

**Learning and Teaching Committee**

**Subject: New Programme Specification Template**

**Origin: Rob Pearson, Programme Quality & Teaching Partnerships**

**Executive Summary:** It is proposed to replace the existing templates for programme specifications and programme regulations with a single, more concise programme specification template.

**Action Required:**  Learning and Teaching Committee is asked to consider the proposal with a view to approval for immediate implementation.

1. **Introduction**

Programme specifications as we know them can be traced back to the 1997 Dearing Report (the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education). Dearing found great inconsistency in the provision of information across the sector about the content of programmes and the skills that graduates of those programmes would be expected to possess.

At a time when there was pressure from government and institutions for the introduction of student fees, Dearing stressed “the importance of clear and explicit information for students so that they can make informed choices about their studies and the levels they are aiming to achieve”. To this end he recommended the creation of a ‘programme specification’ for every programme that would identify the knowledge, understanding and skills that a student will be expected to have upon completion.

Since 1997 the QAA has taken the lead on developing programme specifications. They have indicated the types of information that should be contained within them and state that they should be “a concise description of the intended learning outcomes from a higher education programme, and how these outcomes can be achieved and demonstrated.”

It should be noted that there is no national template for a programme specification. Institutions have been expected to develop their own versions, ensuring they meet the general expectations set out by the QAA. Loughborough meets the QAA expectations through the publication of programme specifications and programme regulations for each programme of study.

At its meeting on 4 October 2012, Curriculum Sub-Committee agreed that it would be timely to review the template for Loughborough programme specifications and regulations to see if they could be presented in a more succinct and user friendly format. Following discussion inside and outside of the Sub-Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee is asked to consider a proposal to combine the two documents into a single more concise document, outlined in further detail below, with a view to **approval for immediate implementation**.

**2. A new Programme Specification template**

The Committee should note that in formulating the new programme specification template due regard has been given to ensuring that it is compliant with relevant guidance provided by the QAA.

A single document

We currently require every programme to have a separate programme specification and a separate set of programme regulations. A review of 20 similar institutions highlights that, with one other exception, all other institutions have a single document that meets the requirements of our current specifications and regulations. In light of this it is proposed tocombine the existing programme specification and programme regulations into a single document.

Limiting the information required

It is also proposed to cut down on the amount of information required in the new programme specification. The review of practice elsewhere suggests we are in the middle of what is being produced: our combined specifications and regulations average about 12 pages, with other institutions averaging around 10 pages (the highest being 20 pages and the lowest 3).

It is anticipated that the following measures will reduce the length of the programme specifications:

* cutting out current duplication between the specifications and regulations
* cutting out text that duplicates information in the AQPH
* replacing free text on ‘*learning, teaching and assessment methods to enable outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated’* with a link to a generic university statement on ‘*The teaching, learning and assessment strategies used at Loughborough*’
* replacing free text on ‘*Information about programme assessment strategy*’ with a link to a generic university statement on ‘*The teaching, learning and assessment strategies used at Loughborough*’
* replacing ‘*what makes this programme distinctive*’ with a link to a generic university statement on ‘*what makes Loughborough University programmes and its graduates distinctive*’

The proposed new programme specification template is presented in appendix 1. Presented in appendix 2 is the old programme specification template with comments and tracked changes.

In order to give the Committee a flavour of how the new programme specifications will look like, an example has been mocked up of the new programme specification for the BEng in Aeronautical Engineering (see appendix 3).  Also presented (appendix 4) are the existing programme specification and programme regulations for that programme. The document has tracked changes to show how the existing documents have been amended to bring them into line with the new specification.

1. **Actions for Learning and Teaching Committee**

Learning and Teaching Committee is asked to comment on the proposed new programme specification with a view to **approval for immediate effect for all new programme proposals**.

The Committee is also **invited to form a view** on whether all existing programme specifications and regulations should be changed into the new format as soon as possible (for example, by the end of January 2013), or over a more protracted period of time (for example, by the time of the School’s next Periodic Programme Review).

Transferral into the new format will have resource implications as staff will be required to convert the existing documents into the new format. For the sake of consistency and reducing the burden on Schools it would be preferable for this work to be undertaken by the Academic Registry. However, in light of current workloads this would require the employment of a temporary member of staff for approximately a month.

1. **Future work**

Generic University statements

It is proposed to replace several of the free text fields with generic university statements. Discussions have already begun at CSC and other fora about the content of these statements. It is proposed to ask Learning and Teaching Committee to approve these statements later in this academic session. Schools will be invited to form a view on whether they would like to supplement the University statements with School or Departmental statements.

Automating the process

It is proposed to work towards using the web-based Content Management System (CMS) to manage the approval and publication of programme specifications. This would see the current manual processing of Word documents replaced with an online system for the approval and publication of the specifications. It is anticipated that this should speed up the approval process and enhance the presentation of the documents.

This would also provide opportunities for using information from the programme specification for other purposes, for example, in the prospectus.

The provision of supporting documentation

Schools will still be required to create Curriculum Maps and Assessment Matrices alongside the new programme specification. However, with the advent of KIS the Academic Registry is looking at how the KIS data can support programme design and delivery, with one option being the automatic production of a dummy KIS for each new programme. The Academic Registry will therefore consider how the information presented in Curriculum Maps, Assessment Matrices and KIS can be created and presented most efficiently and effectively.

**APPENDIX 1**

**PROPOSED NEW PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION TEMPLATE**

**Programme Specification**

*Name of programme*

 Academic Year:

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities that are provided.

This specification should be read in conjunction with:

• Regulation XX for Undergraduate Awards (URL) *or* Regulation XI for Postgraduate Awards (URL)

• Module specifications (URL)

• The teaching, learning and assessment strategies used at Loughborough (URL)

• What makes Loughborough University programmes and its graduates distinctive (URL)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Awarding body/institutionDepartment | Loughborough University |
| Teaching institution (if different) |  |
| Details of accreditation by a professional/statutory body |  | Being sought ProvisionalEstablished |
| Award*(e.g .BA, MSc etc)* |  |
| Programme title |  |
| Length and mode of programme |  |
| UCAS code |  |
| Admissions Criteria |  |
| Date at which the programme specification was written or revised |  |

**1. Programme Aims:**

**2. Relevant subject benchmark statements and other external and internal reference points used to inform programme outcomes:**

**3. Programme Learning Outcomes**

**3.1 Knowledge and understanding**

*e.g. On successful completion of this programme, students should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of…*

*K1 ...*

*K2*

*etc*

**3.2 Skills and other attributes:**

1. **Subject-specific cognitive skills**

*e.g. On successful completion of this programme, students should be able to…*

*C1 ...*

*C2*

*etc*

1. **Subject-specific practical skills**

*e.g. On successful completion of this programme, students should be able to…*

*P1 ...*

*P2*

*etc*

1. **Generic skills**

*e.g. On successful completion of this programme, students should be able to…*

*T1 ...*

*T2*

*etc*

**4. Programme structure**

*List compulsory and optional modules in each Part semester (Code, title, modular weight).*

**5. Criteria for Progression and Degree Award**

 In order to progress from Part A to Part B, from Part B to C, from C to D (if applicable) and to be eligible for the award of an Honours degree, candidates must not only satisfy the minimum credit requirements set out in Regulation XX or Regulation XI (*delete as appropriate*) but also obtain ………

**6. Relative Weighting of Parts of the Programme for the purposes of Final Degree Classification**

Candidates' final degree classification will be determined on the basis of their performance in degree level Module Assessments in Parts B and C (and D if applicable). The percentage mark for each Part will be combined in the ratio xxxxxxxx to determine the final percentage mark.