University of Bradford Curriculum Framework

1. Introduction

The University of Bradford Curriculum Framework lays out the core educational principles for all our degree awards, from foundation courses through to doctoral education.

The original Undergraduate Curriculum Framework was approved by Senate in June 2012 (SA51a/11-12 Appendix 1). In this document we outline an adapted Curriculum Framework that will apply to all of our educational provision, and therefore offer a vision for the characteristics of learning and teaching for all our students.

1.1   The Nature of Curriculum.

The key driver for learning, teaching and assessment practices is curriculum, as designed and delivered by programme teams and as experienced by students.

Curriculum in this sense is not just about the *content* of programmes, but about the overall educational design which guides students through a set of teaching, learning and assessment experiences toward the achievement of intended and unintended educational outcomes and graduate attributes. This includes students' directed and self-directed engagement with learning resources and information. The curriculum is situated within a range of learning and research environments, including the physical and social environment of the campus, virtual environments and students' workplaces and neighbourhoods. Student learning can also be enhanced through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, for example through work-based learning, volunteering and real-world projects.

In this sense, each of our students can enjoy an individualised learning experience and can access support and learning opportunities to meet their needs.

1.2   Aims of the University of Bradford Curriculum Framework

Through developing a whole-institution curriculum framework, we aim to:

- Achieve a common sense of purpose and identity to the rich diversity of disciplinary and professional programmes offered by the University of Bradford.
- Stimulate, enable and ensure the development of graduate attributes that reflect a distinctive University of Bradford ethos around employability and professionalism, inclusivity and academic development.
- Stimulate, enable and support the development of educational and research programmes that exhibit evidence-informed and creative approaches to curriculum design and delivery that enthuse, engage and motivate staff and students.
- Ensure the development of inclusive curricula and learning opportunities, which engage and motivate our students and enable them to achieve their potential regardless of background, and through that narrow attainment gaps.

As the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B1, programme design and approval) puts it:

"Programme design is a creative and often innovative activity. The processes used by institutions to approve, monitor and review academic programmes should foster creativity, and encourage a culture of continuous enhancement of provision."

2   Developing Graduate Attributes through a Curriculum Framework

An increasing number of UK HEIs have followed the lead of Australian universities in developing statements of attributes which will be achieved by all graduates of their institutions. While these draw from a recognised set of ideas about what defines a graduate, and what sorts of attributes, capabilities and skills they might possess, each institution defines a distinct mix that reflects institutional mission, values and provision. Graduate attributes have typically been defined in terms of undergraduate programmes (FHEQ Level 6), but the principle can be extended to other levels of academic study, including Masters (FHEQ Level 7) and Doctoral education (FHEQ Level 8).

Once adopted, a core part of the ongoing development and design of programme curricula lies in showing how these attributes will be developed and demonstrated by students on all programmes.

In developing a set of institutional graduate and postgraduate/doctoral attributes, the University of Bradford will achieve a common reference point and stimulus for all of our programmes including research degrees, and an organising principle for the rest of the curriculum framework.

Three broad domains of University of Bradford graduate attributes (Table 1) were identified in the 2012 Undergraduate Curriculum Framework.

Table 1: Domains of University of Bradford Graduate Attributes

| Domain	Indicative areas to be developed as attributes.
Academic development and critical thinking.	Learner autonomy, critical thinking, information literacy, research and enquiry.
Employability and professionalism.	Self-awareness and management, communication, collaboration, life-long learning, professional values, digital literacy.
Inclusivity.	Intercultural and international awareness, social and civic responsibilities, global citizenship, ethics, sustainability.

Graduate attributes appropriate to FHEQ 6 have been developed to ensure our graduates are resilient to the challenges of the 21st Century. (see appendix 1). Graduate attributes appropriate to FHEQ 7 and 8 will be developed in 2014/15.

3.   Curriculum Themes and Principles

The University of Bradford Curriculum Framework is built around an integrated set of educational themes and principles which will inform the development of, and be exhibited within, each programme, including doctoral education. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B1, Indicator 5) requires that institutions: "publish, or make available, the principles to be considered when programmes are designed and developed, the fulfilment of which will be tested at the approval stage."

3.1   Four over-arching themes guide the curriculum framework. These reflect institutional mission, values and priorities, and will be reflected in the University of Bradford graduate attributes as indicated above.

Figure 2: University of Bradford Curriculum Themes.
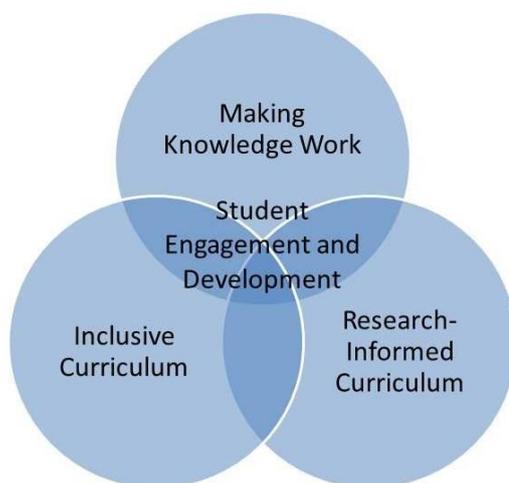
3.1.1   Making Knowledge Work.

The University of Bradford has a strong commitment to the development and application of knowledge. Participating in programmes of study including research that include an emphasis on application, experiential learning and real world engagement will make a major contribution to students developing skills and attributes for employability. The University's employability model has four elements: professional/technical knowledge and skills, work experience, employability skills and professionalism and career management skills. Each of these elements can be supported and developed through the design and delivery of our curricula, both by bringing them into programmes, but also through ensuring that all our programmes are flexible enough to allow students full access to the broad range of learning opportunities offered within the university.

3.1.2   Inclusive Curriculum.

The University of Bradford is committed to an educational experience that is inclusive of the diversity of its students and staff, and that addresses attainments gaps within our student body, particularly that between BME and white students. To achieve this we aspire to move beyond a culture of special adjustments to meet diverse needs, toward a more universal

educational design that is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all learners. This includes ensuring that our assessment practices are varied and flexible enough to meet diverse needs. Our curricula and learning opportunities shall be designed in a way that reflects the diverse cultural and national backgrounds of our students.

Equality impact assessment and analysis of curricula will become part of the programme design, development and approval process, as well as subsequent evaluation of taught provision.

3.1.3 Research Informed Curriculum.

One of the factors that distinguishes a *Higher* Education experience is that it is conducted within an institutional atmosphere of research. In recent years, HEFCE's research-informed teaching enhancement fund has stimulated a significant body of work on this theme. This has developed the sector's understanding of research-informed teaching, and strategies for embedding it within curricula, even where the relative intensity of research activity within HE institutions, schools and departments varies.

A research-informed curriculum is one which:

- engages learners with current research relevant to their subject, discipline or profession, including where possible the opportunity to interact and engage with researchers;
- involves students learning through research and enquiry;
- is informed by evidence of effective educational practice drawn from educational research.

3.1.4 Student Engagement and Development.

At the hub of our curriculum framework lie our students. While our programme teams lead and coordinate the design and delivery of coherent curricula reflecting an appropriate subject and professional focus, each student avails themselves of different learning and development opportunities during their degree programme and their broader student and campus experience. Our Personal Development Planning Frameworks for both undergraduate and PGR/PGT ensures that the development of students is supported and guided throughout their programme, such that they develop increased self-awareness, are able to make connections between the formal and informal learning opportunities available to them at university and their responsibilities in engaging with those, and monitor their progress toward achieving intended attributes and learning outcomes.

Implementing the Curriculum Framework will provide significant space for learners to become more involved in the decisions relating to the curriculum, and to learning, research, teaching and assessment practices in general, so that our students feel genuine partners in

their learning process, and ultimately are able to become producers[1] more than consumers of their higher education.

3.2 Supporting the curriculum themes are a further seven integrated curriculum principles which will be evident within the educational design, delivery and experience of all programmes.

3.2.1 Assessment for Learning.

Programme-based assessment strategies should employ a range of methods that aim to explicitly develop the learning of our students, and provide them with timely feedback at key points in the learning process[2].

An appropriate assessment strategy is as much about managing the staff experience as the student experience. The implementation of this Framework will need programme teams to have an explicit rationale for formative and summative assessment practices, and to be strategic in how these are deployed.

3.2.2 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Through our Ecoversity initiative, the University of Bradford has developed an international reputation in designing and offering formal and informal educational experiences that enhance our graduates', postgraduates' and doctoral students' capacity to make a positive contribution to sustainable development. This aspect of the curriculum strongly supports our inclusivity and diversity goals, as well as providing substantial opportunities for student engagement and linking formal and informal curricular learning.

The Curriculum Framework maintains existing institutional commitments to integrating sustainable development with the formal and informal experiences of all students. The development of the re:centre enables us provide a focal point for ESD, as well as promoting the many links between ESD, enterprise, research and employability.

3.2.3 Collaborative Learning.

The ability to work collaboratively is a key attribute. Collaborative learning is also an important way of helping students to develop peer networks and intercultural awareness. All University of Bradford programmes will include significant collaborative learning experiences. For some programmes this will be example through adopting educational models, like Problem-Based Learning or Team-Based Learning, that emphasise

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[1] See the University of Lincoln's NTFS Project, Student as Producer.
[2] Indicator 6 of Draft Chapter B3 (Learning and Teaching) of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, places particular emphasis on assessment for learning and student engagement with feedback.

collaboration in all aspects of learning. For others it will be through the use of group projects, or collaborative classroom experiences, or, for example research students, operating within an established collaborative research environment within which individual research initiatives are conducted.

3.2.4   Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL).

Technology is playing an increasing role in all students' learning, whether that is in the classroom experience or through their engagement with learning resources and online social networks. TEL also broadens our conception of who our students might be and where they might study. Through TEL, distance learners and researchers are likely to form an increasing part of the University community over time.

While there is a growing maturity of technology-enhanced learning practice, for example in use of the virtual learning environment (VLE), e-portfolios, e-assessment and mobile learning, there remains considerable variation in how this is delivered and experienced within and between programmes. This means that as well as continuing to innovate and push the boundaries of practise in this area, we need to maintain consistent levels of expectation and experience for all staff and students.

The digital literacy and fluency of students and staff will play a key role in successful learning within the curriculum framework. Digital literacy is not just about the technical and cognitive skills necessary to make productive use of information, communication and learning technologies, it is also about how our learners create and manage their own digital, networked identities for their personal and professional development.

3.2.5   Real World and Experiential Learning.

A key factor in motivating and engaging students is in making direct connections between their curricula and the world with which they are engaged on a day-to-day basis. Curricula can be enhanced by integrating real world learning, be that in the form of work experience, placements, community-based or practice-based projects, live briefs from companies and businesses, digital stories of service users and in many other ways.

3.2.6   Enquiry-based Learning.[3]

Where learning is a process driven by the student, in a way that is oriented to a research process of investigation, synthesis and discovery, it is enquiry-based. Under such an approach, learners may engage in collaborative or individual investigations devised by themselves, or may respond to work-based/practice-based scenarios or scenarios established by their tutors. In addition to contributing to the development of knowledge

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[3] See, for example, the work of the Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning at the University of Manchester.

based, enquiry-based approaches are invaluable in developing a range of graduate attributes. Enquiry-based learning forms a key aspect of a research-informed curriculum.

3.2.7 Transition to Learner Autonomy.

A learning experience is a process of transition. Students do not exhibit graduate/postgraduate attributes overnight. Attainment emerges from a carefully designed process where expectations and requirements are set, aspirations raised, appropriate support is put in place and regular feedback on progress is received. From induction to outduction both staff and students should be aware of the role that each educational experience plays in the attainment of programme outcomes and graduate attributes. As such consideration needs to be given to the role of each year and/or stage within a programme.

For students to develop learner autonomy as a graduate/postgraduate/doctoral student, and thus to be enabled to go forward as life-long learners, they need to be supported and enabled to develop learner autonomy. Autonomous learners emerge from a process where they are strategically afforded more responsibility, decision making and choice regarding the content and nature of their learning/research as they proceed through their programme. Undergraduate education is typically about learners working towards autonomy in learning and researching, with significantly more autonomy expected and afforded in Master's education, with clear progression from PGCert to PGDip to Masters. At Doctoral level full learner autonomy and initiative should be realised.

4   Curriculum Framework Characteristics

Curriculum design involves the development of effective and engaging educational experiences that will enable students to achieve programme-based learning outcomes that reflect the nature of their subject/discipline and or professional area and achieve key graduate/postgraduate and doctoral level attributes. The University of Bradford Curriculum Framework for taught programmes is therefore programme-driven, more than module driven. All formal educational experiences within a student's programme of study should make a recognisable contribution to the development of programme learning outcomes and graduate/postgraduate/doctoral level attributes.

4.1 Taught Programmes

The curricula of University of Bradford taught programmes will include the following characteristics:

- Programme learning outcomes that reflect appropriate benchmarks for the subject/discipline/profession and University of Bradford graduate attributes.
- Learning outcomes for each available award such that at each stage of study we ensure students are working progressively toward clear programme-based outcomes (knowledge and skills) and graduate/postgraduate/doctoral level attributes appropriate to the academic level of study.
- Programme teams will develop and publish a clear assessment and feedback strategy for taught programmes. This will include, for example, the portfolio of assessment methods used in the programme, how, when and why these are deployed in relation to intermediate outcomes and student development. The place and timing of formative assessment and

feedback within the programme should also be clearly articulated. Key organising principles here include:

- o Students should experience a range of assessment methods, and where possible should be able to exercise some choice over assessment methods.
- o Students should experience a balanced assessment load (formative and summative) through their programme.
- o In any module, students should receive feedback on their learning before being summatively assessed.
- o Programme teams are encouraged to develop synoptic and integrative programme-based assessment that draws from learning in different modules of study and/or extra-curricular activity.

- The normal expected minimum module size within a programme is 20 credits, although programme teams are encouraged to explore the educational advantages of larger modules of study.
- Students will have a substantial collaborative learning experience at least once during each stage of a programme.
- Undergraduate programmes should include space for students to pursue elective modules, as a means of maximising their ability to access the full range of learning opportunities offered by the university. Elective modules should be free of pre-requisites and should be available across the university. Programme designs must allow students the opportunity to select an elective module or modules of at least 20 of the 240 credits studied at Stage 2 and 3.
- While elective modules are not required of Postgraduate Taught programmes, it is expected that such programmes will afford significant choice to learners for example through subjects to be studied, or areas of investigation for assignments and project work.
- Stage 3 of each undergraduate programme should include at least 20 credits of enquiry-based independent study. This may take the form of a dissertation, project, exhibition, consultancy or any other appropriate mode. It is expected that postgraduate programmes will be designed to include a significant enquiry-based learning assignment
- Over the period of a programme all undergraduate students will have the opportunity to experience the workplace on at least one occasion through participation in a work placement (flexible modes such as four to twelve weeks, six month, twelve month), internship, work-based learning project and/or 'live brief' 'project. Where possible, postgraduate programme teams should ensure that there are explicit links between the programme of study and the workplace.
- Each programme will have been impact assessed for equality of provision and student attainment.
- Each programme will reflect the UoB curriculum principles.
- Each programme should have a published Programme Team. All academic staff would normally be members of at least one Programme Team.

4.2   Research Programmes

University of Bradford research programmes should follow the vitae Research Development Framework, which is designed to articulate the knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes of researchers and encourage them to aspire to excellence through achieving higher levels of development.

Post-graduate research programmes should support the student's ability to:

- Develop their knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research focussing on developing the student's:
  - Knowledge base
  - Cognitive abilities
  - Creativity

- Develop their personal qualities and approach to be an effective researcher focussing on developing the student's:
  - Personal qualities
  - Skills in self-management
  - Professional and career development

- Develop their knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research focussing on developing and understanding of/skills in:
  - Finance, funding and resources
  - Research management
  - Professional conduct

- Develop their knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research focussing on developing skills in:
  - Engagement and impact
  - Communication and dissemination
  - Working with others

5.   Design and Development of Programmes

A key aspect of the implementation of the Framework is that programme design and development will be structured and supported in a more longitudinal fashion, rather than an emphasis on end of process approval. Programme review, design and approval would normally take place over at least the duration of an academic year.

Programme review, design and approval must involve significant student engagement.

The programme design and development process will include a number of stages, including:

1. Clarifying the vision and purpose for the programme, the programme aims and learning outcomes, and the key challenges in student attainment.
2. Consulting an appropriate evidence-base to review contemporary national and international practice in the teaching/learning and assessment of the subject/discipline/profession.

3. Design/redesign of programme focused on achievement of programme learning outcomes, and reflecting engagement with UoB curriculum principles and the curriculum framework.
4. Development of an implementation plan for the programme.
5. Approval.

The University has established two Curriculum Development Fellows, appointed as 2-year secondments from the Faculties and who will act as key agents of change within the curriculum redevelopment process. There are also plans to appoint a permanent Curriculum Development Associate in each Faculty to support programme teams to develop/redevelop their programmes so they are aligned with the curriculum framework.

Support and/or facilitation through these stages will be available from the Centre for Educational Development (CED), Academic Quality and Partnerships Office (AQPO), Academic Skills Advice (ASA), Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU), Information Services (IS), Student and Academic Services (SAS), Curriculum Development Fellows and other relevant parts of the university, to complement that offered within Faculties. Associate Deans for Learning and Teaching are responsible for the quality assurance and enhancement of taught programmes within the Faculties and able to advise programme teams. Similarly the Dean of Graduate Studies is responsible for the quality assurance and enhancement of postgraduate research programmes and can advise on matters relating to PGR. Guidance, handbooks, resources and professional development have been developed to support programme teams in the curriculum redevelopment.

Overall we hope to establish a constructive and creative engagement with the process of curriculum redevelopment at the University of Bradford. This is an initiative for staff and students to get excited and engaged about curriculum design and it will make an essential contribution to realising our institutional targets.

Curriculum Implementation Group[4], May 2012

Curriculum Framework Group[5], August 2014

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[4] Peter Hughes, CED – Chair; Udy Archibong – EDU & SoHS; Jennifer Beaumont – AQU; Christine Dearnley – SoHS; Imad Faghmous –UBU; Mark Goodliff – SCIM; Peter Hopkinson – SoLS & CED; Peter Lassey – SLED; Peter Morgan – SoM; Sara Marsh – LSS; Gary Slater – SSIS; Pete Twigg – SoEDT. Serviced by: Bharti Mistry – ADU.
[5] Sean Walton, CED; Simon Tweddell and Mark Goodliff (Curriculum Development Fellows); Peter Hughes, CED

Appendix 1 - Graduate Attributes mapped to the Employability Capabilities

Graduate Attribute	Employability Capability
Academic Development and Critical Thinking. The Bradford Graduate is:	
• Able to apply knowledge to solve complex real-world problems and show proficiency and creativity in decision making	Problem solving and decision making Innovation and Enterprise
• An independent learner and a critical and creative thinker.	Management of self and own performance
• Skilled in research and enquiry.	Information and digital literacy
Employability and Professionalism. The Bradford Graduate is:	
• Aware of their own capabilities and able to manage themselves	Management of self and own performance
• Proficient at communicating with others through a range of media.	Communication skills and presentation skills
• Effective at collaborating and respecting the opinions of others	Team and customer working
• Able to demonstrate appropriate professional values.	Professional Values
• Able to identify their learning needs and take action to improve their performance	Managing self and own performance
• Enterprising and creative in their approach to study and work.	Innovation and Enterprise
• Digitally literate and able to manage information effectively	Information and digital literacy
• Able to demonstrate commercial awareness by relating their learning to a commercial or business perspective	Business, Commercial and Financial awareness Team and customer working
Inclusivity. The Bradford Graduate is:	
• Interculturally and internationally aware.	Professional Values Business and Commercial awareness
• Aware of social and civic responsibilities.	
• Literate in and committed to the principles of sustainable development	