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## Curriculum Design Framework for Taught Credit-Bearing Awards Level 3 to 7

### Introductory Notes:

- This document applies to all taught credit-bearing awards at Levels 3 to 7 inclusive. It does not include commercial programme or research degrees.
- All credit-bearing programmes of study must clearly conform to the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) (FHEQ). Non-credit bearing programmes may be developed outside FHEQ but these must adhere to UoC requirements for clarity in terms of entry requirements, content and teaching ethos, assessment methods, and operational effectiveness.
- The Curriculum Design Framework (CDF) is to be applied for all relevant programmes coming forward for Programme Initiation during 2020/21 and beyond. For all validation and review activity in 2019/20 it is expected that where practicable to do so, programmes will include elements of the CDF parameters. For support and guidance on this please contact the [Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement](#) at [CAPE@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:CAPE@cumbria.ac.uk)
- Where one of the parameters creates a tension between the PSRB requirement or the Apprenticeship Standard and the University, the PSRB or the Apprenticeship Standard requirement normally takes priority. If you are unsure or if there is a tension between the above categories advice can be sought from Director of AQD at [AQD@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:AQD@cumbria.ac.uk)
- The parameters set out in the CDF will be tested out through discussion at [validation/review or Programme Initiation](#) (if relevant).
- CAPE can support Programme Teams in developing their programme in line with the CDF requirements. We can also facilitate creative sessions for teams on innovative approaches and ideas as a lead in to Programme Initiation and design.
- If you are designing a programme for apprenticeships you should seek advice from CAPE as well as the [Apprenticeships Development Manager](#) to ensure the Programme Team understands the regulatory requirements of this type of provision and how they will be embedded into the curriculum.
- If you are considering a partnership with a College, other HEI or an overseas institution you should seek advice from [Collaborative Provision](#) in AQD so the programme team understand the regulatory requirements and logistical issues of this type of provision and how they will be embedded and addressed into the curriculum.
- [Library and Academic Advisors](#) are on hand to support you with anything related to creating and maintaining online reading lists; please visit the [Library Services for Academics page](#) for full details.
- This document will be reviewed annually in May by AQD.

## Purpose of this document

- This is a staff-facing document and an essential reference point for all subject teams developing or reviewing credit-bearing programmes at UoC at Level 3 to Level 7. It applies across campuses and for collaborative provision. It will also apply to international collaborations with the caveat that teams will need to consider aspects which may need a different approach, for example: cultural norms, business model and/or delivery patterns.
- The overall purpose of the CDF is to enable subject teams to apply their subject expertise and professional judgement in the development of programmes, within a set of agreed operational parameters. The parameters within this document exist to ensure a degree of consistency in the student and staff experience and adherence to regulatory / business processes while allowing for subject flexibility.
- Panel members considering such programmes through the processes of Programme Initiation, Validation, Minor Modification and Review must use this document to check alignment with UoC priorities in relation to Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

## The UoC mission and LTA Strategy

- We are Cumbria: we work in partnerships to develop our region’s talent and capabilities and attract new talent into our region to study and work and live. We raise aspirations and educational attainment and contribute to the social, cultural and economic well-being and prosperity of our communities. To achieve this the focus of our portfolio at UoC is on evidence-based, employability-focussed programmes.
- *“We are in the business of possibility. Empowering staff and students to succeed – bringing new thinking, skills, and opportunities. We will enhance our portfolio to offer students more choice. Crucially, we will ensure our staff are equipped, supported and valued. We will enable them to do what they do best, but also encourage them to innovate and to grow – to develop their talent and skills, while exploring new academic possibilities<sup>1</sup>.”*
- It is through the lens of this clear [mission and strategic intent](#) that as a collective we design, deliver and continuously improve our portfolio of provision and learner experience, in line with the CDF and using the [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2017-2022](#) is a key reference.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/about/publications/strategic-plan/> [accessed 011019]

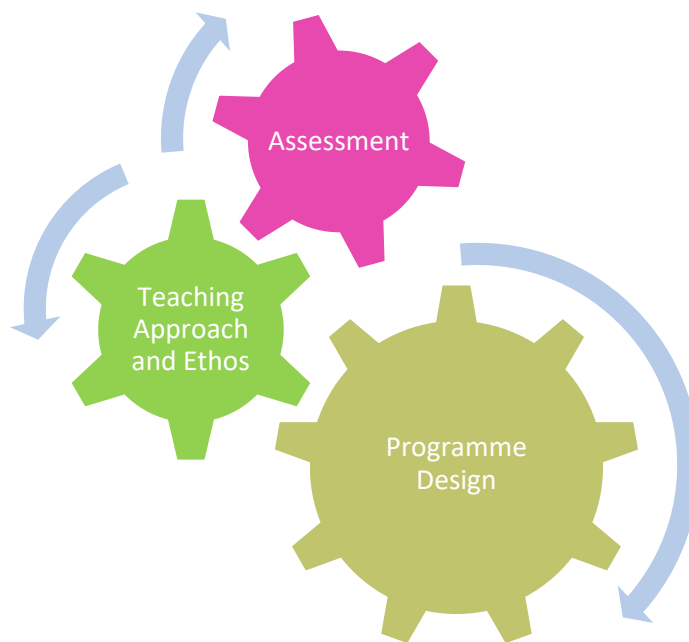
## The Overarching Principle of Curriculum Design

- This document - The Curriculum Design Framework or CDF - recognises that creating a programme of study is most effectively done when starting with the learner's experience of the subject at programme level as opposed to at module level. Consideration needs to be given to how learning at each programme level develops confidence and subject knowledge in order that learners can engage competently with the next level.
- A focus on modules as discrete units is helpful in breaking down the whole of a term, semester, or year into more manageable chunks. However, the modules must be designed so that they interlock to create a coherent experience where any repetition is purposely designed and meaningful, for example allowing learners to revisit key skills theoretical frameworks, research and/or knowledge into order to apply it in a new context.
- A coherent module structure enables and encourages learning across modules, so that skill, knowledge and confidence developed in one module are used to create new insights and faster progress in another module. At its best, this approach develops the learner's ability to work autonomously, making connections between elements of the programme, developing a holistic overview of the subject, and using critical reflection to understand their own achievements, strengths and development needs as graduates.
- A first step to curriculum design is to ensure that there is clear evidence of a market for the programme and that it fits within the [UoC strategic aims](#). Consideration must be given to UCAS trend data, information from relevant PSRBs, external and professional associations, the [industrial strategy](#), [Local Enterprise Partnership priorities](#) as well as competitors. Seeking accreditation for programmes is encouraged as this will add value to the learner experience and potential for sustained work on graduation.
- Programme Teams must engage with learners and where relevant, industry, in designing or redesigning programme and are encouraged to expand this to co-create the curriculum with existing learners and/or relevant industry partners.
- Programmes must be developed and written, as far as possible, to include a degree of future-proofing so as to eliminate or at least minimise the need for formal changes during the lifetime of the validated programme. In practice this means that modules and the programme specification should give explicit and detailed information about the elements of the programme which are definitive and characteristic of it and which would not be expected to change – such as the criteria for admission, the module and programme learning outcomes, the diet of modules, and any PSRB-related information which the relevant body requires to be part of the validation.
- Aspects which might reasonably be expected to change and be updated over time such as the detailed module content (including techniques, processes, material studied, theorists and practitioners chosen for focus), learning, teaching and assessment methods, equipment lists, placement/internship settings, etc., must be articulated so that it is clear they are indicative of the approach planned, not a definitive statement of it. Our obligations under [consumer law](#) mean that we should only make changes to a programme of study for continuing learners in genuinely exceptional circumstances. For this reason, modules and programmes should be written to give applicants and learners a clear understanding of which elements are definitive and which are indicative only.

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- The following sections give programme teams guidance and the parameters within which they should design their coherent curriculum. There are three main areas of focus:
  1. Programme Design
  2. Teaching Approach and Ethos
  3. Assessment

### Elements of Programme Design at UoC



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### Programme Design

1. The curriculum must be designed to support learner achievement through the design of holistic, coherent curriculum which becomes progressively challenging at each level using learning and achievement from earlier levels as a foundation.
2. Programme Learning Outcomes are achieved through a carefully considered design of module aims, module learning outcomes and module assessment. The Programme Learning Outcomes, expressed at each Framework for Higher Education Qualifications ([FHEQ](#)) level of study, articulate the essential skills and knowledge to be included in the modules and should be the starting point for decisions about the focus of individual modules.
3. At the programme level, careful attention must be paid to the balance of variety in teaching, learning and assessment methods, to ensure a rich and inclusive learning experience.
  - a. By rich we mean a creative approach to teaching, learning and assessment which challenges learner's assumptions, supports them to explore complex issues, enables them to critically reflect on their own experiences and encourages the learners' to be co-constructors of subject knowledge.
  - b. As an institution we must work together to ensure an inclusive learning experience in which each learner feels valued, supported and respected in their studies and on campus. Programme approaches to LTA should be designed with this in mind.
  - c. The challenge for programme teams is to ensure there is sufficient consistency in approach to learning, teaching and assessment across the programme so that learners know what to expect and are challenged by the content of the programme rather than its structural organisation.
4. In the pursuit of a coherent curriculum that will remain relevant and beneficial to the learner after graduation and in their future work-settings, programme teams must demonstrate how the following elements are woven together meaningfully with their subject content, at each level of the programme:
  - a. [Global perspectives of the discipline](#)
  - b. [employability / transferable soft skills](#)
  - c. research/professional inquiry skills
  - d. [information literacy](#)
  - e. [digital literacy](#)
  - f. academic literacy
  - g. [graduate attributes](#)
5. [Apprenticeship](#) programmes are work-integrated programmes which follow the same parameters set out in this CDF. Apprenticeship must be designed collaboratively with the employers to ensure it is relevant to the employer's needs and the employment context of their apprentices.
6. As a minimum the UoC element of the Apprenticeship must map to all of the Knowledge statements of the [relevant Apprenticeship Standard](#) and demonstrate how, through partnership working, the Skills and Behaviours will be developed in the workplace. Apprenticeship programme design must demonstrate how the development of the relevant Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours are jointly supported and tracked at both UoC and in the workplace.

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7. In order to meet the criteria of an **Apprenticeship**, the UoC elements must, in addition to adhering to the CDF, explicitly weave in the elements below into the coherent design of the programme:
- development of English
  - development of maths
  - understanding of health, safety and well-being in relation to their role and work context
  - reference to Prevent in the context of understanding how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation
  - understanding of the career opportunities open to them within this subject area
  - the promotion of democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith

FHEQ Level	Apprenticeship Equivalent
Level 3,4,5	HLA
Level 6	Degree Apprenticeship
Level 7 and 8	Degree Apprenticeship

8. Programmes which draw on a number of disciplines and/or optional modules and have a variety of modes of delivery must demonstrate that they have mechanisms in place to ensure a connected curriculum with variety and sufficient consistency which allows learners and tutors to feel they have an identity within the named programme of study. This will include, for logistical and organisation reasons, ensuring there is an agreed Module Leader across the programmes involved.
9. Independent study or research is vital for Level 6 study, related to the **FHEQ** guidance and to prepare learners for potential future progression to Level 7. Honours Degrees must include a minimum of 20 credits of independent study or research at Level 6. This may take the form of a Dissertation or a major Project. Programme teams may choose to have 40 credits of independent study or research and must be able to demonstrate adequate support for weaker learners.
10. All Honours Degrees and Apprenticeships must incorporate research methods development at Level 5 which underpins the Level 6 Dissertation or major Project unless PSRB (Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body) requirements make this impossible. The content may be in the form of a dedicated Research Methods module or woven into other Level 5 modules, with specific learning outcomes to reflect the Research Methods content. There is no requirement for an FdA/FdSc to have a Level 5 Research Methods module, however the programme design must include an element of research and the research process at Level 5 as preparation for potential progression to Level 6.
11. Top-Up Programmes may choose to have a dedicated Research Methods module in the first semester of their Level 6 to support the development of the Dissertation or Major Project. The Admissions criteria to Top-Up programmes must ensure that applicants are adequately prepared for Level 6 study and the particular content of the programme.
12. Postgraduate taught degrees must have a significant element of independent research at 40 or 60 credits. Programme teams must ensure adequate support for learners in engaging with this element via a Research Methods module or the embedding of similar content across the programme.
13. Standalone credit-bearing modules can be validated and credit from such modules may be applied at a later date to named awards through established [accreditation of prior learning \(APCL\) processes](#).

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### Titles of awards

14. Awards available at University are set out in the [Academic Regulations](#) (Taught Degree Regulations, Section B and Research Degree Regulations). Creation of new awards (e.g. BMus instead of BA Music) is possible but highly exceptional. A proposal to create an award new to the University must be made formally to the Director of AQD before the Programme Initiation process begins.
15. The Award title must clearly and accurately reflect the content and discipline of study and will be tested at Programme Initiation, if appropriate and at [Validation and/or Review](#). In designing an award title, Institutes must take into account the potential interpretation of the title in employment contexts and in the discipline nationally and internationally. Certain terms are protected for professional reasons and in all cases, titles of awards must avoid creating confusion as to whether a graduate or diplomate is eligible for professional registration or recognition.
16. The award title should not include use of the word 'in'. For example, a degree in Chemistry is a BSc (Hons) Chemistry as opposed to BSc (Hons) in Chemistry.
17. Award titles related to [Apprenticeships](#) should name the academic award rather than the [Apprenticeship Standard](#). For example, the Apprenticeship for Academic Professional may be aligned to the award of PGCert Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. In this case the Apprenticeship is the Academic Professional and the degree title is PGCert Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The two must not be mixed.

### Pathways

18. Pathways may be offered as 'entry awards' to create a set of linked programmes, for example BA (Hons) Modern Languages as an entry award will lead onto BA (Hons) French or Spanish or Japanese etc. In this case, all pathways linked to one programme will share a common entry level: Level 3 and/or 4 for undergraduate, Postgraduate Certificate stage for postgraduate taught programmes.
19. If a common Level 3 and 4 or postgraduate certificate stage is not possible for PSRB reasons, then separate named entry awards, not a pathway, must be validated.
20. Individual pathways will be distinguished through at least 60 credits of content in later stages including the Dissertation or major Project, i.e. 60 credits within the final 2 levels of study.
21. In designing pathways, programme teams must ensure that there are distinct programme learning outcomes for each pathway and that these are mapped clearly to module learning outcomes.
22. Learners must make their choices for their pathway before the end of Level 4 to allow for adequate planning.
23. Institutes should regularly review their portfolios to ensure clear distinction between all named awards, including pathways.

### Exit awards

24. Unless prevented by PSRB regulations, every programme over 60 credits must offer named exit awards.
25. The names of exit awards may vary from the names of target awards.



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26. For Honours degrees with PSRB or external professional accreditation, there must be a named exit award at Level 6, wherever practicable to do so to allow for learners who complete the programme but have not met the external professional accreditation requirements. As an example within the professional route of Adult Nursing, a learner who does not meet the NMC requirements may be eligible for an exit award of BSc Hons Nursing.
27. Exit awards will be automatically awarded if a learner withdraws early from the programme but has gained sufficient credit for the award.
28. In the case of Degree and Higher Level **Apprenticeships**, it may be possible for the apprenticeship standard to be achieved within a lower award, as determined by the relevant Apprenticeship Standard. The Standard will determine whether lower awards and exit awards are available in Degree and Higher Level Apprenticeships. Typically there is no exit award for an Apprenticeship but it is appropriate to grant an exit award to an apprentice who is unsuccessful on the Apprenticeship but has completed sufficient credit for a Certificate HE or Diploma HE.

## Programme and Module Logistics

29. All programmes must adhere to the agreed [published University start dates](#):
- Apprenticeships, part-time provision, CPD, short programmes and single modules may commence on any of the University's agreed published start dates.
  - Research degrees will commence in the month of October, January or April.
30. Modules are defined as semester-long if delivery is over the full 12 teaching week semester, or year-long if across two semesters. For the purposes of validation, timetabling and Assessment Boards, we use the following phrases for module delivery:

Label	Definition	Example
Semester 1	Run over the first 12 teaching weeks in that programme's academic cycle	Typically September to January Or January to May for January start programmes
Semester 2	Run over the second 12 teaching weeks in that programme's academic cycle	Typically January to May Or September to January for January start programmes
Semester 2E	Run over the second 12 teaching weeks in that programme's academic cycle <u>and extended</u> past the 12 weeks into the holiday period	Used exceptionally for PSRB or for teaching which requires access to a particular, agreed resource

31. Programmes are encouraged to consider using a combination of semester-long and year-long modules, where pedagogically viable, to reduce bunching of assessment.
32. The precise delivery pattern of all programmes must be articulated and approved at the point of validation and must not change without prior agreement via the [Minor Modifications Panel](#). This is due to the impact it will have on our obligations to learners under the [Consumer Markets Agency Competition and Markets Authority](#) (CMA) and the logistical challenges of ensuring the appropriate modules are presented at the right time to Assessment Boards. This latter point is key to the staff and

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student experience in allowing reasonable time for marking, internal and external moderation, confirmation of assessment results, reassessment and ultimately to allow for progression decisions to be made in a timely and fair manner.

33. Collaborative Provision partners may request a change to the order of delivery at validation or through Minor Modifications Panel where it makes pedagogical sense to do so.
34. When programme team make substantial changes to the programme, existing learners must remain on the original programme until their completion. Learners registering in the new academic cycle following the approval of changes will be taught the new version of the programme. This will mean that course teams will need to run-out the old programme alongside delivering the new programme. This is for CMA reasons as well as operational effectiveness.

### Programme and Module Patterns of Delivery

35. The pattern of delivery supports the teaching approach, ethos and accessibility of the curriculum as well as future-proofing the programme so it can be delivered to future cohorts who may have a different needs. It is important that programme teams give early consideration to patterns of delivery when designing the curriculum.

Pattern of Delivery	Definition
Block delivery	programmes or modules designed to be delivered intensively i.e. in less than a semester
Standard delivery	programmes or modules which are designed to be run in line with the standard academic calendar

36. Block delivery of modules is permitted, provided that learner workloads are balanced within a semester, and academic year, and that the mapping to [Assessment Board dates](#) allows sufficient time for marking, internal and external moderation, confirmation of assessment results, reassessment and ultimately to allow for progression decisions to be made in a timely and fair manner.
37. Programme Teams may wish to put forward a programme with a mix of module delivery patterns and this must be discussed with Director of Student and Academic Administration for logistical discussion; [CAPE](#) can advise on design principles.
  - a. An example of a mixed module delivery pattern is a programme which may have high demands in a specific skill/knowledge which needs to be delivered in an intense block before the other modules to allow learners maximum opportunity to engage with subsequent content.
38. 2-year and accelerated degrees may be developed if there is evidence that resources can support the delivery of a programme across the full calendar year. Validation will test the recruitment strategy, assessment schedule, timing of reassessment and progression opportunities and arrangements for switching to less intensive study to ensure that learners have balanced workloads and opportunities to retrieve failed modules and take breaks from study if needed.
39. There is no external or current internal requirement to validate a 3-year route alongside a 2-year or accelerated route. Where a learner wishes to transfer to another programme or suitable alternative programme, they must seek the advice of [SAAS](#) as this may have funding implications among other

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things. Teams should take potential risks to the intensity of learning into account when designing the programme.

### Programme and Module Modes of Delivery

40. As a University we are required to submit details of modes of delivery at programme and module level to our [regulatory body, The Office for Students](#). At UoC we make a distinction between 4 modes of delivery:

Mode of Delivery	Definition
<b>Blended</b>	programme delivery which as a minimum of 33% distance learning within it and the remaining balance being face to face
<b>Face to face</b>	programme delivery in which learners and staff are physically together with support from VLE and/or less than 33% distance learning
<b>Distance learning</b>	programme which is designed to be accessed online, typically at the learners' own rate and pace, with support from a tutor. There could be an element of face to face delivery through residential
<b>Work Integrated Learning</b>	programme designed to be delivered in conjunction with a specified employer and largely within a work place setting. Typically these programmes are Apprenticeships

The above categories also apply to modules.

41. In all cases the Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy for the programme must explicitly address the distinctive features of the delivery method, explain the benefits for learners, and articulate how learners are supported to understand and adapt to the different modes of delivery.

### Learner Modes of Study

42. Undergraduate programmes will normally be validated for full-time delivery mode of study with the possibility of part-time learners taking classes and exams alongside the full-time cohort, primarily for full-time learners who need temporarily to study part-time for academic or personal reasons. A dedicated part-time delivery pattern independent of full-time delivery will only be approved where there is a clear and evidenced market demand to indicate that viable separate cohorts will be recruited.

43. Integrated foundation years and year-long sandwich placements must be validated and offered on a full time basis only, but may be taken by learners whose main mode of study for the rest of their programme is part-time.

44. **Apprenticeships** can be full-time or part-time depending on the employment contract of the apprentice.

45. Provided that apprentices are undertaking [off-the-job-training](#) for at least 21 hours per week for a minimum of 24 weeks per academic year, the **apprenticeship** programme should normally be validated on a full-time basis only.

46. If the University validates an [Apprenticeship](#) where the duration of the academic award component is shorter than the maximum duration set out in the [Standard](#), off-the-job training hours must continue

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to be provided for the equivalent of the maximum duration in order to meet regulatory and funding body requirements.

47. Funding received for Apprenticeships covers the entirety of the **Apprenticeship** regardless of the length of time it takes for an individual to complete. Due to this, programme teams must ensure there are early indicators of additional support needs to mitigate intercalation or repeat years as these have financial implications for Institutes.
48. Postgraduate taught provision may be validated for up to 3 modes of study:
  - a. full-time delivery
  - b. dedicated part-time delivery
  - c. full-time and part-time students to share delivery on a planned in-fill basis
49. Collaborative Provision with partners may be validated for up to 3 modes of study:
  - a. full-time delivery
  - b. dedicated part-time delivery
  - c. full-time and part-time students to share delivery on a planned in-fill basis

## Module Sizes

50. The University's standard module size is 20 credits. Programmes will normally be designed on the basis of 20, 40 and 60 credit modules.
51. Smaller modules must not be used, as they lead to a fragmented learning experience and increased workload for academic and professional services staff. Modules of less than 20 credits will only be considered where there is a compelling case to meet PSRB requirements or in designing standalone modules for a specific commercial market.
52. Modules larger than 20 credits can have a positive impact in creating a more sustained learning experience but they may disadvantage learners who fail one or more components and may be unable to progress or be considered for compensation. They may also have a distorting effect in the process of degree classification.
53. Validation will test the appropriateness of the use of 40 or 60 credit modules to ensure that any impact on learners' progression and on degree classification is understood. Validation panels will pay particular attention to the way formative and interim summative assessment is used in a larger module to provide progress checks and to prevent bunching of assessment at the end of a semester.
54. When using modules of different sizes within a level of study, the learner workload both for study and assessment must be balanced across the year so as to avoid overload at particular times.
55. Where programme design, by reason of the module sizes, means that all modules must be successfully completed before progression so that learners meet the [standard progression requirements](#), this must be made very clear in information for applicants and learners. An example of this would be a programmes with a 2x60 credit modules in one of its levels as it would mean that to pass 100 credits to meet the minimum progression requirement both modules would need to be passed.

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Module Status

56. Modules are classified as core, compulsory or optional:

Module Status	Definition
Core	must be taken and passed for the target award to be achieved. Core modules are reserved for use in programmes carrying PSRB accreditation where the PSRB makes this a specific requirement, or where a specific health and safety issue requires their use.
Compulsory	must be taken by all learners on the award, but assessment may be condoned within the defined limits set out in the academic regulations.
Optional	provides learners with a choice of modules to study. They must be approved as part of the programme at validation and be relevant to the validated award.

57. The number of optional modules validated or adopted for a programme must be proportionate to the predicted cohort size so that modules are pedagogically and financially viable, this is key to mitigate against poor learner satisfaction, potential complaints and because of our obligations under [CMA](#) to not make changes to a programme once the applicant has confirmed they accept the offer of study at UoC.

58. The overall number of optional modules permitted set out below. Should a programme demonstrate a trend of large intakes over a period of 3 years of 50 or more learners, the number of optional modules available can be reviewed with the agreement of the Director of Institute and the Director of AQD.

59. Awards of 60 credits or less will comprise only compulsory and/or core modules.

60. For Awards of 120 credits or more:

Level	Amount of Optional Modules permitted
Level 3	No student optional module choice (i.e. all modules core or compulsory)
Level 4	No student optional module choice (i.e. all modules core or compulsory)
Level 5	20 credits of student optional module choice (i.e. a minimum of 100 credits core/compulsory)
Level 6	Up to 40 credits of student optional module (i.e. minimum of 80 credits core/compulsory – to include the dissertation)
Level 7	PGCert: no student options module choice (i.e. all modules core or compulsory)  PGDip: up to 20 credits of student optional module choice (i.e. minimum of 100 credits core/compulsory)  MA / MSc: up to 20 credits of student optional module choice (i.e. minimum of 160 credits core/compulsory to include the dissertation)

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61. Programme teams may wish to have strategically timetabled optional modules where it is clear to learners that in the academic cycle A optional modules 1 and 2 will run and in academic cycle B optional modules 3 and 4 will run. This is perhaps more relevant for Postgraduate programmes. This model must have a clear pedagogical and resource rationale which needs to be presented at Programme Initiation stage.
62. In the pursuit of a connected curriculum, programme teams must map, within the [Programme Specification](#), all core, compulsory and optional modules validated to form part of the programme so that it is clear how the modules interlock and how each contributes to the learner's achievement of the Programme Learning Outcomes.
63. Modules can only be validated with pre-requisites, (i.e. modules that must be passed before another specified module can be taken) where required to meet PSRB rules or to ensure safe practice.

### Contact time per Module

64. Contact time is an important consideration in the development of a programme which is designed to meet the needs of our learners and our community.
65. The sector standard total learning hours for any module are notionally 10 hours per credit or 200 hours per 20 credit module which can be split between contact time and directed and/or independent study depending on the subject requirements. The balance of these hours depends on:
  - a. The subject needs
  - b. The learner needs
  - c. Resource available
  - d. Academic year
66. The total learning hours are typically divided into:
  - a. Scheduled teaching time – e.g. lecture, seminar, supervised studio time
  - b. Independent learning – e.g. independent VLE activity, research time
  - c. Directed learning – e.g. tutorials, studio time, VLE activity
  - d. A worked example is:
    - i. Scheduled teaching time – 33 hours (11 x 3 hour workshops)
    - ii. Independent learning – 155 hours
    - iii. Directed learning – 12 hours doing directed VLE tasks
67. For pure distance learning programmes will typically have all of their learning hours online (asynchronous) and the programme team must produce a pedagogical justification how the learning hours are categorised taking into the account the delivery pattern and the types of tasks and activities which will drive the learning. A worked example is:
  - 20 credits = 200 hours of learning of which:
    - i. 10 hours of recorded lectures
    - ii. 20 hours of tasks / activities, monitored by the tutor
    - iii. 10 hours of peer-led discussion
    - iv. 160 hours of independent (non-directed learning)
68. The balance of how the overall module learning hours are used is for the programme team to decide. The rationale must reflect the content and the learning, teaching and assessment approach for the module and the programme. While there may legitimately be different proportions of contact between modules, attention must be paid in designing modules to the following:

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- a. that the contact is of a kind, and in a quantity, that will effectively deliver the required learning activity
  - b. that there is consistency (and a transparent rationale if not) in the amount of contact time validated for modules of the same size within a level of study
  - c. that the kind and quantity of contact across a programme of study support learners' increasing autonomy and independence as learners
  - d. an appropriate balance of contact between tutors, technicians and Graduate Teaching Assistants
69. Programme Teams must also provide guidance to learners on how to make effective use of their independent learning time and may wish to seek advice from [Academic Support](#), the [Library](#) or CAPE to provide this guidance. Examples could be: how to read critically, how to make effective notes, relevant online journals, use of PebblePad, setting up a VLE peer discussion board.
70. Some PSRB accreditations require additional contact or learning time which must be passed but is not for credit – see the section on Qualificatory Practice Units.
71. For **Apprenticeship** provision, there must be at least 20% [Off-the-Job training](#) which comprises the academic delivery. This must include all aspects of their apprentices programme – contact time, study time, assessment preparation and assessment. Tripartite Review meetings do not count as contact time.
72. As a guide only, programme teams may wish to use the following to start their discussions on contact time for modules:

FHEQ Level	Starting Point for Discussion
Level 3	48 contact hours per 20 credit module
Level 4	48 contact hours per 20 credit module
Level 5	36 contact hours per 20 credit module
Level 6	36 contact hours per 20 credit module
Level 7	24 contact hours per 20 credit module 36 hours for a Level 7 PGCE

## Qualificatory Practice Units

73. A QPU is a specialist non-credit bearing unit of learning which is directly linked to PSRB requirements. A QPU is by definition only used when there are additional PSRB requirements that cannot be allocated to a credit-bearing module for pedagogic or logistical/practical reasons.
74. A QPU can exist at any level of a programme and must be assigned an academic level. It can be semesterised or year-long and appear in one or more levels, as required. It is assessed on a PASS/FAIL basis.
75. Programme teams must make it clear to applicants and learners that to pass the award, learners must successfully complete the QPU but that as it is PASS/FAIL (i.e. not graded) it won't affect the final degree classification.
76. Where a QPU exists, there should be a route available for the learners who do not wish to engage with the PSRB route or who are not successful with the QPU pass requirements. This route may be an exit or alternative target award.

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77. QPUs cannot be used either for:
- a. Extending the scheduled learning and teaching hours on a credit-bearing module where there is no PSRB requirement to do so.
- OR
- b. Enrichment or enhancement activity (for example trips, excursions)
78. Should a non PSRB programme wish to have a work-placement element which is integral and something a learner must complete in order to achieve the award, this must be achieved through the credit structure of that award using a sandwich year of 120 credits, a placement semester of 60 credits, or a placement module.

## Placement Learning

79. Programme teams may choose to include placements as modules in the programme design.
80. Programmes teams must design the assessment of placements to ensure that assessment relates to learning that can only be acquired through effective engagement with the agreed placement.
- a. For example, a placement could be appropriately assessed through a reflection of learning from the placement. A report about how the placement organisation develops its staff would not be appropriate as this knowledge could have been gained without the learner doing the placement.
  - b. Reassessment of placements will normally require the placement to be repeated. The exception to this is where the original assessment comprised 2 pieces of assessment for example the completion of a specific number of hours of placement plus a reflective journal. A learner who passes the placement element but fails the reflective journal would be reassessed on the journal only.
81. Should a programme wish to encourage learners to take up an optional work placement or experience that is not credit-bearing but is supported by the University, this can be achieved by signposting learners to My Career Enriched <https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Learner-Life/careers/Finding-jobs-and-getting-experience/>.

## Negotiated Learning

82. Negotiated Learning modules are typically modules which a learner chooses in order to extend their knowledge and understanding in area of study which complements the programme but **the subject** is not offered within the existing validated curriculum. Such modules are self-directed by the learner and usually have up to 5 hours of tutorial support offered to ensure the learner is making progress. Prior to starting on a negotiated learning module, the learner must enter into a formal agreement with the Programme Leader to:
- a) Ensure the topic complements the curriculum and does not duplicate previous or planned future study
  - b) Confirm the name of the tutor with relevant expertise who will support them on the module
  - c) Agree the schedule of tutorials



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- d) Agree, through compilation of the Assessment Brief, an appropriate method of assessment that complements the assessment strategy across the curriculum **as specified within a learning contract, agreed with the personal tutor or programme leader**

83. Negotiated Learning modules must follow the standard credit size of multiples of 20 and be validated within the curriculum

84. The maximum credits of Negotiated Learning allowed per level is:

FHEQ Level	Maximum number of credits for Negotiated Learning
Level 3	0
Level 4	20
Level 5 and Level 6 (for Honours programmes)	40 credits which can be distributed flexibly across Level 5 and 6 for a 3 year programme
Level 6 (Top Up programmes)	20
Level 7	20

## Teaching Approach and Ethos

85. UoC programmes *“are in the business of possibility. Empowering staff and learners to succeed – bringing new thinking, skills and opportunities”*<sup>2</sup>. We do this through proactively working in partnership with and listening to the needs of our community, our industry partners and our learners. The impact of this is that our learners feel valued and supported; they react positively to the level of intellectual challenge of the curriculum and how it is taught and assessed and they value our work as tutors and professional service teams<sup>3</sup>.
86. Our learners have an active role to play in their learning and this is purposefully designed into the way we approach teaching, learning and assessment. We engage learners with developing knowledge and skills in partnership with the programme team and their peers and make it clear that they are active, co-creators of knowledge within their chosen subject. This approach and ethos requires that teaching and learning at UoC:
- a. Is **rich**, meaning we adopt a creative approach to teaching, learning and assessment which challenges learner’s assumptions, supports them to explore complex issues, enables them to critically reflect on their own experiences and encourages the learners’ to be co-constructors of subject knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/about/publications/strategic-plan/> [accessed 031019]

<sup>3</sup> Summary taken from the NSS 2018 qualitative comments

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- b. Is **inclusive**, meaning we adopt teaching and learning approaches which recognise “all student’s entitlement to a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences”<sup>4</sup>. In the pursuit of supporting learners with this, programme teams are encouraged to create balanced reading lists in terms of **protected characteristics** such as gender and ethnicity.
- c. **Challenges learners** positively including the challenge of reflecting on their own assumptions and ways of thinking
- d. Is **innovative**, **engaging** and based on a **communicative** approach
- e. Is **tailored** to the needs of the individual learners
- f. Is **accessible** to the widest range of learning preferences, using multi-modal delivery and a range of activities to facilitate this
- g. **Anticipates** potential barriers to learning and puts plans in place beforehand to mitigate them, should they occur
- h. Makes effective use of **peer power** so learners develop each other and themselves
- i. Includes reference to **scholarly activity** and **cutting edge research** so that learners have critical encounters with knowledge at module and programme level
- j. Is **practice-based** with an experiential focus, wherever appropriate and feasible
- k. Is linked to the current and **potential future interests** of learners to engage them, and to provide an appropriate platform from which they can be challenged and motivated to stretch their minds
- l. Supports progress into graduate work through the development of **skills and behaviours** which will support our learners in the workplace: **employment-specific and transferable soft skills, academic, digital and, information literacy skills** (see point 4)

87. **Apprenticeships** are the clearest examples of how we develop employability-focussed programmes. The teaching approach for such programmes is best articulated as a work-integrated programme underpinned by research and/or scholarly activity which enables the apprentice to progress within their field of employment and which delivers tangible benefits to the employer.
88. The work-integrated nature of the **Apprenticeship** programme means that module-based study and activity in the workplace coherently support the development of the apprentice towards the Gateway. Programme teams need to demonstrate how the teaching, learning and assessment approach explicitly encourages this.
89. Programme Teams are encouraged to engage in in-house and external CPD opportunities to maintain currency in the field and in approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in Higher Education. This includes the PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and routes to becoming a Fellow via Advance HE.
90. Teams delivering **Apprenticeship** provision are required by the regulatory body to ensure they remain industry relevant. Teams must have a plan for how this will happen over a period of time which is

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<sup>4</sup> [HEA framework for student access, retention, attainment and progression](#) [accessed 161019]

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agreed within their Institute. The University offers sabbaticals, [scholarly and research activity schemes](#) which could be used, among other routes, to support this requirement.

### Assessment

91. Assessment should be used as a driver for learning with meaningful, authentic assessment types used at every level. Assessments need to be designed to enable learners to engage deeply with their subject and the Learning Outcomes of the module and ultimately the programme as well as prepare them for graduate level work. As the learners progress through their programme, the assessments tasks must become more challenging and build on the learning from previous levels, rather than repeating it.
92. The approach programme teams must take to assessment is a programme-level strategy for how assessments will operate and interlock across the programme rather than at module level.
93. Essay Mills remain on the rise and programme teams are asked to address this and wider plagiarism concerns through the effective design of assessments. A guide [to effective assessment design](#) is available on the Academic Toolkit.
94. Text-based assignment questions must be rotated on a 3 year cycle in order to maintain a robust assessment approach and to ensure that in-programme plagiarism is minimised. This means that each assessment (e.g. essay question, performance title, exam question) cannot be used more than once in any 3 year period. Programme teams must keep their own records of the rotation of assessments, AQD can provide a template if required.
  - a. A worked example is: *“a 10 minute presentation critiquing learning styles in Education”* used in 2018/19 could not be used again until 2022/23. Different titles addressing the same Module Learning Outcomes would need to be created by the module team for 2019/20 and 2020/21.
95. The standard expectation is that every module of 20, 40 or 60 credits will have a maximum of 2 pieces of summative assessment. Exceptions to this must be justified by reference to absolute PSRB requirements or a detailed assessment strategy with attention to learner and staff workload and the constructive use of assessment across a programme of study.
96. Assessments, including reassessments, must be spread out throughout the module to avoid bunching of deadlines. Programme teams are expected to work collectively to ensure no more than 2 summative submissions (e.g. assignment deadlines, exams or in-class tests) in any one week for an individual learner.

### Assessment Types and Tasks

97. There must be a clear link between the assessment task and type and the learning outcomes for the module.
98. Module learning outcomes are the building blocks of Level and Programme Learning Outcomes. Assessment tasks should enable learners to demonstrate their achievement of the module learning outcomes with as little repetitive assessment of the same Programme Learning Outcomes at module level as possible.
99. The challenge of assessment tasks increases as the programme progresses (acknowledging that writing less can be more challenging) through the levels of study, commensurate with the number of credits.

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The [FHEQ Level Descriptors](#) must be referenced to ensure that the learning and its assessment are at the nationally expected levels for each stage of study.

100. Assessment tasks must be varied in form so that learning is tested in different ways; programmes must include assignment types that develop and evidence the learner's employability skills and graduate attributes. This variety should then be repeated at subsequent levels in the programme so that the learners can act on feedback and demonstrate their learning through assessment.
101. For stand-alone Top-Up programmes, the summative assessment types must be repeated across the two semesters and the second semester must use assessment types that have been used either summatively or formatively in the previous semester.
102. For **Apprenticeships**, formative and/or summative assessment must prepare apprentices for the type of assessment they will encounter at the [End Point Assessment](#). This may mean mirroring the EPA assessment type in the final 2 levels of the academic element so that apprentices can practice the assessment type and have the opportunity to build on the experience.
103. Digital skills, as a key graduate attribute, must be included in assignment requirements at all levels.
104. Where portfolio assessment is used, the number, type and weighting of components within the portfolio must be clearly articulated within the Module Descriptor Form and tested at validation. The use of a Portfolio must be for either:
  - A coherent collection of work where the subject requires this e.g. Arts

OR

  - Small pieces of work which form part of a cohesive whole e.g. evidence of meeting a standard in apprenticeships
105. In the process of programme/curriculum and assessment design, teams will be supported through CAPE for example via CPD sessions, resources on [Academic Toolkit](#), templates for assessment maps, assessment briefs.
106. There is no minimum or maximum expectations for word length, minutes or number of artefacts for Module Assessment. Programme teams must demonstrate through their assessment strategy and at validation a holistic and consistent approach across level and/or the programme to:
  - Weighting of assessments
  - Duration, length, number of artefacts required
  - Level of challenge/progression from previous level
  - Task type
  - The inclusion of Graduate attributes
  - The inclusion of digital literacy skills
107. Assessment tasks must be of a length to enable all the relevant learning outcomes to be tested, giving learners sufficient space or time to demonstrate their learning with reasonable concision. Programme teams should consider the sector discipline norms for the presentation of information and the form of the task when deciding the length/duration/scale of a task.
108. While some variation is legitimate, attention must be given within programmes to establishing consistency of practice across modules in terms of the length of comparable tasks. Penalties for not meeting the minimum or maximum length decided by the Programme Team must be clearly explained in the module handbook.

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109. Spelling, punctuation and grammar may only be assessed summatively when it is articulated as a specific module learning outcome. Programme Teams can choose to highlight spelling, punctuation and grammar errors to learners when they mark and give feedback but it must be clear that these errors do not attract penalties. The exception to this is when the error changes the meaning and has an impact on the content/argument in which case the criteria will indicate poor argument, weak structure, irrelevant section or poor knowledge.
- a. If there are concerns identified about a learner's level of English (as either a native speaker or international learner) they should be referred to [Academic Student Support](#).
110. It is expected that, as part of the development of transferable skills, learners will work and be assessed in peer groups as part of their degree. A case for non-inclusion of group work will be tested at Validation, and will be approved only exceptionally. For group work assessed summatively at Levels 5 to 7 the grade awarded must contain an element of individual work, such as a reflection in which the learner evaluates their contribution to the group.

### Use of Diagnostic and Formative Assessment

111. In order for programme teams to develop their teaching and learning approach to the needs of the individuals on their modules they may consider including an element of diagnostic assessment early in the first semester of study. Diagnostic assessment must be carefully designed and administered to prevent learners feeling that they are being tested despite having met the programme entry requirements. CAPE can support programme teams to determine the content and logistics of a [diagnostic assessment](#). Note that for **Apprenticeship** provision the use of diagnostic assessment is required, for other provision it is advisory.
112. In each level of a programme and in each semester there must be some form of formative assessment, which directly relates to a summative piece (not necessarily using the same task type). Normally every module will include formative assessment and this will be specified on the module descriptor form.
113. The assessment type used in a formative assessment can link to an assessment type in another module and/or level so that broader learning can be applied and links can be made across the curriculum.
114. Formative assessment does not contribute to the length or mark of the summative assessment.

### Assessment Briefs

115. A programme approach to [Assessment Briefs](#) is paramount. Programme Leaders and Module Leaders must routinely check that the individual assessment briefs are coherent and consistent, enabling learners to build their confidence and assessment literacy. Assessment briefs must include:
- a. Assessment task (what the learners need to do)
  - b. Marking criteria or the rubric (what are the academic team looking for)
  - c. Details of how and where to submit the assessment.
  - d. Technical details such as file type, file size or length of recording.
  - e. Turnaround time (when will it be marked)
  - f. Feedback date and method of feedback
  - g. The module learning aims being assessed

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- h. Digital / transferable skills being developed
- 116. Online submission should be used where possible for assessments.
- 117. There must be programme level approach to submission deadlines with teams choosing 1 of the following submission times for their programme:

Choose ONE day	Choose ONE submission deadline time
Tuesday / Wednesday / Thursday	9am / 1pm / 4pm

- 118. Consistency of submission deadlines is vital so that Programme Teams can fairly apply the regulations for late submission of work: any work not received on the specified hour will have penalties applied.
- 119. Teams need to record their submission deadlines on SITS.
- 120. Validation panels will scrutinise sample assignment briefs, including assessment criteria, for one or more assignments at each level of the programme to ensure that academic standards are secure and that there is transparency for learners.
- 121. External examiners often comment on the range and quality of sources that students cite in their assessment tasks and reading lists can play an important role in helping students to achieve the breadth and depth required. Research informed and up-to-date reading lists provide students with a starting point for accessing the relevant literature and resources underpinning the teaching of a module. The online reading list system (OneList) can also be an effective vehicle for signposting students toward wider library resources to enable intellectual discovery and independent research.

**Assessment Criteria and Feedback**

- 122. The use of rubrics is just one potential solution to consistency in assessment (criteria for and marking of) and feedback hence the encouragement to use them. However using rubrics is a choice for Institutes and their Programme Teams. The key is that teams have a consistent approach to assessment and feedback which includes effective design and use of marking criteria or a rubric.
- 123. Allocation of grades (marking) must explicitly reference assessment criteria linked to the module learning outcomes, and feedback to learners must demonstrate how the mark was derived in relation to performance against the criteria.
- 124. The [UoC Grade descriptors](#) are to be used as a guide to support staff and learners in developing and interpreting marking criteria; they may also be used to demonstrate differentiation and progression between levels for similar types of assessment.
- 125. The [University Academic Regulations](#) give guidance on the use of anonymous marking which should be adhered to wherever it is practicable to do so for example where there are low numbers on the module anonymous marking may be less relevant. In such cases, Programme Teams must make it clear to learners the steps they have taken to remove unconscious bias from the assessment process.

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126. In all cases, feedback on learner work should be individualised and make reference to progress made from previous assessments in that module.

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**Annex A: Overview of Programme Structures**

**Cert HE (120 credits)**

	<b>CORE MODULE</b>	<b>COMPULSORY MODULES</b>	<b>OPTIONAL MODULES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Level 4</b>	120 credits		0 credits	120@L4

**Foundation Degree, DipHE and DPS (240 credits)**

	<b>CORE MODULE</b>	<b>COMPULSORY MODULES</b>	<b>OPTIONAL MODULES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Level 4</b>	120 credits		0 credits	120 @L4
<b>Level 5</b>	0 - 120 credits		0-20 credits	120 @L5

**Honours degrees (360 credits)**

	<b>CORE MODULE</b>	<b>COMPULSORY MODULES</b>	<b>OPTIONAL MODULES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Level 4</b>	120 credits		0 credits	120 @L4
<b>Level 5</b>	0 - 120 credits		0-20 credits	120 @L5
<b>Level 6</b>	0 – 120 credits (including dissertation)		0-40 credits	120@L6

**Honours degrees with foundation entry (480 credits)**

	<b>CORE MODULE</b>	<b>COMPULSORY MODULES</b>	<b>OPTIONAL MODULES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Level 3</b>	120 credits		0 credits	120 @L4
<b>Level 4</b>	120 credits		0 credits	120 @L4
<b>Level 5</b>	0 - 120 credits		0-20 credits	120 @L5
<b>Level 6</b>	0 – 120 credits (including dissertation)		0-40 credits	120@L6

**Top-up degrees and Graduate Diplomas (120 credits)**

	<b>CORE MODULE</b>	<b>COMPULSORY MODULES</b>	<b>OPTIONAL MODULES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Level 6</b>	0 – 120 credits (including dissertation)		0-40 credits	120@L6



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Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits)

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
<b>Level 7</b>	0 – 60 credits		0 credits	60@L7

Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
<b>Level 7</b>	0 – 120 credits		0-40 credits	120@L7

Masters degrees

	CORE MODULE	COMPULSORY MODULES	OPTIONAL MODULES	TOTAL
<b>Level 7</b>	0 – 180 credits (including dissertation)		0-40 credits	180@L7

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### Annex B: Glossary

CDF – Curriculum Design Framework

CAPE – Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement, part of the Academic Quality and Development service

AQD - Academic Quality and Development service

FHEQ – Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

PSRB – Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body

NMC – Nursing and Midwifery Council

SAAS – Student and Academic Administration Service

Collaborative Provision – provision that includes one or more partner delivering a programme under the UoC name (e.g. an FE college, an overseas university, a local business)

Programme Initiation – the process used to put forward ideas for new degree programmes over 60 credits

Pre-validation Scrutiny – the first stage of the validation process during which the full set of documentation is scrutinised and tested against the threshold criteria and CDF

Validation – the second and final stage of the validation process during which the full set of documentation, enhanced from the Pre-validation Scrutiny process, is scrutinised and tested against the threshold criteria and CDF

Programme Learning Outcomes – learning outcomes (i.e. what learners will be able to do by the end of the programme) expected for the full award/programme and mapped to subject benchmarking

Module Aims – description of what learners will learn in the module

Module Learning Outcomes – what learners will be expected to be able to do by the end of the module

Information literacy - is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to reach and express informed views and to engage fully with society.

Top-Up programme – a programme which comprises 120 credits at level 6 and leads to the award of Bachelor (Hons); students normally move to this after completing an HND or Foundation Degree

Exit award – an award given to a learner who does not complete the award for which they registered. An exit award is therefore at a lower level of study or prestige to the one they enrolled for. A student who fails the final year of their full Bachelor (Hons) degree but successfully completed the Level 5 modules may get an exit award of a Diploma in Higher Education

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Gateway – the period of time, typically 3 months, during which an apprentice is preparing for their End Point Assessment because their employer agrees that they are ready to attempt it

Annex C: Apprenticeship Provision

Apprenticeship programmes at all Levels must adhere to the CDF; there are specific items which related only to Apprenticeships are these are:

5	6	7	17	28	46	47
71	83	84	86	98	100	107