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# 2031 Learning Framework Operationalising the Principles: for Postgraduate Taught Programmes

# Operationalising the Principles

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## Part 1: Quality Standards

This document lays out the quality standards expected within **every postgraduate taught programme (PGT)**, and thus indicates how the 2031 Learning Framework principles and their features will operate from 2025/26. It is targeted at colleagues within both academic and professional service teams across all three campuses, whether delivering full or part time postgraduate taught programmes, or postgraduate Continuing Professional Development (CPD). It will also guide the delivery of PGT by relevant partners.

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Glossary of 2031 Learning Framework Terms](#) and guidance materials associated with the Learning Framework. The principles of the 2031 learning framework have been tailored to the PGT context, in consultation with faculties, providing a level of flexibility for programme teams. If further flexibility is required, beyond those laid out in this guidance document, programme teams are required to make a case to be discussed during Sprint meetings, to be signed off subsequently by the Director of Quality and the Chair of Assurance Committee (as relevant). For PGT programmes operating across multiple campuses, the programme leader is expected to ensure that colleagues from all campuses shape the design of the programme before, during and after Sprint meetings.

PGT programme teams are asked to consider the alignment of their programme with relevant undergraduate programmes to facilitate progression pathways for students, as graduates, into further study; thereby supporting lifelong learning.

# Operational Expectations

## Principle 1: Our Academic Year

### Feature 1.1: Three semesters

*An academic year of three 10-12-week semesters will operate and apply across all PGT programmes.*

- PGT students routinely study across one or more calendar year, rather than academic year(s).
- It is recognised that PGT students may be required to study beyond the 10-12 week semesters in order to complete research/major project/independent project requirements or undertake a placement.
- Final assessment deadlines should be scheduled no later than the month in which they start one or two year later, depending on whether it is a 1 or 2-year PGT programme. This means that students starting in September will submit no later than the end of September and January start students no later than end of January.
- Programme Assessment Boards considering progressing profiles will be held at the end of semesters, as relevant, aligned to UG boards (currently June, August).
- Postgraduate Programme Assessment Boards considering finalist profiles will be scheduled to align to the submission of the final dissertation/major study (currently November; February) operating across all campuses.

### Feature 1.2: Three potential entry points

*PGT programmes can operate up to three entry points in any one academic /calendar year.*

- The number of entry points per year will be determined by market demand, where proven, with more flexible start dates offered in some programme areas.
- It is recognised that CPD will be delivered in any semester aligned to the availability of modules, staff, and market demand.

### Feature 1.3: Two consecutive semesters of study for full-time students

*This feature does not apply to PGT programmes.*

## Principle 2: Programme Structure

### Feature 2.1. Common first year across cognate groups (where relevant)

*This feature does not apply to PGT programmes.*

### Feature 2.2: Limited module options

*There will be module choice within PGT programmes, wherever appropriate.*

#### Number of elective modules

- Programmes teams can select the number of 'elective' (optional modules) versus 'core' modules (mandatory modules), as relevant to their programme design, cohort size and resources available. They can also select which semester the elective modules run (i.e. spread across semesters or all within one).

**Number of module options:**

- The number of modules that students can choose between is dependent upon cohort numbers. Each module should have no fewer than 12 students.
- The number of module options will depend on student numbers.
- Note, access to modules may be restricted for certain students due to operating a 3-day timetable; to mitigate this, where there are elective modules operating, the entire cohort will need to be on campus for the same days of the week.

**Shared module options:**

- Where possible, PGT programmes should share optional modules to support operational efficiencies and ensure that viable numbers have been reached for modules to run.

**Impact on student groups (see principle 4)**

- Students will be assigned to a module group (akin to a seminar group) and thus may be in more than one group.

## Principle 3: Module Structure

**Feature 3.1: Four 30-credit taught modules**

*30-credit modules are expected to operate across all taught components of PGT programmes as standard. PGT programmes can select up to four 15-credit modules (in multiples of two) within any one academic year. A research/major project/independent project module should make up the remaining credit (typically 60 credits to align to our regulations).*

**Delivery modes:**

- Modules can be taught concurrently (i.e. two modules taught across the twelve weeks) or in series (i.e. one taught in a block of 6 weeks intensively, followed by the other module). Hence, modules can be taught in blocks.

**Module titles:**

- It is expected that module titles and descriptions appeal to a global audience and are enticing to prospective PG /CPD students, conveying the breadth, depth and global reach of the subjects they will be studying.

**Use of 15-credit modules:**

- Up to four 15-credit modules are permissible in any one academic year, in multiples of 2, where they are relevant to a programme, or needed for CPD provision.

**Shared modules:**

- Wherever possible, PGT programmes will offer modules with other programmes to support operational efficiencies. This may include offering modules as a discrete CPD course, where relevant. This offers the potential to ensure that viable numbers have been reached for modules to run.

### **Use of modules greater than 30 credits:**

- Research/major project/independent project modules should be 60 credits to align to our regulations [c.f.: Assessment and Progression Regulations for Taught Programmes, E4.2./J.11]. To align with our regulations (E.4.2), dissertation /independent project modules of less than 60 credits will need the approval of the Assurance Committee.
- Internship and placement modules can be larger than 30 credits.
- A sandwich placement, operating across a whole academic year will continue to be 120 credits.

### **Feature 3.2: Two modules each semester for full time PGT students**

*It is expected that two modules per semester for taught components of the PGT programmes is the norm. In any one semester, this may increase to three if there are two 15-credit modules operating. For the dissertation, major/independent project 60-credit module, it will reduce to one.*

- For the majority of PGT programmes, there will be 5 modules operating as standard, including the research/major or independent project module.
- Competency development should be embedded within core and elective modules, rather than within discrete long thin modules, to ensure each is standalone (3.3: no pre-requisite modules), is underpinned by practice and supports the development of graduate and/or professional competencies (5.2: integrated curriculum).

### **Feature 3.3: No prerequisite modules within a level of study**

*There should be no prerequisite taught modules across all PGT programmes within a level of study as standard.*

- All taught modules in a PGT programme should be standalone. This supports flexibility of use (e.g. CPD provision).
- It is accepted that in the PGT contexts, pre-requisites may be required between taught and any dissertation/major project/independent project modules.
- It is accepted that if your programme has a professional competency requirement, necessitating a work placement, this may be a prerequisite module and is permitted under the framework.

## **Principle 4: Student Groups**

### **Feature 4.1: Student groups**

*Student groups will operate across all PGT programmes as standard. These are the groups in which students will be taught, for example, seminar groups.*

#### **Allocation of group:**

- Students are assigned to a group for each of their modules.

#### **Flexibility to change their group:**

- Students will be able to change their group within the 2 weeks of enrolment or by the end of teaching week 1 (or within a week of enrolling for late starters) and will thereafter be expected to remain in that group for the remainder of the academic year.

**Group size:**

- For PGT programmes, student group sizes can be up to 40 and no less than 12 (minimum viable module number). Student group sizes will depend on the programme and cohort size.
- Wherever possible, groups within a cohort (or programme) should be of an equitable size.
- Current specialist and computer room capacity will inform group sizes.

**Merging or splitting groups:**

- In the PGT context, groups can be merged or split, as and when required on the grounds of health and safety; equipment access; room availability; room size; pedagogical rationale. Minimum viable module numbers should be retained when splitting groups.

## Principle 5: Integrated Curriculum Design

### Feature 5.1: Principles for curriculum design

*The curriculum design principles (inclusive, flexible, personalised and impactful) should operate across all PGT programmes as standard.*

- Programme teams should make clear in what ways the programme is inclusive, flexible, personalised, and impactful, as an integral part of its design, delivery, and evaluation.
- These design principles should be demonstrated across the whole programme, rather than be evident within every module. These principles should be made clear within the programme information and module information template and student handbook.

### Feature 5.2: Embedded practices

*These practices are expected to be embedded and demonstrated in every PGT programme as standard. These should be incorporated across the programme as a whole, rather than within every module.*

- The following practices are drawn from our 2031 Strategy and are characteristic of our educational approach. The extent to which each practice is integrated will vary by programme and can be further enhanced by the programme team over time, to extend their integration and focus.
- They are listed in alphabetical, non-priority order:
  - **Co-leadership**, demonstrated through participation of student representatives or nominees in the curriculum design process (through consultation groups; student forums or paid co-design roles) and embedded co-leadership opportunities within the programme (such as to make choices; co-design /negotiate their learning activities; to lead student communities or enrichment activities; entrepreneurship projects).
  - **Digital literacy**, demonstrated through experience of using a range of technologies and building students' digital competencies and confidence to help them succeed in their studies and in the workplace.

- **Employability**, demonstrated through employer connections; employment modules (internship; real-live consultancy/project; work placement); entrepreneurial development, as relevant to students' career aspirations, competencies, and position.
  - **Employer engagement**, demonstrated through business, professions and/or industry input, shaping programme design and contributing to delivery.
  - **Graduate competencies**, nuanced to PG level, integrated within all programmes.
  - **Health and wellbeing**, demonstrated through the provision of ongoing support to encourage students to take action to achieve and prioritise good health and wellbeing.
  - **Inclusive curriculum**, demonstrated through all components of the curriculum and achieved through the continual development of the following dimensions of inclusion: mindset; context; identities; practices; wellbeing, and collaborative working.
  - **Internationalisation**, demonstrated through cross-campus collaborative learning and/or research; study abroad; learning between peers from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds; taking social responsibility for global issues, inequities, and injustice.
  - **Practice-led learning**, demonstrated through the use of practice-led, experiential pedagogies, enriched by work-based learning, professional/industry practice; as well as opportunities to apply learning to the world beyond the 'classroom' (i.e. societal, employment, HE).
  - **Sustainable Development Goals**, demonstrated through commitment to incorporating our strategy themes and UN Sustainable Development Goals (and beyond 2030, their successor), within the curriculum, as relevant to your discipline.
  - **Research-informed teaching**, demonstrated through providing learning through doing research, learning about how to research, learning through critiquing the research of others (research and scholarship) and learning from and engagement with academic research communities of practice
- A list of centrally supported technology will be updated routinely, with specialist technology to be identified by faculty.
  - Programme teams will need to demonstrate across the validation documentation how each practice is integrated within programme and module information documents.
  - These embedded practices contribute to our three integrated themes stipulated in [Strategy 2031](#) - Equity and improvements in health and wellbeing; Inclusive socio-economic development and enriching lives through culture; Sustainability of Community and the Environment.

## Principle 6: On-campus and Online Teaching

### Feature 6.1: Three days on-campus teaching

*As standard, there will be no more than three days of on-campus, timetabled teaching and learning activity across the working week for PGT programmes.*

- The days timetabled do not need to be consecutive for every programme. CPD courses may vary.
- Sessions timetabled only during the morning or afternoon will count towards one of the three days.

- Placement days count as one of the three days.
- Students may choose to be on campus on the other days of the week to use the facilities, but they will not be required to attend timetabled activity on other days of the week.
- Our working day will continue to operate from 9.00am and 9.00pm, with occasionally weekend working.

#### **Timetabled taught activity:**

- Timetabled activity is directed by a member of staff (or invited external). This can include the following (as relevant to your programme content, design and students):
  - teaching sessions
  - guest speakers
  - academic advising interactions (group or 1:1)
  - project work
  - demonstrations
  - lab sessions, practicals, or workshops
  - supervision or revision sessions
  - fieldwork
  - external visits
  - ⊖ work-based learning (placements, internships)
  - enrichment activities (e.g. competitions, global collaborative group work)
  - 1:1 meetings.
- Students will be required to be on campus for the majority of timetabled activity, recognising that some activities will be scheduled to be off campus (such as placement, visits, fieldwork).

#### **Independent study activity:**

- PG students are expected to undertake independent study outside of timetabled hours; some of which should be directed by programme teams and scaffolded through the virtual learning environment (such as through key concept videos, curated content, quizzes, discussion forums). The requirement for independent study may vary for CPD courses, although equity should be considered where modules are shared with PGT programmes.
- Programme teams should monitor students' engagement and progress with directed independent study activity.
- Independent study activities should be related to the programme.
- These can include a mix of directed and non-directed activities, such as:
  - preparation for teaching sessions
  - follow-up work
  - research based activity
  - wider reading
  - practice
  - watching key concept videos and other curated content
  - completion of assessment tasks
  - revision
  - group work outside of teaching sessions
  - academic study support



- contributing to discussion forums
- volunteering
- discipline student-led societies
- quizzes.

#### **Directed hours:**

- Directed hours apply to timetabled taught sessions or guided activity as part of independent study.
- At level 7, the number of directed learning hours should not fall below 8 hours per week, to align with the sector average of 8-10 hours.
- The maximum number of directed learning hours cannot exceed three days on campus.

#### **Online delivery:**

- Online sessions (synchronous) can be timetabled where there is a sound rationale for doing so (such as pedagogic, campus capacity, cross-campus collaboration, distance education) and where they are taught in groups and are engaging and interactive.
- Online taught sessions count towards the three days on campus.
- No more than 25% of timetabled hours can be scheduled online (unless distance education mode of delivery), to provide flexibility, build digital literacies, support internationalisation and inclusivity and offer authentic and collaborative work-place learning environments that benefit from staff competence and confidence.
- It is expected that students will have access to a curated virtual learning environment to support their learning.
- Programme teams should consider the connections between all forms of directed learning (on-campus, online and independent study). A flipped learning/classroom approach is expected, using key concept videos provided in advance, as well as the provision of curated content taken from Open Educational Resources (OER) or co-created/led by students. Outside of teaching sessions, the organising of directed independent study will be expected through asynchronous online activities (e.g. discussion forums, watching key concept videos, podcast, curating resources, independent research, quizzes).

#### **Notional (study) hours:**

- Universal notional learning hours (10 hours to one credit) will continue to guide the number of hours of learning per module. This equates to 1,800 notional hours of learning for students studying 180 credits per academic year (i.e. full time).
- Notional learning hours include timetabled hours (teaching, learning and assessment) and independent study. Timetabled hours will vary by discipline and level of study with independent study hours varying by student (i.e. some students will take longer to study or complete an assessment than others). It is recognised that students will undertake independent study at weekends and during holidays periods, hence outside of the formal teaching weeks. Both timetabled and independent study hours can constitute directed learning.
- The notional hours per week are an average, hence some weeks will be fewer and others more (e.g. when completing assessments).
- Within module information templates, programme teams will be required to indicate a split between timetabled and independent study.

### **Feature 6.2: Engaging and interactive on-campus and online activities**

*Directed on-campus and online learning activities should be engaging and interactive across all PGT programmes as standard.*

- On campus and online timetabled activities will be in groups.
- Engaging and interactive activities, as relevant to the PGT context and can include:
  - opportunities for dialogue and debate
  - sharing of work or collaborative learning
  - practical or experiential learning activities.
- A range of learning technologies can be used to enhance engagement and provide opportunities for active collaboration, ahead of, during, and following on-campus activities. These include My Learning, Microsoft teams, whiteboards/bulletin boards, polling software and social media.

#### **Engaging large group teaching sessions:**

- Large group teaching sessions can be timetabled where required (e.g. guest lectures; industry speaker) and are expected to be interactive and engaging for students.

#### **Online delivery:**

- Online engaging and interactive timetabled sessions (synchronous) are permitted.
- As specified above, outside of timetabled sessions, directed independent study activities (asynchronous) will be expected and should be engaging and interactive (e.g. discussion forums, watching key concept videos, independent research podcast, curated resources).

#### **Feature 6.3: Key concept videos, recorded and shared online**

*Key concept videos will be expected to be made available to students in advance of timetabled activities on PGT programmes as standard.*

- Videos should aim to be concise, with the length appropriate for the topic.
- The recording of complete lectures will not be required and should not be a replacement for timetabled activity.
- The videos should be shared a week (and no later than 48 hours) in advance of timetabled activity.
- Key concept videos should:
  - be engaging
  - provide clear and concise explanations of important theories, principles, or ideas
  - be relevant to a specific topic or theme embedded into the curriculum
  - be signposted and have clear actions and activities that help scaffold students' learning
  - be linked directly to the learning outcomes
  - be referenced within the directed learning activity.
- The number and use of key concept videos will be influenced by the content of the module, learning outcomes, level of study, and students' needs. Programme teams should plan when and where in the semester the videos will be used most effectively and scaffold accordingly. They may choose to incorporate more videos within the first four weeks of every semester to build up key knowledge and/or accommodate late starters.

- Programme teams can make use of other high-quality curated content alongside key concept videos, including Open Educational Resources (OER) or content co-created /led by students.
- Use expertise from across your subject area or faculty to create key concept videos, to share the workload and make effective use of resources. Videos should be shared in My Learning and in the university's video hosting platform, for programme teams to draw upon when needed.
- The use of key concept videos supports a flipped learning/classroom approach.
- Videos should be scaffolded alongside other, directed independent learning activities, upholding TEL Threshold Standards (for before, during and after taught sessions).

## Principle 7: Assessment

### Feature 7.1: Programme-based and authentic assessment

*Programme-based and authentic assessment should be evident within all PGT programmes as standard.*

- **Programme-based assessment:**
  - Programme teams will be expected to work together to set assessment types and deadlines across all modules.
  - There should be a range of ways for students to demonstrate achievement of programme learning outcomes across the forms of assessment used. This does not mean that students are required to demonstrate programme learning outcomes multiple times.
  - Innovative assessment methods (such as use of AI) can be used within the programme as appropriate and to provide variety but are not expected within every module.
  - Students will continue to be expected to adhere to academic integrity standards.
  - Where more than one assessment is required (2 per 30-credit; up to 4 for 60 credit module), one (or more) deadline(s) should be scheduled at the mid-point (see feature 7.2), to spread out assessments throughout the academic year.
- **Authentic assessment:**
  - Authentic can be expressed in one of two ways within assessment:
    - *Type of assessment method used* – where an assessment has relevancy to a professional, business, industry or research-aligned context. The assessment method will be based on workplace tasks and/or involve reflections in/on practice.
    - *Learning outcome being demonstrated* – where one or more core professional competency/competencies (skills, knowledge, or behaviours) are being assessed.
  - Programme teams will be required to discuss the ways in which their assessments are authentic as part of their assessment plan and design, as part of the Sprint meetings.

### Feature 7.2: Assessments are limited to two per 30-credit module; one mid-semester or mid- module

*No more than two assessments per 30 credits will operate across all PGT programmes as standard. Where two assessments are required, one should be mid-semester/mid-module,*

*unless the required assessments are aligned, such as a written submission, followed by a dialogue assessment (e.g. critique or viva) about the written work.*

- Programme teams should have one assessment point for a 15-credit module; can select up to two for a 30-credit module and up to four for a 60-credit module.
- Where more than one assessment is planned, deadlines should be spread out, wherever possible.
- Module leaders should plan their assessment deadlines in conjunction with other modules running within the same semester.
- The 15 working days turnaround deadlines for marking and feedback are expected, as per our regulations.
- A portfolio form of assessment is permitted providing that there is only one assessment deadline given (for 30 credit module; two per 60 credits).
- Programme teams can select the weightings applied to each assessment where two or more assessments are required.

### **Feature 7.3: Formative feedback throughout module**

*Formative feedback will be expected within all PGT programmes as standard.*

- Multiple approaches to formative feedback are encouraged (including peer to peer, group/cohort feedback, self-assessment, multiple choice questions, knowledge checks), alongside formal formative feedback (such as feedback on plans or drafts of full assessment).
- The use of technology is encouraged to support effective formative feedback.
- It should be made clear to students where feedback has been given, as well as the different forms of formative feedback they have received.
- Students should be supported to build their assessment literacy and understanding of the assessment process.

### **Feature 7.4: Multiple re-sits of mid-semester/module assessments at Levels 3 and 4**

*This feature does not apply to PGT.*

### **Feature 7.5: 20-point scale phased out, to be replaced by a percentage scale**

*All PGT programmes will use a percentage scale, in preparation for the 20-point scale being phased out.*

- The use of the 20-point scale will be phased out, with all programmes moving towards marking using a percentage scale. This will entail a change to our degree classification algorithm and the way that achievement is recorded on the diploma supplement.
- Where two assessments per module are required, components should be marked in percentages and only converted when both assessments have been completed. The conversion to the 20-point scale will thus be calculated once the module has finished.