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1. Introduction

1.1 This handbook covers the development and validation of all degree programmes – that is Certificates/Diplomas of Higher Education, Foundation degrees and progression routes from Foundation to Honours degrees, BA, BSc, LLB, Graduate Certificates, Graduates Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificates, Postgraduate Diplomas, LLM, MA, MSc, MA/MSc by research, MRes. This should be used as guidance for development of standard programmes as well as those run in collaboration with partners, through flexible and distributed learning (including distance and e-learning), or tailored, bespoke programmes developed in response to demand from a specific employer/organisation as well as any programme with multiple interested parties, including cross-School and interdisciplinary programmes.

1.2 The handbook can be used to guide you through the entire process of degree design, validation and establishment from the first germ of an idea through to the recruitment of your first students. People developing new degrees may find it useful to read most of the handbook before finalizing the design of their programmes. This should be read in conjunction with the College’s ‘Programme Approval Guidance Notes’ (http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval). Consideration should also be given to the Academic Opportunities paper produced as a result of the College’s Strategic Review and to the School’s strategic plan (See http://www.bbk.ac.uk/strategic-review/projects/academic-opportunities).

1.3 This guide has been designed to provide as much of the information needed as is possible. However, there are many other documents that it is useful or necessary to read which are not included but links are given throughout the document and in appendix 2. Please also bear in mind that some information quickly becomes out of date and it is important to use the latest version of forms and policies and these should be taken from the appropriate website rather than from this document.

1.4 Designing and developing degrees involves a large amount of work and takes at least two years from the discussion of an idea until the first students are sitting in a classroom. There are many resources available to you while you go through this process as well as colleagues who can help and support you. Do take advantage of these right from the very start. Most importantly do talk to colleagues who can help you throughout the process.
2. Defining degrees – the basics

Modules and levels

2.1 Degrees at Birkbeck are composed of ‘modules’ taught at different ‘levels’. Each degree must be composed of the right number of modules at the right level. This section explains what modules are, gives a guide to the levels that awards are taught at and sets out the structure of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

2.2 A module is a unit of study that is internally coherent – learning on a module is assessed within that module. Modules are measured in credits, whereby one credit is notionally equivalent to 10 hours of student effort. A full-time undergraduate year is normally made up of 120 credits (equivalent to 40 hours per week of student effort during term weeks) and a full-time postgraduate year is normally made up of 180 credits. At Birkbeck undergraduate degree students are expected to normally study 90 credits per year (0.75 FTE - full-time equivalent) and postgraduate students are expected to study 60 credits per year part-time (0.5 FTE) or 120 per year full time with a 60 credit dissertation. (See section on Designing Modules for guidance on contact hours and assessment norms).

2.3 A standard Birkbeck module is 30 credits and programmes may be made up of half (15 credits), full (30 credits) and double (60 credits) modules. Modules can be ‘core’ (must be taken and must be passed before student can proceed), ‘compulsory’ (must be taken but not necessarily passed i.e. a compensated fail) ‘optional’ (from a defined list) or ‘elective’. They may have pre-requisites, co-requisites or excluded combinations. (See Common Awards Scheme Regulations http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs/cas.)

2.4 The difficulty of modules is indicated by their level. Students would normally proceed from modules at a lower level to those at a higher level as their knowledge and competence increases. The levels which are recognized broadly correspond to whole years of study on a full-time undergraduate degree or throughout a postgraduate degree.

2.5 The national scheme which is used to describe levels in Higher Education is the FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) which uses numbering for modules on undergraduate degrees at levels 4, 5, and 6 and for postgraduate degrees at level 7 (the scheme goes up to level 8 – Doctoral). These levels are also often referred to as ‘Certificate’ (C/4), ‘Intermediate’ (I/5), ‘Honours’ (H/6), ‘Masters’ (M/7). At Birkbeck we now refer to levels using this numbering scheme. See Appendix 4 for full details of the FHEQ Qualification Descriptors at each level.

The Structure of Degrees

2.6 A Masters degree is normally composed of 180 credits. At Birkbeck and throughout the sector these have typically been designed to take two years part time and one year full time. An Honours degree is the most common type of undergraduate degree in the UK system. It is normally composed of 360 credits. At Birkbeck these degrees have typically been designed to take four years of intensive part time study (at full time institutions they take 3 years).

2.7 Under the Birkbeck Common Awards Scheme (CAS) an honours degree should normally be composed of 120 credits at level 4, 120 credits at level 5 and 120 credits at level 6 (but other combinations are also allowed). A Masters degree should normally be composed of 180 credits with a minimum of 150 at level 7 and a maximum of 30 at level 6. See Common Awards Scheme Regulations http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs/cas for more details on the structure of degrees. It is also useful to read the short CAS briefing papers before developing a degree. (See http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs/casfaq/casbrief) and the Higher Education Credit Framework for England (See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/england/credit/creditframework.pdf).

2.8 Foundation Degrees are a relatively new type of award that were designed in order to raise the skill level of the workforce. They are equivalent to two-thirds of an honours degree (240 credits) but must contain vocational elements as well as academic study. At Birkbeck a Foundation Degree normally takes two years and two terms of intensive part-time study. It is normally composed of 120 credits at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5 (although a minimum of 90 credits at Level 5 is permissible). Foundation Degrees must be developed in discussion with relevant employers and must contain Personal Development Planning and work-based/work-related learning (see Appendix 3 on developing FDs). Foundation Degrees must also allow progression to further study. This is most commonly through a progression route to an honours programme (120 credits at level 6) that students follow after completing their FD.
Before developing any Degree you should be fully aware of the QAA Subject Benchmark Statements (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp) including the statement on Foundation Degrees (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/FoundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.asp). You should discuss all proposals with colleagues in relevant cognate subject areas and the latter with the Coordinator of the Foundation Degree Network at the College/Institute of Professional Studies. (Contact the Central and Collaborative Provision section of Registry Services for further details.)

Masters, Honours and Foundation degrees are all designated as being either ‘science’ or ‘arts’ – MA/MSc, BA/BSc, FdA/FdSc. Normal practice at Birkbeck is for both science and social science programmes to be designated ‘Sc’ whilst those in the arts and humanities are ‘A’ (‘arts’).

For programmes run in collaboration with another Higher/Further Education institution or professional organisation a Memorandum of Understanding should be developed prior to submission of the outline proposal and a more detailed Memorandum of Agreement should be developed alongside the full proposal specifying the contribution to be made to the programme by each party.

Table 1: Summary of Birkbeck Awards and Birkbeck Common Awards Scheme (CAS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAS/ FHEQ</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Credits needed</th>
<th>Min at upper level</th>
<th>Max at lower level</th>
<th>Birkbeck Common Awards Scheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/M</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>150 level M/7</td>
<td>30 level H/6</td>
<td>6 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/M</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>90 level M/7</td>
<td>30 level H/7</td>
<td>4 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/M</td>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60 level M/7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/H</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>120/90¹</td>
<td>90 level H/6</td>
<td>30 level I/5</td>
<td>4 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/H</td>
<td>Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30 level H/6</td>
<td>30 level I/5</td>
<td>2 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/H</td>
<td>Honours Degree</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>120 level H/6</td>
<td>120 at level C/4</td>
<td>12 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/I</td>
<td>Foundation Degree</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>90 level I/5</td>
<td>120 at level C/4</td>
<td>8 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/I</td>
<td>Diploma of Higher Education</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>90 level I/5</td>
<td>120 at level C/4</td>
<td>8 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/C</td>
<td>Certificate of Higher Education</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>90 level C/4</td>
<td>30 at A Level or NVQ level 3</td>
<td>4 modules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validating degrees at Birkbeck

At Birkbeck all proposals for new degrees must first be submitted in outline to your School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (STQEC) and if agreed in principle notified to the Quality Enhancement and Validation (QEV) section of Registry Services for completion of a full proposal to be considered by a Programme Development Panel. All programmes put forward for consideration by the STQEC must already have been included in the School Strategic Plans, submitted in January and approved by the College Strategic Planning Committee in February. By presenting outline proposals to the STQEC for approval in principle, strategic and resourcing matters may be considered at an earlier stage in a programme’s development thus ensuring the process is as effective and efficient as possible. Following such endorsement, the QEV section of Registry Services will liaise with you regarding the most suitable dates for submission of your full proposal.

¹ Graduate Diplomas have been developed at Birkbeck which are either 120 or 90 credits. This is in line with the Higher Education Credit Framework for England which recommends that these are a minimum of 80 credits.
2.13 Once a Programme Development Panel has considered and approved the proposal, where appropriate, (either through a meeting or by correspondence) the College Programmes Committee will give consideration and endorsement to this, recommending the new programme to the College Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee and Academic Board. These committees all meet once a term. All new programmes must therefore be proposed initially on the Outline Proposal Form and, if given approval in principle to proceed to consideration, on the Programme Proposal / Specification Form, with the component modules each on a Module Proposal / Specification Form. (See http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs.)

2.14 Once a programme has been approved changes to it have to be made on a Programme Amendment Form (and modules on a Module Amendment Form) (See Appendix 2 and web links for examples of these forms). Your School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committees may approve new modules, module and minor programme amendments for report to the College Programmes Committee, providing these are in line with the QAA national academic infrastructure (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/default.asp), College’s Mission (http://www.bbk.ac.uk/about_us/mission), relevant College Codes of Practice and College/School Strategies including Learning and Teaching (http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lts/).

2.15 All new programmes must be compliant with the College ‘Common Awards Scheme’ (CAS). This outlines not only the balance and size of modules, as indicated above, but also aspects such as policies on resubmission of failed work, late submission of work and mitigating circumstances. All CAS documents are available at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/casregs.doc/view.

2.16 The process of developing a degree can be thought to be in three distinct stages. The first involves gathering information about whether such a degree is appropriate and if so what shape it should take then designing it in terms of what the aims are, what the modules will be, key features etc. The second is the detailed design of the programme and modules and completion and submission of the proposal forms. After this you enter the third stage of preparing the practicalities; assigning tutors, advertising, recruitment, room booking and all the many other things that need to be done.
3. Design and development Stage 1 – Information gathering and planning

Information gathering and market research

3.1 The first thing to consider when thinking about developing a new degree is whether there is demand for it. This should help you to decide whether to go ahead at all and, if you do choose to, precisely what form the degree should take. The Programme Proposal and Specification Form asks for information about the market so do keep notes of all your market research activities.

- Talk to the Assistant Deans and Assistant School Managers for Learning and Teaching and for Recruitment and Retention and members of the Department/School about your ideas. They should be able to advise if the proposals have been considered in the past or if they touch on the interests of other colleagues. Consideration should also be given to the Academic Opportunities paper produced as a result of the Strategic Review and to the School’s strategic plan (See http://www.bbk.ac.uk/strategic-review/projects/academic-opportunities).

- Check other provision within the Department/School and the rest of the College. There is no point developing a degree in direct competition with existing provision. You should meet with colleagues to discover the precise nature of their programmes and to listen to their opinions on whether there would be a market for your programme.

- Check provision at other institutions. Are there many courses in this subject? Where are they? Are they large? Is recruitment healthy? Do they offer part-time or evening routes? Would you need to offer something substantially the same or interestingly different from other institutions?

- Ask External Relations, Business Relations and colleagues in similar disciplines whether they ever get enquiries for the programme you are thinking of. External Relations will be able to provide trend data on student demand for particular programmes in the London area and across the sector. The Unistats website (http://www.unistats.com/) may also be used to provide details of degree programmes currently on offer across the sector.

- Carry out research among potential students or employers. It may be possible to hold focus group discussions with existing students on cognate programmes, or to send out questionnaires.

- Contact the Linking London Lifelong Learning Network office to discuss your idea and to find out if any of Birkbeck’s partners run programmes that could feed into or work with yours (See http://www.linkinglondon.ac.uk/).

- If you are developing a Foundation Degree you may also be able to get information from an appropriate sector skills council, professional body, or Foundation Degree Forward (fdf). You will need to discover if employers perceive there to be a skills gap that your programme could fill. The Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) website lists all Foundation Degrees so it can be a useful resource (See: http://www.fdf.ac.uk/).

3.2 It may be possible after gathering this information that you decide that there would not be substantial demand for the programme you were thinking of. It may be that you need to refine your idea and change tack slightly or that you decide to go ahead. You may decide, for example, to develop new pathways from existing programmes or to use different combinations of existing modules to develop new programmes.

3.3 The other thing you should consider right from the start is the large amount of work involved in delivering a degree (even if it shares modules with other programmes) and whether staff are available to do this work. For example, as well as the provision of the necessary modules, the team providing a degree will normally need to recruit students – advertise, interview, select candidates including perhaps setting and reading entry tasks and writing to all applicants; keep records of student achievement, both student files and all their assessed work; provide support for students in the form of detailed handbooks, tutorials, induction events, module selection information/events; work closely with tutors both one to one and in meetings; convene a Board/Sub-Board of Examiners in July and communicate results to students; and much, much more. You should also consider very closely how much of the teaching and tutorial support for a degree should be delivered by Sessional Lecturers and whether appropriate staff are available to meet the needs the students will have.
3.4 If you decide you would like to proceed you should discuss the decision with your Head of Department – it has serious implications for your workload! You should also discuss whether the provision of such a degree is possible within existing resources, including staffing and learning resources. This is a serious issue and something that needs to be addressed from the outset. You should inform your Head of Department and Assistant Dean (Learning and Teaching) if you are going to go ahead.

Assemble a team

3.5 The design and development of the degree is a large job that needs a wide range of skills and knowledge. It should not be done by a lone individual or just two people (say, proposed Programme Director and Team Leader) working together. You will need a team of people who have the necessary knowledge to develop the detailed programme specification and any new modules needed. The team should include:

- Lead academic – will co-ordinate the development process and be Programme Director once the degree is offered.
- Team Leader – ideally the person who will be the lead administrator supporting the programme. If there is no Team Leader identified discuss this with your School Manager.
- At least one academic who has experience of developing a degree at the same level and being Programme Director for a degree. If you are developing a foundation degree this should be someone with experience of such.
- Other academics with appropriate subject knowledge, this might include academics from other Departments/Schools if appropriate.
- For programmes run in collaboration with a partner institution you need to include a representative of this institution and for those run by flexible and distributed learning (including distance and e-learning) you need to include someone with expertise in this area.
- For Foundation Degrees, you need to include someone who is responsible for employer consultation; this may be the lead academic or may be a specially appointed person. For advice you should contact the Foundation Degree Network/Institute for Professional Studies.

3.6 If you are developing a Foundation Degree you will also need to discuss your plans with the people who run modules in Personal Development Planning and work-based and work-related learning (contact the Foundation Degree Network/Institute for Professional Studies). They may not want to come to every meeting but should be kept in touch with your plans and invited to attend as appropriate.

3.7 The Head of Department, Chair of the School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee/Assistant Dean (Learning and Teaching) and the Assistant School Manager (Learning and Teaching) should also be ex-officio members of your team if they are not otherwise involved.

Plan your time – what you need to know before you start

3.8 Developing a degree is a long process that needs to be planned carefully. It is time consuming and has to meet a whole number of deadlines along the way. In order to plan your time successfully you need to be aware of exactly what it is you need to do and the deadlines you need to meet.

3.9 The deadlines are driven by the meetings of the School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee. The College insists that all outline proposals for all new programmes are submitted to the relevant STQEC by 28th February (18 months in advance of when teaching would begin). You need to make yourself aware of these deadlines and to plan backwards from them. Do also keep in mind that all proposals need a number of signatures (including an External Subject Specialist) and consultation with relevant central services (e.g. Library, ITS) and this can take some time to organize.

3.10 You should also be aware of the deadlines for prospectus entries. A programme that is only in the planning process may be entered in the relevant prospectus as a listing entry. A fuller, more detailed entry may be made once it has been approved by the STQEC to proceed to consideration of the full proposal but this must be marked as “subject to approval”. The outline proposal asks for information on the programme structure, its main features and rationale so you need to have a good idea of what the programme will be like before you complete the form.
**PROGRAMME APPROVAL TIMETABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme begins</th>
<th>October 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline Programme Proposal submitted to School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee – <em>approval to development of full proposal for consideration by Programme Development Panel</em></td>
<td>By 28th February 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In liaison with QEV (Registry Services) and School TQEC</em> – Development schedule for programme agreed including dates for submission of documentation, date for Programme Development Panel (a meeting or by correspondence)</td>
<td>March 2012 onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Programme Proposal submitted to Programme Development Panel – <em>PDP recommends approval of programme to College Programmes Committee</em></td>
<td>March 2012 onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full programme proposal plus full details of consideration by Programme Development Panel submitted to College Programmes Committee – <em>recommends approval to TQEC</em></td>
<td>Summer term 2012 onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New programme details submitted to TQEC – <em>endorsement of recommendation for approval to ABExCol/Academic Board</em></td>
<td>Summer term 2012 onwards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.11 Once you are aware of the time frame you are working within it is then sensible to read a number of documents so that you are aware of what you need to do. The key documents you should be familiar with are:
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for related subjects
  - [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp)
- QAA FD Benchmark Statement [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.asp)
- Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) [http://www.fdf.ac.uk/](http://www.fdf.ac.uk/)
- Programme Regulations [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/casregs.doc/view](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/casregs.doc/view)
- Birkbeck Common Awards Scheme (CAS) website [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/casregs.doc](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/casregs.doc)
- Programme Approval Guidance Notes 2011/12 [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval)
- Programme Proposal/Specification Form [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval)
- Outline Programme Proposal Form [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval)
- Module Proposal and Amendment Forms [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval)
- Programme Amendment Form [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval)

3.12 It can also be useful to look at the College guidance on Internal Review ([http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qa/internal/sed](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qa/internal/sed)). This is the guidance that has been written for people preparing Self-Evaluation Documents as part of the internal review process and is directed at programmes that have been running for a number of years. However, it sets out good practice and it can be very useful to think about how you would evaluate the programme you are designing.

3.13 After reading these documents you should have a good idea of the task ahead of you and you can plan a timetable that fits with the deadlines set by the committees that documentation needs to go to. The process will take different amounts of time for different programmes depending on things such as whether they are drawing on existing provision of modules, are Foundation Degrees, or are being developed in partnership with another institution. Foundation Degrees and partnership arrangements can be particularly time consuming, the latter requiring development of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between Birkbeck and the collaborating institution.

3.14 If you are leading the development of a new programme and have limited experience of designing new programmes or modules do consider attending an appropriate training course. There are some provided by SEEC (South East England Consortium for Credit) in London. SEEC also have a number of publications that may be useful to you in this process (See: [http://www.seec.org.uk/docs/whatwedo.htm#](http://www.seec.org.uk/docs/whatwedo.htm#)). The QEV section of Registry Services can provide advice at the initial stages of programme development in such areas as Common Awards Scheme (CAS)/regulatory queries, engagement with the national academic infrastructure (*Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Higher Education Credit Framework for England, Code of Practice, Subject Benchmark Statements, Programme Specifications*), College’s Mission, relevant College Codes of Practice and Strategies including Learning and Teaching, development of
a Memorandum of Agreement (for collaborative programmes) etc. The Central and Collaborative Provision (CCP) section of Registry Services can advise on development of a draft Memorandum of Agreement.

Content – how to know what to include

3.15 One of the things the team should concentrate on in the early stages of programme design is thinking about the basis on which the content of the programme will be decided. In some subjects degree programmes are largely similar, have detailed benchmark statements, which extend the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in different ways, and/or guidelines from professional bodies. In others, particularly interdisciplinary programmes or those in new areas, no such guidance exists. How will you know what your programme should cover?
(See QAA benchmark statements at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp.)

3.16 Any decision must reflect the aims of the programme – what is it that you are trying to achieve? But you may also want to consider:
• Market research with potential students - what are their needs, wants, desires? Support should be sought at the same time from External Relations in examining current and future market trends.
• Employer engagement if it is a Foundation Degree (see Appendix 3).
• The content of similar degrees at other institutions (particularly popular ones)
• The main sub-disciplines as reflected by professional bodies
• Adequately preparing students for subsequent study in the subject
• The quality of the teaching it is possible to provide in each area

3.17 Once you have decided the principles on which the content of the programme will be developed you can start to think about that content. This is clearly a major part of the process of programme design and something the team should spend a substantial amount of time working on. When thinking about content, you will need to think about the content of the programme as a whole and how this breaks into separate modules (See the section on detailed design for more guidance on this).

3.18 Once you have a broad idea of the content of the degree you may want to test out your ideas with some more market research and make changes based on what you find out. Do check that your proposed programme is still substantially different from other programmes offered by the College and keep colleagues in cognate Schools/Departments informed of your plans as appropriate.
4. Design and development Stage 2 - detailed design and validation

Introduction

4.1 Once you have gathered the information you need and broadly decided on programme content, you can get on and design the programme in more detail. This involves developing the programme as a whole and any new modules that are going to be part of it.

4.2 When the College offers a programme and students enroll on it the goal is that the aims of the programme will be met. In order for this to happen the students have to achieve the programme learning outcomes. Students demonstrate that they have achieved these outcomes by studying modules that help them to achieve and assess their achievement of component learning outcomes. The content of modules and the assessment methods used have to make it possible for students to meet the learning outcomes of the module and to demonstrate that they have done so. There is, therefore, a direct link between the aims of the programme and the detail of teaching and learning methods on modules and each individual piece of assessment.

4.3 It is important that the modules and programme are developed with reference to each other, so that completion of the component modules means that students will have met the learning outcomes of the programme. If members of the team are each working on separate elements you will need to ensure that they come together to form a coherent whole. If possible you should devise the learning outcomes, assessment strategy and teaching and learning strategy for the programme as a whole before you design any new modules. If you are developing a Foundation Degree that is going to have its own honours progression route, this route should be designed, and submitted to committees, at the same time as the Foundation Degree.

4.4 When you are ready to design your programme in detail you should use the College Programme Proposal/Specification Form and Module Proposal/Specification Form (and the guidance notes that go with them). Use these as working documents to begin with, drafting and refining your responses as you develop your programme in greater detail. (See http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/programme-approval.)

Programme aims and learning outcomes

Aims

4.5 Every programme needs stated aims and these will shape the programme in terms of content, delivery, location and most other aspects. The aims are normally about what the degree will provide to students but could also be about meeting the strategic needs of the College, such as increasing provision in Stratford, or building links with important partners.

4.6 Aims tend to be broad and a degree does not necessarily need very many. When you come to write the aims of your programme you will probably realise that some of them are the things that have driven the development of the programme from the start and others are elements that have emerged from the process of gathering information and talking to people.

Examples of Programme Aims

FD Science
- Prepare students for employment in specific areas with higher technical and associate professional skills.
- Provide students currently in science related work with new technical skills, academic knowledge and transferable skills that will allow for vocational realignment.
- Attract people with differing educational backgrounds with an entry point to the lifelong learning ladder, with an opportunity to complete an Honours degree within 2 years.
- Provide a route into HE entry from under represented groups.

BSc Social Science
- The interdisciplinary degree aims to equip students with the conceptual, theoretical and intellectual skills to analyse the origins and dynamics of social conflict from the perspectives of the individual, the group, the state and international communities.
To provide students who have started with a particular (social science) subject area the opportunity to broaden and deepen their understanding of the social sciences by learning about the key concepts and paradigms of psychology, sociology, political science and development studies.

To enable students to become competent, critical and responsible researchers of the social world with the ability to make informed choices about research methods and apply them competently.

To prepare students for further postgraduate study and/or to prepare them for career and professional development opportunities in a range of fields which require research, analytical and communication competences as acquired and practised during their degree studies.

To develop students’ analytical reflection on their learning experiences across a range of professional and non-professional contexts as well as their skills of planning and directing their learning.

To integrate students' explorations of their learning about social conflict with wider debates on diversity and social justice.

**MA Renaissance Studies**

- Enable students to gain a broad grasp of Renaissance culture over a number of subject areas, but also to pursue more specialised interests in the period if they wish.
- Give students a thorough and systematic understanding of the social, political and religious background of the era, along with key intellectual and artistic thought of the period.
- Produce scholars who are alert to, and able to engage with, current debates about Renaissance culture, with a comprehensive understanding of the appropriate methodologies and techniques for study in the fields they specialise in – literary, historical or social.
- Produce students who are competent researchers and who can interpret and apply knowledge of the discipline in an original manner, and who are able to evaluate and critique the scholarship in the field.
- Introduce key academic skills of critical reading, academic writing, and academic research.
- Promote critical reflection on learning by students.
- Develop an advanced level of group work skills as well as individual learning.
- Develop excellent presentational skills, both oral and written.

### Learning Outcomes

4.7 Once you are sure of the aims of your programme you can develop learning outcomes for the programme as a whole. Learning outcomes are ‘a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a period of learning’ (Gosling and Moon 2001). A student may gain in all sorts of ways from completing a degree but the stated learning outcomes of the programme are the things that you can expect that all students completing the programme will have shown they know/can do – they are things which all students have been given the opportunity to be assessed in. You must make sure that these clearly relate to the aims of the programme.

4.8 Learning outcomes should be written in such a way that each one would complete the sentence ‘On successful completion of this programme a student will be able to…’ Therefore each learning outcome needs a verb – there is something that students will be able to do. Learning outcomes should also give some indication of level. For example, if a learning outcome claims that students will be able to demonstrate knowledge about something, will that knowledge be detailed, sophisticated, critical or more basic? The learning outcomes for the programme as a whole refer to the abilities of the students at the end of the programme, therefore, they should be appropriate to the highest level of study on the programme (I/5 for Foundation Degrees, H/6 for honours degrees, M/7 for masters degrees).

4.9 Learning outcomes should be achievable, general (that is they specify learning not curriculum) and unambiguous. A well-written learning outcome is likely to contain:

- A verb that indicates what the learner is expected to be able to do at the end of the period of learning.
- Word(s) that indicate on what or with what the learner is acting. If the learning outcome is about skills then the word(s) may describe the way the skill is performed.
- Word(s) that indicate the nature (in context or in terms of standard) of the performance required as evidence that the learning was achieved.

See Gosling, David and Moon, Jenny (2001) *How to Use Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria* SEEC, for more on this.
4.10 It may be useful to think about Learning Outcomes as 'subject specific', 'intellectual', 'practical' and 'personal and social' when writing them. For the programme proposal learning outcomes can be relatively broad, encompassing more specific skills and knowledge gained on a number of modules. It is typical to have about 10 - 20 learning outcomes for a degree programme, but there is no 'right' number.

4.11 The learning outcomes of a programme are met by study on individual modules. Each module also has learning outcomes and the outcomes for the programme as a whole have to be mapped to individual modules (Table 17 of the Programme Proposal/Specification Form). This means you have to be able to show on which module(s) students will be given an opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved each learning outcome for the programme. Some learning outcomes will be demonstrable on a number of different modules whilst others may be specific to just one module, for example carrying out independent research on a dissertation module. The learning outcomes for the programme must be achievable by all students completing the programme, no matter which options they take, so you will need to make sure that none of the learning outcomes for the programme can only be met by studying specific options.

4.12 If you are including some modules in your programme that have already been designed and approved these also need be included in the mapping exercise. You will need to be sure that you understand the learning outcomes for these modules and how they map to those of your programme.

Teaching, learning and assessment strategy

4.13 Once you know what the aims of your programme are and the learning outcomes that students need to achieve on completion of it you can start to design your teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) strategy (or this might be two things, a teaching and learning strategy and an assessment strategy). The process of doing this will help to shape the modules that will make up your programme.

4.14 Your TLA strategy must be appropriate for your programme. So you need to think about the best ways in which students will gain the skills and knowledge that you have identified in the Learning Outcomes. Different types of skills and knowledge often need different teaching and learning activities to support them, and different students learn in different ways so think about the variety of methods you could use. The strategy must also meet the aims of your programme. So, for example if you are aiming to attract particular groups of learners (young, old, under-represented, in a particular job etc) you should think about methods of teaching, learning and assessment that are most appropriate for them.

4.15 Some of the teaching methods that are best for your programme will be more obvious than others. If students need to gain practical skills such as field research or laboratory skills then they would normally be taught these in a ‘hands on’ way. Other elements might be less clear – how do you best support students to deepen their understanding of complex theoretical concepts? You might also like to think about whether you wish to deliver the programme face-to-face or through distance or network learning and how you will make use of the Bloomsbury Learning Environment (BLE). Your team should discuss these things and perhaps think about the range of approaches that could be used and how they might be combined within modules.

4.16 The stated purpose of assessment is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate that they have met learning outcomes (and can therefore be awarded credit). The methods of assessment used must therefore be appropriate to the skills and knowledge that are outlined in the learning outcomes. Of course, assessment fills other purposes as well and you should design an assessment strategy that supports your students' learning as well as possible.

4.17 As assessment happens within modules much of the design of specific assessments will happen as part of module design. However, it is also worth thinking about an assessment strategy for your programme as a whole so that the total number of pieces of work that students are expected to do, their variety and the balance between different types of work has been considered. You should also consider how skills gained in lower level modules might be built on and extended later in the degree. So, for example, students may be asked to write a summary of an article at Level 4; to compare two articles at Level 5; to critique an article at Level 6; or to produce their own small piece of research at level 7. By developing a strategy for your programme as a whole you can ensure that students are equipped with the skills that they need and can build on these as they progress through the programme. You will also
need to develop grading criteria, examples of which can be found in the College ‘Policy on Marking and Moderation’ (See http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/marking-and-moderation.pdf).

Designing modules

4.18 Once you have a clear picture of your programme as a whole, its learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment strategy you can design the modules that will make up the programme. For some programmes breaking the content into module-size ‘lumps’ will be a relatively easy process while for others it might be more difficult to untangle and to decide exactly what goes where. It can be useful to look at how other degrees in the same subject are organized and to think about the total number of modules you plan to offer. Programmes with large cohorts of students or students with diverse interests can normally support larger numbers of optional modules while other programmes may find that it is not suitable to offer much choice.

4.19 You will also want to think about the size of the modules that are going to make up your programme. At Birkbeck modules can be ‘whole’ (30 credits), ‘half’ (15 credits) or ‘double’ (60 credits): no other sizes are allowed. It is normal practice for masters, honours degrees and progression routes from Foundation to honours Degrees to include a 60 credit dissertation/Work-based research project module and for Foundation Degrees to include a 30 Credit Work Based Learning Project in the final year.

4.20 For all programmes core and compulsory modules (i.e. modules taken by all students on a programme) are particularly important. These not only provide a place where you know that all students are being given the opportunity to meet particular learning outcomes, they can also serve other purposes, such as helping a cohort of students to meet and bond. Core and compulsory modules can also be good places to cover study skills on undergraduate degrees or core aspects of the curriculum prior to specialization on postgraduate degrees as they reach all students in a cohort.

4.21 Within the College there are suggested standards for the contact hours and assessment lengths of modules which can provide a guide for your design. A 30 credits ‘whole’ module is normally delivered with 40-44 hours of contact and 5-6,000 words equivalent of assessment (ten minutes of presentation is considered equivalent to 1000 words). It is entirely acceptable for modules to vary from this if there is a good reason, for example, practically based modules may require more contact hours while those with independent study may require fewer. This standard can be used as a guide.

4.22 When you are submitting a proposal for a new programme, proposal forms for any new modules that will be part of it should be submitted at the same time. The module proposal forms show what the students will actually study, how they will be taught and assessed. All of these elements of each module – the learning outcomes, syllabus, teaching methods and assessment – should clearly flow from the aims and learning outcomes of the programme.

4.23 Students should show progression as they move through their programme demonstrating learning outcomes that are more sophisticated or require more knowledge as they progress from lower to higher levels. The level of difficulty of a learning outcome is indicated, generally speaking, in one of two ways. First, it can be through the difficulty of the material students are dealing with. For example, ‘survey a level site’ – level 4, ‘survey an uneven site’ – level 5. Both learning outcomes ask the student to do the same thing, ‘survey’ but the level 5 outcome is clearly more difficult and builds on knowledge gained from achieving the level 4 learning outcome.

4.24 The second way in which level is indicated is through the ‘command words’ used to indicate what the students must do with the material they are using. Practices differ between disciplines but in general activities based around description are considered to be at a lower level than those based around evaluation, application, critique or explanation. So, students might initially be asked to ‘describe’, ‘outline’, ‘give examples of’ and then ‘discuss’, ‘compare and contrast’ or ‘analyse’ and finally ‘evaluate’, ‘explain’ or ‘critique’. These words do not correspond rigidly to the level of modules. It would be quite appropriate for students at level 4 to be asked to critique if the material were simple, and for those at level 6 to ‘describe’ something extremely complex. The idea is that there is progression from simpler to more difficult learning outcomes as the student moves from one level to the next.

4.25 The assessment for a module must be designed to allow students to demonstrate they have achieved the learning outcomes for the module. This means that you may need to use a variety of assessment methods for some modules. You are encouraged to think creatively about assessment and to design tasks which are the most appropriate for
assessing work on the modules you are teaching. These tasks might include traditional essays, reports, projects, reviews, problem solving exercises, presentations, reflective diaries or formal exams, for example.

4.26 Some things to keep in mind when designing assessment for modules:

- If the assessment for a module does not include an unseen exam you should state on the module proposal form the steps you have taken to prevent plagiarism.
- Any work which contributes to a student’s final degree classification has to be moderated and stored in line with the College’s policy on marking and moderation. (See http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs.)
- The above is true of presentations too, so if students are doing assessed presentations you should consider having two markers present; require the submission of a summary or PowerPoint handout; keep notes on your marking.
- Think very carefully about setting assessed group work, particularly if it is going to make up a significant part of the module mark. It should be clear to students (and second marker / external examiner) how marks have been allocated to group members.
- Do not assume that students share your knowledge or assumptions about what an essay, report, presentation (or whatever) is. Plan the syllabus with enough time to explain to students what is expected of them. Be absolutely clear about what you expect.
- Space assessments so that students can receive feedback on one before completing the next.
Introduction
5.1 Once your programme has been validated your work is not over, there are a range of things that need to be done before students start on the programme. Once the programme is up and running you will need to make sure that you are aware of – and are doing – the many things that will ensure and enhance the quality of your students’ experience on it. There are many things you need to do before a programme starts. Briefly, and amongst others, these include those listed below.

Before the programme starts
5.2 Make sure your programme is listed in the relevant prospectus and that it is cross referenced from other, related programmes as necessary. You will need to liaise with External Relations to do this. If the degree will have its own ‘chapter’ it may need a relevant image or photograph (perhaps of the Programme Director!) and a quote to appeal to students as well as information about the programme and modules.

5.3 You will probably also need to advertise your programme in other ways. This may be in general or specific media, through professional networks or bodies or through employer links. This work may involve tracking down appropriate people, visiting employers or even appearing on the radio or TV. It all takes time so do allow for it.

5.4 Students apply to degree programmes on a standard application form (normally on line). If you would like them to provide additional information you will need to liaise with Registry Services to ensure that this is clear to anyone thinking of applying. Some programmes use an ‘application task’ (such as a short essay or review) to help in the selection of students. The application task can deter frivolous applicants, provide some information on students’ interests and/or their writing. Your team needs to decide if you want to use such a mechanism and if so to design it and make it available to applicants.

5.5 It is also standard practice (although not required) to interview degree applicants. Interviewing can offer applicants the opportunity to find out more about the programme and make sure it is right for them – thus helping retention later on – as well as giving staff information about students. It can also help in ‘conversion’ (that is turning applicants into students) as meeting a member of the programme team in person makes applicants feel more valued and encouraged. If you are going to interview applicants you will need to arrange a programme of interview dates at regular intervals so that no applicant is made to wait too long for a decision. Following interviews Registry Services will communicate formally with applicants (after the Programme admissions tutor gives a decision) but it is normal for programme teams to also send informal communications and to give successful applicants additional information such as timetables and handbooks once they have been accepted even if this is some time before the programme starts.

5.6 Students should also be invited to attend both the College Orientation and Department/School induction events. Some programmes run their own events while others hold joint ones. Orientation normally includes an introduction to the College’s facilities, such as the library and students’ union, and information about where and who to go to with different types of queries. Department/School induction events can also provide opportunities for students to meet each other and perhaps to meet existing or former students. You will also need to arrange a specific library induction for your new students. These normally last about one hour and are designed to provide the most appropriate information for students studying a given topic. Contact your Subject Librarian to arrange this.

5.7 You will also need to timetable new modules, request appropriate rooms, interview and select new Sessional Lecturers if needed, allocate tutors to students, arrange a regular programme of team meetings and appoint an external examiner (unless sharing with another very similar programme).

Quality Assurance and Enhancement
5.8 Once your programme is up and running it will need to comply with the College Quality Assurance/Enhancement procedures.These cover things such as annual reports, garnering and responding to student feedback, peer observation of teaching, and response to external examiners’ reports. This document does not cover these procedures. If you are running a degree you should make yourself familiar with them at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/. You should also discuss best practice with the Head of Quality Enhancement and Validation (Registry Services).
Appendix 1

PROCESS FOR APPROVAL OF NEW AWARDS:

1) The idea for the proposal is brought to the Department/School Executive
   • The person proposing the new award presents the idea
   • Colleagues who may be able to support the development of the proposal may be identified (this could be the point at which the programme team is identified).

2) An Outline Proposal Form is submitted to the School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee:
   NB this group meets approximately once a term
   • This should happen at the latest by 28\textsuperscript{th} February one year before the proposed start of the new award [eg in February 2011 in order to start in September 2012].
     This is in order to ensure its inclusion in the prospectus.
   • The Quality Enhancement and Validation section of Registry Services will liaise with Schools regarding the most suitable dates for submission of the definitive proposal.

3) A full proposal is submitted to a Programme Development Panel
   NB these meet as required
   • The person proposing the new award will attend a meeting of the Programme Development Panel to answer questions or may do so by correspondence
   • The Chair of the School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee or Head of Department may attend
   • The Chair of the Panel gives the person proposing the award feedback on whether it has been approved and on any changes that need to be made both at the meeting and in writing afterwards.

4) The proposal is passed on to the College Programmes Committee
   NB this group meets once / term
   • The College Programmes Committee endorses recommendations made by the Programme Development Panel for the approval of new degree programmes and then recommends that Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC) and Academic Board gives formal approval to these.
   • The person proposing the new award does not attend.
### Appendix 2 – Useful links

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Appendix 3 – Development of Foundation degrees

Foundation degrees – employer consultation

According to the QAA, Foundation Degrees ‘provide graduates who are needed within the labour market to address shortages in particular skills.’ They must be designed in consultation with employers, again as the QAA puts it: ‘[t]he distinctiveness of Foundation Degrees depends upon the integration of the following characteristics: employer involvement; accessibility; articulation and progression; flexibility; and partnership. While none of these attributes is unique to Foundation Degrees, their clear and planned integration within a single award, underpinned by work-based learning, makes the award very distinctive.’ (See ‘Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark, 2004:
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.pdf).

The FD benchmark statement requires that employers are involved in the development and regular review of Foundation Degrees and ideally with their delivery and the assessment of students. There are two main models for employer involvement in Foundation Degrees in the College. The first, typified by the FD Pharmacy, works very closely with a narrowly identified group of employers to increase the skill level of a specific group of employees, all of whom have the same existing qualification and largely similar roles at work (in this case pharmacy technicians). The second, which is more common amongst the other Foundation Degrees, works with a more diffuse group of employers and will have students who are both in relevant employment but wanting to increase their level of qualification, and students who are currently not employed in the sector the Foundation Degree covers. The nature of employer engagement will vary depending on which of these models you are following.

If you are developing a Foundation Degree you need to involve employers from the start. You should consult over the content of the programme – what skills and knowledge will the students need to gain? – and over mode of delivery – when and how should teaching happen? How will employers be involved? How many employers you need to consult will vary by sector. In some sectors employers’ needs and practices are largely similar while in others they vary greatly. You should ensure that you have consulted a range of employers who are representative of those who would take on graduates or your degree or who employ staff who would benefit from studying the degree. Employers who only have staff with much higher or lower levels of qualification are not necessarily useful contacts.

You will need to be able to demonstrate how you have taken employers’ views into account in designing the degree. You should also use the period of consultation to build a relationship with relevant employers so that they will be involved in the programme in other ways (such as supervising students or sitting on a programme board) in the future.

In some sectors employer involvement can be facilitated through Sector Skills Councils, but in many other areas these do not exist and finding employers who are willing to give their time can be difficult. Employer consultation is very time consuming but it is also critical to the success of any Foundation Degree. You should discuss your plans for working with employers with the College’s Foundation Degree Network/Institute of Professional Studies. Some additional resources are available to support this work and you should consult the Foundation Degree Network and Business Relations about getting access to these.

Foundation Degrees: designing in work-based and work-relevant learning

The definitions of different types of work related learning are not precise nor used consistently in policy documents. However, broadly speaking it can be useful to think about ‘work relevant’ skills which may include both specific technical and more generic practices such as time management, team work or project planning. ‘Work-related learning’ is normally more closely allied to a particular role or job and might include developing skills needed for that role even if it does not take place in the workplace. ‘Work-based learning’ is expected to have some element that takes place in a work place and focused on the student’s role (this may be in their own workplace, a voluntary sector role, a placement or in a ‘virtual’ workplace).

Work-based and work-related learning are requirements of Foundation Degrees. The ideal Foundation Degree has work relevant skills and work-based learning included throughout with employers involved in both advising on design and assessing students. The outcomes of consultation with employers should be considered in the design of all modules. Where possible work-relevant skills should be included throughout the degree and should be clearly identifiable as such (you may need to highlight these in marketing materials or a self-evaluation document).
Foundation Degrees that are designed to take students from a specific workforce would normally require the design of specific work-related and work-based learning (both as specific modules and as components of other modules). If you are designing a Foundation Degree of this type you should take advice from the Foundation Degree Network/Institute of Professional Studies on how to go about doing this.

Foundation Degrees which recruit students with a broader range of employment experiences might find it useful to use the suite of modules that already exist in the College. They are each 30 credits and have been designed to fulfill the QAA benchmark requirements for work-based learning and personal development planning while still being appropriate to part-time learners. Students should start with the first one in their first year and take the last in the final year.

Level 4: Introduction to Higher Education and Personal Development Planning (PDP)
Level 5: Work-related Learning
Level 5: Work-based Learning Project.

Designing work-based and work-relevant learning for Foundation Degrees can be time consuming and difficult. Please seek advice before undertaking the task and make sure you are familiar with the QAA benchmark statement on Foundation Degrees.
Appendix 4 - QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Qualification Descriptors
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI/default.asp

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 4: Certificate of Higher Education
The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any Certificate of Higher Education which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor can also be used as a reference point for other level 4 qualifications.

Certificates of Higher Education are awarded to students who have demonstrated:
- 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.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:
- 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.

And holders will have:
- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

Holders of a Certificate of Higher Education will have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject, and will have learned how to take different approaches to solving problems. They will be able to communicate accurately and will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility. The Certificate of Higher Education may be a first step towards obtaining higher level qualifications.

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 5: Foundation Degree
The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any Foundation Degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor can also be used as a reference point for other level 5 qualifications, including Diplomas of Higher Education, Higher National Diplomas, etc.

Foundation Degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:
- 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 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.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:
- 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.

And holders will have:
- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.
The Foundation Degree is an example of a qualification that meets, in full, the expectations of the qualification descriptor (and the Foundation Degree qualification benchmark). The Foundation Degree qualification benchmark (2004) can be accessed at: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.asp

Holders of qualifications at this level will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study, and will have learned to apply those principles more widely. Through this, they will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation, for example HNDs, enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field. Holders of qualifications at this level will have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

**Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6: Bachelor's degree with honours**
The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any bachelor's degree with honours which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor can also be used as a reference point for other level 6 qualifications, including bachelor's degrees, graduate diplomas etc.

**Bachelor's degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:**
- 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:
  - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline
  - 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 research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

**Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**
- 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.

**And holders will have:**
- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
  - the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the holder will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The holder of such a qualification will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively.

Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances. Bachelor's degrees with honours form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Typically, learning outcomes for these programmes would be expected to be achieved on the basis of study equivalent to three full-time academic years and lead to awards with titles such as Bachelor of Arts, BA (Hons) or Bachelor of Science, BSc (Hons). In addition to bachelor's degrees at this level are short courses and professional 'conversion' courses, based largely on undergraduate material, and taken usually by those who are already graduates in another discipline, leading to, for example, graduate certificates or graduate diplomas.
Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7: Master’s degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the framework is for any master’s degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor can also be used as a reference point for other level 7 qualifications, including postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.

Master’s degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- 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:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- 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.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
  - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

Much of the study undertaken for master's degrees will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems. They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.

Master’s degrees are awarded after completion of taught courses, programmes of research or a mixture of both. Longer, research-based programmes may lead to the degree of MPhil. The learning outcomes of most master’s degree courses are achieved on the basis of study equivalent to at least one full-time calendar year and are taken by graduates with a bachelor’s degree with honours (or equivalent achievement).

Master’s degrees are often distinguished from other qualifications at this level (for example, advanced short courses, which often form parts of continuing professional development programmes and lead to postgraduate certificates and/or postgraduate diplomas) by an increased intensity, complexity and density of study. Master’s degrees - in comparison to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas - typically include planned intellectual progression that often includes a synoptic/research or scholarly activity.

Some master’s degrees, for example in science, engineering and mathematics, comprise an integrated programme of study spanning several levels where the outcomes are normally achieved through study equivalent to four full-time academic years. While the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7 in full, such qualifications are often termed 'integrated master's' as an acknowledgement of the additional period of study at lower levels (which typically meets the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6).
First degrees in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science comprise an integrated programme of study and professional practice spanning several levels. While the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves typically meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7, these qualifications may often retain, for historical reasons, titles of Bachelor of Medicine, and Bachelor of Surgery, Bachelor of Dental Surgery, Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine or Bachelor of Veterinary Science, and are abbreviated to MBChB or BM BS, BDS, BVetMed and BVSc respectively.

**Note**
The Master of Arts (MA) granted by the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge are not academic qualifications. The MA is normally granted, on application, to graduates of these universities with a Bachelor of Arts (BA). No further study or assessment is required, but the recipient may be required to pay a fee. At the University of Oxford, the MA may be granted during or after the twenty-first term from matriculation and at the University of Cambridge, the MA may be granted six years after the end of the first term.