		
			Examine		
			Categorize		

Modules where the learning outcomes are more to the right will tend to be more challenging, and therefore pitched at a higher level, than those where the outcomes are to the left (knowledge and understanding tends to be level 3 or 4).

Once completed, mapping learning outcomes on a grid that connects the knowledge domain with the cognitive processes will further help with levelling. (Table 5)

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Factual Knowledge				LO1		
Conceptual Knowledge						
Procedural Knowledge			LO3		LO5	LO4
Metacognitive Knowledge				LO2		

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.

Summative Assessment

At Birmingham City University we believe that assessment should be inclusive and accessible to all; designed to enable success, not define failure.

This vision will be delivered through the key principles that aspire to ensure that every assessment is an opportunity for students to learn and an opportunity for academic staff to support their students' development through high quality feedback. As different students excel in different ways, flexibility and choice must be built in. Even when assessment is used for summative purposes (giving a grade, defining a degree classification), assessment can and should serve formative purposes. Student understanding of the purposes, processes and value of assessment and feedback should be explicitly developed as part of that journey, enabling all students to achieve their full potential.

Consideration needs to be given to matching the assessment type with the learning outcomes. For example, the use of a MCQ exam is unlikely to be helpful in assessing communication skills whilst a presentation may not give evidence of practical skills. A mixture of assessment types may be required to fully assess all the learning outcomes on a module.

How many assessment points?

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 can 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 10-30% of credit allocated to condition the student to working independently and with groups. As level 3 and 4 modules do not contribute to degree classification the marks awarded will not distort degree outcomes but may improve retention and achievement in future years.

There are many ways to assess students but they generally fall into one of the three main categories at BCU we have defined these as– Exam, Coursework or In-Person (Table 6).

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.

Assessment should be a learning experience and should recognise achievements as relevant to the level of study. The table below sets out guidance on the student experience of assessment (Table 7):

Level 7	Professional and independent work based on evidence of making judgements that are of a level expected in the relevant industry (in alignment with PSRB expectations as appropriate).
Level 6	Honours level assessments that address learning outcomes that require evaluation and synthesis and higher level technical, professional and practical skills (in addition to new knowledge). A single larger piece of work, produced in stages, is likely to be appropriate, with an opportunity for feedback on a full draft before submission (with mark only after submission).
Level 5	Normally 1 or 2 assessments for a 20 credit module with opportunities for feedback on staged elements of the work. Assessments should be addressing learning outcomes that have a greater focus on critical ability.
Level 4	Small pieces of work, especially at early stages, to give opportunities for feedback. Choice (e.g. topic, written/presentation format) is important to enable flexibility and reduce the need for reasonable adjustments.
Level 3	Several small pieces of assessment is ideal at this stage with very early submissions to give early feedback on progress. Engagement should comprise up to 30% of the weighting of learning outcomes around engagement (not simply attendance, but peer work, discussion, reflective pieces, in class-exercises and on-line contributions.)

Each assessment point may assess one or more learning outcomes.

We recommend that, when multiple assessments are weighted, rather than applying weightings to learning outcomes, weightings are applied to assessment points. This makes the calculation easier and is more transparent to students.

The weightings of the assessment points should be calculated in units of 10% totalling 100%. For example (Tables 8,9,10):

20 Credit Module, level 5	
Assessments	**Weight (%)**
Coursework	40
Exam	60

20 Credit Module, level 4	
Assessments	**Weight (%)**
Coursework 1	20
Coursework 2	30
Exam	50

20 Credit Module, Level 3	
Assessments	**Weight (%)**
In person 1	10
Coursework 1	20
In person 2	20
Coursework 2	50

Assessment scope is a measure of the 'size' of the assessment task which is directly related to the amount of time and effort required of students to complete the assessment and the time required by staff for marking, moderation and feedback. At level 3 and 4 short writing pieces should be sufficient to assess the knowledge and understanding so 300-500 words should be sufficient. At level 5 and 6 2000-3000 words may be required to present a more complex analysis. The size and range of assessment scope from level 3-7 should be set out in your LTA policy.

Courses should publish a marking guide, outcome grid, rubric or other explanation of how assessments will be judged and marks arrived at. This needs to be consistent across the course, however some variation may be expected for different kinds of assessments. It is expected that Coursework and In-Person assessments will generate individual feedback to students. For exams it is usual to provide generic feedback to the group and individual verbal feedback on request.

Feedback will generally be written (although recorded oral feedback or other electronic means may be used if appropriate) and provided electronically. Feedback should provide at least the following information:

- Strengths and weaknesses of the submission
- Guidance on how to improve future submissions of either
    - the next assessment on the course or
    - in the case of a fail, the resubmission for that assessment
- Details of how the mark was arrived at

Feedback is normally provided within 20 working days of the submission deadline.

Resources

Library and Learning Resources (L&LR) provides a wide range of general and specialist resources and support services for use by staff and students across the university. Course teams must engage with L&LR in order to establish both what is already available and what is needed for the course.

Students should be actively encouraged to come in, discover, browse, borrow and study in the physical library spaces. However, many books, chapters, journal articles and other resources are now provided electronically. Material considered relevant for the module must be included on the Reading Lists Online (RLO) resources list that is associated with that module and not in the module guide or uploaded as a document to the VLE. There is a link on each Moodle module page to the RLO resources list. The Purchase, Essential, Recommended and Background categories currently used will be replaced by two categories, namely Core and Wider reading (no direction to purchase

a resource can be made to avoid hidden costs). RLO allow students to see the resource, and if it is a print item, its class mark, the number of copies and its availability and provide them with a live link through to the item on an L&LR managed electronic resource or out to an external website. RLO resources lists are very easy to compile, edit and update; it is just as simple to tag a resource and annotate a list to provide students with more guidance and direction.

It should be noted that for legal reasons, no pdfs or other document copies of copyrighted material should be uploaded to the VLE – rather links to L&LR managed resources (or external websites) should be included in the RLO resources list. Where full-text access is not available, specific chapters and articles can be, on request, digitised by L&LR and links provided for inclusion in the relevant resources list on RLO.

As a general principle, when students are provided with a resource there should be an accompanying instruction or activity. (These can be easily added to the resources list on RLO or included on the VLE next to the link.)

It is important that students develop and improve their research, information and digital literacy skills. For example, at Level 4 it might be sensible to provide a direct link to a journal article in the RLO resources list. At Level 5 it might be better to give the student a link to the key journals and for them to discover articles of interest and relevance. At Level 6 the student might be provided with a list of key concepts, authors and/or theorists and instructed to discover their work for themselves. L&LR staff can help advise on what resources are available and support academic colleagues with populating RLO resources lists.

Students should also be actively encouraged to ask L&LR staff to help them develop their searching and researching skills.

Engaging Stakeholders

Whilst the primary responsibility for developing curricula, programmes and courses rests with academics, there are a range of stakeholders that should be included in the curriculum design process. Essentially, they can be grouped as follows:

Students – existing students, potential future students, alumni.

Sectoral – other HEI colleagues, external academics who serve on validation panels (not external examiners who should remain independent), feeder schools and colleges.

Employer – business leaders, PSRB representatives, local employers.

Each stakeholder has their own agenda and the job of the course team is to balance the competing needs and ensure that all perspectives are valued and taken into account when designing the student experience.

University Assessment Centre

The University is developing a case for the creation of the BCU Assessment Centre. This will provide facilities for student testing and deliver guidance to academic and professional staff colleagues on the design and evaluation of electronic assessments. The Centre will cater for the entire student journey, providing diagnostic tests for students who join the university, developmental assessments for students on programmes of study and employability assessments for students as they prepare to enter employment.

The Centre will assist the University as it faces challenges around:

- enabling successful student transition into the university and ensuring early identification of student learning and support needs;
- supporting student learning and development within and beyond the classroom;
- effectively preparing students for graduate level employment;
- demonstrating the added value or 'learning gain' for the University's students.

The Centre will be founded upon a model that engages the entire student journey through Diagnostics, Development and Destinations. The Centre will be operational from September 2019 and Faculties and Professional Services will come together to plan the design and delivery of the Centre over the coming months. EDS will fund pilot activities with programmes over the coming year as staff consider the benefits of engaging with the Centre. You may wish to consider the use of such a centre as you plan your assessment design for forthcoming years. For example, exams could be scheduled mid-semester to allow early feedback and retrieval with coursework assessment points towards the end of the semester.

Part three – Student Experience

Orientation, retention and progression

Progression and retention within HE has become a key indicator of success for both the institution and for regulators. There are obviously financial and reputational considerations of poor student retention and progression for the institution, but there can also be a huge emotional and financial cost to students as well.

Student orientation should set the foundations and expectations of the experience to come. Students' initial perceptions and attitudes towards their university experience can be founded upon initial course inductions. You will need to consider how students are orientated towards becoming effective learners and how such learning is structured throughout your programme. Induction should not be a one-off activity that takes place in September. Orientation activities should be considered and timetabled to engage with students when it is most required and will be most effective.

There are also links between effective orientation and progression and retention rates. Effective orientation can facilitate the generation of a supportive learning community and set student expectations for their journey ahead. The university has a responsibility to support students from all walks of life and a diversity of backgrounds and personal experiences and orientation activities need to reflect this in both conception and practical organisation.

You know the students on your course, but as a guide you might like to know that University data for 2017/18 revealed that:

- 52% of students are categorised as BaME
- 66% of students are commuters
- We have students from over 100 countries
- 20% of our students are categorised as mature.

Whilst orientation is an important part of reducing early drop-out for new students, similar activity designed to keep students engaged and on track is important throughout the course, particularly at transition points – particularly between years, but also between semesters – where students can be vulnerable to feelings of isolation and anxiety over grades and increased expectations. The creation of bridging initiatives could support those transitions, such as summer camps and other activities.

Inclusion

There are legal and regulatory requirements, as well as moral reasons, as to why we need to design our programmes and courses to be accessible for all students. 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 as an institution to understand that diversity in all its forms leads to a richer learning experience for us all.

The general principle of inclusion is to provide experiences that are suitable, or accessible, to all. Particularly in relation to assessment, this means that the aim should not be so much to ensure reasonable adjustments are in place, but to try to make reasonable adjustments unnecessary.

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 improved student satisfaction.

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 might students be able to influence, shape and contribute to the learning experience itself? How can students be involved in the design process itself? How do you make it clear the student voice is valued and how do you visibly respond? How can you gather and use feedback on learning teaching and assessment to support change and improvement of the course?

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

Employability

Employability is not a single thing. To be 'employable' is to have a set of skills, understandings and personal attributes that makes one more likely to gain employment and to be more successful in ones chosen career.

Employability is not just about becoming employed. Just because a student is on a vocational course does not mean that employability is automatic. Similarly, we know that many students who enrol on highly vocational courses do not end up working in that area after graduation, so we have a duty not just to the professions, but to the individual students.

Employability should be built into the course through both the curriculum and extra-curricular activity via the university's [Graduate+](#) programme.

Assessment literacy

For students to be able to succeed we ask them to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes for each 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 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.

Successful activities to improve student assessment literacy generally involve students practising applying the criteria to their own, and others' work, explaining their reasoning, and getting corrective feedback on their interpretations. The distinctive feature of any such activity is student engagement over and above receiving a simple explanation of the criteria.

For support in this area, talk to the Centre for Academic Success, who can offer guidance on designing an effective assessment briefs. CAS provide this service to many staff and can offer that check so that both you and your students understand what is required.

Learning technology, Information Literacy & Researching Skills

Your students will have an expectation to be supported via technology. The old days of 'talk and chalk' are, in the main, gone. As part of your programme/course philosophy and your LT&A strategy, you should consider how you will support the learning experience through technology. 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.

Library & Learning Resources will work with Faculties and Professional Services to ensure a supportive learning experience from pre-entry to completion of studies. The University strongly acknowledges the importance for students to develop Information & Digital literacy and Researching skills and has mandated that these skills should be formally embedded within each course and delivered by the L&LR.

L&LR staff will support the development of student's Information & Digital literacy and Researching skills, by working with academic staff to identify a module within which sessions to support these skills can be embedded into each level of every course to ensure that students gain these key skills.

The development of these skills can be staged to facilitate the transition into higher education for students and L&LR staff can work with academics to identify a learning outcome relating to the development of these skills. Below are examples of some learning outcomes being used by other courses.

Level 4 – Undergraduate Year 1: Able to identify, locate and evaluate the different resources and types of sources appropriate to their area of study and construct a search strategy using discipline specific keywords and search techniques and use information ethically.

Level 5 – Undergraduate Year 2: Able to develop and implement a range of search strategies and to critically evaluate different sources within the framework of the discipline.

 Level 6 – Undergraduate Year 3: Able to develop and review search strategies to keep up to date with the literature and to generate new understandings within the discipline.

Level 7 – Postgraduate: Able to construct complex search strategies, bringing together conceptual and theoretical frameworks and perspectives from multiple disciplines in the generation and dissemination of new understandings within the discipline.

These skills are essential for students for a successful progression and completion of their studies and also to enhance their ability to gain employment and develop successful careers.

References

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Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2011) *Teaching for quality learning at university, 4th Ed.* Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Wiliam, D., & Thompson, M. (2007) Integrating assessment with instruction: what will it take to make it work? In C. A. Dwyer (Ed.) *The future of assessment: shaping teaching and learning.* Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Further Information

For more information or guidance from EDS, please use the following contacts:

Pedagogy, learning and teaching, formative and summative assessment; technology supported learning	Graham.Lowe@bcu.ac.uk
First year experience, transition, orientation, retention and inclusivity	Luke.Millard@bcu.ac.uk
Assessment literacy and study skills	Maggie.Gibson@bcu.ac.uk
Graduate+, employability and student personal development	Lesley.Taylor@bcu.ac.uk

Appendix 1 – Summary of FHEQ level statements

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

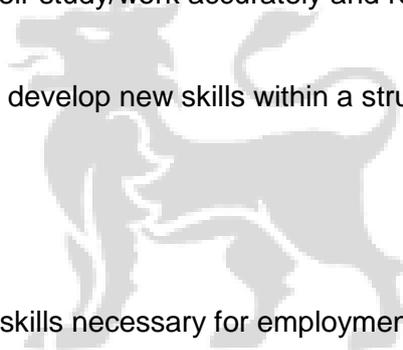**Certificates of Higher Education are awarded to students who have demonstrated:**

- 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.