



Queen Mary  
University of London

# Principles of Academic Degree Programme Design

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# Principles of Academic Degree Programme Design

These programme design principles are designed to support the University's 2030 Strategy. Within that overarching 2030 Strategy, our educational strategy states that our programmes are always devised with the student at the centre, and are coherent, easy to navigate and support overall progression.

The strategy also highlights that the Queen Mary Graduate Attributes are embedded in all of our programmes, so that our students develop the knowledge, skills, adaptability, and resilience to succeed in an ever-changing global job market and become active global citizens. The following principles have been developed to support delivery of the strategy.

Principles	Explanation	Driver	Support
<b>1. Clear Programme leadership</b>	<p>There should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear leadership of a programme, with a clear oversight of component modules.</li> <li>• Clear accountability across all modules comprising the programmes.</li> <li>• A minimum of two meetings per annum between Programme Leads and Module Organisers.</li> </ul>	Clear educational oversight	<a href="#"><u>Academic Leadership Development – Queen Mary Academy</u></a>
<b>2. Coherent Programmes</b>	<p>A Programme should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherence and should be distinct and defined. Core and/or compulsory modules ensure programme coherence in that all students graduating from a defined programme must have at least completed all modules defined as core and compulsory, and passed all modules defined as core. Module alignment within programmes is explained in the appendix.</li> <li>• Pathways and support for students to select modules.</li> <li>• Programme and associated modules that adhere to the Queen Mary Academic Credit Framework.</li> <li>• Elective modules may serve an important purpose in allowing students to personalise their learning, selecting options that allow students to specialise and focus on knowledge, skills and behaviours / attributes most appropriate to their plans for postgraduate employment or further study.</li> <li>• Elective modules can be considered as grouped electives or as free choice elective modules, as defined in the appendix.</li> </ul>	Compliance with OFS Condition B1 which states that “each higher education course is coherent”.	<a href="#"><u>Programme level outcomes mapping tool</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Queen Mary academic credit framework</u></a>

Principles	Explanation	Driver	Support
<b>3. Programme Aims, Programme Level Outcomes and Programme Mapping</b>	<p>A Programme should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear programme aims articulating the purpose of the programme and clearly explaining what a learner is expected to know and be able to demonstrate after completion of the programme.</li> <li>• Programme level outcomes that are holistic and aspirational and lead to strong Graduate Outcomes and not simply the sum of the relevant module learning outcomes.</li> <li>• Programme level outcomes mapped to module learning outcomes and the component module learning outcomes should be consistent with the programme descriptors for awards at the relevant level and constructively aligned with assessment.</li> <li>• Clear stages for the programme allowing for academic progression.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, all programmes should comply with the requirements of relevant external regulators, for example professional and statutory regulatory bodies (PSRB's), the institute for apprenticeships and technical education (IFATE) and Ofsted.</p>	<p>Compliance with OFS Condition B1 states that “‘educational challenge’ means a challenge that is no less than the minimum level of rigour and difficulty reasonably expected of the higher education course, in the context of the subject matter and level of the course.”</p>	<p><a href="#">Programme level outcomes mapping tool</a></p> <p><a href="#">Intended Learning Outcomes – Queen Mary Academy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies</a></p> <p><a href="#">SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education</a></p> <p><a href="#">QAA Subject Benchmark Statements</a></p>
<b>4. Programme Assessment Mapping</b>	<p>A Programme should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructive alignment of learning outcomes and assessment at module level.</li> <li>• Parity in terms of quantity of assessment across modules.</li> <li>• Variety of assessment types across the programme.</li> <li>• Formative assessment and opportunities for students to act on feedback.</li> <li>• Progression of knowledge and skill development across programme assessment.</li> <li>• Programme level mapping of assessment undertaken to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Any overassessment or gaps in assessment of learning outcomes.</li> <li>– Assessment bunching (with regards to deadlines and submission dates).</li> <li>– Opportunities for programme level assessment approaches and/or integrative assessments.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Compliance with OFS Condition B4 which states that “providers must ensure that students are assessed effectively.”</p> <p>We need to reduce overassessment and assessment overlaps.</p> <p>The responses to the NSS questions on assessment mean action needs to be taken.</p> <p>Assessment design to improve academic integrity (Generative AI).</p>	<p><a href="#">Assessment Handbook - Policy Zone</a></p> <p><a href="#">Assessment and Feedback – Queen Mary Academy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Open and bespoke workshops – Queen Mary Academy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Generative AI and Chat GPT - a guide for Queen Mary staff</a></p> <p><a href="#">Programme level outcomes mapping tool</a></p> <p><a href="#">Assessment case studies - Queen Mary Academy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Feedback case studies – Queen Mary Academy</a></p>

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<p><b>5. Programme teaching and learning approaches and activities</b></p>	<p>In the design of the programme, consideration should be given to the pedagogic approach to maximise student engagement, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACE approach</li> <li>• Active Learning</li> <li>• Co-creation</li> <li>• Peer led team learning</li> <li>• Team Based Learning</li> <li>• Problem based Learning</li> </ul> <p>Be clear on the delivery modes used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In room</li> <li>• MME hybrid teaching (where applicable)</li> <li>• Digital content and delivery (where applicable)</li> <li>• Online learning - Asynchronous (where applicable)</li> </ul> <p>And student work should be designed to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent study and formative work</li> <li>• A range of learning activities as describe by the ACE (Active Curriculum for Excellence) approach to enhance student engagement.</li> </ul> <p>Programme design should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support students' transition from one level to another to complement the distinctiveness of different levels.</li> <li>• Ensure that a suitable range of learning resources is made available, and that they are accessible, regularly refreshed, and represent a diversity of perspectives.</li> <li>• Account for both the digital and physical infrastructure required to support the learning activities, consulting with school staff, estates, ITS, and library as appropriate.</li> <li>• Include the Principles for Inclusive Curriculum covering the content, delivery, and assessment across all its component modules.</li> <li>• Consider embedding the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (QM Environmental Sustainability Policy 2020).</li> </ul>	<p>Our strategy states that we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the holistic education and learning experience we provide is world-leading, co-created with students and employers as appropriate, and reflects our diverse and international community.</li> <li>• To deliver our cutting-edge curricula, we will develop, implement and promote new pedagogical approaches using the latest, or our own bespoke, technological advances to enhance the student experience.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">The Queen Mary Education Approach</a></p> <p><a href="#">Open and bespoke workshops – Queen Mary Academy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Enhancing asynchronous education course - CPD Training</a></p> <p><a href="#">Inclusive Curriculum – Queen Mary Academy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Co-creation: Educators and learners as change makers – Queen Mary Academy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sustainability in the Curriculum – Queen Mary Academy</a></p>
<p><b>6. Planning staff-student contact</b></p>	<p>A Programme should have clearly articulated staff-student contact opportunities.</p>		<p><a href="#">Co-chairing and co-creating in SSLCs course - CPD Training</a></p> <p><a href="#">Co-creation: Educators and learners as change makers – Queen Mary Academy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Effective Advising and signposting course - CPD training</a></p>

Principles	Explanation	Driver	Support
<b>7. Employability</b>	<p>A programme should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employability skills clearly identified and developed (with input from Careers and Enterprise as appropriate).</li> <li>• Graduate attributes identified and embedded in curriculum through teaching and learning, authentic assessment, academic advising, and other activities.</li> <li>• Knowledge Skills and Behaviours clearly identified for Degree Apprenticeship programmes.</li> <li>• Enterprise skills identified where appropriate.</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship identified where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>Compliance with OFS Condition B3 4c – Graduate employment and progression to professional jobs and postgraduate study.</p>	<p><a href="#">Graduate Attributes – Queen Mary Academy</a></p>

## Scope

**These programme design principles are intended, in the first instance, to inform and support the design of new undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes offered by QMUL, so as to ensure alignment to the University’s 2030 Strategy and the OFS Conditions of Registration.**

Alignment to these principles for degree programmes approved prior to 2023/24 will be achieved through the process of programme review / continuous programme monitoring and enhancement.

While the principles described above should inform and apply to transnational education (TNE) programmes as far as is practically possible, it is appreciated that such programmes may not fall under the auspices of the OFS and may be subject to regulation by international bodies (e.g. the Chinese Ministry of Education) which may impact compliance with one or more of the above principles.

# Appendix

## Module definitions and alignment / contribution to programme level learning outcomes

Individual modules can be classified as follows depending on the strength of the relationship between the **module level** learning outcomes and the **programme level** learning outcomes to which each module contributes.

At the highest level, modules can be classified as **core**, **compulsory** or **elective**:

Module Type	Alignment / contribution	Regulatory implications
<b>Core</b>	<b>Very strong</b> – Module level learning outcomes make an essential contribution to the programme level learning outcomes such that it would not be possible for a student to evidence that they have met all of the programme level learning outcomes without meeting most / all of the module level learning outcomes for each core module.	Module <b>must be taken</b> and <b>must be passed</b> for a student to demonstrate that they have met one or more of the programme level learning outcomes.
<b>Compulsory</b>	<b>Very strong</b> – Module level learning outcomes make an important (not necessarily essential) contribution to the programme level learning outcomes. It would not be possible for a student to evidence that they have met all the programme level learning outcomes without meeting at least some (not necessarily all) of the module level learning outcomes for each compulsory module.	Module <b>must be taken</b> but does <b>not need to be passed</b> for a student to demonstrate that they have met all of the programme level learning outcomes.
<b>Elective</b>	<b>Variable</b> – Module level learning outcomes align and contribute to the programme level learning outcomes, but the strength of that alignment and contribution can range from very strong to tangential. It may be possible for a student to evidence that they have met all of the programme level learning outcomes without meeting the module level learning outcomes for each elective module.	<b>No requirement to take or pass</b> any given elective module, other than to ensure that a student has completed and passed the requisite number of credits in each year of study and at each level as stipulated in the Academic Regulations (although see opposite).

In addition, elective modules can be considered as:

- **Guided elective modules** – where elective modules are organised (by the Programme Director) into one or more subsets and it is compulsory<sup>1</sup> for a student to complete elective modules to a defined credit value from each subset of guided elective options. (For example, may be two or more specified elective modules of the same credit value for a student to choose between). Students retain agency in selecting which modules they wish to complete, but the choice of electives is guided by the organisation of electives into subsets to ensure that programme level learning outcomes can be met by each individual student (see opposite).
- **Free choice elective modules** – where students may select any elective module from a defined list in accordance with the Academic Regulations (as relate to total credits that need to be completed and passed in any one year of study and at any particular level).

The alignment of these two different types of elective module to the overarching programme level learning outcomes differs as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Depending on the number of credits associated with each guided elective module, it may be necessary for a student to not only complete but to pass guided elective modules in order to meet the requirements for progression and/or award as stipulated within the Academic Regulations. In this event, a subset of guided elective modules becomes, by definition, core rather than just compulsory, but each specific module still meets the definition of an elective, in that students are neither required to complete nor to pass any specific individual module.

Module Type	Alignment / contribution	Regulatory implications
<b>Guided elective</b>	<b>Strong to very strong</b> – Within each defined subset, module level learning outcomes make an important if not essential contribution to the programme level learning outcomes such that it would not be possible for a student to evidence that they have met all of the programme level learning outcomes without at least completing, if not passing, at least one guided elective from each defined subset. Within each defined subset, there is strong alignment between the module level learning outcomes across the elective modules in that subset.	Within each defined subset of guided elective modules, modules to the specific credit value <b>must be completed</b> (and, normally, must be passed) for a student to demonstrate that they have met one or more of the programme level learning outcomes <sup>1</sup> .
<b>Free choice elective</b>	<b>Variable</b> – It would be possible for a student to evidence that they have met all of the programme level learning outcomes without meeting at least some (not necessarily all) of the module level learning outcomes for each free choice elective module.	Modules <b>do not have to be completed</b> or passed for a student to demonstrate that they have met all of the programme level learning outcomes (other than to ensure that a student has completed and passed the requisite number of credits in each year of study and at each level as stipulated in the Academic Regulations).

To ensure programme coherence (in accordance with OFS Condition of Registration B1), when designing degree programmes, **at least 50% of** the overall programme content should be comprised of modules that are defined as **core, compulsory or guided elective modules** (i.e. less than 50% of the programme content should comprise free choice elective modules).

It is anticipated that for a degree programme spanning two or more sequential years of study (e.g. a Bachelors or undergraduate integrated Masters programme), the proportion of core, compulsory or guided choice elective modules would normally be higher in the early years of the programme and the proportion of free choice elective modules would make a greater contribution to the later years of the programme.

For the majority of degree programmes, it is expected that the balance between core, compulsory or guided elective modules as compared to free choice elective modules would be as follows:

Year	Core, compulsory or guided elective modules	Free choice elective modules
1	≥ 75% (≥ 90 credits)	≤ 25% (≤ 30 credits)
2	≥ 50% (≥ 60 credits)	≤ 50% (≤ 60 credits)
3	≥ 25% (≥ 30 credits)	≤ 75% (≤ 90 credits)
(4)	≥ 25% (≥ 30 credits)	≤ 75% (≤ 90 credits)

<sup>1</sup> Depending on the number of credits associated with each guided elective module, it may be necessary for a student to not only complete but to pass guided elective modules in order to meet the requirements for progression and/or award as stipulated within the Academic Regulations. In this event, a subset of guided elective modules becomes, by definition, core rather than just compulsory, but each specific module still meets the definition of an elective, in that students are neither required to complete nor to pass any specific individual module.

