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2B: Academic Framework

INTRODUCTION

1. The Academic Framework is a common basis for the design and structure of the University's taught awards and learning associated with the award of credit.

2. The Framework aligns with external regulatory guidance, including the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and, in turn to the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, and, where appropriate, to the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB).

3. The Framework has been written with regard to the University's interest in the promotion of innovative, flexible and effective curriculum design and delivery, and in line with its particular character, ethos, mission and strategic priorities. The University seeks to address the changing needs of students, employers and the wider communities that it serves by:

    i.   extending the accessibility and flexibility of the provision;
    ii.   increasing the range of learning opportunities available to students within and surrounding the curriculum, including work experience, self-employment and entrepreneurial activities;
    iii.   enhancing the employability of students and their capacity to succeed in a fast-changing and globalised world;
    iv.   meeting the needs of employers, PSRBs and the continuing professional development needs of those in work;
    v.   Addressing principles of equality and diversity.

4. The Framework sets out the parameters of course and unit design as a basis for consistent, good practice across the University, whilst allowing 'schools' scope to consider how best to achieve their intentions for learning and teaching within the Framework. The Framework is a basis for ensuring that rigorous academic standards and high quality of provision are secured and that student learning opportunities are enhanced.

5. Central to the University's Strategic Plan, and to the Framework, are the interests of students. Students need high quality learning opportunities, informed by current thinking within the discipline and pedagogic and industrial practice, grounded in research and advanced professional practice.

6. Students must also be enabled to demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and critical, practical, professional and personal skills, through assessments that are challenging, rigorous, fair, transparent and appropriately aligned to the learning undertaken and the intended learning outcomes. Students should be enabled to gauge their learning needs and achievements, to develop independence in learning and judgement, and to make informed choices in planning their studies and careers.

7. Provision of effective support for learning is essential to ensure that the diverse learning needs of students are addressed and that all have an equal opportunity to succeed.

8. The Framework is aligned to relevant English national legal and regulatory requirements. The Academic Registrar will ensure the continuing review of the Framework for consistency with national legal and regulatory requirements, making recommendations, from time to time, through the Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Committee (LTSAC), to Academic Board for any amendments.

9. The University holds powers, under section 76 of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, to award taught degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic awards and distinctions, including honorary degrees, together with the associated academic credit.

10. Academic Board exercises the authority to make and to rescind academic awards on behalf of the University.

11. Academic Board has delegated the responsibility of monitoring the operation of the Framework to the Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Committee. The Committee will seek approval from Academic Board for any changes to the Framework, following recommendations from the Academic Registrar.

12. Unit and progression and award assessment boards have delegated authority from Academic Board to award academic credit in accordance with the Academic Regulations.

13. The Academic Registrar has authority delegated by Academic Board to interpret the University's Academic Regulations and policies and to make a final decision in case of any dispute.

14. The Academic Registrar has authority delegated by Academic Board through LTSAC to grant exemptions from the Academic Regulations and the associated regulatory policies. The LTSAC will receive an annual report detailing how this authority has been exercised.

SCOPE OF THE APPLICATION OF THE POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES IN THE FRAMEWORK

15. This Framework applies to all learning provision offered by the University as the awarding body. The University will maintain and enhance its capability and reputation as the provider of high quality education and training, and the source of awards, applying good practice in design, delivery, assessment and student support.

16. The provisions set out below are intended to facilitate the design and delivery of the University's core provision of undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision, which are mostly located 'on campus'. These provisions should be applied, appropriately and proportionately, to all learning provision formally assessed for the award of credit by the University which includes:

i.   All taught awards, including those developed for employers and collaborative partners;

ii.   Accreditation of employers' own in-house programmes;

iii.   All modes of delivery and locations, and all types of learning opportunities whether 'face-to-face', on-line or in any other format.

17.   Non-credit bearing courses, i.e. courses delivered by Southampton Solent University without the award of any credits, will be aligned to the Educational Principles contained in this Framework and approved through a process established by Academic Services; the review of non-credit bearing provision will be conducted under the oversight of LTSAC.

EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES

18.   All provision will be based on the principles of providing:

A learning experience that:

i.   is focused on students and their success;

ii.   addresses defined learning-outcomes;

iii.   is equitable, diverse and inclusive;

iv.   enables students to develop the knowledge, critical, intellectual, practical, professional and transferable skills necessary to prepare themselves for the personal and career challenges of a changing and increasingly inter-connected world; and

v.   fosters the independent learning required for continued professional development.

A curriculum that:

i.   is unit based and credit rated in alignment with the UK Quality Code;

ii.   is innovative and forward thinking;

iii.   is enriched throughout with 'real-world' learning;

iv.   meets or exceeds the standards set by national, and where relevant international, academic and professional bodies;

v.   reflects current thinking and practice in the subject and pedagogy and is clearly informed by research, advanced professional practice and enterprise;

vi.   has clearly defined learning outcomes, which reflect the academic, professional and employment demands of the discipline; and

vii.   offers an element of student choice.

Assessment that:

i.   is explicitly aligned with student learning;

ii.   is clear and equitable; and

iii.   enables students to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

DESIGN OF COURSES

Principles

19. The awards that the University confers are defined in Annex 1. Each award title must be unique within the University's portfolio and reflect the content and learning outcomes of the course. Exceptions may be permitted where it is demonstrated, through the course approval process, that the award titles, including those used for exit awards, are associated with identical learning outcomes for the proposed courses.

20. A course is an approved programme of study that provides a coherent learning experience with a defined set of course learning outcomes leading to a University award.

21. To ensure the integrity of award titles at least 60 credits across levels 5 and 6 (undergraduate courses consisting of 3 or more levels) or 45 credits at level 7 (postgraduate courses), excluding research methods and final year projects/dissertations units, must be distinct to the course. This does not exclude the sharing of units between courses.

22. All University courses should encapsulate the ethos, aspirations and distinctive characteristics of the University. They should:

    i.   clearly demonstrate alignment with the University's Educational Principles and Learning and Teaching Strategy;
    ii.   be underpinned by the University's research, scholarship and enterprise activities; and
    iii. where appropriate, be designed to meet the requirements of relevant PSRBs with a view to seeking professional accreditation.

23. Each course will be assigned to an academic school, the Solent Learning and Teaching Institute, the Research and Innovation Office or a collaborative partner (collectively referred to as 'school' in this Framework). Professional services departments may take responsibility for the delivery of units as determined through the course approval process. The quality assurance of a course will be the responsibility of the assigned 'school' in collaboration with Academic Services.

24. The University validates:

    i.   Undergraduate courses – this includes all awards of qualifications at FHEQ levels 4-6 and Integrated Master's qualifications at level 7; or
    ii.   Postgraduate Taught courses – this includes all awards of qualifications at level 7, except Integrated Master's and Research Master's qualifications (where students spend more time on original research than on taught or guided study, e.g. MPhil, MRes).

'Real-world' learning

25. 'Real-world' learning involves interaction with employers and external organisations, and is underpinned by experiential learning pedagogy to allow students to prepare, rehearse and reflect on their experiences.

26. 'Real-world' learning should be embedded within the curriculum enabling students to learn through activities which are derived from real-world scenarios and preparing them

for employment or career progression. This may be achieved through various mechanisms as appropriate for the subject area, course and level of award and must be clearly specified in the course documentation.

27.   Where work-based learning is integral to the course there is a requirement for the construction of the workplace as a learning environment and for learning outcomes to reflect this type of transdisciplinary learning. Unlike placement activity there is a requirement that the learner is in existing/continuing employment and is supported by existing workplace supervisors. In most cases these require partnerships between the University and the external organisation, and often tripartite agreements between the learner, employer and University.

28.   Courses will be designed to ensure that all students are able to develop generic and course specific employability and career development skills. This will include generic and transferable skills such as verbal and written communication, resilience, teamwork, leadership, networking, self-motivation, commercial awareness, problem solving, research, organisation and confidence as well as sector specific skills.

Stages and levels

29.   All courses must be divided into levels and where appropriate stages to offer appropriate progression and award points in alignment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF).

30.   Levels are a series of sequential stages (a developmental continuum) expressed in terms of a range of generic outcomes against which typical qualifications can be positioned, the higher the level the more difficult the qualification. The University's levels mirror the levels in the FHEQ and RQF as indicated in Table 1. Within each level, the various qualifications involve different volumes of learning and hence differences in the range of intended learning outcomes.

31.   Stages are progression points within or across a level (e.g. part-time or Master's course) where specific progression regulations are applied and decisions are made regarding the student's progression to the next stage. Stages are considered and approved through the course approval process.

Course and level learning outcomes

32.   All courses must have stated aims and intended learning outcomes which the curriculum, the course structure and the unit's teaching, learning and assessment strategies are collectively designed to fulfil.

33.   The course and level learning outcomes state what a student is expected to know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completion of a designated course or level of study which leads to an award.

34.   The course learning outcomes should cover the Educational Principles defined in this Framework and refer to relevant internal and external reference points, which include:

   i.   The FHEQ;
   ii.   relevant subject benchmark statements;
   iii.   appropriate qualification characteristics statements; and
   iv.   relevant PSRB requirements.

35. Courses with more than one level must also define level learning outcomes for each level. These should indicate the level of the overall course learning outcomes that students are expected to have achieved to progress to the next level or receive an approved exit award. Level learning outcomes must clearly demonstrate the incremental progression of learning through the levels.

36. The course and level learning outcomes will include specific skills developing:

    i. <u>Knowledge, Understanding and Cognition</u>
        These learning outcomes should outline what learners will know and understand about the subject as well as demonstrating application and the use of knowledge in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

        It is expected that the complexity and hierarchy of learning outcomes match the level of learning in the areas of: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation.

    ii. <u>Real-world Skills</u>
        These learning outcomes should outline the professional, practical and transferable qualities students are expected to acquire throughout their studies to prepare them for employment and/or career development and enable them to demonstrate personal responsibility and decision making in familiar and unfamiliar circumstances.

37. Course and level learning outcomes must be assessed in more than one unit to ensure that all students have met all the learning outcomes for an award, including those awarded condoned units.

38. Outcomes must be measurable, through the use of summative assessments, to enable demonstration of the extent to which students have achieved the intended learning outcomes. Courses should make use of formative assessment to help students meet the learning outcomes and succeed at the summative assessments.

Core, options and optionality

39. The course structure must specify in which order units will be studied. All units must be designated in the definitive documentation as either:

    i. **Core**: Units which students studying for a named award are required to study; or
    ii. **Option**: Units which can be chosen by students from alternative units as defined in the course specification.

40. In line with the University's Educational Principles courses should offer students optionality within the curriculum as appropriate for that subject area and any PSRB requirements. The level of optionality provided will be established through the course approval process, bearing in mind University policies on learning, teaching and resources.

41. The available options from within the course and other courses should be stipulated in the course specification.

Academic sessions

42. An academic session is a specified period of time during which an academic course or a level/stage of a course is delivered and assessed; a session may be synonymous with an academic year, a calendar year or another defined period of time lasting no more than 12 calendar months and will have a specific start and finish date.

43. With the exception of courses which recruit through UCAS, courses can start and finish at any time throughout the year when the University is open.

44. When determining the length of non-UCAS courses through the course development and approval process, full consideration must be given to the length of time needed to compete the prescribed credit (1 credit = 10 notional learning hours).

45. Student workload should not exceed 48 hours per week.

46. Careful consideration should also be given, through the course development and approval process, to the funding implications of course lengths, e.g. Master's courses should be at least 45 weeks in order to qualify as 'long courses' and receive additional funding.

47. Academic Services and 'schools' will notify students of their progress and achievements through their studies and of the outcomes from all assessment boards.

48. A reassessment opportunity must be provided before the start of the next academic session, except where this requirement has been set aside through an exemption approved by the Academic Registrar.

Undergraduate courses

49. Undergraduate courses may be multi-levelled, but the level of the final award and any exit awards must be clearly stated on the course specification.

50. Undergraduate courses which are part of the agreed national competitive application process are classed in the documentation as 'UCAS courses'. All 'UCAS courses' in full time or sandwich mode must be 30 weeks long in each annual academic session. They are free to use any combination of unit modes, but the start and finish dates of individual units must be within the 30 designated weeks. Unless this requirement has been set aside through an exemption approved by the Academic Registrar.

51. Courses must be designated as full time or part time or both.

52. Undergraduate courses (not including Integrated Master's) may also be designated as extended (4 levels including a foundation year at level 3) or sandwich (including a 26 week or longer placement).

53. Integrated Master's courses may be designated as sandwich (including a 26 weeks or longer placement).

54. Full time undergraduate courses must be designed to enable a student to complete a minimum of 120 credit points at the same level of the course in one academic session.

55. Under exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Head of Student Records acting on behalf of the Academic Registrar, individual students enrolled on a full-time

course may reduce the number of units they study over a period of time. The Head of Student Records will ensure that students do not exceed the time limits determined by the Student Loans Company or the UK Visas and Immigration Authority. During those periods students:

i. Will be considered part-time for registration and funding purposes;
ii. Must be registered on between 40 and 100 credits points at levels 4-6 and between 30 and 100 credit points at level 7 (Integrated Master's only);
iii. Maximum registration period will be calculated pro-rata according to the attendance modes studied, but cannot exceed the part-time maximum registration period as set out in this Framework.

56. Part time courses must be designed to allow students to achieve a level or an award over a longer period than a full-time variant. Part-time courses will comprise a minimum of 40 credits and a maximum of 80 credits in any one academic session and designed so that each level can be completed within two academic years. Any exceptions will be considered and approved through the course approval process.

57. Course documentation must inform prospective students of the minimum credit to be achieved in an academic session.

58. All undergraduate courses consisting of three or more levels must provide students with the opportunity to study at least one language unit as part of the curriculum, unless an exemption has been approved by the Academic Registrar.

59. All undergraduate courses should provide opportunities for students to undertake real-world learning and in addition ideally work experience or placements as part of developing employability and enterprise skills.

60. Students studying an undergraduate course of three or more levels may study level 5 at a partner institution abroad where the units being studied are equivalent and have been appropriately mapped and the impact to relevant professional body requirements assessed by the Course Leader. The credit values of the units will be recognised; the assessment marks achieved abroad will not be transferred.

Combined subjects

61. Some subject areas are multi- and inter-disciplinary and course titles and content should reflect and specify this interrelation.

62. Nomenclature should be explained in course documentation, marketing material and other instructions to students.

63. Courses which bring together two distinct subjects should follow the following naming conventions and credit allocations:

i. Joint Honours: Title: Subject A and Subject B Credit allocation: A minimum total of 140 credits in each of the two subjects (which may include subject specific options) and no more than a 20 credit difference between the totals for each subject, excluding the final level project where applicable; and
ii. Major/Minor: Title: Subject C with Subject D Credit allocation: A maximum total of 240 credits in subject C and 120 in subject D, minimum of 180 credits in subject C and 80 in subject D.

Placement learning

64. All placements that form a validated part of a named award must be registered appropriately by the University and approved by the designated academic (unit leader/course leader) and the employer.

65. The support arrangements for placements are detailed in the Student Work Placement Handbook and the Employer Placement Handbooks.

66. The University retains ultimate responsibility for the academic standards related to placement learning where the placement is part of an assessed unit.

67. All placement learning (including professional practice experience) that forms a formal part of a course must be defined in terms of credits, level, learning outcomes and assessment requirements.

68. A period of placement learning exceeding 24 weeks that forms part of a sandwich degree will be assigned 120 placement credit points. These 'P' points will be in addition to the total credits needed for the degree.

69. A four or five-year undergraduate course with a period of placement learning exceeding 24 weeks must also have a validated three or four-year (respectively) version to which students can transfer in the event they cannot successfully obtain or complete the required partner-based learning element. Course documentation must make clear if differences exist in the recognition of a course by professional bodies between the three/four year and the four/five year versions.

70. Credit rated placement learning must have the appropriate level of detail shown in the course specification and be part of the University's quality assurance procedures that apply to the course.

71. The University will assure itself of the standards of all placement learning where a partner (e.g. employer organisation or educational institution) is partly or wholly responsible for delivering the outcome level and the assessment of learning.

Postgraduate courses

72. All postgraduate taught courses are at level 7; the final award and any exit awards must be clearly stated on the course specification.

73. Full time courses should be designed so that they can be completed within one academic session.

74. Under exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Head of Student Records acting on behalf of the Academic Registrar, individual students enrolled on a full-time course may reduce the number of units they study over a period of time. The Head of Student Records will ensure that students do not exceed the time limits determined by the Student Loans Company or the UK Visas and Immigration Authority. During those periods students:

i.   Will be considered part-time for registration and funding purposes;
ii.   Must be registered on between 30 and 150 credits points.

    iii.   Maximum registration period will be calculated pro-rata according to the attendance modes studied and must not exceed the part-time maximum registration period as set out in this Framework.

75.   Courses in part-time mode will comprise of units totalling a maximum of 120 credits and a minimum of 60 credits in any one academic session. Any exceptions will be considered and approved through the course approval process.

COURSE MANAGEMENT

76.   All courses must have a course specification and must:

    i.   have a designated course leader;
    ii.   be assigned to a named subject group; and
    iii.   be assigned to a 'school'.

77.   The course leader appointed by the 'school' will be appointed on an open-ended or indefinite contract, which extends beyond one full cycle of the course operation, with any exceptions approved by the relevant Director (or nominee).

78.   Each course must have its own course committee or be assigned to an appropriate committee that covers several courses, with appropriate student representation. Heads of Subjects (or equivalent) are responsible for ensuring all courses are allocated to a course committee and that the committee meets at least twice in an academic session.

79.   All courses will be subject to annual and cyclical course review - see section 2D of the Academic Handbook.

CERTIFICATION OF COURSES

80.   An award certificate and transcript of results will be produced for each qualifying student.

81.   Diploma supplements will be provided to students for all completed undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses.

CREDIT VALUES OF AWARDS

82.   The full list of the University's approved awards is contained in Annex 2.

83.   The University has aligned its credit values with the 'Higher Education Credit Framework for England'. Table 1 depicts the credit value to be applied in the design of courses. Courses are expected to be designed using the required credit value at the level of award. Exceptionally, a course may be designed using the minimum credit required at the level of the award, this would be considered and approved through the course approval process.

Table 1. Credit value of awards

HE qualification as set out in the FHEQ	FHEQ level	Credit required in the design of the award	Credit required at the level of the award	Minimum credit at the level of the award	FQ-EHEA cycles
PhD	8	Not credit rated			Third cycle
MPhil	7	Not credit rated			Second cycle
MA/MSc/MProf/MEd/MBA	7	180	180	150	
Integrated Master's degree	7	480	120	120	
Integrated Master's degree (with a placement year)	7	600*	120	120	
Postgraduate diploma	7	120	120	90	
Postgraduate certificate	7	60	60	40	
Classified Bachelor's degree	6	360	120	90	First cycle
Classified Bachelor's degree (with a placement year)	6	480*	120	90	
Top-up Degree – Classified Bachelor's degree	6	120	120	120	
Graduate diploma	6	120	120	80	
Foundation Degree	5	240	120	90	Short cycle
Diploma of Higher Education	5	240	120	90	
Higher National Diploma	5	240	120	90	
Higher National Certificate	4	150/120	120	120	
Certificate of Higher Education	4	120	120	90	
Foundation Certificate	3**	120	120		

* 120 of these credits are P credit points for the placement year
** RQF level

REGISTRATION PERIODS FOR COURSES

84. To be eligible for an award a student must be registered on the award and all awards must have been completed within the approved maximum registration periods specified in table 2.

85. The registration requirements for a named award, including the extra time granted to make good credit point deficits and periods of formal suspension, must be met within the standard length (as approved at validation) plus two years.

86. Since the University encourages the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process and advanced standing there are no minimum registration periods for awards.

87. A student will be entitled to receive only one Southampton Solent University award as a result of a continuous period of registration.

88. Students registered on research degrees may register on taught courses and units in addition to their research degree.

89. Direct-entry students will have their maximum periods of registration shortened by one year (full-time) or two years (part-time) for each complete level with which they enter.

90. Students who transfer between attendance modes will have their registration periods calculated pro rata.

91. Students who withdraw from a course will not be permitted to register back onto that course from which they have withdrawn: this includes students who transfer to another course within the University.

Table 2. Registration periods

Traditional Qualifications	FHEQ Level	Indicative FT Length	Full time Maximum Registration	Indicative PT Length	Part time Maximum Registration
Foundation Certificate	3	1	3	2	4
Certificate of Higher Education	4	1	3	2	4
Diploma of Higher Education	5	2	4	4	6
Foundation Degree	5	2	4	3	5
Higher National Diploma	5	2	4	4	6
Top-up Degree	6	1	3	2	4
Degree or Honours Degree	6	3	5	6	8
Graduate Diploma	6	1	3	2	4
Postgraduate Certificate	7	-	-	1	3
Postgraduate Diploma	7	1	3	2	4
Integrated Masters	7	4	6	8	10
Masters	7	1	3	2	4

UNIT DESIGN

Principles

92. A unit is a self-contained, formally structured, learning experience with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

93. Southampton Solent's unit based curriculum provides students with the opportunities either:

    i.   to study discrete units of study from a predefined validated course; or
    ii. to study discrete stand alone units which may or may not be part of a validated course.

Unit designations

94. All units will be designated either as 'credit-bearing unit' or 'non-credit bearing unit'.

95. 'Credit-bearing units' – Units which will award University credit on successful completion. Includes all units, stand alone or as part of a designated course delivered by the University or a collaborative partner. The unit descriptor will clearly identify the unit is credit bearing and the level and amount of the credits.

96. 'Non-credit bearing units' – Units developed and delivered by the University in line with the University's Educational Principles without any award of University credit on

completion. Requirements contained in this section do not apply to non-credit bearing units; these units are approved and documented through a University process established by the Quality Management Department.

Documentation

97. Each unit must have a validated Unit Descriptor containing key information, such as the level and number of credits, learning outcomes, learning and teaching approach, assessment strategy and the weighting of individual elements of assessment

98. All students enrolled on a unit should have access to the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) (or an alternative VLE for collaborative students). The unit site will contain essential unit information, including the week-by-week teaching and learning scheme (or equivalent), tutors' contact details and availability, assessment brief with grading criteria (or equivalent), assessment submission (e.g. Turnitin link or details on where to submit paper based assignments).

99. All required reading material must be available to University students via the library or provided through other appropriate means.

Credit

100. A credit-rated unit based system allows students to be awarded credit for what they have achieved. Credits gained are portable, allowing students to be recognised for what they have achieved and to be able to transfer between modes of study, courses or institutions.

101. Credit is awarded to students in recognition of the verified achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level.

102. All student learning activities and demonstrations of achievement that count towards a named award or credit of the University must be contained within a credit-rated unit. Credit awarded will be compatible with the UK Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) where 2 CATS are equivalent to 1 ECTS point.

103. Credit will be awarded for the achievement of learning outcomes, as specified by the volume of work (amount) that students are expected to do to achieve the learning outcomes (level). One credit point represents 10 notional hours of learning. This includes not only formal contact hours, but also preparation for these, private reading and study, the completion of formative and summative assessments and revision for examinations.

Unit size

104. The minimum and maximum credit sizes of undergraduate and postgraduate units are provided in table 3.

Table 3. Unit credit size

	FHEQ level	Minimum unit size	Maximum unit credit size	Must be divisible by
Undergraduate	4-7	20	60	10
Postgraduate Taught	7	30	60	15
Standalone units	4-7	2	60	2 or 5

105. The following exceptions apply to table 3:

i. Placement units may be larger than 60 credit points in size.
ii. Level 7 Integrated Master's units can be either divisible by 15 credits (minimum unit size 30 credits) or divisible by 10 credits (minimum unit size 20 credits).
iii. In exceptional circumstances a course can include 10 credit units (undergraduate) or 15 credit units (postgraduate and level 7 integrated master units) with the approval of the relevant Director and subject to approval by the validation panel or unit and course modification panel.

Credit levels of units

106. All units must be assigned to an appropriate level in accordance with the FHEQ or RQF.

107. The credit level of a unit provides an indicator of the relative complexity, demand and/or depth of learning and of learner autonomy.

108. The University recognises the following unit credit levels:

i. **Level 3**: aimed at preparing students for study at higher education entry level;

ii. **Level 4**: aimed at providing students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills demanded for study at undergraduate level;

iii. **Level 5**: aimed at providing students with the knowledge and opportunities to demonstrate a repertoire of skills, critical judgement and independent thought;

iv. **Level 6**: aimed at providing students with the opportunities to demonstrate that they have become skilful, competent, critical, reflective, adaptable, employable and capable of the acquisition and evaluation of new knowledge and concepts;

v. **Level 7**: aimed at providing students with opportunities to demonstrate mastery of a complex area of specialised knowledge and expertise in advanced technical, professional and/or research skills, to devise methodologies and communicate the results of research.

vi. **Placement**: Credit rated and assessed experience which is part of an agreed and negotiated period of learning up to one year's duration and takes place outside the University (except where the University is the placement provider/employer) and is additional to the 360 credit points required for a undergraduate degree. These credits can be awarded at any specified level and do not count towards the final degree classification, except where this rule has been set aside through an exemption approved by the Academic Registrar.

NOTE: This is distinct from experiential, work placement, study placement or work based learning units which are part of an award bearing course.

Unit delivery modes

109. Units can be delivered in a range of ways, using a combination of methods. While the University encourages the use of flexible and varied means of delivery, each unit will have a predominant mode of delivery and this is what should be used to classify the unit. The mode of delivery for a unit must give students the opportunity to achieve the unit learning outcomes.

110. The mode of delivery should be clearly identified in the unit descriptor and should be either classified as 'Campus Delivery', 'Distance Learning', or 'Placement Learning'.

111. Where a unit is approved to be delivered in both modes to support different course structures or learner groups a separate unit code (and therefore unit descriptor) is needed for each mode delivered to aid timetabling and tracking of units.

112. Students must be informed by External Relations prior to enrolment whether any teaching or core course related activities will take place outside the standard teaching hours or the teaching periods defined in the University's academic calendar.

Unit learning outcomes

113. All units must have learning outcomes and the unit's learning and teaching, and assessment strategy are designed to assess these.

114. The unit learning outcomes should be designed to support and meet the level and course learning outcomes. They should be categorised according to the course learning outcomes, i.e. 'Knowledge, Understanding and Cognition' and 'Real-world Skills', and must be assessed.

115. Collectively all units at an award level, including exit awards, must meet the learning outcomes of that award.

Unit management

116. Each unit must have a nominated unit leader, who will be responsible for the management and quality assurance of the unit.

117. The unit leader should will be a member of staff appointed by the 'school' on an open-ended (permanent) contract or an indefinite contract, which extends beyond one academic year, unless another arrangement is exceptionally approved by the relevant Director (or nominee). Effective staffing arrangements for units delivered by a collaborative partner must be agreed with the partner organisation and form part of the memorandum of agreement.

118. Each unit must be formally approved through the course approval or unit approval and course modification processes, a Unit External Examiner appointed where required, and assigned to a 'school' who will be responsible for ensuring the unit is managed in accordance with University's policies and procedures.

Pre-requisites

119. Where prior study of a specific unit or group of units (either from the previous level or within the same level) is essential before another unit can be attempted, the unit descriptor of the latter unit must explicitly state the details of the pre-requisite unit or group of units.

120. Pre-requisite units must have been studied and assessed but not necessarily passed for purposes of progressing to the unit it is a pre-requisite for. A unit cannot stipulate a minimum grade to be achieved on a pre-requisite unit in order to be permitted to study that unit.

Assessment of units

121. All credit rated units must be summatively assessed against the unit learning outcomes and feedback given to students. Grades achieved from summative assignments contribute towards the final grade for the unit.

122. Details of the University's Assessment Policy including the Assessment Regulations can be found in section 20 of the Academic Handbook.

Minimum and maximum number of students on a unit

123. In order to maintain the quality of the student learning experience it is important to ensure there are neither too many students nor too few students on a unit.

124. Core units must always run in order to ensure students can complete their course of study. A minimum or maximum student number restriction cannot be defined in this case since all students enrolled on the course must be guaranteed access, although 'school' management teams should work with Academic Services and External Relations at the recruitment stage to avoid core units operating with unviable numbers.

125. For units with large numbers of enrolled students, careful consideration must be given by the 'school' to the group size of timetabled sessions to ensure the size is appropriate to the task and resources available.

126. Optional units may have minimum and/or maximum student number restrictions where there are specific resource constraints. These restrictions must be reviewed and approved by the 'school' management team in liaison with Academic Services and in line with University policy.

127. 'Schools' in liaison with Academic Services must inform students where number restrictions are in place and have fair and transparent mechanisms in place for determining which students will be able to take the optional unit where demand exceeds places.

Sharing of units

128. Units may be shared between courses such that students registered on different courses may be enrolled on the same units.

129. Units at the same level can be shared between courses where the learning outcomes are appropriate for the courses concerned.

130. 'Schools' wishing to share an existing unit through a new course must fully consider and assess any timetabling and resourcing implications. This will be assessed and approved through the course approval process.

131. Units at different levels may be taught together where the syllabus to be followed is the same. These units must have separate unit descriptors with different assessment(s) to reflect the differing standards of student attainment required by level and learning outcomes.

132. Common learning components of units may also be shared e.g. shared fieldwork, but each unit must have a separate unit descriptor and assessment strategy.

Student workload and contact time

133. Student workload must be reflected in the credit rating of a unit and the learning and teaching strategy of the unit; the calculation of student workload should follow the convention of 1 credit equals 10 notional learning hours.

134. In line with the Educational Principles of this Framework, the amount and pattern of formal, timetabled contact hours should be determined by the most efficient and effective means of enabling students to achieve the learning outcomes specified for the unit and to become, progressively by level, independent learners.

135. Scheduled teaching and learning activities, as categorised in the Key Information Set (KIS), should be used to facilitate active student engagement with the learning material. The amount and type of scheduled teaching and learning may vary according to the level and credit size of the unit to appropriately reflect the aims and learning and teaching strategy of the unit. It is anticipated that there will be progressively less formal contact time through the levels, to reflect and promote the increasing intellectual independence of students.

136. Where a unit has no scheduled learning and teaching activities, the teaching and learning strategy must clearly state how students will be supported.

STUDENT SUPPORT FOR COURSES

137. Students must be supported in their academic studies in an appropriate manner. All students can expect to receive:

    i.   appropriate documentation;
    ii.   induction to their course and their roles in the University and the wider community;
    iii.   timely and sound academic and pastoral support; and
    iv.   opportunities for careers advice and personal development.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

138. Students on all taught courses and on courses that include taught elements are expected to:

    i.   attend all timetabled teachings sessions;
    ii.   submit all assessments by the scheduled hand in date;
    iii.   attend all scheduled assessments (e.g. in class tests/presentations/examinations);

iv.   undertake independent learning in support of classroom delivery or as directed by academic staff; and

v.   not take holidays during teaching and assessment periods.

139.   Part of the University's overarching approach to supporting student achievement is to monitor student attendance at scheduled teaching events.

140.   Tier 4 students demonstrating a lack of engagement, extremely low attendance rate and/or long periods of unauthorised absences on a course of study may have their studies terminated immediately and reported to the Home Office.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT PROCESSES

141.   The University places the informed student voice at the centre of its approach to quality management and enhancement. The University works in partnership with students, individually and collectively, and the Students' Union to foster an environment where the provision of open and constructive feedback on all aspects of the student experience is encouraged.

142.   Student membership of committees and boards is defined in Section 3 of the Academic Handbook.

143.   Students will be invited, from time to time, to serve as members of development teams and panel members for course approval, course review, course modification and course revalidation processes.

144.   Students have the opportunity to feedback and/or raise issues with the course team or the relevant 'school' or professional services staff either directly or through a student course representative. End of unit surveys and other surveys are conducted by the University to collect feedback from all students.

145.   Student course representatives play a major role in the quality assurance and enhancement of courses. To provide the most appropriate course representative system, each course must have a minimum of one course representative for each year of a course.

ANNEX 1: SCHEDULE OF AWARDS AND CRITERIA TO BE USED FOR THE DESIGNATION OF SOUTHAMPTON SOLENT UNIVERSITY AWARDS

Introduction

1.   Proposals to add a new award type to the list of Southampton Solent University awards will receive initial consideration by the Academic Planning and Recruitment Committee, before presentation to Academic Board for approval.

2.   Proposals will be considered according to the following criteria:

   i.   avoidance of the unnecessary proliferation of awards;
   ii.   evidence that the proposed awards would have currency (e.g. amongst other HEIs, potential students, employers and professional bodies);
   iii.   a reasonable expectation that the award will have long term currency;
   iv.   clear evidence of demand amongst current and prospective students; and
   v.   any guidance contained in the relevant QAA subject benchmark statements.

Awards

Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BSc)

3.   The award of Bachelor of Arts (BA) should be used for courses of study in art and design, the arts, humanities and social or business studies where it is appropriate.

4.   The award of Bachelor of Science (BSc) should be used for courses of study that are substantially based on science, the social sciences or mathematics and their applications.

5.   BA and BSc courses must meet the qualification descriptors in full at level 6. The award type selected should reflect the major subject studied within the course.

Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) and Master of Engineering (MEng)

6.   These awards designations are reserved for courses of study which provide a technologically broad education with an emphasis on engineering applications, primarily those courses that may also lead to registration with the Engineering Council.

7.   The MEng is reserved for Integrated Master's courses in engineering spanning levels 4 to 7. MEng courses of study will provide a range and depth of specialist knowledge, within a research and industrial engineering environment, alongside a broader and more general academic base.

8.   BEng courses must meet the qualification descriptors in full at level 6 and MEng courses must meet the level 6 and 7 qualification descriptors in full.

Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and Master of Laws (LLM)

9.   These titles are reserved for courses of specialised study in law or (for the Bachelor degree) cases where it is combined with a minor subject.

10. LLB courses must meet the qualification descriptors in full at level 6 and LLM courses must meet the level 7 qualification descriptors in full.

Certificate of Higher Education (Cert HE)

11. This title is used for both stand alone courses and as an exit award that is awarded when students cannot continue with their course but have achieved the learning outcomes and gained a minimum of 120 credits at level 4.

12. Certificate of Higher Education courses must meet the qualifications descriptors in full at level 4.

Diploma of Higher Education (Dip HE)

13. This title is used for both stand alone courses and as an exit award that is awarded when students cannot continue with their course but have achieved the learning outcomes and gained a minimum of 240 credits of which a maximum of 120 credits should be at level 4.

14. Diploma of Higher Education courses must meet the qualifications descriptors in full at level 5.

Foundation Degrees (FdA, FdSc, FdEng)

15. The titles Foundation Degree in Arts (FdA), Foundation Degree in Science (FdSc) and Foundation Degree in Engineering (FdEng) are for the University's Foundation Degree courses. When considering the most appropriate designation for a foundation degree, the criteria in paragraphs 3, 4 and 6 above should be used.

16. Foundation Degree courses must meet the qualifications descriptors in full at level 5.

Graduate Diploma (GradDip)

17. This title is used for courses, at level 6, designed as a conversion course for graduates in another discipline.

18. Graduate Diploma courses must meet the qualifications descriptors in full at level 6.

Higher National Certificate (HNC)

19. This title is used for awards awarded under the Licence Agreement with Pearsons.

20. HNC courses must meet the qualifications descriptors in full at level 4.

Higher National Diploma (HND)

21. This title is used for awards awarded under the Licence Agreement with Pearsons.

22. HND courses must meet the qualifications descriptors in full at level 4.

Master of Arts and Master of Science (MA and MSc)

23.   The award of Master of Arts (MA) should be used for courses of study in art and design, the arts, humanities and social or business studies where it is appropriate.

24.   The title Master of Science (MSc) should be used for courses of study that are substantially based on science, the social sciences or mathematics and their applications.

25.   MA and MSc courses must meet the qualifications descriptors in full at level 7.

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

26.   The award of MBA is used for generalist business courses at level 7 which focus on career development. These courses are distinguished by an emphasis on leadership and strategic management.

27.   MBA courses must meet the qualifications descriptors in full at level 7.

Masters of Computing (MComp)

28.   The MComp is reserved for courses of study which provide a technologically broad education with an emphasis on computing applications.

29.   The MComp title is used for Integrated Master's courses of study spanning levels 4-7 and must meet the qualification descriptors in full at level 6 as well as level 7.

Master of Education (MEd)

30.   The title is used for courses of specialised study in education that meet the full expectations of level 7 qualification descriptors.

Master in Professional Practice (MProf)

31.   This designation is reserved for level 7 awards which reference and reflect upon professional work, with a substantial component of project work, which has the potential to result in a contribution to the enhancement of professional practice.

Master of Natural Science (MSci)

32.   The MSci is reserved for courses of study which provide a technologically broad education with an emphasis on science applications.

33.   The MSci title is used for Integrated Master's courses of study spanning levels 4-7 and must meet the qualification descriptors in full at level 6 as well as level 7.

Postgraduate Certificate (PGC)

34.   This title is used for both stand alone courses and as an exit award that is awarded when students cannot continue with their course but have achieved the learning outcomes and gained at least 60 level 7 credits.

Postgraduate Diploma (PGD)

35.   This title is used for both stand alone courses and as an exit award that is awarded when students cannot continue with their course but have achieved the learning outcomes and gained at least 120 level 7 credits.

Other Awards

Foundation Certificate (FdCert)

36.   This will be granted as an exit award for students who withdraw, or are withdrawn, having successfully completed 120 credits at level 3 or have completed a course at level 3.

Award of Credit

37.   This is used to award academic credit to an individual who has successfully completed a unit or units. This will be presented in the form of a transcript.

Certificate of Achievement

38.   This is an exit award for HNC/D courses that is based on the cumulative total of credit that has been achieved.