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UNIVERSITY OF YORK

TEACHING COMMITTEE

Academic Framework - working draft

This document sets out the University's principles and overall academic framework in relation to qualifications (with reference to the QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*) and credit. It applies to all programmes commencing in or after the academic year 2003/04.

The QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* is available on the web at:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf>

The academic framework should be read in the context of other University documents, including the Ordinances and Regulations (<http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/aso/ordreg/welcome.htm>), the University Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures (<http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/eto/welcome.htm>) and guidance relating to the accreditation of prior learning (<http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/aso/teach/apl.htm>). A full list of relevant documents is provided on the web at <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/aso/teach/Chairsinfo.htm>.

1 Qualifications Framework

1a Principles

The University has adopted the following principles from the QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*:

1. Qualifications should be awarded to mark the achievement of positively defined outcomes, not as compensation for failure at a higher level, or by default.
2. All qualifications should be located at an appropriate level in the qualifications framework.
3. The names of qualifications should appropriately represent the level of achievement, reflect accurately the field of study and should not be misleading.
4. The design of the curricula of programmes should secure academic and intellectual progression.
5. Qualifications should only be awarded where the expectations of the relevant qualifications descriptor have been met or exceeded.
6. In relation to levels in the qualifications framework, it is the assessment of the outcomes of learning that is important, rather than the nature of any component element of study.

For a fuller exposition of these principles, please refer to the QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*.

1 b Summary of qualifications and their location within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

Level	Descriptor (Taken directly from the QAA FHEQ). <i>Qualifications at the relevant level are awarded to students who have demonstrated the following qualities:</i>	Qualifications at this level	Number of credits
Certificate (C)	(i) 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; (ii) an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.	Certificate of Continuing Education Certificate of Higher Education	60 120
Intermediate (I)	(i) 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; (ii) 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; (iii) knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s), and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study; (iv) an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.	Diploma of Higher Education	240
Honours (H)	(i) 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; (ii) an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline; (iii) 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; and to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline;	Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma Degrees of Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc), or Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) with Honours	60 120 360

	<p>(iv) an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge;</p> <p>(v) the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (eg refereed articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).</p>		
Masters (M)	<p>(i) 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;</p> <p>(ii) a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;</p> <p>(iii) 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;</p> <p>(iv) conceptual understanding that enables the student: to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.</p>	<p>Postgraduate Certificate</p> <p>Postgraduate Diploma</p> <p>Degrees of Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc), Master of Research (MRes) or Master of Public Administration (MPA)</p> <p>Degrees of Master of Chemistry (MChem), Master of Engineering (MEng), Master of Mathematics (MMath), Master of Physics (MPhys)</p> <p>Degree of Master of Social Work (MSW)</p>	<p>60</p> <p>120</p> <p>180</p> <p>480</p>
	<p>MPhil candidates are also expected to demonstrate the following additional qualities:</p> <p>(v) a good general knowledge of the field of study;</p> <p>(vi) a comprehensive particular knowledge of some part or aspect of the field of study;</p> <p>(vii) the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of knowledge, applications or understanding of the discipline;</p> <p>(viii) some original contribution to knowledge or understanding.</p>	Degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	
Doctoral (D)	(i) 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	Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	

	<p>publication;</p> <p>(ii) 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;</p> <p>(iii) 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;</p> <p>(iv) a detailed understanding of the applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.</p>		
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All awards made by the University of York should be done so with reference to the above framework and qualifications descriptors. Reference should also be made to appropriate subject benchmark statements for undergraduate programmes and taught postgraduate programmes (where relevant subject benchmark statements are available).

Qualifications not yet located within the framework: Ordinary Degree, PGCE and MB BS.

2 Programme Framework

2a Principles of the Modular Scheme

The University of York operates a modular scheme for taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The modular scheme requires academic programmes to comprise of modules, which are allocated a certain credit value. The University believes that modularisation and the use of credit:

- are useful for both students and staff, in quantifying the workload associated with particular elements of a programme
- should assist in the design of programmes
- should provide programme flexibility, to permit the taking of electives where appropriate
- are helpful for recording the achievements of students who do not complete a programme, for whatever reason.

However, to avoid fragmentation and over-assessment (which can be products of a modular system) and to promote the overall coherence of academic programmes, the University places significant emphasis on the overall programme outcomes and students' achievements of these outcomes, rather than on a system of credit accumulation.

The modular scheme adopted by the University reflects the principles outlined above.

2b Progression within undergraduate programmes leading to the award of bachelors degrees

The University believes that all students should be provided with defined opportunities for progression, towards the attainment of the necessary level of achievement for the qualification being pursued. To assist departments in defining progression, Teaching Committee has identified two distinct models for progression and expects that in the large majority of cases, progression within undergraduate programmes will be defined in terms of these models. Teaching Committee acknowledges, however, that there is a variety of ways in which progression can be facilitated and expressed, in many instances linked to the particular discipline being studied. The Committee wishes to encourage reflective practice and also innovation, where appropriate. It is therefore content to consider alternative and innovative models for progression, provided such models are transparent, clearly articulated and meet the general criterion of providing students with defined opportunities for progression towards the attainment of the necessary level of achievement for the qualification being pursued.

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Three levels of attainment. In some cases, these relate directly to year, although there are a number of alternative schemes, depending on the structure of the programme.	Two-part structure (usually divided at the end of year one).	Other
Archaeology; Biology; Chemistry; Computer Science; Educational Studies; Electronics; English; Environment; Health Sciences; History; Language and Linguistics; Management; Mathematics; Physics; Sociology.	Economics; History of Art; Philosophy; Politics; PEP; Psychology; Social Policy and Social Work.	Music

2c Programme titles

Programme titles should accurately reflect the content of programmes and the proportion in which different subject elements are studied. In particular, the following principles should be observed:

- (i) University documentation should refer consistently to ‘combined programmes’ with main, subsidiary and equal components;
- (ii) such programmes should be designated as ‘A *with* B’ (for main/subsidiary combinations) and ‘A *and* B’ (for equal combinations);
- (iii) equal combination programmes should, so far as possible, be ordered alphabetically. It was acknowledged, however, that there might need to be some exceptions to this rule;
- (iv) programmes managed by a single Board of Studies should not be referred to as combined programmes;
- (v) Biochemistry and PPE should be regarded as integrated programmes in their own right and not as combined programmes;
- (vi) a year spent in Europe or on an industrial or research placement should be indicated in the programme name and on the degree certificate irrespective of whether the year was an additional or a substitute year for a year in York;
- (vii) the term ‘sandwich year’ should not be used and should be replaced by reference to, for example, ‘a year in industry’;
- (viii) the length of a programme should always (and only) be indicated if there was a foundation year or year away from York that increased the overall length of the programme in relation to the norms of three years for a BA/BSc or four years for an MMath, MChem etc; for example, ‘MEng in Electronic Engineering (5-year with a year in industry)’.

3 The modular scheme

3.1 Definitions

Programme: the set of modules studied for the award of a named degree eg. V100 BA History; MSc in Information Processing.

Module: an individual component of a degree programme eg. 'Unemployment in the 20th Century'; 'Developmental Psychology'. A module may comprise elements taught by different departments and the function of a particular module may vary from one programme to another. There are three different types of module:

Compulsory module: a module required for the programme.

Optional module: a module chosen by the student from a prescribed list of modules within the programme.

Elective module: a module chosen by the student normally from outside those offered by the department(s) responsible for the programme.

Credit: the value assigned to a module in terms of student workload, regardless of any weighting the module may be given in the calculation of the degree result or of the module's level of academic difficulty.

3.2 Undergraduate Programmes

3.2.1 Structure

- (a) The value of a module is 10, 20, 30 or 40 credits.
- (b) Modules of 10 credits are contained within one term. Modules of 20, 30 or 40 credits may be contained within one term, or spread over two or three terms. *Any deviation from this structure requires the explicit approval of the Teaching Committee.*
- (c) A single academic year of study normally comprises modules with a total value of 120 credits. A year of a programme spent away from York, on an approved scheme such as an exchange or placement, likewise counts as 120 credits. *Any deviation from this structure requires the explicit approval of the Teaching Committee.*
- (d) A three-year programme comprises modules with a total value of 360 credits. This total cannot be reduced or increased, except in special circumstances and with the approval of the Special Cases Committee.
- (e) A four-year programme comprises modules with a total value of 480 credits. This total cannot be reduced or increased, except in special circumstances and with the approval of the Special Cases Committee.
- (f) Undergraduate masters programmes (MChem, MEng, MMath, MPhys) must contain at least 120 credits of masters-level material and related assessment.

- (g) Credit totals for the components of three-year combined programmes are normally 180:180 (for equal combinations) or 240:120 (for main/subsidiary combinations). Some variation may be permitted.

3.2.2 *Modules and levels*

- (a) Modules may be assigned to levels based on their academic content. The level will normally be allied to the year in which they fall, as follows:

Level 0 Foundation year

Level 1 First year

Level 2 Second year

Level 3 Third year

Level 4 Fourth year

In programmes where there is no distinction in level between second- and third-year modules, students may progress from level 1 modules in the first year direct to level 3 modules in the second and third years.

There is, however, no University requirement that modules be assigned levels, and therefore no prescribed number of modules to be taken at any level.

- (b) Boards of Studies should stipulate clearly where particular modules have pre-requisites in the form of the successful completion of other modules, or in the form of a qualification obtained prior to registration at the University.

3.2.3 *Student Workload*

- (a) A student's workload consists of all of the work associated with the modules taken, including teaching (i.e. lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops and laboratory or practical work), private study, work required during vacations (e.g. fieldwork, dissertations, projects), the preparation of course work, and assessment (i.e. preparation of assessed work, preparation for examinations, and examinations).
- (b) All students must have a full workload amounting to 400 hours per term (i.e. approximately 40 hours per week, adjusted, where appropriate, to take account of any vacation work required). In other words, a 10-credit module involves a notional workload of 100 hours, a 20-credit module a total of 200 hours' work, and a 40-credit module a total of 400 hours' work. One credit involves a notional workload of 10 hours.
- (c) As far as possible a student's workload must be spread evenly over the three terms of the year, although it is recognised that some unevenness may be unavoidable. Boards of Studies are asked in particular to ensure that students are properly occupied in term 9; teaching/assessment arrangements should be re-considered where necessary to achieve this. A student's workload in any one year must not be less than 100 credits nor more than 140 credits, except in special circumstances and where the individual case has been approved by the Special Cases Committee. Departmental modular schemes which do not comply with this requirement must have been approved by the University Teaching Committee.

- (d) A student's home department is responsible for ensuring that the student has enrolled for the requisite number of modules and will thus obtain the requisite number of credits to complete the programme.

3.2.4 *Assessment*

- (a) All Boards of Studies should ensure that assessment practices and procedures for modules are coherent and clearly stated in information to staff and students. Staff are advised to consult the *University Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures* produced by the Examinations Office for further information on University requirements and guidance.
- (b) Modules may be assessed at the time of delivery (e.g. by course work or an end-of-module examination) or at a later date (e.g. at the start of the following term or at the end of an academic year). However, a student earns credit for the module only on completion of the assessment.
- (c) Assessments do not carry a separate credit value, but work associated with assessment (e.g. preparation for examinations, sitting examinations) constitutes part of the workload and hence part of the credit value of a module. As a corollary, examinations covering material that has not been specifically taught (e.g. general papers) do not carry credit although they may contribute to the calculation of the final degree result.
- (d) All modules have a credit value and contribute to the credit total of the programme. However, the weighting of modules, including elective modules, is determined by the Board of Studies of a student's home department. Not all modules need be assessed (or assessed equally) for degree purposes. Some modules (such as those taken in the first year of a programme) might not contribute to the calculation of the final degree result, or might carry a low weighting. It is a requirement that final marks for individual modules are communicated to students using the University mark scale. The pass/fail borderline on the scale is 34.5.
- (e) If a Board of Studies requires elective modules taken by its students in another department to contribute to the final degree classification, it must specify that its students may only take elective modules which carry marks and for which the assessment procedures comply with University requirements for assessments contributing to the final award.
- (f) It is not necessary to gain a pass mark in a module to gain credit. Failed modules may simply carry fail marks. If the conventions operated by a Board of Studies are such that the Board requires students to redeem failure in order to progress, then it must specify that its students may only take elective modules for which resits can be offered. Boards of Studies may also specify other progression criteria (e.g. any limit to the number of fail marks a student may be permitted to carry).
- (g) If a student fails to observe the attendance requirements of a module, the department offering that module may award a mark of 0 or, under the terms of Regulation 5.4, refuse to permit the student concerned to enter for examination. If this situation occurs in respect of an elective module, the student's home department may require the student to take another module. Home departments may also require students to take another module in the event of failure to observe the attendance requirements of optional or non-assessed modules.

- (h) Boards of Studies may prescribe for visiting students a different form of assessment for a particular module from that prescribed for other students, if such an arrangement is necessary to ensure that an evaluation of the visiting student's performance in each module can be provided when the student leaves York.
- (ix) Boards of Studies, in admitting students to start afresh on a degree programme having completed a year of a different programme, should ensure that the repeating of modules and assessments is avoided wherever possible.

3.2.5 *Elective Modules*

- (a) Boards of Studies have been asked to identify, within each programme, non-compulsory modules which a student may replace with elective modules. The number of modules which may be replaced in this way should amount to at least 40 credits of the programme. It is accepted that in some programmes of study, the requirements of professional bodies may limit or prohibit the replacement of programme elements with elective modules.
- (b) Boards of Studies have also been asked to identify modules which may be made available as elective modules to students on other programmes, providing that the students meet any pre-requisites which such modules might have. The number of modules so identified should amount to at least 40 credits of the programme. Boards may set quotas for the number of students admitted to such modules.
- (c) Students should not usually be permitted to take elective modules amounting to more than 40 credits of their programme of study unless the framework for the programme, as approved by Teaching Committee, specifies otherwise.
- (d) Supervisors should bring to the attention of the Chair of their Board of Studies any difficulties regarding the operation of the elective system. Any repeated difficulties should be brought to the attention of the Teaching Committee.
- (e) Departments should make available to incoming elective students full details of the method, the timing of assessment and the release of results, to ensure that students are aware of specific departmental practices when choosing electives. These details should be included in the Compendium of Elective Modules wherever possible.
- (f) Optional University courses, such as Languages for All and ILIAD, do not usually count as part of the modular scheme.

3.3 *Taught Postgraduate Programmes*

3.3.1 *Structure*

- (a) With the exception of dissertation modules, postgraduate modules should have one of the following credit values:

10 credits (standard module)

5 credits (half module)

20 credits (double module)

40-credit modules should not be permitted, other than with the express permission of the Teaching Committee.

- (b) Master's programmes (MA, MSc, MPA, MRes) should be of 12 months' duration full-time (or equivalent part-time) and should consist of modules totalling 180 credits (with the dissertation rated at a minimum of 50 credits). Material taught and assessed at undergraduate level should comprise no more than 30 credits.
- (c) Postgraduate Diploma programmes should normally be of nine months' duration full-time (or part-time equivalent) and should consist of modules totalling at least 120 credits.
- (d) Postgraduate Certificate programmes should be of six to nine months' duration full-time (or equivalent part-time) and should consist of modules totalling at least 60 credits.

3.3.2 *Student Workload*

- (a) A student's workload consists of all of the work associated with the modules taken, including teaching (i.e. lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops and laboratory or practical work), private study, work required during vacations (e.g. fieldwork, dissertations, projects), the preparation of course work, and assessment (i.e. preparation of assessed work, preparation for examinations, and examinations).
- (b) All students must have a full workload amounting to approximately 40 hours per week. Credit is associated with a notional student workload with one credit representing 10 hours' work by a student; thus a standard 10-credit module represents 100 hours' work and so forth.
- (c) As far as possible a student's workload must be spread evenly over the period of study, although it is recognised that some unevenness may be unavoidable.

3.3.3 *Assessment*

- (a) All Boards of Studies should ensure that assessment practices and procedures for modules are coherent and clearly stated in information to staff and students. Staff are advised to consult the *University Guide to Assessment Policies and Procedures* produced by the Examinations Office for further information on University requirements and guidance.
- (b) Modules may be assessed at the time of delivery (e.g. by course work or an end-of-module examination) or at a later date (e.g. at the start of the following term or at the end of an academic

year). However, a student earns credit for the module only on completion of the assessment.

- (c) Assessments do not carry a separate credit value, but work associated with assessment (e.g. preparation for examinations, sitting examinations) constitutes part of the workload and hence part of the credit value of a module.
- (d) All modules have a credit value and contribute to the credit total of the programme. However, the weighting of modules is determined by the Board of Studies of a student's department. Not all modules need be assessed (or assessed equally) for the purposes of the award. Some modules might not contribute to the calculation of the final result, or might carry a low weighting.

3.3.4 *Electives*

- (a) For postgraduate programmes, there is no requirement for Boards of Studies to identify non-compulsory modules which a student may replace with elective modules nor for them to identify modules which may be made available as elective modules to students on other programmes. Modules from other departments may, however, be incorporated into a programme of study provided this has been approved by the Teaching Committee.

2c *The treatment of fail marks in undergraduate programmes*

It is anticipated that further work will be carried out to refine these models. It should be noted that in general, a very small proportion of students fail individual modules or assessment components and that where they do fail, there are often extenuating circumstances. In addition to requirements relating to fail marks, departments have attendance and completion requirements which must be met in order for a qualification to be awarded. In a number of cases, the models below overlap.

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Limit the number of fail marks that can be carried.	Requirements to pass each year of the programme.	Two part structure. Must pass part I overall to proceed to part II.	Must pass all core elements of the programme; individual elements carry fail marks.
Archaeology; Biology; Economics; Educational Studies; English; History; History of Art; Language and Linguistics; Music; Philosophy; Politics; PEP; Psychology; Sociology; SPSW.	Chemistry; Computer Science; Electronics; Environment; Health Sciences*; Management; Mathematics.	Overlaps with other models.	Physics (but also fits with model two); Music.

*Operates across more than one model in relation to programmes that have statutory requirements and those that do not.