

2B – Programme Structure and Curriculum Design Characteristics: Policy

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This document outlines key features, requirements and considerations in the design and re-design of academic programmes. It is intended for use by programme development teams and evaluation panels in ensuring that all relevant internal and external reference points are duly considered and addressed through the design and approval process. The document outlines curriculum structure and design principles to ensure alignment with [BU2025 strategy](#), including incorporation of BU's key values of Excellence, Inclusivity, Creativity and Responsibility when undertaking curriculum design. This document also provides links to appropriate sector requirements and internal alignment with the University *Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures* (ARPP).

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Senate: to approve University policy pertaining to curriculum structure and design ensuring alignment with BU2025.

Education Committee: to ensure new and revised programme proposals are aligned to the structure and design principles outlined in this policy.

Faculty Education Committee: To ensure new programme proposals developed in Faculty align with the structure and design principles outlined in this policy.

Faculty Department Committee: to review initial proposals for new programmes and ensure alignment with the structure and design principles outlined in this policy.

3. ACCESSING OTHER RELEVANT BU DOCUMENTS

3.1 All documents can be accessed [here](#)

3.2 Other documents with direct relevance to this are

- 2A - Awards of the University: Policy
- 4A - Programme Approval, Review and Closure: Policy and Procedure
- 4D - Continuing Professional Development (CPD): Policy and Procedure
- 4J - Guidelines for Online Learning and/or Blended Learning programmes with extensive online learning
- 4K - Placements: Policy and Procedures
- 6C - Principles of Assessment Design: Policy

4. STRUCTURE OF PROGRAMMES

4.1 Awards and programme titles

The awards that the University may confer is defined in 2A - Awards of the University: Policy including definitions of when the use of 'Arts' or 'Sciences' is appropriate (i.e. BA/BSc or

MA/MSc) and the required level and credit volume for awards and the subject matter of a programme must justify the award title.

Programmes should incorporate intermediate awards to facilitate exit points and the award of a qualification for students who fail to achieve the outcomes of the full degree programme.

The subject matter of a programme must justify the award title. Award-specific credits are normally incorporated at each level of the programme. Credits awarded for dissertations or major projects are to be considered when determining the most appropriate award title. However, differentiation between award titles should not be justified solely on the basis of the dissertation/project.

4.2 **Credit structure for programmes and units**

All University programmes and awards are determined by units of credit. The minimum credit value for a unit is 20 credits, above which credit values increase at 20 point intervals. Unit Specifications record the University credit value and the equivalent European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) value in brackets¹. Exceptions may be permitted only on the basis of external factors including PSRB requirements.

Part-time programmes should be designed to deliver no more than two thirds of the credits of an equivalent full-time programme in a given year.

4.3 **Common Academic Structure**

All programmes (not including those delivered by partner providers) need to align with the Common Academic Structure (CAS) (unless exceptions to CAS have been formally approved by the University). The CAS is intended to ensure that programmes are delivered in a format that enhances the student experience by providing the following benefits:

- a more open architecture including greater potential for units to be shared (common), resulting in an increased potential for multi and inter-disciplinary provision; inward and outward mobility for student, staff and visiting scholars;
- comparability and equity of entitlement regarding education and assessment;
- possibility to adopt semester placements where appropriate (e.g. masters programmes);
- early formative assessment, feedback and development of autonomy/independent study;
- facilitation of two intakes in September and January;
- facilitation of part time provision;
- early completion of units so those who may not complete the year can be awarded credit for completed units.

The CAS applies to all campus-based taught programmes regardless of mode or level of delivery.

4.4 **Programmes and common units**

Programmes may share units with other programmes, referred to as 'common' units. Common units are defined where the following characteristics are the same:

- Unit title
- level of study
- credit value
- aims
- intended learning outcomes (ILOs)
- learning and teaching methods
- assessment (assignment briefs or examination content) (excluding formative).

If units do not align with all of the characteristics set out above, they cannot be considered common and should be differentiated by different titles. Faculties may still choose to deliver joint teaching and learning activities.

5. **PROGRAMME DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

- 5.1 BU is committed to ensuring that all students have the best opportunity for success by designing and delivering high quality programmes which adhere to the expectations of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, offer opportunities for work-based learning, provide space for personal development through extra and co-curricular activities and always include a focus on student wellbeing.

¹ The University aligns with the European Commission's European Credit Transfer System [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System](#) (ECTS), which promotes ease of transfer between European programmes of study through an agreed tariff of credit equivalence. Under ECTS, 10 ECTS credits are equal to 20 University credits.

Programme teams should ensure that the design of the curriculum and the associated teaching, learning and assessment activities enables a holistic and inclusive learning experience for all students, aligned to the the diverse nature of the student body.

Fusion Learning

5.2 Programmes must embed the principles of [Fusion Learning approach](#), which include the notions that:

- Learning is personalised;
- Students are researchers;
- A Problem-based/inquiry-based/action learning is taken;
- Learning is multi and inter-disciplinary;
- JISC/EU digital competences framework is embedded;
- A more open architecture/shared modules approach is taken;
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation requirements are met.

5.3 Open curriculum is defined as a curriculum which allows students to access to a range of subjects outside of their academic discipline via option units from across their Faculty and across the wider university. Standard undergraduate programmes should be designed to ensure that programme learning outcomes are achieved within 100 credits per level, to ensure that students undertaking 'elective' units are still fully achieving the programme learning outcomes.

5.4 Placements

Placement provision is a core component of Fusion, linking the teaching experience with professional practice. Placement experiences are regarded as essential to developing the skills and graduate attributes expected of our learners and must be linked to the curriculum content.

It is a principle of BU's curriculum design that all undergraduate students will normally undertake a placement experience. All undergraduate, full-time, first degrees must include placement opportunities, which can be stated as either mandatory or optional. Where placements are only optional both long and short placements should be incorporated into the programme specification to maximise student choice. Short placements can consist of several short individual placements but the total length must not be less than four weeks.

6. EXTERNAL FRAMES OF REFERENCE

6.1 In designing programmes, development teams must take into account all relevant external frames of reference:

6.2 [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (Quality Assurance Agency): the Code is the national frame of reference which mandates Expectations on the outcomes providers must achieve in setting and maintaining the standards of their awards, and for managing the quality of their provision. Teams should refer to:

- [Qualifications and Credit Frameworks](#) (incorporating the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) (FHEQ)
- [Characteristics Statements](#) (Foundation Degrees, Masters Degrees, Doctoral Degrees)
- [QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#)
- [QAA Advice and Guidance:Course Design and Development](#) .

6.3 [JISC Digital Capabilities framework](#): the Digital Capabilities framework should be utilised to inform programme and curriculum design in a way which will allow students to develop the capabilities, skills and attitudes required in a digital society. The framework consists of six elements; ICT Proficiency (functional skills), Information, data and media literacies (critical use), Digital creation, problem solving and innovation (creative production), Digital communication, collaboration and partnership (participation), Digital learning and development (development) and Digital identity and wellbeing (self-actualising).

6.4 [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#): BU students should be given a variety of opportunities to build their knowledge and understanding in relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goals in order to promote graduates who have a positive impact in relation to the environment and social and economic wellbeing.