******Common Modular Framework**

**Scope**

1. This framework applies to new programmes that will be validated in 2023-24 and in subsequent academic years.
2. Existing programmes that are being revalidated in 2023-24 and in subsequent academic years are expected to engage with the Framework and adopt the framework requirements unless there is an overriding educational imperative.
3. If funding body or professional body requirements conflict with the framework, external requirements will usually take precedence.
4. Some elements of the Common Modular Framework are aspirational. It may not be possible for all programmes to implement these elements in 2023-24 or 2024-25. Programme teams are asked to consider how they might work towards these elements, which are clearly labelled in the framework.

**Award of credit**

1. 1 credit = 10 hours of notional student study time.

**Module definition**

1. A module is a self-contained component of a programme or programmes of study with defined learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, and assessment requirements. For organizational reasons, each module will have a unique identifying code.
2. The module title, academic level credit rating, intended learning outcomes and summative assessment methods are fixed at the point of validation.
3. Validated modules will have a unique identifying code. If the features of the module defined in paragraph 7 change, the changed module will have a different unique identifying code.

**Modules and module size**

1. The minimum module size is 15 credits (or 150 notional study hours). Other modules should be multiples of 15. 15 and 30 credit modules, other than for project modules, are the norms[[1]](#footnote-1).
2. A module is delivered at a defined academic level (4 to 8) with the level expressed in the learning outcomes for the module.
3. If a module is offered at more than one academic level, each version of the module will have a separate unique identifier. In this instance the module title and content may be the same. The modules must have different learning outcomes to reflect the level at which they are offered, and the assessment must be differentiated to allow students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.  Assessment elements may be the same, but assessment criteria need to be different.
4. The teaching and learning strategies for modules offered at more than one academic level must acknowledge the different level at which the learners are enrolled.

**Projects and module sizes for projects**

1. Programmes of study leading to an award at level 6, 7 and 8 will normally include a project module. The nature of the project work carried out by student may vary depending on the role of the module within the programme.
2. Project modules may vary in size but shall not exceed 120 credits (MRes and MSci), 90 credits (other masters programmes) and 45 credits (level 6 qualifications).

**Organisation of the academic year**

1. The academic year, for the purpose of delivering this framework, is organised into two semesters for undergraduate programmes. For postgraduate programmes, there will be a notional third semester (or trimester) to accommodate project work.
2. Modules (normally) start and finish within the same semester. Yearlong modules are allowable, if there is a suitable educational rationale.
3. Modules and credits must be evenly distributed across the academic year to ensure a consistent workload for students. As an illustration, the credit-rating for a fulltime academic year at level 4 is 120 credits. The credit-rating for each semester must be 60 credits.
4. Modules do not need to be evenly distributed throughout the year. The credit-rating for a full-time academic year at level 4 should be 120 credits comprising two 60 credits semesters. However, the number of modules in each semester need not be the same. For example, one semester may comprise two 30 credits modules and with the subsequent semester made up of four 15 credit modules.
5. Modules may be taken concurrently or in blocks. For example, if a semester includes four fifteen credit modules, each module may start and finish at the same time. Alternatively, if a semester includes four fifteen credit modules, one of these modules may be taught in a block at the start of the semester, if that module is a prerequisite for the subsequent modules offered in that semester.
6. For workforce development modules, modules may be delivered consecutively to reflect the way in which students are funded and/or released to undertake continuing professional development. If this is the case, the student will take a single module within a defined block, complete the assessment for the module and then enrol on a subsequent module.

**MSc programmes – indicative structures**

**Figure 1: indicative structure for a full time MSc programme**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Semester 1 (September to December) | Semester 2 (January to April) | Semester 3 (May to August) |
| 60 credits (taught modules) | 60 credits (taught modules) | 60 credit project (preparatory work for the project may begin in semester 2) |

**Figure 2: indicative structure for a part time MSc programme**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Semester 1 (September to December) | Semester 2 (January to April) | Semester 3 (May to August) |
| 45 credits (taught modules) | 30 credits (taught modules) | none |
| Semester 4 (September to December) | Semester 5 (January to April) | Semester 6 (May to August) |
| 30 credits (taught modules) | 15 credits (taught modules) | 60 credit project (preparatory work for the project may begin in semester 4) |
|  |  |  |

1. The months referred to are illustrative and do not make any assumptions in relation to the academic year structure.
2. Project modules will usually take place in a single semester. Preparatory work for a project will usually be included in a separate Research Project Proposal module delivered in an earlier semester (for example semester 5 of an honours degree) with the project execution taking place in the subsequent semester (6).

**Credit requirements for SGUL awards**

1. Credit requirements for SGUL awards are set out in the [Quality Manual](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/about/our-professional-services/quality-and-partnerships-directorate/documents/quality-manual/Section-K-Recognition-of-prior-learning.pdf) and, for ease of reference, are reproduced at appendix A.

**Programme structure**

1. Modules are core (required for an award), optional (available on an opt-in basis to students registered for an award) or open choice (available to any students who meet predetermined entry requirements).
2. The internal structure of programmes (i.e. the balance between core, optional and open choice modules) can be determined at the programme level. However, all programmes must include optional modules and will normally include open choice modules.
3. Typically, open choice modules will not exceed 30% of the credit required for the award.

The emphasis on open choice modules is aspirational. This reflects the fact that very few open choice modules are currently available. Programme teams are asked to consider where, in their programme, open choice modules might be accommodated if more become available. Teams are also asked to consider which of their modules might be made available as open choice modules.

1. Modules may have pre- and co-requisites.

**Learning outcomes**

1. The number of learning outcomes for a module are prescribed (typically, four for a 15-credit module and no more than seven; typically, seven for a 30-credit module and no more than 10).

**Assessment**

**See the glossary of assessment terms**

1. Credit is awarded for successfully completing an assessment element or elements that confirm that the student has met the learning outcomes for the module.
2. The number of assessment elements for a module are prescribed. There will usually be one for a 15-credit module although there may be two if there is an educational rationale. There will usually be two for a 30-credit module. This prescription provides the starting point for achieving consistency between modules and programmes; and will simplify the process of drafting university-wide assessment regulations.
3. The weighting between assessment elements may vary depending on the role of the elements in the assessment of the learning outcomes. In the following example, the Critical Evaluative Report plays a greater role in assessing the Intended learning outcomes for the module.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Module title** | **Credit value** | **Level** | **Core/optional** | **Element** | **Learning Outcomes** **Assessed** **(FHSCE – as module outline numbered list)** | **Weighting %****(or Pass/Fail only)** | **Timing (month/ term/ semester)** | **ACHIEVING A PASS****(confirm if an assessment element, or group of elements, must be passed separately to achieve an overall pass for module)** |
| Principles of effective curriculum design | 30 | 6 | C | Critical Evaluative Report (3,000 words) | 1-5 | 60 | S1 | Each assessment element must be passed separately to achieve a pass for the module |
| Presentation (20 minute) | 6-7 | 40 |

1. The nature of the assessment for a module will be determined by the purpose of the module and its intended learning outcomes. In specifying module assessments, programme teams will need to be mindful of the position of the module within the programme and of the other modules that students will be taking at the same level or year. Programme teams will need to take a programme-level view on module assessments to avoid the over-emphasis on exams or other assessment types.
2. The way in which clinical or practice-based modules (or modules that include practice-based learning) are assessed will depend on the learning outcomes for the module. It may be the case that more than one assessment element is needed to reliably assess the learning outcomes for modules of this kind.
3. Assessments will normally take place in the semester in which the module is delivered.
4. All modules will include formative assessment. Formative assessment has a developmental purpose, designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained prior to the summative assessment.
5. Zero credit modules are proscribed because i) this implies either the award of credit is not linked to student effort or ii) the total amount of student effort required for an award will exceed the credit requirements set out in the Quality Manual.
6. Time spent by students undertaking clinical or practice learning must be contained within a module and be given a credit allocation. For learning of this kind, the credit allocation may not reflect the numbers of hours spent by the student in the module.
7. Assessment elements will usually be given a mark out of 100. Assessment elements may be marked differently (eg on a pass/fail basis) if there is an educational rationale.

**Pass marks**

1. The pass mark for a module offered at levels 4, 5 and 6 is 40%.
2. The pass mark for a module offered at level 7 or 8 is 50%.

**Minimum element marks**

1. For modules at levels 4, 5 and 6 that include more than one assessment element, a student will pass the module if they achieve a weighted average of 40% or above across all assessments. If a student achieves a marginal fail in one element, that failure may be condoned if marginal failure is permitted in the Scheme of Assessment for the programme and module. To be eligible for condonement, the student must achieve a mark of at least 35% in the failed assessment element.
2. For modules at level 7 that include more than one assessment element, a student will pass the module if they achieve a weighted average of 50% or above across all assessments. If a student achieves a marginal fail in one element, that failure may be condoned if marginal failure is permitted in the Scheme of Assessment for the programme and module. To be eligible for condonement, the student must achieve a mark of at least 45% in the failed assessment element.
3. If a marginal failure for an assessment element is condoned, the actual mark will not be changed.
4. There is no limit on the number of occasions on which a student might benefit from condonement, notwithstanding the provision of paragraph 42.
5. Where there is a strong educational rationale, the weighted average requirement will not apply and students will be required to achieve a minimum mark of 40% (at levels 4, 5 and 6) or 50% (at level 7) in *all* assessment elements, to pass the module.

**Assessment elements – components**

1. An assessment element may be made be made up of a collection of related, small assessment sub-tasks e.g. a collection of tests or experiments can, taken together, form a single practical assessment. These sub-tasks **are assessment components**. Students will not ordinarily be expected to pass all components to pass the element.

**Placement learning**

1. Learning undertaken by students in a placement setting falls within the scope of this framework.
2. Typically, placement learning will either:
	1. be accommodated within a module that also includes within it a related academic component (a “theory and practice” module). The intended learning outcomes for the module will reflect both its theoretical and practical components.
	2. or accommodated within a practice placement module.
3. Placement modules normally have a credit-rating of 30 credits.
4. A 30 credit “theory and practice” module will usually compromise 300 notional study hours. Hours spent by students in placement learning will be recorded in the module descriptor for the module so that the total time commitment represented by the module is clear to all students. In some cases, when time spent on placement is added, the total time commitment for a “theory and practice” module may exceed 300 hours. Figure 3 provides an example based on a “theory and practice” module that includes a five-week placement.

**Figure 3: teaching and learning strategy for a 30-credit module that includes a 5-week placement.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Contact Type: | Hours |
| Keynote Lectures | 50 |
| Tutorials and Seminars  | 30 |
| Practical Sessions (including clinical skills and communication skills sessions) | 20 |
| Directed Study  | 50 |
| Independent Study  | 50 |
| 5-week placement  | 175 |
| Total (without placement)  | **200 Hours**  |
| Total (including placement) | **375 hours** |

1. The teaching and learning strategy for a practice placement module will identify the actual hours spent by the student on placement.

**Assessment of practice modules**

1. Typically, there will be a minimum of two assessments for a 30-credit module, although this Framework allows that number to be exceeded for modules with a practice component.
2. For a “theory and practice” module, there will be a single assessment related to the academic component of the module. It may be the case that more than one assessment element is needed to reliably assess the learning outcomes related to clinical practice component for modules of this kind.
3. Practice-related assessments will be graded as pass or fail so that the mark for the module is derived solely from the academic assessment.
4. Where there are more than one practice-related assessments, these assessments will need to be passed separately. Figure 4 provides an example of an assessment strategy for a “theory and practice” module.

**Figure 4: summative assessment strategy for a 30-credit theory and practice module that includes a 5-week placement**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Assessment elements | Weighting | Achieving a pass | Deriving a mark for the module |
| Assessment 1: coursework (3000 words) | 100% | It is a requirement that all elements of assessment must be passed  | The module mark is derived from assessment 1 |
| Assessment 2: Skills portfolio  | Pass/fail |
| Assessment 3: Direct observation of practice  | Pass/fail |

**Figure 5: summative assessment strategy for a 30-credit practice placement module**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assessment elements** | **Weighting** | **Achieving a pass** | **Deriving a mark for the module** |
| Portfolio  | Pass/fail | It is a requirement that all elements of assessment must be passed | An overall mark is not derived for this module. It is graded as pass or fail.  |
| Performance Assessment | Pass/fail |
| Viva (20 mins) | Pass/fail |
| Level 6 Competencies | Pass/fail |

The purpose of the provision in this framework that requires practice-based modules and “theory and practice” modules to be graded rather than marked is to prevent these modules from having a disproportionate upward effect on the proportion of good degree conferred by a particular programme. This provision is to a certain extent aspirational. Programme teams may mark these modules if there is evidence from previous iterations of comparable modules, that modules of this kind are not “inflationary”.

**Exclusions from the framework**

1. Activities may be excluded from the framework if (i) they do not have a credit-rating whereby the credit counts towards the award and (ii) they do not amount to an additional burden for students. The Professional Training Year which is undertaken between years 2 and 3 of the Biomedical Science programme does not therefore amount to an additional burden for students and is therefore excluded.
2. The open spaces modules are included in the framework. The modules are credit-rated and will normally be taken by students as open modules. For programmes that are not credit-rated, they may be taken as extracurricular modules. Extracurricular modules are credit-rated and taken by students in addition to their course.

**Variations and derogations from the Framework**

1. If course planners request a variation or a derogation from the Common Modular Framework, it is proposed that these requests are considered by a subgroup of QAEC comprising:
	1. The Chair of QAEC
	2. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
	3. The Head of Centre for Innovation and Development in Education
	4. Director of Quality and Partnerships
2. The subgroup of QAEC will also have the authority to update the Framework.

*DB/January 2024 V5.2*

**Appendix A Credit values for programmes that lead to SGUL awards**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Qualification** | **FHEQ level[[2]](#footnote-2)** | **Minimum credits** | **Minimum credits at the level of the qualification**  |
| PhD, MD(Res) | 8 | Not typically credit rated | Not typically credit rated |
| MPhil | 7 | Not typically credit rated | Not typically credit rated |
| MA, MSc, MRes | 7 | 180 | 150 |
| MSci | 7 | 480 | 120 |
| MBBS | 7 | Not typically credit rated | Not typically credit rated |
| PgDip | 7 | 120 | 90 |
| PgCert | 7 | 60 | 40 |
| BSc with honours | 6 | 360 | 90 |
| BSc[[3]](#footnote-3) | 6 | 300 | 60 |
| Graduate Diploma | 6 | 80 | 80 |
| Graduate Certificate  | 6 | 60 | 60 |
| FdSc | 5 | 240 | 90 |
| Undergraduate Diploma/DipHE | 5 | 240 | 90 |
| Undergraduate Certificate/CertHE | 4 | 120 | 90 |
| Foundation Certificate | Not aligned to FHEQ | 120 | 120 |

1. From 2025, the Government will begin to introduce the lifelong loan entitlement (LLE), a modular student finance scheme, to provide individuals with a loan entitlement to the equivalent of 4 years of post-18 education to use over their lifetime. It will be available for both modular and full-time study with the current expectation that the LLE will be extended to study at (levels 4 to 6) from 2027. For learners wishing to access the LLE to study individual modules on a flexible basis, it is likely that the learner will have to study modules with a minimum credit value of 30 credits to be eligible for loan support. Programme teams should consider how 15 credits modules can be paired to create coherent 30 credit blocks that would be eligible for the LLE. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The QAA framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. SGUL has two models: 120 credits at level 6 (for a top up) and 60 at level 6 as an exit award from an honours programme and MBBS [↑](#footnote-ref-3)