

## Background

“Higher education providers therefore give prospective students indicative information about the nature and design of the curriculum. This provides an overview of likely opportunities to develop transferable skills; of the teaching, supervision, learning and assessment methods students can expect on the programmes; and of the resources and facilities available to enable and enhance their learning. Providers also indicate the ways in which an inclusive learning environment is provided for students to ensure equality of opportunity, and how they anticipate and respond to the diverse needs of students.”

Information about Higher Education Provision is structured around the following purposes:

- to communicate the purposes and value of higher education to the public at large
- to help prospective students make informed decisions about where, what, when and how they will study
- to enable current students to make the most of their higher education learning opportunities
- to confirm the achievements of students on completion of their studies
- to safeguard academic standards and assure and enhance academic quality.

## QAA Quality Code

The programme specification document is therefore an important text: it summarises the basic information (as identified by the QAA) relating to a programme of study or qualification, and it is a public document available to students, potential students, employers and other interested parties<sup>1</sup>. It constitutes, in effect, a ‘contract’ between the university and a whole range of ‘clients’. It is also one of the main documents through which internal quality assurance is demonstrated; and it is used within the process of QAA institutional audit. It is essential that it presents both a definitive programme outline and a strong positive image of the university and its standards, and avoids poor grammar, spelling errors and ‘typos’.

## Providing programme specifications for programmes

1. There is a standard Middlesex format and style for programme specifications - templates provided in Appendix 3f
2. Programme specifications must be provided for all taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

## Arrangements for producing programme specifications

1. A nominated member (or group) of academic staff should be responsible for drafting and maintaining each programme specification to accurately reflect the programme to which it relates.
2. The relevant Deputy Dean is responsible for agreeing the final text of programme specifications.
3. AQS is responsible for advising programme teams in producing programme specifications.

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of public information, QAA in its *Code of Practice (Section 10: Recruitment and admissions)* states that “Institutions promotional materials and activities are accurate, relevant, current, accessible and provide information that will enable applicants to make informed decisions about their options” (precept 3).

### **Generating and storing programme specifications**

1. The currency of programme specifications should be reviewed by the Programme Leader for in-house, joint and franchised programmes and by the University Link Teacher for validated programmes each academic year.
2. Programme specifications for each academic year should be made available on the university website, except for validated programmes, where partner institutions should make the programme specifications publicly available.

### **Use of programme specifications in other documentation**

1. A link to the Programme specifications are included in programme handbooks.
2. Programme specifications are an essential item of documentation for consideration within programme validation and review.
3. Programme specifications will be available to prospective students and other interested parties in hard copy and on the university web site.

### **Programme specification structure**

The university will use a common specification template for all programmes, insofar as that is possible. For franchised programmes the programme specification for the home programme will be suitably customised. The template is Appendix 3f and comprises the following sections:

1. Programme title
2. Awarding institution
- 3a. Teaching institution (if different)
- 3b. Language of study
- 4a. Valid intake dates
- 4b. Mode of study
- 4c. Delivery method
5. Professional/statutory body (if applicable)
6. Apprenticeship Standard
7. Final qualification(s) available
8. Academic Year effective from
9. Criteria for admission to the programme
10. Aims of the programme
11. Programme outcomes: knowledge and understanding; skills
12. Programme structure including levels, modules (and highlighting non-compensatable ones), credits and progression requirements
  - 12.1 Programme structure
  - 12.2 Levels and modules
  - 12.3 Non-compensatable modules
13. Information about assessment regulations
14. Placement opportunities, requirements and support (if applicable)
15. Future careers/progression
16. Particular support for learning
17. HECos code(s)
18. Relevant QAA subject benchmark(s)
19. Reference points
20. Other information
21. A curriculum map relating learning outcomes to modules, a list of the programme learning outcomes and the highest level at which they are to be achieved by all graduates of the programme

### Advice on completing the programme specification

In the text below, part A offers general advice; part B focuses on individual numbered sections within the current programme specification template(s).

#### Part A: GENERAL ADVICE

1. Treat the programme specification as a discrete component (element) of the programme handbook, rather than integrating it as descriptive text in the main body of the handbook. This has the advantage of allowing preparatory work on the handbook to proceed separately from work on the final wording of the programme specification.
2. For franchised programmes the programme specification for the home programme should be suitably modified.
3. Programme Teams frequently seek advice about the number of programme specifications that are required when there are different exit points within a programme (as for example a named Post Graduate Certificates and/or Postgraduate Diplomas within an overarching Masters programme or named pathways leading to an award, for example BSc Nursing (Adult/Child/Mental Health). To provide clarity the following should guide decisions about the number of programme specifications to use:-
  - If students can enrol on an award that has its own programme code and name, then the programme should have a programme specification.
  - If students enrol on an award where there are no named exit awards, a separate programme specification for any lesser award the student might obtain if they fail to achieve the credits for the award is not necessary. However, the programme specification should indicate what would happen if the student does not have sufficient credit for the award but sufficient credit to be awarded a lesser award.
  - For named exit awards the programme specification can be annotated to state differences such as learning outcomes. However, if these are too numerous or complex then separate specifications may be more appropriate.
  - Care should be taken in all examples identified above where in addition to the academic award, successful students are eligible for a professional award/accreditation by a professional body (PRSB) to indicate exactly what the student needs to achieve in order to be able to register/be accredited by a PRSB
4. Consider the implications of different module categories and the roles and responsibilities such different modules carry in achieving programme outcomes as well as in terms of their own, integral, module learning outcomes:
  - Compulsory modules – make a fundamental, contribution to the programme; must normally be passed by the student for the qualification to be attained and have a key role in addressing programme learning outcomes.
  - Optional modules – provide some degree of choice but a specified number must be taken and passed, possibly in specified combination(s); optional modules serve, in association with compulsory modules, to ensure that programme learning outcomes are addressed.

Any module may also be determined to be non-compensatable – i.e. compensation is not normally allowable in the case of such modules.

Remember the necessity for consistency and agreement between statements in the programme specification and the corresponding role/contribution of individual modules (as in module narratives) in delivering the programme outcomes. Having written the programme specification refer back to module narratives for a final check.

Remember students will have a ‘programme’ view of their University experience rather than consider each individual module. It is important to acknowledge this and ensure standards are met and that there is a level of consistency across the whole programme.

Finally – write programme specifications in a ‘user friendly’ style without compromising accuracy or completeness. The programme specification should be written in such a way as to be understandable by (potential) students, and some explanation of educational terms may be necessary.

## **Part B: SECTION-SPECIFIC ADVICE AS PER TEMPLATE**

### *Section 1: Programme title*

State the programme title as validated.

### *Section 2: Awarding institution*

Normally this will be Middlesex University but there may be occasions of a shared or dual qualification with another institution (joint or dual awards).

### *Section 3a: Teaching institution*

Normally this will be Middlesex University for in-house programmes but there may be occasions when other institutions are involved in teaching the programme (joint programmes). For franchised and validated collaborative programmes enter the name of the partner institution as the teaching institution. Plus, campuses if applicable

### *Section 3b: Language of Study*

This will normally be English for home and most collaborative programmes, unless special permission was given at institutional approval stage for the language of tuition and/or assessment to be different.

### *Section 4a: Valid intake dates*

i.e. Sept/Jan etc for each campus/partner

### *Section 4b: Mode of study*

i.e. FT/PT/TKSW for each intake

### *Section 4c: Delivery method*

On-campus/blended or distance education

### *Section 5: Professional/Statutory/Regulatory body*

State here any Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Body (PSRB), or any other accrediting body (e.g. NHS) that additionally accredits the programme in whole or in part and its graduates subject to certain conditions. Note Middlesex University is NOT an accrediting body for its own awards.

### *Section 6: Apprenticeship standard*

*Section 7: Final qualifications(s) available*

State here only qualifications that are formally validated. These include separately-validated 'staged' qualifications within a single programme (e.g. PGCert, PGDip, MA) but do NOT include normal credit-based 'progression stage' or 'exit award' qualifications as per standard provision within University Regulations.

*Section 8: Year effective from*

State the academic year for which the programme specification is valid from. The programme specification is a public document, available on the university web-site. It is important, therefore, that it indicates the academic year from which it applies i.e. the programme was validated in 2015/16 (Year of Validation) but a programme change was made in 2017/18 (Year of amendment).

*Section 9: Criteria for admission to the programme*

Set out the programme's expectations of applicants in terms of prior qualifications and/or experience. This should include any English language qualifications (e.g. IELTS level) for overseas applicants. State any special arrangements or exemptions that may exist (e.g. for mature student entry). Be careful, however, not to set any requirement that might be held to constitute unreasonable obstacles to disabled students. It would be appropriate to specify here any disabilities that would militate against entry due to programme-specific requirements, but such a statement should not be made lightly. If the programme allows student entry to a 'top-up' year/qualification, or with 'advanced standing', relevant entry requirements and qualifications should be indicated.

*Section 10: Educational aims of the programme*

Aims are not the same as outcomes. Aims, which should be succinct and readily comprehensible to a range of readers, are best considered as the well-intentioned aspirations of the programme, as envisaged by its designers, with regard to the opportunities and benefits which students should obtain from taking the programme. As such, aims have two distinguishing features:

- (i) aims indicate the opportunities and benefits (short-term and long-term; personal, professional and career focused) likely to accrue to students through taking the programme and what it provides to its students. Such indication should convey the nature of the programme and its focus or coverage but does not seek to specify requirements to be expected of students; and, consequently,
- (ii) aims outline aspects or benefits that aren't eligible for assessment and, perhaps cannot be assessed, certainly not in the period of the programme itself.

Five or six 'aims' should normally be sufficient to convey the overall intentions and character of the programme. Suggested opening words to this section are:

"The programme aims to:"

[followed by 'bullets' opening with a verb – e.g. develop; encourage; equip; establish; facilitate; foster; inform; introduce; outline; prepare; provide; stimulate; support; etc].

They might, for example, refer to the programme's/teachers' intention(s) to introduce students to the nature of a subject and its complexities; to providing learning opportunities for erstwhile excluded students; to encourage a collaborative learning attitude on the part of students; to establishing the basis for subsequent career or research success (lifelong learning); to cultivating critical attitudes and/or civic responsibilities; etc. They are not unimportant, therefore, in establishing the ethos and purpose of the programme, but they are less practical or immediate than programme outcomes. On occasion they might also serve

to reflect some of the possible outcomes to some students from taking some of the purely optional modules within the programme.

Programme “aims” as expressed in the programme specification should be the “aims” as expressed in the relevant section of the programme handbook, i.e. same wording, same numbering, etc. They should also, in ‘umbrella’ form, cover, be fully consonant with, and embrace the aims/outcomes as expressed in constituent module narratives of the programme.

Note where there exist lower level or ‘progression stage’ qualifications within an overall programme (see part A, para 6), it may be necessary to express the aims in such a way as to distinguish between the programme intentions at or for each lower level qualification or ‘progression stage’ (assuming such difference in intention exists).

### *Section 11: Programme learning outcomes*

#### 11.1 Background

Section 11 is the most critical part of the programme specification to get ‘right’ because it brings together the three essential elements of the programme. The outcomes constitute the single and comprehensive statement of the essential requirements that will be expected of all successful students on the programme in order to gain its target qualification(s). Section 11 then indicates how the outcomes will be addressed by the programme (teaching) and how their achievement by students will be made known (assessment). The programme outcomes need to demonstrate how they map to Middlesex Graduate Attributes (Guidance 3 xiv). Attention should be paid, therefore, to the following aspects:

- (a) Programmes should be defined by a single set of learning outcome statements applicable to all students studying for the qualification(s) for which they have enrolled (See part A, paragraph 3), with such outcomes couched in terms of the final (target) qualification.

Where students might exit with a lesser generic university qualification if they do not achieve the award for which they are registered the outcome statements should not normally need to make any statement of such ‘lesser’ outcomes.

- (b) Programme outcomes themselves are potentially difficult to ‘pin down’ insofar as they may not themselves be directly or uniquely assessed at the programme level at one time and place. Instead they are mediated via modules, and module outcomes (teaching/assessment), at a variety of levels. They also usually represent a process of continuous development for the student and a cumulative pattern of practice and assessment. The curriculum map visually represents this crucial relationship between programme outcomes, and the associated pattern of student development, and module-based teaching and assessment (see section 14 of the programme specification).
- (c) There is distinct benefit in controlling the number of outcomes stated. It is advantageous to:
- keep stated programme outcomes as few as possible while continuing to indicate the essential nature of the programme.
  - use programme outcomes to indicate the core attributes/achievement expected of every successful student on the programme, while leaving specific details of intended learning to the statement of learning outcomes in module narratives as shown in the curriculum map.

As a ‘rule of thumb’ and given that there will be need in to include six outcomes as ‘graduate skills’, an aggregate total of some 20 outcomes (or less) for the overall programme would be more easily manageable and still be adequate to inform the reader in broad terms and to direct to the greater detail in module narratives.

- (d) 'Demonstrability': if student success on the programme depends on achieving the stated outcomes, it follows that there must be means whereby that achievement is demonstrated (and documented). This is the function of assessment. So, there should be an evident linkage between the stated outcomes and the assessment arrangements (variety, methods, levels) for the programme as effected through modules. The proposed assessment (nature, variety), through the constituent modules (module outcomes) of the programme, must not only clearly cover all the outcomes, it should also be such as to actually promote or reinforce the intended student learning and performance abilities in these respects. In so doing, it will also show the applicability of the outcomes at a range of levels in keeping with the guidance on level descriptors provided via QAA subject benchmarking statements, the FHEQ and Middlesex University's regulations <sup>2</sup>.

In a similar manner, there should be some evident alignment with programme aims (section 10). More specifically, it is important to identify teaching methods (including e-learning) that are likely to encourage or enable students to work towards achievement of the stated outcomes. Similarly, the programme content or syllabus (section 12) should also be appropriate to the stated outcomes with particular reference to the outcomes under 'knowledge and understanding' (section 11).

- (e) Although it may be appropriate for some learning outcomes on some undergraduate degree programmes to only be assessed at a level below level 6, i.e. to recognise that the programme develops them but does not pursue them to 'graduate' level, such instances should be kept few. Programme outcomes are the outcomes for the programme and if the programme is intended as a degree programme, it would normally be expected that the stated outcomes (as of those relating to the university's eight "graduate attributes" in section 11) are those of a graduate, i.e. level 6. The highest level at which programme outcomes are to be achieved by all graduates should be indicated in the curriculum map.
- (f) For postgraduate programmes, knowledge, cognitive and practical skills outcomes are those of level 7. Graduate skills are NOT required for postgraduate programmes.
- (g) Check that the stated programme outcomes and assessment feature and are reflected in the constituent compulsory and/or optional modules that make up the programme. In this context, it is also worth 'back-checking' to ensure that key module learning outcomes from compulsory and optional modules are evident or influential within the stated programme outcomes.

## 11.2 Readership

Prospective students will be one of the primary groups looking closely at statements in this section; employers and parents constitute other important groups. It is important, therefore, that stated learning outcomes eschew jargon and place a premium on being readily comprehensible in conveying the nature of the programme and the potential learning opportunities and experiences that it offers. Text should be 'user friendly', with students thought of as a key readership.

## 11.3 Drafting learning outcomes

<sup>2</sup> Consult/refer to the Middlesex University regulations which cover level descriptors. Additionally, in January 2003 SEEC (the Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer) published its "*Credit Level Descriptors for Further and Higher Education*" which features a set of indicative and generic (i.e. subject-independent) outcome statements for each level of the FE/HE sector. These outcome statements are organised, for the HE level, into four categories: development of knowledge and understanding; cognitive/intellectual skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application); key/transferable skills (generic) and practical skills (subject specific) which bear a close resemblance to the categories of outcome in the programme specification. While it is not recommended that the outcome statements of the SEEC documents (levels) should be slavishly adopted into programme specifications which should seek to reflect the 'individuality' and distinctive character of the programme to which they relate, they do provide an interesting and helpful model or indicator for the shape and nature of possible outcome statements - see the SEEC website at <http://www.seec.org.uk>

There is some healthy and sometimes confusing academic debate about the nature, value and function of 'learning outcomes' and 'learning objectives'. What follows ignores the niceties of such debate and seeks to offer a practical approach that should satisfy the immediate need to make some useful statements of what a programme hopes will be the outcomes for its students with such outcomes stated at the threshold level, i.e. to be achieved and 'passed' by the student in order to gain the qualification<sup>3</sup>.

The achievement of outcomes should be discernible or demonstrable - hence the direct linkage with corresponding assessment provision. So it is important to express outcomes in terms that offer some chance of demonstrability (see 11.1 d, above). It follows that terms like "students will have an appreciation of" or "students will be informed about", leave much to be desired and pose a number of difficult questions. Such terms are best avoided.

Instead, consider the hierarchy of cognitive performance as outlined by Bloom and colleagues<sup>4</sup>, and verbs that are suggested as indicative of performance at the different stages of this hierarchy. On such a basis, outcomes should be stated in terms of:

"On completion of this programme the successful student will be able to [verb]....."

and should employ verbs as per the following suggestions:

<u>Bloom level(cognitive domain)</u>	<u>Suitable verbs (listing not complete)</u>
Level I: Knowledge [i.e. largely a function of memory of specific facts/data]	state, define, list, name, reproduce, recall, recognise, label, .....
Level II: Comprehension (Understanding) [i.e. ability to organise facts/data to derive meaning]	identify, select, justify, indicate, illustrate, represent, formulate, explain, contrast, classify, .....
Level III: Application [i.e. use of knowledge/comprehension in the context of a task or problem]	predict, demonstrate, instruct, compute, use, perform, calculate, .....
Level IV: Analysis [i.e. ability to break information into constituent parts or meanings to derive relationship or significances of parts]	analyse, identify, differentiate, separate, solve, compare/contrast, .....
Level V: Synthesis [i.e. ability to bring information together in new ways to create wider or better understanding of an issue or problem]	combine, summarise, restate, argue, discuss, organise, derive, interpret, relate, generalise, conclude, .....

<sup>3</sup> Some QAA subject benchmarks also refer to 'modal' statements – i.e. statements which seek to define the achievement expected of the 'average' student. However, it is recommended that programme specifications at Middlesex all work to threshold statement of outcomes.

<sup>4</sup> Bloom, Benjamin S *et al* (1956; 1964) A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook 1 - Cognitive Domain. Longmans Green & Co.



Level VI: Evaluation [i.e. ability to reach judgements, including value judgements, and/or to draw/offer conclusions based on available information]	judge, evaluate, determine, support, defend, attack, criticise, select, .....
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[Caution: Bloom's hierarchy should be seen as a sequence or as stages of cognitive development in a particular sphere of activity. The stages should not be directly equated with levels of HE achievement or performance in all, or in general, terms. So, for example, although a programme might expect its students in level 6 modules to be demonstrating abilities of synthesis and evaluation (Bloom's levels V/VI) with regard to programme demands, it is quite possible that in other respects, or in other subjects' modules, the student may be more of a 'novice learner' and only operating at, for example, Bloom levels II or III. Module outcomes at upper levels (i.e. HE levels 2 or 3) can legitimately reflect this diversity or spread of Bloom levels.]

Bloom and colleagues<sup>5</sup> also explored the affective domain which embraces consideration of the development of student attitudes and value systems – moving from a position of 'receptivity' to a position of developing and, if necessary, reconciling or living with complex value systems. In this, Bloom has some similarity to the ideas of Perry<sup>6</sup> and the notion of students moving from a position of dependency and a fairly simple or 'absolutist' view of the world (e.g. 'to every question there is a right answer') to a greater reliance on self and personal values (e.g. 'maybe to some questions there aren't ready answers but my personal perspective allows me to live with that'). Helping students develop this 'emotional maturity' is a legitimate and commendable concern of a programme. The programme may, or may not, choose to formulate this aspect of student development as outcomes. It may better be expressed as 'aims' but it is a consideration that may inform the overall shaping of the programme and may thereby inform or influence stated outcomes, not least with regard to the development of 'autonomous learning'.

If required by PSRBs, undergraduate programme learning outcomes can also be presented using the taxonomy of the appropriate subject benchmark.

#### 11.4 Text entries in Section 11 – Parts A – B

Section 11 calls for the listing of outcomes under two category headings. One of these relate to 'skills' in different shapes or forms, but this should not obscure the importance of the statements of "knowledge and understanding" in capturing the distinctiveness of the programme.

Each category requires a statement not only of outcomes, but also a statement of the "teaching/learning methods" and "assessment methods" associated with these outcomes. It is vital, therefore, when writing outcomes not to lose sight of the necessity for their being demonstrably linked with the proposed assessment to be employed, differentiating, if applicable, between formative and summative assessment, with the teaching methods intended to foster their achievement by students, and with the appropriate level descriptors as in the QAA's FHEQ guidelines and the university's regulations.

It is not sufficient, having listed outcomes, to define the "teaching/learning methods" as "lectures, tutorials and seminars", or to say of "assessment" merely "coursework and unseen examinations". What matters is to show how these approaches have been purposively

<sup>5</sup> Bloom, BS, Krathwohl, David R *et al* (1964) *A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook 2 - Affective Domain*. NY, David McKay Co Inc.

<sup>6</sup> Perry, William G (1988, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed) *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: a scheme*. Holt Rinehart & Winston

selected and employed by programme/module staff as part of an overall curriculum design to achieve the avowed outcomes. Such an approach indicates something of the programme's 'teaching philosophy' and indicates why each methodology is employed, what its particular strengths or features are, and hence how it makes a particular contribution to achieving some or all of the stated outcomes, if applicable, by linking particular methodologies to particular outcomes. For example, under "teaching and learning", a statement such as the following gives a strong indication of purposive choice and utilisation of methods to achieve specific learning ends: "Seminars provide opportunity for student discussion groups to address issues covered by lectures and back-up reading. In so doing they also provide opportunity for students to seek clarification of understanding, and for staff to gather feedback. Seminars therefore reinforce the student knowledge base (outcomes A.1 - 4), develop students' group working and verbal communication skills (outcomes D1 and D), and help students prepare for the assessed group presentations".

Similarly, for assessment, a short account should be given of methodologies employed and the specific purposes and outcomes they address. For example, where and why group assessment is employed, and how this reinforces student recognition of the importance of specific outcomes such as teamwork. It would also be useful to include an indication of the relative overall usage (proportion) of different assessment methodologies across, or at different levels of the programme, e.g. the extent of usage of examinations (seen/unseen) as compared with coursework (written/verbal; individual/group) or other modes at different levels. Consider too the role(s) of summative and formative and maybe diagnostic assessment in the overall programme.

To recap: clear indication should be given of how chosen teaching/assessment methods will positively promote the desired learning outcomes, i.e. have been selected and/or combined; what forms of e-learning are employed and which learning outcomes will be addressed by which teaching methods/modes of assessment. For example: "lectures will be used to address achievement by students of outcomes 2 and 3, while seminars will encourage students to focus on outcome 1 " with similar statements for the different function or purpose of different elements of the outlined assessment.

Alternatively, if aligning methods with specific outcomes is problematic, consider relating methods to overall student development as the programme progresses, e.g. "from a significant use of lectures in level 4 modules to impart and support the acquisition of basic information and concepts, by level 4, teaching involves greater reliance on student-centred approaches: single/group projects, student-led seminars, presentations, problem-based activities and peer support".

Then, check that the modules as specified in the module narratives, and in nature, content and sequence really do reflect and put into practice the programme statements on how teaching and assessment methods are structured to help students work towards achievement of the programme outcomes.

Section 11A – "knowledge and understanding". Each programme will have distinctive entries to make here based on the nature and, particularly, the content or syllabus of the programme. Note that it is perhaps in this section that most care needs to be given to the drafting of the learning outcome. The opening wording for section 11A should be:

"On completion of this programme the successful student will have a knowledge and understanding of:"

but where subsequent statements should seek to do more than just list content (syllabus) per se but should also seek to indicate the 'meaning' or 'value' of such content, e.g. 'the significance of ...', 'the complexities within ...', etc.

Section 11B – "Skills".

Bloom's hierarchy of cognitive attributes is of direct relevance to this section above all others. The opening wording for section 11B should be:

"On completion of this programme the successful student will be able to:"

Skills can be considered in both cognitive and practical domains. Therefore, outline here how the programme will positively contribute to the development of the student's general academic or intellectual capabilities, i.e. offering possibility of transfer beyond the level of study of the programme itself, and beyond the actual subject area as well as practical skills that relate to those skills that may well be specific to the nature of a particular programme or subject area and/or to likely consequent career paths of students,

You should be sure that the skills map onto Middlesex's Graduate Attributes (Guidance 3xv) (Not in use for the academic year 22/23). It is a university requirement that skills development is embedded within subject teaching. This should be reflected in the outlined teaching/learning and assessment methods of the programme. Graduate skills for postgraduate programmes are not required.

These eight attributes lend themselves to very different levels of achievement in different programmes. It may be that some degree programmes will feel obliged to declare some of these "graduate" skills as evident only at sub-graduate level, i.e. only evident in modules at levels 4 and 5. Such instances should be kept to a minimum, and good arguments should exist as to why the programme feels unable to deliver to the full criteria of 'graduate attributes as defined by the university and interpreted by the parent subject(s) but the possibility remains.

Skills outcomes may be couched in such a way as to reflect the nature of the programme (content and teaching) through which they have been developed.

### *Section 12: Programme structure*

Section 12.1 - Overall structure of the programme: This section should provide a diagram to include full-time/part-time, year of study, module length and respective requirements; sandwich options; RPL; the value of prior experience; possible choice of pathways; the nature of a compulsory final project; links with other subjects; placement opportunities or requirements; other key features of the programme that its providers would wish to make explicit. It should provide a detailed description of how the constituent modules (all categories) contribute to the programme, its pathway(s) and the final qualification. Consider contacting your [CAPE Business Partner](#) for sense check/consultation on the design process and considerations (<https://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/services/centre-for-academic-practice-enhancement/about-cape>)

It is important in this section to differentiate between 'compulsory' and 'optional' modules, and to show how, between them, the modules address all the programme learning outcomes for all graduating students of the programme. It should not merely list the modules by level or year, instead it should lay out the elements of the programme and provide an explanatory account making clear any conditions of which students need to be aware when considering or planning their programme of study. Details of specific named and validated 'lesser' qualifications (timing, criteria, etc.) should be provided, as appropriate.

Clear indication should be given of the nature, and credit value towards the final qualification, of any placement module or year. Specify where there is a sandwich element to the programme, whether a Diploma in Industrial Studies or Diploma in Employability Studies may be awarded.

A general account of the availability, nature and requirements of 'progression stage qualifications' could also be provided, i.e. stage qualifications as defined in the academic regulations. A diagram showing the structure of the programme would be useful.

Section 12.2 – levels and modules: This section should list modules by category (compulsory/optional) and specify any progression requirements between levels of study. Modules should show their full module code.

Section 12.3 – non-compensatable modules: This section should show modules that are non-compensatable within the programme. A module may be determined to be non-compensatable:

- if it is the only module to assess achievement of a programme learning outcome at the highest level at which it is intended that the learning outcome will be achieved by all graduates of the programme,
- by virtue of its significant contribution to the achievement of one or more programme learning outcomes even if the module does not uniquely assess achievement of programme learning outcomes at their highest level, or
- by virtue of its key role as a preparation for later stages of the programme
- due to other requirements, e.g. PSRB.

In determining which modules are to be non-compensatable, a balance will need to be struck between creating a programme structure which allows the compensation mechanism to facilitate progression of students who, for example, may have marginally failed a module, but are, in the judgement of the assessment board, adequately prepared for progression to the next stage of the programme. This is whilst assuring that any students graduating from a programme will have demonstrably achieved all programme learning outcomes at the appropriate level. Therefore, any module which uniquely assesses achievement of a programme learning outcome at the highest level must be achieved by all graduates of the programme and must be non-compensatable.

### *Section 13: Information about assessment regulations*

This section should make reference to the university regulations but should also include any regulations supplementary to those defined in the university regulations, e.g. the requirement to pass both coursework and exams. It should also direct readers to module narratives where additional information may be provided, e.g. where modules are assessed by examination and by coursework, must the student pass in both modes to pass overall? A reference back to section 12.1 for details of credit requirements for awards might also be helpful in some cases of multiple award possibilities.

Also, if there is interest or involvement by a PSRB which impacts on assessment procedures, e.g. a PSRB requirement that certain modules must be passed, or requirement of a minimum grade above Middlesex 'pass' requirements in order for the student to gain PSRB accreditation, any such conditions should be stated here.

### Classification

Specify if certificates, diplomas, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas are to be classified. For masters programmes without a 60-credit dissertation this section should

indicate which modules should be used for the purposes of classification as agreed at validation.

*Section 14: Placement opportunities*

Please specify any compulsory or optional placement opportunities including student support during and assessment of placements for students on the programme. Placements, whether in specific sectors of employment or in community service voluntary roles, are seen as making a major contribution to a student's development but must be shown to bear a relationship to the student's study activities.

Where programmes feature placements, whether obligatory or optional, suitable information should be provided to students on the nature, role and value including accreditation of placements, on any module which must be passed prior to placement, on the consequences of failure to undertake or complete a required placement, on their contribution to the overall programme and qualification including, where appropriate, any additional certification provided, and the nature and amount of support provided by the programme and its staff. If a Diploma in Employability Studies / Industrial Studies is offered, this should be listed.

*Section 15: Future careers*

Programme specifications should not miss the opportunity to 'sell themselves' effectively to potential students. Refer to feedback from past students or from employers; 'successes' of graduates in terms of further studies, i.e. research degrees, new careers opened up, or senior posts obtained.

Some programmes may be able to demonstrate links with the employment market and/or employers, employer involvement in curriculum design, visiting speakers from industry, links with professional bodies, placement opportunities, collection of feedback from past students, active cultivation through teaching/learning strategies of skills relevant to employment, teaching staff being professional practitioners. In other, less vocational, programmes a few examples of 'typical' careers taken up by 'typical' graduates of the programme may be informative to prospective students.

Given the interest of potential students in the career prospects resulting from a degree, this section is a prime opportunity for a programme to attract would-be students. An indication of the range of career openings consequent upon the programme, and an emphasis on career potential, rather than simply career support provided, is in order here.

*Section 16: Particular support for learning*

If applicable to the programme, specify any learning support arrangements over and above the normal learning resources available for the programme. Such features might include induction or orientation programmes; early diagnostic testing and support; additional tutor support, e.g. on an access-focused programme in the first year of study; specialist library collections of material, e.g. for programmes with emphasis on student research-based projects; programme-dedicated resource rooms; significant teaching input by highly research-active staff if this is indeed a particular support to learning; programmes of visiting external speakers; placement support arrangements; provision of ICT training courses; the Learning Enhancement Team; e-mail access to/support by tutors; etc.

This section should also highlight any programme related specialist support for students with disabilities and should not include unnecessary barriers to access by disabled people (precept 8). The university has a policy statement (HRPS8) on "Equal opportunities" which states, inter alia, that "The university is committed to ensuring that all students enjoy equality of opportunity during their studies at Middlesex and are free from any form of discriminatory

practices by the institution or its members ....” (para 46). With specific regard to students with disabilities, its position is that “candidates will be selected on academic ... suitability only” (para 65a); additionally, it is “committed to setting up systems to break down any barriers which might prevent a disabled person from actively participating in the life of the university” (para 61).

The university is required by the Equality Act 2010 to explicitly make reasonable adjustments in its provision of services which includes teaching to ensure that it does not discriminate against, or place at substantial disadvantage, students with disability<sup>7</sup>. This carries implications for programmes with regard to aspects ranging from admission/enrolment policy and practice through curriculum design and teaching<sup>8</sup> through provision of learning and other support through to assessment, e.g. provision in suitable media of feedback on work; extension of assessment time; etc. For more advice on matters relating to disabled students, contact the Head of Wellbeing Services

#### *Section 17: HECos*

State the appropriate HECos code for the programme. A list of codes is available from Academic Registry.

#### *Section 18: Relevant QAA subject benchmark group(s)*

For many programmes as organised at Middlesex University only one benchmark statement will be involved but some programmes may need to take note of more than one. It is also possible that no existing benchmark applies. Published QAA benchmark statements can be found at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/>

#### *Section 19: Reference points*

Programme specifications should show awareness of, and appropriate accordance<sup>9</sup> with, both external and internal reference points which should be listed and correctly titled.

For external sources most, if not all, programmes will need to make reference to:

- the relevant QAA subject benchmark(s);
- the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) (see guidance 5i);
- the QAA Quality Code

and some may also refer to

- PSRB (Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Body) requirements or guidance
- relevant government or other publications, e.g. White/Green Papers, OfS, UUK, CBI, AGCAS

For internal sources most, if not all, programmes will need to make reference to:

- University policies, e.g. on access, equal opportunity;

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For more information, and for very useful and instructive examples of application or interpretation (including acceptable grounds for limiting access by disabled students), see the “Code of Practice for Providers of Post 16 Education and Related Services” by the Disability Rights Commission - downloadable at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>. See also information on the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (‘Skill’) website at [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk).

<sup>7</sup> Teaching implications might include, for example: lectures (lip-reading) pace of delivery for note-taking by some students; use of handouts (hardcopy for blind students); reliance on ICT (keyboarding) for core activities; etc.

<sup>8</sup> Teaching implications might include, for example: lectures (lip-reading) pace of delivery for note-taking by some students; use of handouts (hardcopy for blind students); reliance on ICT (keyboarding) for core activities; etc.

<sup>9</sup> Accordance need not be synonymous with total compliance. For example, in some cases a programme may feel justified in operating in a manner that diverges from, or transcends, subject benchmarking statements. In such cases, what matters is that the programme team have nevertheless evidently taken note of the relevant benchmark(s), have substantial grounds for their preferred mode of working, and have not jeopardised standards. QAA benchmarks offer threshold/modal statements for guidance and quality assurance but quality enhancement invokes evolution and emerging diversity in provision, as QAA recognises.

- University and/or school and/or programme strategy documents, e.g. on learning, teaching and assessment, distance education; and
- the University regulations

*Section 20: other information*

Add any other information with regard to the programme that might be of interest to students.

*Section 21: Curriculum map and module learning outcomes*

This section maps programme learning outcomes against the modules in which they are assessed in the curriculum map, and indicates the highest level at which programme outcomes are to be achieved by all graduates.

The curriculum map, associated list of programme outcomes and the highest level at which these outcomes are to be achieved by all graduates of the programme, is best provided as an appendix, in which case a cross-reference will suffice here in the main form. It makes it easier to read the curriculum map if visible horizontal and vertical lines demarcate the grid (rows and columns) of modules/outcomes.

It is not necessary to include the table if all learning outcomes are developed to the highest level appropriate to the award (e.g. level 7 in the case of postgraduate awards, level 6 awards in the case of undergraduate honours degrees). In such cases, please note in this section that “All programme learning outcomes are developed to ... (level number)”.

The map is an important document in portraying ‘at a glance’ an overall picture of how the programme delivers on its stated learning outcomes. Therefore, it is important to ensure that every compulsory or optional module is shown and that every programme outcome as stated in section 11 features also. It can help the reader if some form of differentiation can be provided between compulsory/optional modules, perhaps by shading or use of different fonts and/or by placing compulsory modules together at the top of each section (level category) of the map. All modules should be identifiable by their module code to show level as well as title. It is also useful if the map can be expanded to show the place, and duration, of any work placement module or year, even if the attached credits do not necessarily contribute directly to the usual academic credits required for a qualification.

It is important to be selective in how outcomes are ‘pasted into’ the map and its modules. It is important that each outcome is seen to feature at a range of levels (i.e. a developmental trail), showing how modules/module outcomes and assessment, as detailed in module narratives address the need for the programme to develop students up to the final level of achievement. If this reveals some ‘gaps’ in terms of module outcomes and assessment as expressed in module narratives vis-à-vis ultimate programme outcomes, these should be addressed. But it is not necessary, or desirable, to have every programme outcome feature in every module. This creates needless challenge and complexity and disbelief in correlating programme outcomes with the nature, and activities, of the indicated modules. Show with ‘X’ or a ‘tick’ those modules in which the outcome features in a significant way, i.e. with the emphasis on where it is assessed formatively as well as summatively. This is not to deny the importance of its also being taught and practised by students, perhaps elsewhere, but account of such teaching and practice will be subsumed into module descriptions in module narratives. Finally, check back to verify that each module, in its module narrative (module outcomes; assessment), corroborates the assignment of programme outcomes to that module.

Highest level at which programme outcomes are to be achieved by all graduates

When a degree-level programme features outcomes at sub-degree level, however defined, this should be explained in the initial statement of outcomes in section 11 of the programme specification. This is to avoid the implication that the programme does not represent degree level achievement.

**Programme learning outcomes listing**

It is helpful to have a listing of fully stated programme outcomes numbered as in section 11 (but without teaching and assessment information) to accompany the curriculum map.