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**Programme Specification Commentary**

The Programme Specification Commentary is to be read alongside the Programme Specification. The purpose of the commentary is to enable you to explain to the validation panel what, in terms of curriculum design, you are trying to do and why you think this is the best way to do it. The commentary includes a number of suggested prompts for what you to consider under each of the key sections outlined in the Programme Specification.

The commentary focuses on:

* Programme aims and intended learning outcomes
* The programme structure
* Teaching and learning
* Assessment
* Student support.

The suggested prompts are not intended to be a checklist; not all prompts will be relevant to all programmes. It might also make more sense to respond to some of the prompts in different sections to those suggested here.

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| **Programme aims and intended Learning Outcomes (LOs)** |
| Explain how the programme aims and intended learning outcomes have been derived. You might find it helpful to refer to:* The way in which sector reference points including the [QAA’s qualifications framework](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks), [characteristics statements](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources), [QAA’s subject benchmark statements](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements) and the [SEEC level descriptors](https://seec.org.uk/resources/) have been used.
* The influence of any local, national or international policy and strategy documents on the development of the aims and LOs.
* The balance between knowledge acquisition, skills development and attributes within the LOs.
* The way in which feedback from stakeholders has influenced the LOs (eg cohort meetings with students, patient and service users, employers, professional networks etc).

(150 – 300 words) |
| **Programme structure and features** |
| The Programme Specification will explain the structure of the programme. Please explain the rationale behind the structure. You might find it helpful to refer to:* The expectations of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies for those programmes linked to professional roles.
* The use of credit frameworks in the development of the modular structure.
* The influence of the LOs on the programme structure.
* Progression through the programme and increasing intellectual demand.
* Key decision points for students.
* The balance between time spent in academic study and workplace based study
* The balance between core and option modules
* Flexibility for students.
* Points at which students might enter the programme on the basis of prior learning.
* Points at which students might leave the programme with an exit qualification.

(200 - 500 words) |
| **General teaching and learning strategies** |
| The Programme Specification will explain the general approach to learning and teaching and set out actual methods that you will be using. Please explain why you think these are the best approaches for the learners that you aim to recruit. You might find it helpful to refer to:* The pedagogic approaches that you will be using
* The engagement of students in shaping their learning experience
* The way in which the learning and teaching strategies support the acquisition of subject-based knowledge and skills and a broader range of transferable skills including creative and critical thinking
* The approach to enhancing employability
* Inclusivity issues and the extent to which the preferred approach will meet the needs of all learners and eliminates potential disadvantage,
* The extent of co-teaching of students on more than one programme and across academic levels,
* The overall workload for students.
* The role of technology in learning
* How the overall approach will be applied at module level.

The QAA’s advice and guidance on learning and teaching can be found [here](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qc-a-g-learning-and-teaching.pdf?sfvrsn=1f2ac181_6). (250 – 500 words) |
| **Assessment** |
| The Programme Specification will explain the strategic approach to assessment and the particular methods that you will be using to assess student achievement. Assessment must be consistent, fair and valid. With this in mind please explain why you have chosen the methods that you will use. You might find helpful to refer to:* How assessments and assessment criteria are used to determine whether students have achieved the intended learning outcomes,
* Equivalence between modules.
* How the assessment differentiates between different levels of performance and encourages students to achieve their best work.
* How you ensure that no student is disadvantaged by the assessment process.
* The volume and timing of assessments
* The approach to formative assessment.
* The use of standard setting methodologies.
* How students know what is expected them.
* The way in which feedback will be used to support academic development.
* How the choice of methods will facilitate the provision of effective and timely feedback.
* What measures will be put in place to authenticate students’ work, particularly where the assessment is conducted through remote means, and how students will be trained in the avoidance of academic misconduct.

The QAA’s advice and guidance on assessment can be found [here](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-assessment.pdf?sfvrsn=ca29c181_4).The NUS Assessment and Feedback Benchmarking Tool can be found [here](https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/assessment-and-feedback-benchmarking-tool).(250 – 500 words) |
| **Support for students and their learning** |
| The Programme Specification will outline the sources of advice and support available to students and the way in which students are made aware of those sources of advice. Some of these sources of advice and support will be provided at programme level and others will be provided centrally by experts and expert teams. In this section, you are asked to anticipate students’ key support needs and explain how these will be met. You might find it helpful to refer to:* Support needs at different stages of the student journey from induction to “outduction”
* The academic and pastoral support needs of students with a wide variety of backgrounds including those with protected characteristics
* How student engagement with support services is tracked
* The role of effective academic student support in monitoring the academic and personal development
* The role of effective academic student support in identifying students in difficulty.

For an online programme:* consider the unique needs of distance learning students, given that they may have greater supervisory needs because they do not have access in person to the range of informal and formal support mechanisms (peers, student support services etc.) that campus-based students do. They may also live in a different time zone.
* consider how you will establish a community of learners, providing collaborative learning opportunities (knowledge sharing and creation) and peer support.

The QAA’s advice and guidance on enabling student achievement can be found [here](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-enabling-student-achievement.pdf?sfvrsn=b12ac181_2).(200 – 450 words) |