Academic Policy Statement APS 18: Curriculum Design

1. Introduction

1.1 This document lays out the principles that apply to academic programmes to be delivered as part of the University's Learning Framework and is intended to give lecturers and programme designers a clear indication of the University's requirements with respect to the curriculum of academic programmes. The policy is written in due recognition of the strategic objectives of the University, the Graduate Attributes Framework, relevant University policies, regulations and procedures, and external influences including the QAA Quality Code, and legislation on disability, gender, race and equal opportunities. This document forms part of the University policy relating to academic quality (APS11). All University programmes should follow the principles of this policy.

1.2 Curriculum design is concerned with determining:

- what students are intended to learn
- the learning activities designed to achieve those outcomes
- and the assessment required to determine the extent to which those outcomes have been achieved or exceeded

The design of the curriculum requires that all of these parts of the curriculum relate to each other in a logical and mutually supportive way, through the process of constructive alignment.

2. Aims

2.1 The general precepts applying to aims are that:

- all programmes and modules will have aims
- aims should be succinct and readily comprehensible to students
- aims will indicate the nature, focus and coverage of the programme or module
- aims will indicate opportunities and benefits likely to accrue to students through taking the programme or module.

3. Learning outcomes

3.1 Learning outcomes are statements of what the programme and/or module teams expect learners to know and be able to do as a result of engaging in the learning process. The general precepts relating to learning outcomes are that:

- all programme learning outcomes are to be expressed at minimum acceptable (threshold) standard
- all programme learning outcomes will indicate the highest level (in terms of University level descriptors) at which every graduate of the programme will achieve
- all programme learning outcomes must be assessed (this will be achieved indirectly through the assessment of module learning outcomes and curriculum mapping)
- for a student to graduate, all programme learning outcomes must be achieved
- all module learning outcomes are to be expressed at minimum acceptable (threshold) standard
- module learning outcomes should describe only those outcomes that students must achieve
- all module learning outcomes must be summatively assessed
- for a student to be awarded at least a pass mark in a module, all module learning outcomes must be achieved
- within a programme, graduate skills will be developed to levels consistent with University Graduate Framework

3.2 Learning outcomes should be written in such a way as to:
- reflect the level of study (i.e. be related to the appropriate University level descriptor)
- be readily understood by students
- allow for effective assessment.

4. Syllabus

4.1 The syllabus, that is the topics to be covered in modules, should be:
- relevant to the aims and learning outcomes of the module
- supported by reference to relevant sources of information
- up to date and informed by relevant research in the subject of study
- informed by relevant subject benchmark statements
- informed by requirements of PSRBs (where relevant)
- consistent with University Graduate Attributes Framework
- incorporate the University's threshold standards for inclusivity (see https://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/services/centre-for-academic-practice-enhancement/workshops-and-resources/threshold-standards)
- appropriate for the level of the module (related to University level descriptors) and to the FHEQ

5. Learning and Teaching

5.1 The principles underpinning learning and teaching are that the:

- learning activities should be appropriate for developing the particular knowledge, understanding and skills expressed in the learning outcomes

- learning experiences will take account of the prior experience and understanding of students
- learning activities should encourage a deep as opposed to a surface approach to learning and should engage and stimulate students
- learning experiences will reflect the University's threshold standards for inclusivity
- learning experiences are designed to reflect practice-based learning
- learning activities will utlilise technology to enhance learning where appropriate
- where required, learning materials will have appropriate copyright clearance.

6. Formative and Summative Assessment

6.1 An assessment task can be either formative or summative, or both:

- *Formative assessment* (also known as diagnostic or evaluative assessment) is primarily developmental in nature, and is designed to give feedback to learners on their performance and how it can be improved.

- *Summative assessment* is designed to measure the extent to which a learner has achieved the intended learning outcomes of a module. The summative component of an assessment task is designed solely to provide a measure of the achievement of a learning outcome by a learner.

7. Principles of assessment practice

7.1 <u>Assessment and learning outcomes</u>

- assessment will be clearly and appropriately aligned with learning outcomes
- curriculum (assessment) maps clearly demonstrating that assessment has been designed to accommodate module and programme learning outcomes will be provided as part of programme specifications
- all module learning outcomes should be summatively assessed
- all learning outcomes for the programme must be passed.

7.2 <u>Descriptions of assessment</u>

- assessment will be clearly described in the module narrative
- assessment practice will follow the published description in the module narrative
- the nature of the assessment process, the assessment criteria and the way in which feedback will be given will be made clear to students at the start of each module.

7.3 <u>Design of assessment</u>

- assessment will be designed to offer students a range of methods by which they can demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes
- assessment design will ensure fairness
- assessment design will militate against plagiarism
- assessment design will reflect threshold standards for inclusivity

- the weighting and scale of each assessment task and will be proportionate to the learning outcomes being assessed
- learning outcomes should not be assessed multiple times within the module
- where appropriate, assessment will enable e-submission and feedback
- assessment will be designed to avoid an overload on students and staff.

7.4   Assessment and learning

- assessment will inform and reinforce learning by students
- assessment will be embedded in student learning
- wherever possible, students should be offered opportunities during the course of the module to demonstrate achievement of module learning outcomes
- all modules should offer formative assessment
- students will receive timely, useful and clear feedback on their performance according to the University Code of Assessment Practice.

7.5   Assessment at levels 3 and 4 At levels 3 and 4:

- assessment may be marked as pass or fail, or may be graded using the University scale
- where possible, there should be opportunities before the end of the module for students to demonstrate achievement of, and to be given feedback on, their achievement of module learning outcomes. If students fail to demonstrate achievement of these learning outcomes at this point, then further opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement will be provided. Provision of such assessment opportunities is at the discretion of programme/module teams and the extent to which they are provided will depend upon available resources and time constraints.
- Levels 4+ - There will be no exams (on campus or online) other than to meet PSRB requirements and, exceptionally, to support a transition period where more time is required to implement redesigned approaches to assessment (Assurance Committee will consider exemptions on a case-by-case basis for approval via the Deputy Chair (Director of Academic Quality)). It should be noted that time limited (open book) assessments or other similar style assessment are also not a permitted form of assessment.

Revision history	This policy replaces policies APS 16, APS17 and APS18, and was submitted for approval by Academic Board in November 2006. Revisions to this policy were considered and approved by Academic Board in 2011 and 2017. A revision to add the last bullet point was approved by Learning & Teaching Committee in October 2021 and a further update was agreed by Chair's Action on 15 November 2022. This policy is to be reviewed by July 2023
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