BNU QUALIFICATIONS AND CREDIT FRAMEWORK

QUALITY AND TEACHING

Contents

This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Registry.

Introduction

1 The *Buckinghamshire New University Qualifications and Credit Framework* sets the framework and credit requirements for all programmes of study leading to a taught degree qualification of Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) starting in September 2023. Previous programmes of study were aligned to the *Academic Qualifications Framework* which this document replaces.

Purpose and Scope

2 The purposes of the Qualifications and Credit Framework are to:

- Promote a common and consistent understanding of the characteristics represented by a BNU qualification

- Provide a reference point for setting academic standards when designing, developing, approving, and reviewing programmes of study and their constituent modules and in the development of partnerships with other HE providers

- Support the development of new and innovative interdisciplinary programmes at the University by promoting a common credit framework

- Facilitate the integration and portability of credits awarded by the University with other UK and international providers ensuring learner mobility

- Ensure that BNU qualifications align to requirements and sector expectations for a qualification of the respective academic level.

3 The Qualifications and Credit Framework applies to all taught academic qualifications, including foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study, validated and awarded by the University for delivery in the UK and / or overseas.

Internal and External Reference Points

4 Development of the Qualifications and Credit Framework has been informed by reference to the following sector quality assurance documents:

- The *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* (https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

- *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (FHEQ) (https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks)

- The *Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements (Second Edition)* and *Making Use of Credit: A Companion to the Higher Education Credit Framework for England* (https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/higher-education-credit-framework-for-england)

- The *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (FQ-EHEA) (https://ehea.info/page-qualification-frameworks)

- The *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Scheme* (ECTS) (https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en)

- QAA Degree Characteristics Statements (https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/characteristics-statements), including: *Doctoral Degree Characteristics*;

Master's Degree Characteristics; *Foundation Degree Characteristics*, *Qualifications involving more than on degree-awarding body*, and *Higher Education in Apprenticeships Characteristics*

5   The Framework has also been designed to enable development of programmes aligned to the University's Blueprint for Education at BNU: Curriculum Framework and Design Model ('the Blueprint').

Relationship to other parts of the University quality assurance framework

6   The Qualifications and Credit Framework should be read in conjunction with other University quality assurance documents (available via the BNU policies webpage) as follows:

- Undergraduate and Postgraduate Regulations which set out the University's regulations for the successful achievement of a qualification

- *Programme Approval and Amendment Policy* which sets out the process for quality assuring and approving or amending a programme of study

- *Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure* which sets out the process for credit accumulation and transfer

- *Certification and Transcript Procedure* which covers the production and distribution of certificates and transcripts recording learner achievement

- *Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs): Engaging with PSRBs and maintaining quality assurance* which provides guidance on engaging with accrediting bodies

Relationship with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements

7   Many qualifications offered by the University are further recognised or accredited by one or more PSRB. Many of these PSRBs have their own framework and qualification requirements to meet professional standards.

8   Such recognition or accreditation is strongly encouraged. Therefore, it may be necessary to incorporate these additional requirements in designing programmes of study, some of which may contravene elements of this Framework.

9   Such exceptions should generally be kept to a minimum and used only where necessary. Exceptions will be agreed via a formal approval event. See the PSRB guidance document for further information.

Framework Components

Qualifications and award titles

10   A qualification is a degree, diploma or certificate awarded by the University in recognition that specified learning outcomes have been achieved following the successful completion of a recognised programme of study. A list of approved qualifications offered by the University can be found at Appendix 1.

11 All University qualifications must present a coherent programme of study which is detailed in a programme specification and approved via a formal approval event.

12 All University qualifications must be mapped against the relevant qualification descriptor in the FHEQ which exemplifies the nature and characteristics of that qualification.[1] Qualifications should also meet the credit and level requirements set out further below.

13 Qualifications will fall into the following categories:

- The **final qualification** will be awarded to a learner who has successfully met all programme requirements for the award for which they registered at the outset of study, e.g. a named Honours degree.

- An **intermediate qualification** can be registered for by a learner at the outset of study, e.g. a learner can choose only to study for a PGDip on certain Master's courses

- An **exit qualification** is a lesser award where a learner has not achieved the qualification for which they registered at the outset of study, either through failing to meet the academic requirements, or because they have withdrawn from their registered programme of study. For example, a Diploma of Higher Education on an Honours degree programme. See the Qualifications Framework section for a full list of approved exit qualifications for each award.

- An **alternative qualification** is awarded where a learner meets the general credit and framework requirements for a qualification of a particular level but is unable to meet the specific requirements for a qualification on a programme of study. This is used for programmes where there are additional professional accreditation requirements for registration and use of a particular award title may be restricted, e.g. on some health-related and all nursing programmes.

14 Both intermediate and exit qualifications will have specific programme learning outcomes defined in the Programme Specification for the relevant level of the qualification. All programme learning outcomes must be achieved before a qualification can be conferred.

15 The format of the award title should include:

- the qualification itself (e.g. "Bachelor's degree with Honours")

- the broad discipline (e.g. "Arts"), and

- the field of study (e.g. "Business Management").

The full award title would therefore be: "Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Business Management", which would be shortened to "BA (Hons) Business Management". All qualification titles will be listed in the relevant programme specification.

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[1] FHEQ qualification descriptors are reproduced at Appendix 2.

16   The field of study indicator will be dictated by the principal discipline of study for the programme. In determining the programme name, consideration should be given to the following:

- The extent of specialisation within the programme in terms of aims and learning outcomes

- The extent of professional or employment demands for the specific title

- The potential for misunderstanding or misinterpretation by learners or employers

- The long-term life expectancy of the title, especially when this is driven by current market demands

- The perception of usage from a national and international perspective

17   Pathway specialisms may be used for such programmes and may lead to a specific award title, although all exit qualifications will normally be given in the parent title.

Programmes of Study

18   A programme is an approved path of study that provides a coherent learning experience defined by specified learning outcomes. A programme will consist of one or more stages or years of study, the number of which will vary depending on the qualification and mode of study.

19   Programme learning outcomes will be specified in a "programme specification" to be produced during programme development which will also indicate how these learning outcomes can be achieved and demonstrated. Programme learning outcomes must be set at the relevant level defined in the Framework for the award of a qualification set at that level.

Academic Level

20   Each qualification has an associated academic level within the FHEQ and by extension to the corresponding cycle of the FQ-EHEA. All programmes must be located at the corresponding level for that qualification.[2]

Typical higher education qualifications awarded within each level	FHEQ level	Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle
Doctoral degrees (e.g. PhD, EdD, DNurs etc.)	8	Third cycle **(end of cycle)** qualifications
Master's degrees (e.g. MPhil, MRes, MA, MSc)	7	Second cycle **(end of cycle)** qualifications
Integrated master's degrees (e.g. MEng)		
Postgraduate diplomas (PGDip)		

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[2] Research degrees and research master's programmes must currently be validated by the University's research degree awarding partner. For further guidance on research programmes please contact the Research & Enterprise Development Unit.

Typical higher education qualifications awarded within each level	FHEQ level	Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle
Postgraduate certificates (PGCert)		
Bachelor's degrees with honours (e.g. BA/BSc Hons)	6	First cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Bachelor's degrees (Ordinary degrees)		
Graduate diplomas		
Graduate certificates		
Foundation degrees (e.g. FdA, FdSc)	5	Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) qualifications
Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)		
Higher National Diplomas (HND) awarded under licence from Pearson		
Higher National Certificates (HNC) awarded under licence from Pearson	4	
Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)		

21   Programmes may also include some elements of study at a lower academic level, e.g. an Honours degree is a Level 6 programme and will include elements of study at Levels 4, 5, and 6. Programme and module learning outcomes must be set at the relevant academic level. See further below for the level and credit requirements of component modules within a qualification.

22   Degree programmes may also include an integrated Foundation Year. A Foundation Year is not set at a particular academic level but is a pre-Level 4 year designed to prepare learners for study. It is nominally assigned to 'Level 0' to distinguish from other qualifications. See below for more information on Foundation Years.

Mode of Study

23   Mode of study refers to the study load of the learner, whether full-time, accelerated, or part-time study. The difference between these modes of study is driven by OfS / HESA indicators around the hours per week / weeks per year.[3]

24   A programme will be considered **full-time** where it meets all of the following criteria:

- Learners are required to attend the University, or elsewhere, for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks during the academic year;

- Within that time they are expected to undertake periods of study, tuition, learning in the workplace, or sandwich work placement (that does not meet the criteria to be a sandwich year out), which amount to an average of 21 hours per week. All

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[3] See the HESA Coding Manual:
https://codingmanual.hesa.ac.uk/23056/StudentCourseSession/field/SCSMODE/

guided learning hours count towards this total, but it is expected that higher education students will spend a significant amount of time each week in self-led individual learning, and an estimate of this time should also be included; AND,

- <u>Full-time fees are chargeable</u> for the programme for the year.

25   A programme may be **accelerated** where the number of academic years applicable to the programme is at least one fewer than would normally be the case:

- An undergraduate degree programme may be accelerated where the programme is completed in two years rather than three.

- An accelerated degree programme will have a full-time equivalence (FTE) of 1.5 and will consist of 180 credits per year (1,800 notional learning hours).

- Accelerated degree programmes are subject to additional regulations around progression and should only be offered alongside an existing full-time degree programme on to which students can 'decelerate' as required.

26   A programme will be considered as **part-time** where it does not meet the requirements to be full-time or accelerated. Learners will have an appropriate full-time equivalence (FTE) that reflects their intensity of study.

27   All **apprenticeship programmes** will be classified as part-time as a full-time tuition fee is not charged, and apprentices will spend most of their time working rather than in study and thus will not meet the attendance requirement.

28   **Distance learning** programmes may be classified as full-time or part-time, but for HESES funding purposes cannot meet the attendance requirements to be classified as full-time. Distance learning students will therefore be classified as part-time for funding purposes.

29   A programme specification can cover all modes of study as the teaching learning and assessment strategy requirements will not differ between full and part-time study, only the amount of content to be covered in a year.

Mode of Delivery

30   The mode of delivery of a programme is an important consideration when designing learning activities that will support learners to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding required to achieve the programme learning outcomes.

31   The following modes of delivery are recognised at the University[4]:

- **In-person (onsite) delivery**: Delivery is structured around in-person activities (e.g. lectures, seminars, group work) the majority of which (over 75%) takes place in a physical learning space (classroom, lab, studio, workshop etc.). Activities will take place at scheduled times, i.e. synchronously. Outside of scheduled activities learners will be expected to prepare for scheduled activities and complete

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[4] These definitions have been informed by: *Building a Taxonomy for Digital Learning.* QAA. June 2020. See: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/building-a-taxonomy-for-digital-learning.pdf; and *Advice and Guidance: Work-based Learning.* UK Quality Code for Higher Education. QAA. November 2018. See: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/work-based-learning.

assignments. In person learning will normally be supported by learning resources accessible via a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

- **Blended learning**: Delivery generally blends in-person and online learning activities into an integrated experience. Online learning will constitute a substantial part of the programme (25% or more) typically taking place between onsite activities. Learning can take place in both synchronous or asynchronous modes, where teaching can be delivered in 'real time' or be recorded and documented on a VLE for learners to study in their own time. In-person learning may include non-standard patterns of attendance, e.g. residential study weekends.

- **Distance learning**: Distance learning programmes take place away from the physical site, i.e. remotely, and typically involve a learner studying using only distance learning technologies. There is no in-person learning of any kind. Learning can take place synchronously via learning activities at scheduled times online, or asynchronously via interactive activities (pre-recorded 'mini-lectures', discussion forum participation etc.) which can be accessed at any time.

- **Work-based learning**: Work-based learning involves learning through work, learning for work and/or learning at work. It generally has a dual function of being designed to meet the learning needs of the employees, and also meeting the workforce development needs of the organisation. 'On the job' learning will take place and be supervised in the workplace. 'Off the job' learning will take place elsewhere and normally involve a blended learning approach. Apprenticeship programmes are examples of work-based learning programmes.

32   A programme specification can reference only one primary mode of delivery. Should an additional mode of delivery be developed either at the same time or at a later stage, a second programme specification will be required as the learning activities are expected to differ.

Credit and Learning Hours

33   Credit is used by the University as a means of measuring the amount of learning expected for its qualifications and their intellectual demand. Credit is awarded on successful completion of a particular module.

34   The volume of credit is fixed and linked to the notional hours of learning expected for the particular module. The University has adopted the convention that one UK credit is the equivalent to 10 notional hours of learning. Therefore, a 20 credit module equates to an expected 200 notional learning hours.

35   It is expected that a full-time undergraduate programme will comprise 120 credits per year, which is the equivalent of 1,200 notional learning hours. A full-time postgraduate programme will instead comprise 180 credits per year, which is the equivalent of 1,800 notional learning hours. This is based on the convention that a full-time learner is expected to engage in their studies for forty hours per week across either 30 (undergraduate) or 45 (postgraduate) weeks per year.

36   The University has defined the credit values of each of its qualifications on this basis. These are provided under the relevant part of the Framework (see below). All taught programmes of study must be structured using these credit values.

ECTS credits

37   The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a standard means for comparing academic credits across the European Union and other collaborating European countries.

38   One academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits which equates to 120 UK credits. 1 ECTS credit is therefore equivalent to 2 UK credits awarded by BNU.

Modules

39   A module is a discrete unit of learning set at a specified level which leads to the award of academic credit and which contributes to a programme or qualification. To achieve credit, a learner must achieve the overall pass mark. For some modules, a learner must pass each coursework element.

40   A module descriptor will define:

- The overall aims or objectives of the module;

- The level at which the unit is to be delivered;

- The learning outcomes to be demonstrated and the method of delivery;

- The volume of credit to be achieved, representing a notional volume of learning; and,

- The means of assessment by which learning outcomes will be achieved, demonstrated and credit awarded.

41   A module will normally be delivered as part of a broader programme and will be included in the relevant programme specification. The programme specification will also indicate any programme restrictions, e.g. whether failure of the module can be compensated by achievement in other modules.

42   All programmes should be developed using a structure of 20-credit modules[5]. Undergraduate dissertations and project modules should be double-weighted comprising 40 credits of learning; while Master's dissertation modules will normally be triple-weighted comprising 60 credits of learning.

20 Credit module expectations
• 200 learning hours
• 60 hours scheduled learning and teaching activities (30%)
• 50 hours maximum assessment workload (25%)
• 90 hours of independent study (45%)

43   To facilitate interdisciplinary innovation as well as practical timetabling considerations, modules will normally be completed within an individual teaching block (see below).

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[5] BNU programmes will also incorporate 10-credit 'Opportunity' interdisciplinary modules which will allow learners to personalise their curriculum. These are exceptions to the normal module credit size stipulation. Refer to the Blueprint for more information.

Project and dissertation modules may instead be delivered over an academic or calendar year.

44 A module may be identified as either core or optional relevant to the programme on which it is delivered:

- **Core module**: Cover the fundamental aspects of the discipline and compulsory for the learner to undertake as part of their programme of study. Core modules contribute directly to, and should be mapped against programme learning outcomes. Core modules will include modules that are pathway-specific and compulsory to take on that particular pathway.

- **Optional module**: Chosen by the learner as part of their programme, normally as part of a restricted list.[6] Optional modules are intended to help a learner to broaden their study, or develop additional skills or knowledge. Optional modules are not mapped to programme learning outcomes.

45 The following credit limitations are in place for core and optional modules on a typical FTUG programme:

Academic Level	Core module requirement	Optional module allowance
Foundation	1,200 learning hours	None
Level 4	120 credits	None
Level 5	60 credits minimum	Up to 60 credits
Level 6	60 credits minimum, including the 40 credit Dissertation or Project	Up to 60 credits

Pathway requirements

46 A full-time undergraduate programme can include two or more Pathways. A Pathway is an informal specialism within a programme which may or may not lead to a separate award title.

47 A Pathway is defined by a combination of pathway-specific modules which – combined with core programme requirements – help to shape the direction of studies for a learner wishing to specialise in a particular area.

48 Pathways will only be introduced at Level 5. Level 4 content should be common across the discipline area. A pathway must then include the following in terms of minimum academic credit at Levels 5 and 6:

- 40 credits of pathway-specific modules at Level 5, to be included as part of the core credit requirement. The remaining 20 credit core requirement can either be programme or pathway specific.

- 20 credits of pathway-specific modules at Level 6. The Dissertation / Project should also be pathway focused.

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[6] Where optional modules are available, curriculum development teams should be mindful of the viability thresholds in relation to the number of optional modules from which learners may choose. Optional modules will only run where it is viable to do so; this should be made clear in all learner and applicant-facing materials.

49   A pathway may also include optional modules as set out above.

Academic Year, Teaching Blocks and Intakes

50   The University year is structured into four teaching blocks of 10 weeks. Teaching blocks are seasonal. Partner teaching arrangements may vary but are expected to follow the same broad structure.

Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer
Sept-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept

51   Programmes can admit learners on a 'carousel' basis potentially allowing up to four entry points per programme per year. The number of permissible entry points for an individual programme will be based on viability and resourcing considerations.

52   A programme may run over the 'academic year' from September to June (or its equivalent for mid-year entries) or for the full 'calendar year' (September to September):

Academic Year (9 months)	Calendar Year (12 months)
• 1,200 learning hours • 120 credits • Three teaching blocks (plus additional block for reassessment) • Typically 3 x 40 credit teaching blocks • 30 weeks of teaching • ~40 learning hours per week	• 1,800 learning hours • 180 credits • Four teaching blocks (plus additional block for reassessment) • Typically 3 x 40 plus 1 x 60 credit teaching blocks • ~45 weeks of teaching • ~40 learning hours per week

53   Most undergraduate programmes will follow the typical academic year, although programmes with placement elements may use the full calendar year instead. Postgraduate programmes will typically follow the full calendar year.

Foundation Years

54   A Foundation 'Level 0' is a pre-Level 4 year to prepare learners for study. It has no award of its own but may be validated as an integral part of a four-year course leading to the award of a bachelor's degree with honours, or separately as a stand-alone programme.

      Note: Except for programmes where there may be specific PSRB regulations, a Foundation Year will normally be approved for all undergraduate degree programmes.

55   Each Foundation Programme module will be assigned an indicative credit value to a total of 120 credits (i.e. 1200 notional learning hours in total). Credits will **not** be set at an academic level of achievement but will instead be identified as 'Level 0'.

Integrated programmes

56 An integrated foundation year must represent a coherent part of the programme (or programmes) to which it is linked. Accordingly, each integrated foundation year must have a *subject-specific* component in addition to skills components.

57 Successful achievement of the integrated foundation year will enable automatic progression to Level 4 (i.e. Year 1 of a standard full-time undergraduate degree programme or its equivalent).

58 Integrated foundation years will be governed by the University's *Undergraduate Assessment Regulations*.

Stand-alone programmes

59 A stand-alone Foundation Programme may be developed to prepare learners for study at the University. The programme may combine specific academic study, English language and study skills.

60 Successful achievement of a stand-alone Foundation Programme will result in a Certificate of Achievement. Programme Specifications may permit entry to study specific awards on successful completion of the Foundation Programme where this is a stand-alone programme.

Placement and Study Abroad Opportunities

61 Placements will be integral to all BNU programmes as the expected progression route. Opportunities will range from summer placements, short (term) or longer (9-12 month) opportunities. Programmes leading to professional registration may have additional requirements.

62 In addition to placements a period of study abroad may also be offered as part of a programme. This will either be:

- In addition to the normal minimum period of registration for a programme, e.g. a placement year; or,

- Integral to the programme with activities specified as modules with measurable learning outcomes, assessed activities and assigned credit point values, e.g. typically 40 credits which is the equivalent of a ten week / one term placement opportunity.

63 Where learner achievement during study abroad and / or placement is taken into account in determining eligibility for qualification and classification (including intermediate and exit qualifications) the following must be specified:

- How the opportunity contributes towards the achievement of programme learning outcomes;

- How the standard criteria for the calculation of the overall weighted average for a qualification should be calculated;

- The consequences for failing a study abroad / placement opportunity

64 Arrangements for such opportunities will be approved via a comprehensive mapping exercise in accordance with the University's APL process.

Qualifications Framework

The following table includes qualifications commonly offered by the University. For other qualifications not listed below please contact the Academic Registry for further guidance.

Undergraduate Qualifications

Note that where a qualification is offered with an Integrated Foundation Year (typically a Bachelor's degree) the FTE length will increase by 1 academic year and Learning Hours by 1,200, but UK Credits and Exit Qualifications will be unchanged as Foundation Year study is not credit-rated.

Qualification	Study length (FTE)	Teaching Blocks per year	FHEQ Level	Learning Hours	UK Credits	ECTS Credits	UK Credits per Level	Exit Qualifications
Certificate of Higher Education	1 academic year	3	4	1,200	120	60	120 at Level 4	-
Diploma of Higher Education	2 academic years	3	5	2,400	240	120	120 at Level 4 120 at Level 5	CertHE
Foundation Degree Arts / Science	2 academic years	3	5	2,400	240	120	120 at Level 4 120 at Level 5	CertHE
Graduate Certificate	0.3 academic years	1	6	400	40	20	40 at Level 6	-
Graduate Diploma	0.6 academic year	2	6	800	80	40	80 at Level 6	GradCert
Bachelor's degree (Ordinary Degree)	3 academic years	3	6	3,000	300	150	120 at Level 4 120 at Level 5 60 at Level 6	CertHE DipHE
Bachelor degree with Honours in Arts / Science etc.	3 academic years	3	6	3,600	360	180	120 at Level 4 120 at Level 5 120 at Level 6	CertHE DipHE Ordinary degree
Integrated Master's degree with Honours	4 academic years	3	7	4,800	480	240	120 at Level 4 120 at Level 5 120 at Level 6 120 at Level 7	CertHE DipHE Ordinary degree Honours degree

Taught Postgraduate Qualifications

Qualification	Study length (FTE)	Teaching Blocks per year	FHEQ Level	Learning Hours	UK Credits	ECTS Credits	UK Credits per Level	Exit Qualifications
Postgraduate Certificate	0.3 calendar year	2	7	600	60	30	60 at Level 7	-
Postgraduate Diploma	0.6 calendar year	3	7	1,200	120	60	120 at Level 7	PGCert
Master's degree (Arts / Science etc.)	1 calendar year	4	7	1,800	180	90	180 at Level 7	PGCert PGDip
Professional doctorate[7]	4 calendar years	N/A	8	5,400	540	270	150 at Level 7 390 at Level 8	MPhil

[7] Validated by the University's Research Degree Awarding partner.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Table of current approved qualifications

Abbreviation	Full name of qualification
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEng	Bachelor of Engineering
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CertHE	Certificate of Higher Education
DipHE	Diploma of Higher Education
DMS	Diploma in Management Studies
FDA	Foundation Degree Arts
FDSc	Foundation Degree Science
GradCert	Graduate Certificate
GradDip	Graduate Diploma
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
LLM	Master of Laws
MA	Master of Arts
MArt[8]	Master in Arts
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MEng	Master of Engineering
MOst[9]	Master of Osteopathy
MPH	Master of Public Health
MSc	Master of Science
MSci[10]	Master in Science
PGCert	Postgraduate Certificate
PGDip	Postgraduate Diploma

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[8] Integrated master's degree
[9] Integrated master's degree
[10] Integrated master's degree

Appendix 2: Qualification Level Descriptors

The University has adopted the qualifications descriptors for Levels 4-8 from those published in the FHEQ which are reproduced below. The FHEQ does not cover pre-higher education qualifications, for example Foundation Years. For these, the Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education (2016) published by the South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC) may be helpful.

Level	Awarded to learners who have demonstrated:	Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:	And holders will have:
4	• knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study • an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study	• evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work • communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments • undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment	• the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.
5	• knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed • ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context • knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the	• use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis • effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively • undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations.	• the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making

Level	Awarded to learners who have demonstrated:	Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:	And holders will have:
	appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study • an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge		

6	• a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline
	• an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline
	• conceptual understanding that enables the student:
	   o to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline
	   o to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
	• an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge
	• the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed
		• apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects
		• critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
		• communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
			• the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
			   o the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
			   o decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
			   o the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

Level	Awarded to learners who have demonstrated:	Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:	And holders will have:
	research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).		

7	• a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
	• a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
	• originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret
	• knowledge in the discipline
	• conceptual understanding that enables the student:
	  o to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
	  o to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
		• deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
		• demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
		• continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.
			• the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
			  o the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
			  o decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
			  o the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

8	• the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to	• make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions	• the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex

Level	Awarded to learners who have demonstrated:	Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:	And holders will have:
	satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication • a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice • the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems • a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.	clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences • continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.	and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

Appendix 3: Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

1   A programme may be offered as a higher or degree apprenticeship, which involves learners completing an apprenticeship by working alongside experienced staff and gaining job-specific skills while earning themselves a wage.

Apprenticeship Standards

2   For a programme to qualify as an apprenticeship it must have a corresponding Apprenticeship Standard approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education and published on their website.[11] Standards are occupation-focused rather than being qualification-led and the name of the apprenticeship standard will be the name of the occupation, e.g. "Registered Nurse".

3   Apprenticeship Standards are developed with employers and contain a list of the knowledge, skills and behaviours an apprentice will need to have learned by the end of their apprenticeship. Programme learning outcomes should additionally be mapped against the Apprenticeship Standard requirements.

4   Apprentices are employed and must remain in employment for the duration of their apprenticeship. They are given time for study which is related to their role – usually one day a week (20% of their learning ['off the job' learning]). Depending on their level, apprenticeships take between one and 5 years for learners to complete.

5   All degree apprenticeships are defined by the University as work-based learning programmes. The mode of study may vary and will be determined by the study load as normal, although typically an apprenticeship will be offered as full-time.

   • A 'higher apprenticeship' refers to all apprenticeships that include the achievement of academic / vocational qualifications from Level 4 (CertHE) up to bachelor's and master's degrees at Levels 6-7;

   • A 'degree apprenticeship' is the latest model to be developed as part of higher apprenticeship standards whereby an apprentice can achieve a full bachelor's or master's degree (Levels 6 and 7) as a core component of the apprenticeship.

End Point Assessment (EPA)

6   An Apprenticeship must include an End Point Assessment (EPA) which will determine whether the apprentices has demonstrated the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and therefore whether an apprentice is occupationally competent.

7   EPA will cover the apprentice's performance across the whole standard rather than for individual tasks and will typically comprise a range of assessment tasks including knowledge tests, observations, and a professional discussion. Learners must successfully complete the relevant end-point assessment for the successful completion of their apprenticeship programme and – for some professional programmes – entry to the professional register.

8   EPA must be conducted by independent end-point assessors appointed by an EPAO, which must be on the Register of end-point assessment organisations (RoEPAO).

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[11] See: https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/ for a searchable list of Apprenticeship Standards.

Many degree apprenticeships will follow an integrated form of end-point assessment, where the higher education institution delivering the degree will also be the end point assessor and must be on the RoEPAO against the relevant Standard.

9   End-point assessment arrangements must be confirmed as part of programme development.

Non-apprentices enrolled on apprenticeship programmes

10   Although an apprenticeship will specify a related qualification to be achieved, that qualification is independent of the apprenticeship itself. As such it is possible for the same qualification to be delivered as part of an apprenticeship and in its own right.

11   However, the learner undertaking the qualification separately must meet the requirements of the standalone programme, i.e. they must be in employment and be facilitated by their employer to undertake the programme and support their studies (as with all work-based learning programmes).

Appendix 4: Micro-credentials

1   Micro-credentials are stand-alone 'bite-size' short courses that are credit-bearing but do not lead to a specific qualification. They can be useful for addressing a learner's short-term skills or knowledge gap, e.g. to meet new PSRB requirements.

2   As micro-credentials do not lead to a specific qualification, they should not be used for courses consisting of more than 40 credits, for which a relevant qualification should instead be awarded.

3   Micro-credentials may consist of one or more modules. These may be smaller than the University standard module size (20 credits) but will typically represent the equivalent of 100 notional hours of learning (i.e. 10 credits) as a minimum. Credits should be assigned to and mapped against the appropriate academic level of the qualifications framework.

4   Approval of micro-credential courses should follow the process for short courses set out in the *Programme Approval and Amendment Policy*. Otherwise, the quality assurance for micro-credentials will follow standard requirements for the award of credit.

5   Learners will receive a transcript recording their academic achievement and credits awarded which may be used for the purposes of credit accumulation and transfer.
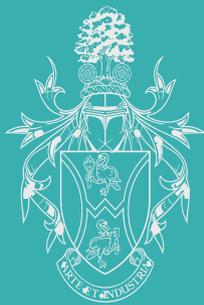
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