

Role and Responsibilities of a Programme Leader and Associate Programme Leader

Published at:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/develop/programme-leaders/>

Introduction

Programme design is a central theme of the 2015-2020 Learning and Teaching Strategy. Although all staff who teach participate in the design of learning and teaching, for every programme of study there should be someone whose concern is the programme as a whole as experienced by students. This person is the Programme Leader. Every programme has a single leader, but a single person can lead more than one programme.

Programme Leaders will fulfil their role and responsibilities under the oversight of the Board of Studies and its Chair but are directly line managed by the Head of Department. The Programme Leader of a combined programme will be the person agreed as most suited to the role by the respective departments involved in the programme's delivery. Combined programmes will also have an Associate Programme Leader in the Partner Department who will be a key contributor to the leadership of the combined programme in their department. The Programme Leader and Associate Programme Leader together will be responsible for promoting effective discussion and collaboration to ensure the effective delivery of the combined programme.

Heads of Department shall identify Programme Leaders and Associate Programme Leaders from among the academic staff as appropriate for their department and ensure that the roles are appropriately recognised in the Department's workload allocation model. (This should recognise in the case of combined programmes that programme leadership by the Programme Leader may require more work than the role for some single subjects). The term of office for a (Associate) Programme Leader is normally three years, with research/ sabbatical leave or where the role of (Associate) Programme Leader is built into a job description being the expected reasons for any exceptions. New (Associate) Programme Leaders should receive appropriate handover support and induction.

Leadership of a combined programme may alternate between departments on the completion of the Programme Leader's term and with due consideration for who is the best person to undertake the role. The decision to designate a Programme Leader from a partner department will not normally alter the SITS designated Home Department, but may result in resource implications the departments will need to discuss with the Planning Office.

There are four key areas of responsibility for programme leaders, described in detail below:

1. Responsibility for the overall design of the programme;
2. Responsibility for ongoing programme design, maintenance and improvement;
3. Responsibility for monitoring the programme in operation;

4. Responsibility for the effective coordination of colleagues who contribute to the design and delivery of the programme.

Programme Leaders will actively ensure that they themselves fulfil the responsibilities below or shall delegate tasks to colleagues, including the Associate Programme Leader, involved in the programme delivery. It is expected that the division of responsibilities will be discussed with members of the Departmental Management Team and as part of workload allocation reviews. The Board of Studies may invest additional responsibilities in line with how teaching is operationalised and managed locally, and should provide (associate) programme leaders with appropriate authority¹ under the oversight of the Board of Studies and sufficient time to do all parts of their role.

The Associate Programme Leader will be the identified lead in the partner department responsible under that department's Board of Studies for the management of the aspects of the combined programme provided by that department and for the students on the combined programme within that department. They will also be the primary point of contact for the Programme Leader from the other department. They will bring to the attention of their own Department's BoS and Officers the implications on the combined programme of any wider changes the Programme Leader's department wish to make. Heads of Departments will ensure a suitable workload allocation for the role of Associate Programme Leader to account for specific work they will do.

It is expected that (Associate) Programme Leaders will normally fulfil the responsibilities detailed below. In the case of combined programmes and those programmes with a high level of commonality with others, in terms of structure and modules, the extent to which (Associate) Programme Leaders are able to fulfil all responsibilities may be limited. In these cases the effective management of the programme may rely more on achieving consensus or compromise with the (Associate) Programme Leaders of related programmes. Programme Leadership shall therefore entail:

1. Responsibility for the overall design of the programme

In line with the principles of the York Pedagogy Programme Leaders ensure that:

- a. The programme is defined by the required number of challenging but realistic learning outcomes which are empowering to students and which accurately portray the distinctiveness of the course of study;
- b. Progression towards achievement of the programme learning outcomes is carefully and realistically charted through the component modules of the programme;
- c. Summative assessment is devised at programme-level to accurately and reliably measure student progression towards achievement of the programme learning outcomes;
- d. Student work, be that undertaken within classroom-based settings, through engagement with online activities or as a result of independent study, is planned so as to progressively support an increasing sophistication of learning or competence towards achievement of the programme learning outcomes;

¹ In the case of combined programmes a Board of Studies may be required to take action, as communicated by a partner department Board of Studies or Programme Leader.

- e. Incidents of contact between students and staff – whether synchronous or asynchronous, face-to-face or virtual – and opportunities for formative guidance propel student progression towards the achievement of programme outcomes;
- f. In accordance with the University’s process for the approval of new programmes (which should reflect the principles outlined a to e), proposals are submitted for consideration to the relevant Board of Studies².

2. Responsibility for ongoing programme design, maintenance and improvement

Programmes will be monitored, and developed where appropriate, to ensure they remain current and relevant. Programme Leaders ensure that:

- a. Developments in University regulations and policy as they pertain to academic programmes are promptly assessed for impact and acted upon as necessary;
- b. Where the requirements of applicable Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies change, or where other disciplinary guidance is modified (for example subject benchmark statements) this is appropriately reflected in the curriculum;
- c. Prevailing market conditions, including the requirements of employers, and the actions of key competitors are monitored and responded to as appropriate;
- d. A scholarly knowledge and understanding of both relevant cutting edge disciplinary research and how this research can be integrated into the curriculum is maintained;
- e. Programme documentation, whether student-facing or University-facing, is updated, receives any Board of Studies approval required and is made available in a timely manner;
- f. Board of Studies (and sub-committee) discussions and decisions which are relevant to the programme are considered and appropriately acted upon, and with regard to combined programmes, whether or not they take place in the Programme Leader’s own BoS or that of the Partner Department;
- g. Proposals to modify the programme are recommended for approval to the Board of Studies³.

3. Responsibility for monitoring the programme in operation.

Significant operational issues at programme level should be addressed effectively. Students should be provided with the opportunity to engage with a supported, but challenging and intellectually stimulating learning experience. Programme Leaders are responsible for:

- a. Monitoring patterns of student progression across the programme with a view to addressing issues where necessary, including in the Partner Department of a combined programme;
- b. Overseeing student evaluation data, be that from module evaluations, NSS, PTES or other sources and taking action, in collaboration with colleagues where appropriate, to address identified issues;
- c. Ensuring recommendations made by external examiners are given due consideration and acted upon where it is deemed appropriate;
- d. Ensuring regular contact with relevant course representatives and that issues raised by course representatives are given due consideration and followed-up by the Programme Team or by

² If approved by the Board of Studies and Planning Committee/ the relevant Faculty Learning and Teaching Group (for planning approval), the programme proposal is then submitted for consideration by University Teaching Committee.

³ The process for approval of modifications to programmes is articulated in detail in the [University’s Modifications Policy](#).

- escalation to the Board of Studies. (In the case of issues which require action by a department to which the Programme Leader does not belong, the Programme Leader has the authority to request (directly or communicated through the Associate Programme Leader or respective (Chairs of) Boards of Studies) that an issue be addressed by a partner department);
- e. Maintaining an informed awareness of the importance to student learning of the employability, sustainability, inclusivity, internationalisation and digital literacy agendas and ensuring these are given sufficient presence within the curriculum;
 - f. Evaluating the resource requirements of the programme (including staffing, timetabling, equipment, library resources etc.) and bringing resourcing issues to the attention of the Board of Studies, Head of Department or other relevant member of staff where necessary (and for combined programmes ensure such concerns as are the responsibility of the Partner Department are brought to its attention).
 - g. In relation to points a-f, (Associate) Programme Leaders are expected to contribute to Annual Programme Review as regards the monitoring and enhancement of their individual programme(s) within the wider departmental context.

4. Responsibility for the effective coordination of colleagues who contribute to the design and delivery of the programme.

The successful design, maintenance and delivery of a programme curriculum under the York Pedagogy is a collaborative enterprise but one that is directed, focused and organised. This means that Programme Leaders are responsible for:

- a. Acting as academic lead for the programme and to the team of staff who contribute modules to the programme (this includes modules that are delivered by a partner department). This includes representing the programme at relevant departmental meetings and during the course of review processes such as Annual Programme Review and Periodic Review and reporting on matters pertaining to the programme to other key Departmental officers such as the Chair of Board of Studies⁴, Chair of Departmental Teaching Committees⁵, Chair of Board of Examiners and Head of Department;
- b. In the case of combined programmes, ensuring that there is a close working relationship between the Programme Leader and Associate Programme Leader, which is likely to require a schedule of regular meetings and frequent correspondence;
- c. Cultivating an environment of collaboration and shared ownership by ensuring colleagues (and particularly the Associate Programme Leader in the case of combined programmes) are involved in curriculum decision-making, by providing appropriate opportunities for the programme team to consult and interact on issues that relate to programme development and delivery;
- d. Organising the curriculum and co-ordinating colleagues in a way that is equitable and non-discriminatory;

⁴ The Board of Studies has high-level oversight of the department's portfolio of programmes and therefore Programme Leaders' management of the programme is overseen by the Chair of BoS and the Board itself to progress proposals for programme enhancement.

⁵ Programme leaders are ex officio members of the Departmental Teaching Committees (DTC) of the department in which they are based (with Associate Programme Leaders of combined programmes being ex officio members of the DTC of their own department) – recognising the role and authority of programme leaders as a senior team.

- e. Effectively managing and sustaining change and development and motivating colleagues with regard to their involvement with the programme;
- f. Being a key point-of-call alongside the Associate Programme Leader in the case of combined programmes in mediating, assessing and solving problems relating to the design and delivery of the programme curriculum.