Considerations of good practice for taught programmes

This document defines a set of considerations of good practice for the design, approval and review of taught provision. They are deliberately relatively broad, general statements. They should be interpreted and used with judgement, considering the nature and context of the particular programme(s)—some elements may be more or less relevant. Schools are encouraged to annotate or adapt the principles to reflect devolved policy matters and the nature of subjects taught.

They are intended to:

- guide staff designing new programmes or reviewing existing provision;
- be a common reference point for implementation of programme approval and periodic programme review; and
- provide a common structure for documentation associated with programme approval and periodic programme review, following seven aspect headings.

It is assumed that all relevant University policies and procedures (see http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/policies/) are adopted.

Aspect headings

Considerations are set out under seven aspect headings, with a brief statement of the intended focus and scope of each aspect:

1. The students
2. The curriculum
3. Teaching
4. Assessment
5. Student support and guidance
6. Resources and the learning environment
7. Communication, management and enhancement.

1. The students

Scope

- numbers;
- characteristics;
- needs; and
- recruitment, retention, progression and achievement.

Good practice

The curriculum and methods of teaching and assessment should be informed by systematic knowledge of:
• the characteristics of the student intake, taking account of the range of individual abilities and needs including those of students with protected characteristics¹ (see https://www.dundee.ac.uk/qf/equalityanddiversity/);

• trends in student performance, achievement and progression; and

• students’ views and feedback.

The curriculum and methods of teaching and assessment should be designed to encourage and promote participation by a wide range of students, including international students and students with protected characteristics. The HEA have developed a useful resource for Inclusive Curriculum Design in Higher Education.

2. The curriculum

Scope

• aims and intended learning outcomes;

• curriculum structure, pathways and options; and

• credit rating.

Good practice

The curriculum should be appropriate with respect to relevant reference policies:

• internal policies of the University and any relevant School policy;

• external generic policy, in particular the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework; and

• external subject-related policies, in particular relevant QAA Subject Benchmark statements and any relevant professional or statutory body criteria.

The curriculum should be appropriate to:

• the abilities and needs of the range of students admitted; and

• the employment needs of graduates of the future.

The curriculum should be coherent—component modules and pathways through the programme should be designed to fit with the overall aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme.

The curriculum should promote achievement and progression:

• by all students admitted; and

• of all intended outcomes at the appropriate level.

3. Teaching

Scope

Methods of teaching employed across the curriculum

Good practice

Methods of teaching should be aligned with:

• the curriculum—its aims and intended learning outcomes;

¹ The Equality Act 2010 describes the terminology of ‘protected characteristics’ to define groups covered under the legislation. These are Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, and Sexual Orientation.
• the students—their abilities and needs;
• methods of assessment; and
• the resources available.

Teaching should promote achievement:
• of all intended outcomes at the appropriate level; and
• by all students admitted.

Staff should be encouraged and expected to:
• evaluate the effectiveness of their own approaches and methods in promoting student learning; and
• develop their approaches and methods to improve student learning.

4. Assessment

Scope
Methods of assessment employed across the curriculum

Good practice
Methods of assessment should be aligned with:
• the curriculum: aims and intended learning outcomes and level of study (with reference to relevant reference policies -see 'Curriculum', above);
• teaching methods; and
• the resources available.

Assessment should:
• promote effective learning by students; and
• include formative elements that enable students to measure the development of their learning.

Students should be provided with clear information regarding assessment tasks (examinations and coursework) and marking criteria.

Assessment tasks (examinations and coursework assignments) and marking should be effectively moderated internally and externally.

Regarding assessed coursework:
• student workload associated with assessed coursework should be appropriate to the credit rating of the module;
• assessed coursework assignments should be scheduled in ways that enable students to complete them effectively, taking account of their full load of modules;
• students should be provided with prompt feedback on assessed coursework assignments; and
• any marks issued to students prior to moderation and approval by formal Examination Boards must include a written caution: 'This grade is provisional and may be changed following moderation by the Board of Examiners'.

Staff should be encouraged and expected to:
• evaluate the effectiveness of their own approaches and methods of assessment; and
• develop their approaches and methods of assessment to improve student learning.
5. Student support and guidance

Scope

- academic support and guidance;
- guidance on curricular choice;
- guidance and opportunities for personal development planning;
- pastoral support; and
- support for students with protected characteristics.

Good practice

Opportunities and arrangements for student support and guidance should:

- be appropriate for the needs of student intake; and
- be effectively communicated, and available to all students on the programme.

Student support and guidance should encourage and promote:

- participation, and effective engagement with the programme by all students including those with protected characteristics;
- personal achievement;
- student choice; and
- personal development planning, within and beyond university.

6. Resources and the learning environment

Scope

- staff—complement, expertise and development;
- library, computing/IT, teaching accommodation, specialist equipment, facilities and opportunities; and
- other (for example, field trips, placements).

Good practice

Appropriate resources should be available to promote:

- academic standards;
- quality of learning and the student experience; and
- student achievement and progression.

Resources should be effectively deployed and managed.

7. Communication, management and enhancement

Scope

- information—to students, prospective students and staff;
- staff-student communication;
- monitoring and enhancement actions;
- health and safety; and
- sustainability and efficiency.
Good practice

Programmes and component modules should be effectively described and communicated using the University's templates:

- to meet the information needs of all users;
- to define credit ratings of programme pathways and component modules with reference to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework; and
- to make students and prospective students aware of expectations of them and of their responsibilities as learners.

Programmes should be provided in a culture that encourages effective two-way communication between students and staff.

Programmes should be provided in a culture that promotes reflection and enhancement:

- programmes and component modules should be systematically and effectively monitored; and
- enhancement actions should be effectively and promptly addressed within constraints of resource.

Programmes should be provided in a safe environment and where appropriate to the subject, in ways that promote student learning of good practice in health and safety.

Programmes should be operated in ways that:

- are efficient and sustainable, taking account of market and financial viability; and
- offer good value to students.