Guidance for departments on the Roll-out of the York Pedagogy to Postgraduate Taught Programmes in 2016-17

1. Background
The York Pedagogy will shape the way that we design and describe our programmes for years to come. A summary of the key features is provided as APPENDIX 1.

To date, the focus has been on our undergraduate portfolio. This is reaching an important milestone of bringing all of our programmes to a common point in readiness for the 2017-18 entry cohort, in line with the University Strategy commitment. This milestone requires an approval process for UTC in Autumn 2016, as explained in a separate guidance note for departments. The work will then continue, embedded in ongoing activities for programme reflection and enhancement, consolidating the re-defined role of programme leader, shaping the way we communicate features of our programmes to applicants, and informing the priorities for central support.

As this phase of the undergraduate implementation approaches completion, attention is turning to the roll-out of this approach to our portfolio of PGT provision. This paper summarises the forthcoming schedule of work and provides commentary on the application of the principles of the York Pedagogy to PGT programmes (Masters, PG Diplomas and PG Certificates).

2. Schedule of work and timeline
The initial roll-out to PGT programmes will follow the same key steps as for undergraduate programmes:
A more detailed representation of the timeline is attached as APPENDIX 2.

3. **Applying the five principles of the York Pedagogy to Masters-level programmes**

This section provides some commentary on the application of the York Pedagogy to the PGT portfolio. PGT programmes are shorter than UG and have different characteristics. Nevertheless, they still need to demonstrate clear outcomes, well-designed student work and staff-student contact, and assessment which is appropriate in nature and volume.

We may see a broadening in the forms and modes of delivery of PGT programmes in the future, such as an increase in distance learning. The York Pedagogy is able to enhance all of these developments. We must still support effective learning, and ensure that students can keep sight of the overall PLOs.

### 3.1 Programme leadership and teamworking

Our students experience their learning in terms of progression through a programme of study, whereas it is easier for us to focus on individual modules.

To achieve more coherent programmes of learning and therefore a higher quality of learning experience for our students, the York Pedagogy aims to increase the shared understanding of the purpose and design of each programme, and the importance of staff working together in programme teams.

The York Pedagogy therefore requires all PGCert, PGDip and Masters programmes to have a **Programme Leader** - a named individual who has oversight of the whole programme as experienced by students and who leads the programme team to ensure that all modules contribute effectively to meeting the PLOs. A member of staff can be the leader of more than one programme.

Full details of the role and responsibilities of programme leaders are provided on the York Pedagogy website: [https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/themes/theyorkpedagogy/](https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/themes/theyorkpedagogy/). To support new programme Leaders, the Academic Practice team runs a Programme Leaders’ Course (see section 5 below).

### 3.2 Articulating and developing a statement of purpose and a limited number of Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Each programme must have a **Statement of Purpose**. This should encapsulate, succinctly in prose, why the degree exists (purpose), its nature (distinctiveness) and what makes it worth undertaking (value). This statement should be discussed and agreed by the programme team in order to ensure shared understanding of the nature and purpose of the programme and to provide a strong basis for defining the Programme Learning Outcomes.
Students achieve more if they are clear about the relevance of what they are doing to their goals. The York Pedagogy requires programme teams to agree **6 - 8 PLOs for Masters degrees (4-6 for PGCerts and PGDips)** which express clearly what students will be able to do at the point of graduation.

Reducing the number of PLOs in this way (from over 25 in many cases), and focusing more clearly on graduate capabilities, will allow us to capture and communicate ambitious and inspiring final outcomes and plan our programmes to meet those outcomes more coherently. It will make it easier for applicants to understand the distinctive features of our programmes and will enable students to work more effectively to meet the outcomes, by understanding why they are being asked to undertake particular types of work and assessment at a given point in the programme. They will also be able to communicate the outcomes of their learning more effectively to employers.

PGT learning outcomes tend to be knowledge-based at the moment. For some programme teams, there may need to be a significant shift in thinking towards concepts of employability and ‘what a graduate can do’.

By adopting the York Pedagogy approach, the University has decided not to take the path of defining and imposing a set of generic graduate attributes. Rather, it is up to the Programme Leaders and programme teams to define and choose exactly what skills and abilities their students will gain, thereby capturing the distinctive experience offered by their programme.

Guidance on the drafting of PLOs is available on the York Pedagogy website (link above).

**3.3 Engaging students through well-designed, demanding Student Work linked to purposeful Staff / Student Contact**

For students to get maximum benefit from their education, optimal design of their independent study is just as important as the design of staff-student contact.

In the York Pedagogy, student work will continue to involve familiar activities such as reading, analysing, practicing, problem solving, critiquing, designing, experimenting, writing and speaking. However, it will be designed so that the totality of study time is as productive for learning as possible.

Such design necessitates calling on all the things that research shows enhance learning, including calibrating work to the students’ level and making effective use of what earlier learning has enabled them to do. Research shows how valuable

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1 where these are offered as stand-alone awards. A free text approach will be adopted for the description of exit awards, along the lines of the UG stage-level outcome descriptors. This recognises that exit awards are often made up of different combinations of taught modules.
“close contact” personal interaction is, but this is a limited resource. This means that staff/student contact needs to be very carefully designed to start, propel, accelerate, consolidate, correct, steer and encourage the work through which students learn.

Concentrating on the design of content and student work across as well as within modules may open up new opportunities to optimise the contribution of a given module and the opportunities for students to derive maximum benefit from formative feedback. For example, it may emerge that some PLOs receive disproportionately high amounts of attention and ‘time on task’ for students across modules, whilst other PLOs may be comparatively neglected.

3.4 Progression

In the York Pedagogy, a programme’s primary description is its learning outcomes, set in the context of the statement of purpose. To achieve the high level of ability described in the PLOs, students will need to progress through stages of development - like climbing a learning ladder. Expressing and then improving the learning ladder is a large part of the York Pedagogy approach.

The concept of progression may at first seem more applicable to UG programmes, with three or more years of study. Nevertheless, PGT programmes also require students to achieve development: in making a successful transition to Masters-level education from a UG degree or perhaps from employment; building knowledge and skills, and (in the case of a full Masters degree) positioning themselves to be successful in a substantial piece of research. The set of PLOs and the programme map provide a guiding framework to consider and articulate this.

To ensure shared understanding of this progression, programme design should reflect a clear sense of what is expected of students at each part of the programme in terms of supporting the achievement of PLOs (such as how taught modules build progressively the student’s ability to undertake a substantial piece of research).

Progression is also supported by summative assessment, which is a key driver of student work. Summative assessments should be:

- effective in measuring students’ progress toward the achievement of PLOs;
- appropriate in format and timing;
- efficient in terms of workload for both students and staff.
4. **Key steps and timeframe**

**August – September 2016**

*Departmental action: planning and oversight of the Pedagogy roll-out*

- Departments decide who will oversee the pedagogy work for all PGT programmes, including the role of supporting and directing programme leaders/teams to work on their individual programmes in the PGT portfolio. This might be the Deputy Head, the Chair of BoS, the Chair of Teaching Committee, or the Chair of the Graduate School Board.

- Programme leaders are identified for each taught programme and at least one per department is enrolled on the Programme Leaders’ Course. As with UG programmes, every programme must have a named leader (including stand-alone PGCerts and PGDips), but a member of staff can lead more than one programme.

- A meeting is held with the ProPEL contact to confirm the programmes being worked on, the list of PLs and contacts and the plan for the year. The ProPEL contact can assist with planning (key dates) and discussing available support and resources.

**September – October 2016**

*Programme leader (PL) action: schedule York Pedagogy process*

- Work back from the UTC Working Group deadlines (for feedback opportunities) and BoS/ GSB meeting dates (for approval of proposed changes to programmes) to plan the pedagogy work for the year. In some cases an extra meeting of the Board may be required.

- Book dates and rooms for programme team meetings for the year\(^2\) and communicate the schedule to all relevant staff.

- Consider when to schedule consultations with students, external experts and, if possible, alumni and add this to the year plan.

- Consider whether any programmes with professional accreditation will require specific consultation with, or approval by, a PSRB as part of the process.

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\(^2\) During the UG roll-out, some teams booked three or four key programme team discussion meetings for the coming year well ahead of time, and informed staff to keep the time free.
October 2016 – March 2017

Programme Leader action:

Establish shared understanding of the current programme

- Confirm current programme information with the programme team and ProPEL contact, using the Programme Specification to note the modules offered; the nature of student work across the programme; the staff/student contact pattern; assessment formats and schedule.

- Clarify career prospects and profile of students through consulting Careers contacts.

- Collate / refer to issues concerning the programme raised by surveys and evaluations (inc: PTES) and recommendations from Periodic Reviews.

- Consider undertaking a TESTA review, which will include gathering student views of the purpose and clarity of the current programme. The ProPEL contact can help with this.

Construct Statement of Purpose (SoP) and 6-8 new PLOs (4-6 for PG Certs and PG Dips available as entry points)

- Distribute the guidance and exemplars regarding SoPs and PLOs to the programme team.

- Meet as a programme team to discuss and draft the SoP and the 6-8 PLOs - this work has been undertaken successfully as an Away Day by UG programme teams. ProPEL contacts can assist in organising and facilitating such an event.

- Consult student focus groups / gain student input on draft SoP and PLOs (ProPEL contacts can assist with this).

- Seek external contributions such as views from external examiners, employers/an Industrial Advisory Board, and PSRBs, and consider how to draw further on the views of these stakeholders in the coming months, such as comments on draft SoPs and PLOs.

- PL completes the draft SoP and PLOs and obtains ‘sense check’ feedback from the UTC Working Group. As with the UG schedule, two or three dates will be available in January-March 2017 for this UTC feedback, with a final deadline for

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3 Meet or discuss online via shared Google Docs or Hangouts

4 TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment) was a project on programme assessment, funded by the HEA, which has been adopted widely. The approach involves mapping a programme in terms of context, assessment and feedback and identifying study patterns and how these are related to assessment patterns. This data is then used to inform programme planning. [http://www.testa.ac.uk/]
submission of draft material of 24 March 2017. The timing of your submission can be agreed with your ProPEL contact.

- PL and programme team reconsider SoP and PLOs in the light of feedback and finalise.

**March - July 2017**

**PL and programme team action:**

**Programme mapping and Enhancement planning**

- Meet as a programme team to map collectively the existing module information to the new PLOs using the Programme Map design tool. UG teams have worked to populate the map prior to a meeting at which the map is analysed and discussed – your ProPEL contact can help with examples.

- Use the map to diagnose issues, such as whether current modules ‘work’ in terms of supporting the new PLOs; where modules may not contribute in an optimal way to the progressive development of skills; where there are gaps and overlaps of provision; where there are issues with assessment i.e. bottlenecks, limited range, not enough consolidation.

- Following mapping, adjust PLOs as necessary.

- The PL and programme team meets again, if necessary, to agree and outline what needs to be done to enhance the current programme to achieve the new PLOs, capturing their thinking in the Enhancement Plan document.

- The PL submits a draft Programme Design Document extract, incorporating the Programme Map, and the Enhancement Plan to the UTC Working Group for sense-checking and feedback. As with the SoP and PLOs, two or three opportunities will be available for this UTC feedback, with a **final deadline of 31 July 2017**. The timing of your submission can be agreed with your ProPEL contact.

**July - November 2017**

**PL and programme team action:**

**Developing the revised programme**

- Programme team to agree changes to improve the alignment of summative assessment, student work and contact time with new PLOs.

- Finalise new programme design document extract.

- BoS/GSB approval for recommending to UTC. UTC sign-off needs to be completed by Christmas 2017.

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5 Meet or discuss online via shared Google Docs or Hangouts
• Look ahead to incorporating the themes of the York Pedagogy in ongoing ‘business as usual’ programme development and pursuing any specific themes arising from the work to date which require further exploration.

Some departments, particularly those with small PGT portfolios, may be able to work to a more rapid timescale than the above.

5. **Support and contacts**

5.1 **The UTC Working Group and ProPEL contacts**

A UTC Working Group exists to provide academic and strategic oversight for the York Pedagogy project. Led by John Robinson (Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students), the group includes academic colleagues and key members of the central support team.

The ProPEL (Programmes to Propel Effective Learning) team is the central team responsible for supporting departments with the implementation of the York Pedagogy. The ProPEL team is led by Nigel Dandy (Head of ASO) and consists of the Project Manager, Katy Mann Benn and several members of the Academic Support Office, Information Directorate and Careers. For more details contact nigel.dandy@york.ac.uk

Each department is assigned a ProPEL contact from the team to work on a one-to-one basis with programme leaders and programme teams. The support from ProPEL contacts includes: meeting programme leaders in the initial stages to clarify plans for the year; advising on the drafting of Statements of Purpose, PLOs and programme maps; helping programme leaders and teams to keep on schedule for UTC Working Group deadlines; liaising with other departments to share practice, and helping to facilitate programme team events and workshops. For more details contact katy.mannbenn@york.ac.uk

5.2 **The Programme Leaders’ course**

This course is specifically designed to support individuals appointed to the role of programme leader in academic departments. The course will focus on curriculum design and organisation at programme level, on learning and teaching approaches for which there is evidence of learning gain, and on developing educational leadership skills. It is intended to equip leaders with the evidence-based pedagogical knowledge and insight to drive forward inspiring and sustainable programme development, aligned to, and supporting the implementation of, the aims and principles of the York Pedagogy.
Whilst the Programme Leaders Course does not carry academic credit, participation can be used by individuals seeking Higher Education Academy Senior Fellowship through the York Professional and Academic Development scheme (YPAD).

For course details and more information, contact academic-practice@york.ac.uk

5.3 Regular updates: Pedagogy Digest

The Pedagogy Digest is produced on a fortnightly basis and is emailed to a distribution list of named contacts. If you would like to be added to the Pedagogy Digest distribution list, please contact janet.barton@york.ac.uk. The Digest will highlight examples of good practice and links to relevant research, workshops and other events to share expertise, links to essential documents, aspects of the schedule of work, and impending deadlines.

5.4 York Pedagogy website

The website is a repository for key documents and guidance materials. It is a ‘live’ resource which is populated with examples of good practice as the work in departments progresses.

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/themes/theyorkpedagogy/

Nigel Dandy, Cecilia Lowe
Academic Support Office
August 2016
APPENDIX 1
Reminder of key features of the York Pedagogy

1. Rationale

What? The York Pedagogy is a distinctive teaching framework informed by research on the best approaches to promoting effective learning.

Why? The vision is to provide outstanding learning and teaching across all our departments and every taught programme. Quality learning and teaching is key to regaining a place in the top 10 UK universities and the top 100 in the world.

How? The York Pedagogy will put the student, their work and their progress through their programme at the centre of how learning is designed. This focus on the programme as a whole, rather than as a collection of modules, will allow staff and students to work more clearly and consistently to achieve their goals.

2. The Five Core Principles

The York pedagogy framework is built around five principles:

(a) Programme leadership

Implementing the York pedagogy requires a clear framework of programme leadership and team-working to ensure that all modules make the most effective contribution to learning in the context of the particular programme.

(b) Programme Purpose and Learning Outcomes

The York Pedagogy requires capturing the distinctive characteristics of each programme in a Statement of Purpose and a set of 6-8 programme learning outcomes (PLOs) – the latter expressed in terms of what a student on the programme can be expected to do at the point of graduation. These outcomes then serve as the focus for the design of the whole programme.

(c) Summative assessment

The York Pedagogy requires the progressive achievement of PLOs to be evidenced by summative assessment which is appropriate in nature, volume and timing. Assessment
is still based in modules, but is considered, coordinated and designed at the programme level.

(d) Designing student work

The York Pedagogy requires programme teams to give more explicit attention to the nature and timing of student work and its central role in driving successful learning. This includes considering how timetabled sessions, independent study, asynchronous engagement and opportunities for feedback can be designed to work together to demand sustained student attention and effort to achieve the PLOs.

(e) Designing contact with staff

The York Pedagogy seeks to maximise the value of students’ ‘contact time’ with staff (class time; virtual contact; synchronous or asynchronous contact; group contact; one-to-one tutorial) by ensuring that all contacts are designed and scheduled appropriately to propel learning and student work. For example, there may be opportunities to introduce more interactive classes by redesigning the requirements for students' preparatory work.
APPENDIX 2: York Pedagogy implementation timescale

Central team support, funded buyout of staff time, online resources, Programme Leaders’ Course

UG PROGRAMMES

- Draft new PLOs and statement of purpose
- Develop programme map and action plan
- Sense check endorsement by UTC working group
- Implement action plan – agree changes to improve alignment of summative assessment, student work, contact time with new PLOs.
- Complete new programme design document

BoS approval → UTC approval

- ‘Compliance’ milestone for 2017-18 entry:
  - All programmes reviewed.
  - New PLOs in place.
  - Programmes mapped and enhancements agreed to improve alignment with PLOs.
  - Enhancements take effect from 17-18 at least for new 1st year.

PGT PROGRAMMES

- Draft new PLOs and statement of purpose
- Develop programme map and action plan
- Implement action plan, complete new prog. design document
- UTC sense check
- BoS approval → UTC approval

Ongoing programme development embedding the principles of the York Pedagogy in departments and central support

- ‘Compliance’ milestone for 2018-19 entry
  - As outlined for UG programmes

Sept 15 – June 2016
June - July 16
Aug – Dec 2016
Jan - July 2017
Aug - Dec 2017

Ongoing programme development as above