Guidelines for Module Specifications
April 2014

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1. Background

Module Specifications are important documents as they serve binding quality functions. They are legally binding in the sense that, once approved, they commit us to all the details contained in the specification for the forthcoming year. The University and our Validating Partners are opposed to changing specifications mid-session. It is therefore necessary to take great care with details in the specifications.

Those students who have optional choices will start by looking at module specifications and we show them to external interested parties as indications of our approach to Teaching and Learning. Thus the specifications must show clearly what the module is actually about in an informative and interesting way, which is consistent with our overall aims.

Both for external purposes (e.g. informing current and potential students) and for quality reviews, the module specification must show clear links to the appropriate programme specifications. Indeed, it is the module specifications which are used to test whether the programme specifications are really being achieved.

The most important field to show these links is that labelled Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs, although the Aims field is also important. It is hoped all staff will collaborate positively in ensuring that the Aims and ILOs sections on all our modules look professionally competent, sound and consistent. They should quite obviously and explicitly link to the Aims and ILOs published in the programme specifications. Also, where appropriate, links to other modules and progression should be indicated in Aims. The contents of the ILO fields should lead naturally and obviously to the types of assessment being used and ultimately to the structure and content of the examination paper. Thinking through these issues should be a productive exercise rather than just a chore because it can strengthen not only the module but also its delivery.

The following sections (2 to 7) indicate how module specifications should be completed. Section 8 provides a copy of the approved University Module Specification pro forma that must be used by all programmes. Section 9 provides guidance on developing appropriate assessment strategies.

2. Aims

The Aims field begins “The aims of this module are.”. It should then indicate the broad purpose of the module, including an indication of any prior modules or experiences it builds on and future modules or experiences for which it prepares students.

3. Intended Learning Outcomes

The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) field should always begin with: “On completion of this module students should be able to:.”

Following this there should be a limited but informative list of ILOs which link to the relevant programme specification and which are structured under the headings: Knowledge and Understanding (KU), Subject Specific Cognitive Skills (SSCS), Subject Specific Practical Skills (SSPS) and Transferable Skills (TS).

3.1 Knowledge and Understanding (KU)

The ILOs listed under KU should link quite clearly to one or other of the KU ILOs in the relevant programme specification(s). In addition they should link the cognitive skills in the programme specification(s) by using appropriate verbs and adverbs to indicate the appropriate level of cognitive and
intellectual skills applied to the knowledge and understanding (e.g.: is it just listing facts? or is there evaluation and assessment of the knowledge? and maybe critical comparison?). These ILOs are the best place to incorporate the cognitive skills aspects of programme specification(s).

Hence the *KU ILOs* should be a series of phrases which specify the achievements that can be expected and will be examined in the module assessments. These should all begin with verbs which indicate the level of achievement expected. Appropriate verbs include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyse</th>
<th>Compare</th>
<th>Assess</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Calculate</td>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Compute</td>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>Distinguish</td>
<td>Appraise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Develop</td>
<td>Discriminate</td>
<td>Interpret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Link</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Plan</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is not acceptable to use verbs such as Understand or Appreciate. These are too general and vague, without sufficient precision to indicate the level of achievement expected or style of assessment that would be appropriate. (A good exam test of a *KU ILO* is whether its opening phrase matches the opening phrase of some past or proposed question on an exam paper for this module.)

### 3.2 Subject-specific Skills and Transferable Skills

The Skills ILOs have to be specified under three separate headings:

1. Subject-specific Cognitive Skills (SSCS)
2. Subject-specific Practical Skills (SSPS)
3. Transferable Skills (TS)

It is necessary to develop Skills ILOs, which should quite explicitly link to one of the Skills ILOs in the relevant programme specification(s). However, it is not appropriate to repeat the wording from the programme specification ILOs.

It is expected that each module will list ILOs under each of the three Skills headings (SSCS, SSPS & TS). It is recognised that some modules may not have Subject-specific Practical Skills (SSPS) and that these are more likely to be relevant to modules in certain disciplines such as Engineering and ICS. Practical modules such as laboratories should specify ILOs under the heading Subject-specific Practical Skills (SSPS). If a module does not have Subject-specific Practical Skills (SSPS) then this section should be left blank.

If possible, Skills ILOs should be specific for instance, in reflecting what sort of communication is encouraged, which IT skills are developed or which team skills are emphasised. Hence, these ILOs might begin with Verbs and phrases like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write</th>
<th>Make</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Analyse</th>
<th>Work in a team</th>
<th>Collect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Solve</td>
<td>Explore</td>
<td>Organise a team</td>
<td>Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Persuade</td>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Motivate others to</td>
<td>Test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some example of ILOs that might come under one of the Skills Categories are listed below.
3.3 Subject-specific Cognitive Skills

On completion of this module students should be able to:

1. analyse verbal and written texts.
2. discuss mathematical and statistical material in a group setting.
3. critically assess output from computer packages.
4. assess and explain strategic choices in certain specific circumstances.
5. develop a plan or alternative strategies in a particular context.

3.4 Subject-specific Practical Skills

On completion of this module students should be able to:

1. calculate average precipitation stream flow and stage discharge relationship.
2. estimate evaporation rates and evapotranspiration.
3. use a flume to demonstrate energy losses due to hydraulic jump.
4. design hydraulic pumps and turbines for pipe networks and other appliances.

3.5 Transferable Skills

On completion of this module students should be able to:

1. learn and work independently.
2. work effectively in a small team on computer based projects.
3. organise a team to produce a substantial report on time.
4. make a short oral presentation of technical material to a small group of peers.
5. discuss and explain arguments in writing.
6. write a discursive essay assembling and structuring ideas from a variety of sources.
7. collect data and ideas from a range of sources.
8. explore and assess a range of alternative uses of resources.

4. Content

Having identified the aims previously, then contents should be concise. It should include the subject matter to be covered in just a few paragraphs or bullet points.

5. Method of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

This section should include a description of the method of learning and teaching. It should quantify the total student effort for the module (normally ten hours per credit unit) and explain how this is made up.

- 100 hours for 10 credits
- 200 hours for 20 credits etc.

The Teaching and Learning section should be kept simple, normally with no mention of week numbers. The types of different teaching sessions involved should be mentioned and an indication of their frequency must be included. The word "normally" should be used with hours per week. Student effort is specified as follows:

- Contact time: number of hours per week for each of the following, namely lectures, tutorials, labs etc. This will usually amount to a third of the time to be spent on the module each week.
• Private study: this will include preparation for tutorials, coursework assessment, study for examinations, project and dissertation work, and additional reading and/or other study. It amounts to two thirds of the time to be spent on the module weekly.

For a 10 credit module the contact time will normally be 30 hours per semester, with 70 hours for independent study.

5.1 Assessment

In this section all elements of assessment must be specified in the boxes below, with the percentage contribution of each element to the module mark. The length (in hours) of formal examinations and (in words) of written coursework assignments should be stated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Focus</th>
<th>Weight %</th>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>ILOs Assessed</th>
<th>Exam Semester</th>
<th>Exam/Written Coursework Length</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

No mention should be made of dates for issue and collection of coursework.

The number of pieces of coursework, with their individual weightings and their general nature must be described, including which are group exercises and which individual; which are assignments and which are tests and which will involve presentations. The additional type specific information is required:

• Assignments - Specify if essay, report or computer based exercise.
• Essay/Report - Specify number of words or A4 pages - to indicate maximum length expected.
• Group Work - Specify range of group sizes, and WHO chooses the groups.

6. Method of Feedback

There are two sections. Each section must have at least one entry, but preferably two or three entries (phrases). See below for further examples of phrases for both sections.

6.1 Feedback given to students in response to assessed work

For modules with an exam the default text is:

*Generic written feedback on the examination will appear on module eLearning page after results are published.*

6.2 Developmental Feedback generated through teaching activities

For modules with an exam the default text is:

*Marking criteria and indicative answers discussed in class sessions.*
6.3 Examples of Method of Feedback phrases

Feedback given to students in response to assessed work

*Generic written feedback on examination will appear on module eLearning page after results are published.*

i. Individual/Group written feedback on coursework

ii. Individual coursework feedback on request

iii. Oral feedback on group presentations

iv. Discussion during poster presentations

v. Generic written feedback on coursework and tutorial tasks issued by email

vi. Brief individual written comments on tutorial and coursework tasks

vii. Individual oral feedback on assessed tutorials/coursework tasks available on request

viii. Individual monitoring

ix. Discussion of assessed tasks in lecture and tutorial sessions

x. Discussion of indicative /model answers to coursework in lectures

xi. Results of IT based exercises.

Development Feedback generated through teaching activities

*Marking criteria and indicative answers discussed in class sessions.*

i. Coursework marking schemes explained in writing and in class session

ii. Provision of specific marking criteria

iii. Comments on coursework drafts/work plans/practice answers to past questions

iv. Individual group interaction with staff in group coursework consultation sessions

v. Provision of model answers

vi. Provision of solution notes to selected computational questions

vii. Discussion of model answers in tutorials/lecture sessions

viii. On-line solutions to additional exercises

ix. Results of informal tests and quizzes or in-class exercises

x. Results of self-marked/peer marked informal tasks/tests

xi. Results of Computer Aided Assessment

xii. Discussion following informal revision tests

xiii. Group critiques of work presented/presentations

xiv. Dialogue between staff and students in tutorials/workshops/seminars/class sessions

xv. Personal and individual counseling on students tutorial performance

xvi. Individual support, interaction and advice in tutorials/workshops/IT Lab

xvii. sessions/seminars/practical problem classes

xviii. Individual support, interaction and advice during case study work

xix. Individual monitoring and advice on tutorial attendance
7. **Format to be used for module specifications**

The module specification template should not be changed. The following format must be used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Font</th>
<th>Arial - normal for text and bold for headings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Font size</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line spacing</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spacing after headings</td>
<td>6pt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spacing after paragraphs and sections</td>
<td>12pt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margins</td>
<td>1&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>Left aligned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Module Specification  2014/15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Code:</th>
<th>Title:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modular weight:</td>
<td>Examination weighting:</td>
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Prerequisite modules:

Reassessment: (indicate if reassessment in the Special Assessment Period is restricted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Leader:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester taught:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key words:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of latest revision:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aims**

The aims of this module are to...

**Intended Learning Outcomes**

*On completion of this module students should be able to:*

**Knowledge and understanding**

1. xxxx
2. xxxx

**Subject-specific cognitive skills**

3. xxxx
4. xxxx

**Subject-specific practical skills**

5. xxxx
6. xxxx

**Key/transferable skills**

7. xxxx
8. xxxx

**Content**
Methods of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Total student effort for the module: xx hours on average over xx semester/s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of session</th>
<th>Student Effort</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number in the Semester/s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorial</td>
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<td>Laboratory</td>
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<td>Private study</td>
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Assessment

<table>
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Method of Feedback

In response to assessed work:

Developmental feedback generated through teaching activities:

Indicative Reading List
8. **Five steps to effective assessment**

*Extracts from a report on 'Assessment of undergraduate work: assessment criteria in current use'*

*Caroline Smith, Quality Enhancement Officer*

1. **Identify intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the teaching**
   These statements should clearly describe the knowledge, understanding and skills which students are expected to possess as a result of their learning.

2. **Based on the ILOs, formulate the assessment task**
   Select an appropriate assessment method and suitable task to enable the learning outcomes to be assessed. Issues of validity, authenticity and inclusivity need to be considered here. An assessment matrix, identifying the assessment methods in use across a programme can also be helpful in identifying where a particular assessment method is under/over used.

3. **For each assessment task, create explicit assessment criteria**
   These assessment criteria may be generic, for example, department wide criteria or they may be developed specifically for each assessment task by the responsible examiner. However derived, assessment criteria should clearly identify how student performance in the assessment task will be measured. The assessment criteria will link to the ILOs but not replicate them.

4. **Ensure the explicit assessment criteria are understood by students**
   Activities designed to support students' understanding of assessment criteria (marking exercises using “dummy” work, self/peer assessment, using screen capture software to show students how staff assess work, developing criteria themselves) can provide helpful insights for students. Such activities need embedding within the programme and need to be planned carefully to avoid being misplaced and therefore mistrusted.

5. **Using the assessment criteria, assess the work and provide feedback**
   Providing feedback which clearly states whether a student has met the assessment criteria can reduce some of the ambiguity which can exist