



# Academic Framework for the Design and Delivery of University Awards

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APPROVED BY ACADEMIC BOARD

EFFECTIVE FROM SEPTEMBER 2022

# Contents

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2	Scope.....	4
3	Aims.....	5
4	Course Architecture .....	5
	Levels and Stages .....	5
	Stages in Taught Postgraduate Awards .....	5
	Stages in Research Degrees .....	5
	Framework for taught courses.....	6
	Single Honours and Combined Honours Awards.....	6
	Modules .....	6
	Pass/Fail Modules .....	6
	Module Assessment.....	7
	Dissertation or Individual Study.....	7
	Core Modules.....	7
	Option Modules .....	7
	Interchangeable modules .....	8
	Negotiated Modules .....	8
	Dual-Level Modules .....	8
	Dual-Delivered Modules .....	9
	Minimum Number of Students on a Module.....	9
5	Curriculum Framework for Taught Degrees .....	9
	Titles.....	9
	Structure .....	9
	Courses.....	11
	Routes .....	11
	Combination of routes .....	12
	Options.....	12
	Naming of exit routes .....	12
	Management.....	12
6	Combined Honours .....	13
7	Course Design .....	13
	Definitive Course Documentation.....	13

	Main elements of the Course Document.....	14
8	Course Approval.....	14
9	Course Changes.....	14
10	Short Courses.....	14
11	Naming Conventions.....	14
	Requirements for award titles .....	14
	Requirements for module titles.....	16
	Terminology .....	16

The revised terminology of suites, courses and routes is used throughout this document. This terminology change will be fully implemented from September 2021.

## 1 Scope

- 1.1 This document, the *Academic Framework for the Design and Delivery of University Awards* [the Academic Framework] sets out the requirements and attributes with which all courses must comply.
- 1.2 Unless clearly indicated otherwise, the Academic Framework applies to all Courses which lead to an Award, or to the award of credit, by Canterbury Christ Church University [the University], wherever they are delivered.
- 1.3 An element of the Academic Framework may only be set aside by the University's Academic Strategy Committee [ASC] in the following circumstances:
  - (i) that element is incompatible with external requirements, such as those of a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body [PSRB];
  - (ii) there is a Joint Award;
  - (iii) the course is delivered under the auspices of an academic consortium, where external alignment is required;
  - (iv) an element of the Academic Framework is set aside by the University's ASC acting in its sole discretion.
- 1.4 An element of the Academic Framework may only be set aside with the specific approval of ASC. The request for variance should be made with an academic rationale at the detailed planning stage of course development. In the case of any unapproved variation from the Academic Framework, it will be the provision of the Academic Framework that will apply, with the proviso that any student rights conferred under the misapplied Academic Framework will be honoured for all affected students.
- 1.5 The University may publish operational procedural documents supporting the implementation of the Academic Framework. If there is any conflict of interpretation between the Academic Framework and the procedural documents, the Academic Framework will have precedence, subject to any interpretation being in favour of the student.
- 1.6 Entry requirements should be set in line with our General Minimum Entrance Requirements and in consultation with the Assistant Director (Admissions) or nominee. Where there is a need for a specific attribute to be demonstrated prior to entry for the award to be recognized, usually for the purpose of professional recognition, that requirement must be set out in a Special Regulation for the Award.
- 1.7 The *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (Quality Assurance Agency, 2008) [hereafter *FHEQ*] is the nationally agreed set of expectations that all higher education awards must meet in order to promote a shared and common understanding of the expectations associated with typical qualification across the Higher Education Sector. Alignment is a requirement of registration with the Office for Students [OfS].

- 1.8 All Awards of the University, whether credit-bearing or not credit-bearing must be assigned to a Level in the *FHEQ*, and will have course learning outcomes that are set in alignment with the level descriptors.

## **2 Aims**

- 2.1 The aims of the University's Academic Framework for the Design and Delivery of University Awards are:

- (i) to establish the principles and structures that underpin the design of University Courses;
- (ii) to provide a consistent approach to the design and delivery of Courses;
- (iii) to establish a clear and easily-understandable curriculum with a single set of terminology to be used through UCAS, marketing, the student record system and quality processes;
- (iv) to minimise structural complexity and, where structural complexity is required, to ensure that it does not impinge on the student experience;
- (v) to maximise student opportunity and choice, while ensuring that students can identify with the Course of their choice;
- (vi) to create and sustain structures that facilitate excellent learning and teaching and support learning communities;
- (vii) to enable shared modules to be managed effectively;
- (viii) to enable niche subjects to flourish within in broader structures.

## **3 Course Architecture**

### **Levels and Stages**

- 3.1 The term **Level** refers to a Level of Study, as defined by the FHEQ.
- 3.2 A **Stage** is defined as a discrete element of an award which a student must pass to progress to the next stage of the award.
- 3.3 The end of a semester or trimester does not constitute a progression point, except where a student completes a level at the end of the semester or trimester.

### **Stages in Taught Postgraduate Awards**

- 3.4 A Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate or non-credit bearing study as part of an Extended Master's will not comprise stages of a Master's Award. Where students are required to achieve a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma as a requirement of professional practice, progression to a master's degree will be through articulation by Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning.

### **Stages in Research Degrees**

- 3.5 Where a Research Degree at Level 8 contains a taught component at Level 7, that taught component will comprise a stage of the Award and will contain 180 credits at Level 7.

- 3.6 A PhD degree does not contain stages. The award of MPhil is not made on the completion of a stage.

#### **Framework for taught courses**

- 3.7 The University's curricula will be organised on a three-tier structure which comprises the following components:
- (i) suites, which link cognate courses for management reporting processes;
  - (ix) courses, which enable a student to study the subject of their choice;
  - (x) routes, which allow students to pursue a more specialised programme of study.

#### **Single Honours and Combined Honours Awards**

- 3.8 The University may approve:
- (i) Single Honours Courses, approved as a single entity and managed as such;
  - (ii) Combined Honours Courses, where two or more separately designed, approved and managed courses are brought together, and students are provided with an award title that reflects this.

#### **Modules**

- 3.9 Credit is awarded on the principle that 10 credits relates to a notional 100 hours of learning time.
- 3.10 Where modules carry credits, these shall be to the value of 20 or 40 credits, with the following exceptions:
- (i) research degree courses and courses at Level 8;
  - (ii) a 60-credit Dissertation or Individual Study at the final stage of a Master's degree;
  - (iii) ASC has agreed that a modular structure other than based on 20 credits is required to meet PSRB requirements.
- 3.11 Course design must be based on a set of modules which are planned to be delivered every year. Course teams should not approve more option modules than can be delivered to the planned student numbers and it is expected that all approved modules will run on an annual basis.
- 3.12 Modules will be identified as having either a parent course or as part of a module bank that is "owned" by a School.
- 3.13 A Module may be delivered as part of more than one course, regardless of faculty or school.
- 3.14 For the purpose of course changes, a module will belong to the Faculty and School in which it is approved, but all stakeholders must be consulted and course changes cannot compromise the learning outcomes of any students registered on a course delivering that Module.

#### **Pass/Fail Modules**

- 3.15 At Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 'pass/fail' modules may only be included in a course where there is clear evidence at validation that this is required to meet the employer expectation and best practice, including the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

- 3.16 Where modules that are classified as 'pass/fail' are included in a classified award, the arrangements for classification must be set out in the Special Regulations, which in the case of awards at Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 must demonstrate how compensation will be applied.

#### **Module Assessment**

- 3.17 All assessment weightings must be multiples of 5 or 10 up to 100%.
- 3.18 As a general guide, the total volume of assessment for a 20-credit module should be 4000 words or equivalent, excepting the Dissertation or Individual Study where the guidance is 6000.

#### **Dissertation or Individual Study**

- 3.19 A Bachelor's degree must include a Dissertation or Individual Study module, as follows:
- (i) to be awarded a Bachelor's degree, all students must undertake a Dissertation or Individual Study;
  - (ii) a Dissertation or Individual Study Module will have a value of either 20 credits or 40 credits;
  - (xi) students may be offered a choice of either a 20 credit or a 40 credit Dissertation or Individual Study Module;
  - (xii) students are permitted to take no more than 40 credits of Dissertation or Individual Study as part of a single or combined honours course.
- 3.20 An Integrated Master's degree will include a substantial study, such as a Dissertation or Individual Study, of a minimum of 40 credits at Level 7.
- 3.21 A Master's degree will include a Dissertation or Individual Study of 40 or 60 credits at Level 7. Where a Master's degree includes both sizes, a student will be permitted to take a maximum of 60 credits on such modules.

#### **Core Modules**

- 3.22 A "core module" is a module that students must undertake successfully to meet the course learning outcomes.
- 3.23 Where a core module is shared by two or more courses or by two or more routes, any change of the module must be agreed by all parties and changed for all courses and routes. The original "owner" of the module cannot assume authority over the change, as that could compromise the delivery of course learning outcomes of the other courses or routes.

#### **Option Modules**

- 3.24 An "option module" is a module that enables a student to customize their course by choosing between alternative areas of study.
- 3.25 Optional modules will deliver course learning outcomes, but an optional module cannot be the sole module delivering a specific course learning outcome, because some students may not choose it.
- 3.26 The range of option modules available on a course will be identified during the process of course design and agreed at the Course Approval Event, except where it is University policy to

allow all students the right to choose an option module from outside the course (see interchangeable module below).

- 3.27 Students may be required to take a specific option in the following circumstances:
- (i) it is designated as compulsory to meet the requirement of an employer which is sponsoring students on a course;
  - (ii) it is designated as compulsory as part of a collaborative arrangement, such as when a limited number of options form part of a franchise to meet local requirements;
  - (iii) it is designated as compulsory for those students who do not opt for an interchangeable module (see below).

#### **Interchangeable modules**

- 3.28 Interchangeable modules are option modules which are designated to be replaced by a language module, or other module so designated by University policy, at the appropriate level.
- 3.29 All courses must include one interchangeable module in Semester 2 at Level 4 and at least one in Semester 1 at Level 5 and Level 6, unless:
- (i) ASC has granted a course an exception to this rule;
  - (ii) PSRB regulations require students to undertake all 120 credits within a Level on modules in the course discipline.

#### **Negotiated Modules**

- 3.30 Negotiated modules are modules that can be tailored to an individual student's particular needs, through the negotiation of Module Learning Outcomes, some or all of which will be generic, and some of which may be negotiated by students, and which have an assessment regime and assessment criteria.
- 3.31 Negotiated Modules may be approved at any level.
- 3.32 Negotiated Modules must have pre-defined Learning Outcomes that allow course learning outcomes to be demonstrated in alignment with national subject reference points and level descriptors. Where students are permitted to negotiate their learning as part of study on a negotiated module, the module learning outcomes must enable the approved course learning outcomes to be met.
- 3.33 Where students are permitted to negotiate some learning outcomes as part of study on a negotiated module, the approval process will ensure that there are arrangements to establish that they align with the course learning outcomes and level descriptors.

#### **Dual-Level Modules**

- 3.34 Dual-Level Modules are used in courses which can lead to awards at one of two levels. Students at the same stage of the course learn the same content and undertake the same assessment which can result in an award at either of two levels (with different learning outcomes) based on the learners' assessments. They play an important role in meeting PSRB requirements, are codified in regulation, and can be delivered within the University processes.

- 3.35 The University will approve Dual-Level Modules only where there is no other appropriate means of delivering external regulatory requirements.

#### **Dual-Delivered Modules**

- 3.36 Dual-Delivered Modules occur where two modules are delivered together to students at two levels at different stages of the course. The module content is the same but there are different learning outcomes. The assessment for both modules is of the same type but at different levels. Reassessment does not allow for an award at a different level to the one for which the work was submitted.
- 3.37 The University does not permit the approval and delivery of dual-delivered modules.

#### **Minimum Number of Students on a Module**

- 3.38 It is an expectation of the University that modules will have a minimum number of students to ensure that an appropriate student experience can be delivered. Courses should be designed to ensure this expectation will be met. Where this expectation is not met at registration, or where student withdrawals leads to it not being met thereafter, this should be addressed by the Board of Study.
- 3.39 Expected minimum numbers of students on modules for each Level of study are decided by Academic Strategy Committee.

### **4 Curriculum Framework for Taught Degrees**

#### **Titles**

- 4.1 The University will not approve more than one course with the same award title, except where ASC, in exceptional circumstances, has given explicit approval to allow two or more courses to have the same title.
- 4.2 ASC will give its approval to two or more courses having the same title only where:
- (i) it receives a specific proposal, setting out why such an exceptional arrangement is required;
  - (ii) the arrangement is of benefit to the students concerned;
  - (iii) the courses involved have the same Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs);
  - (iv) it is satisfied that there are no risks to the University relating, for example, to internal competition;
  - (v) it can confirm that the case for an exception has been made.
- 4.3 Where an undergraduate award comprises a Foundation Year or International Foundation Year this is not reflected in the title of the award.

#### **Structure**

- 4.4 The following diagrams illustrate the core elements of the curriculum framework, setting out the relationship between Suites, Courses and Routes:

Figure 1: General example

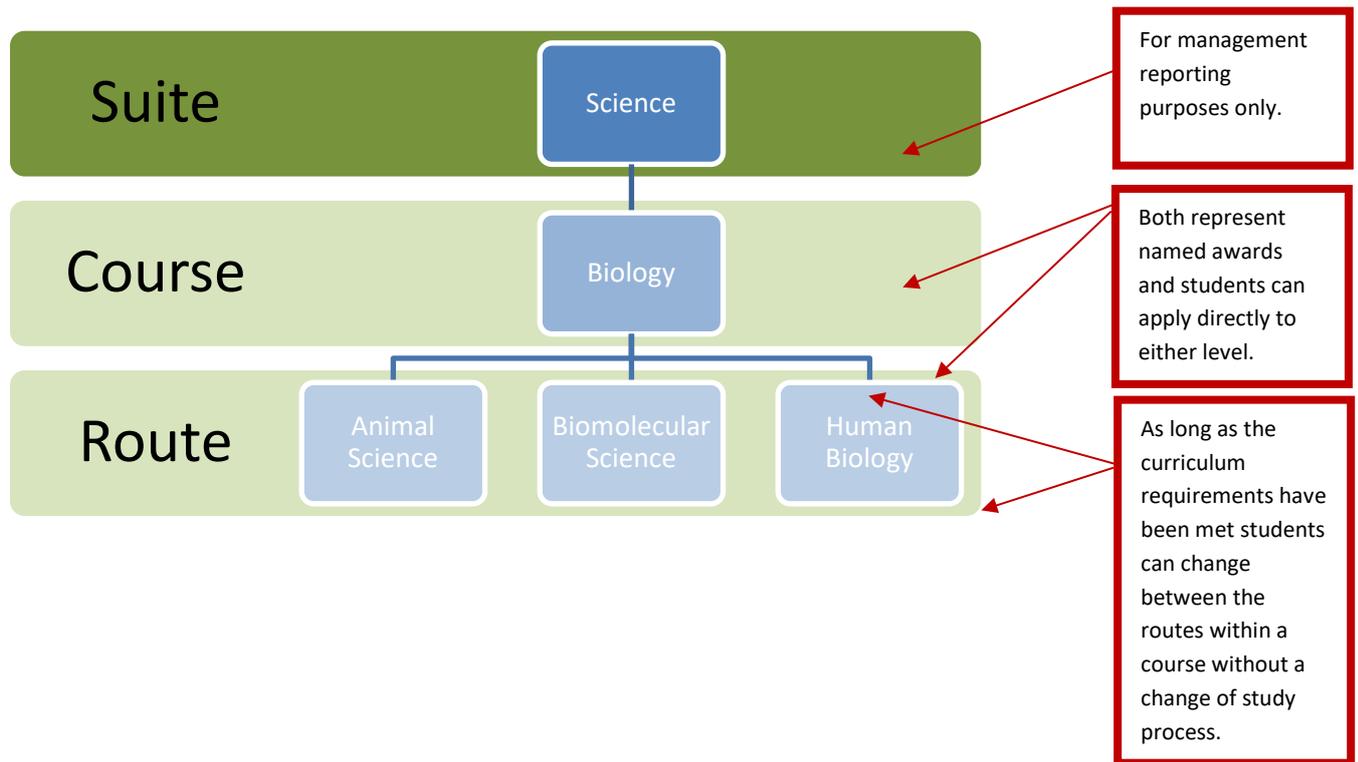
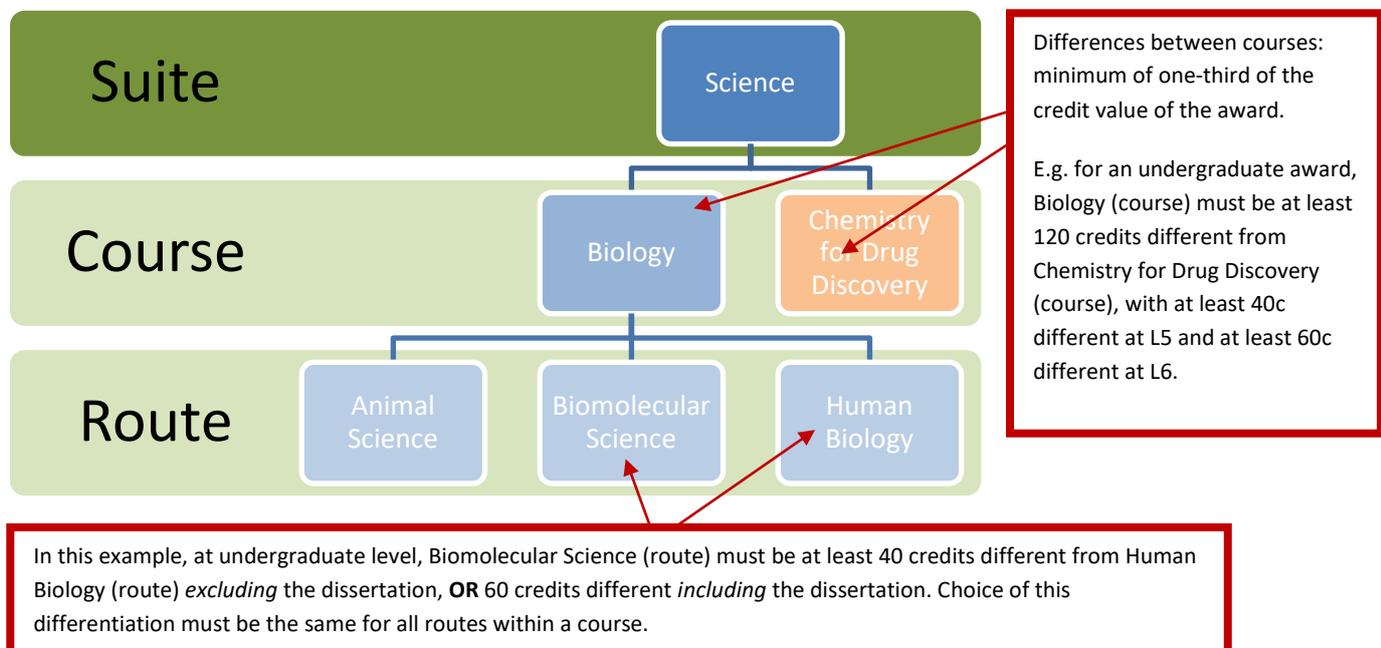
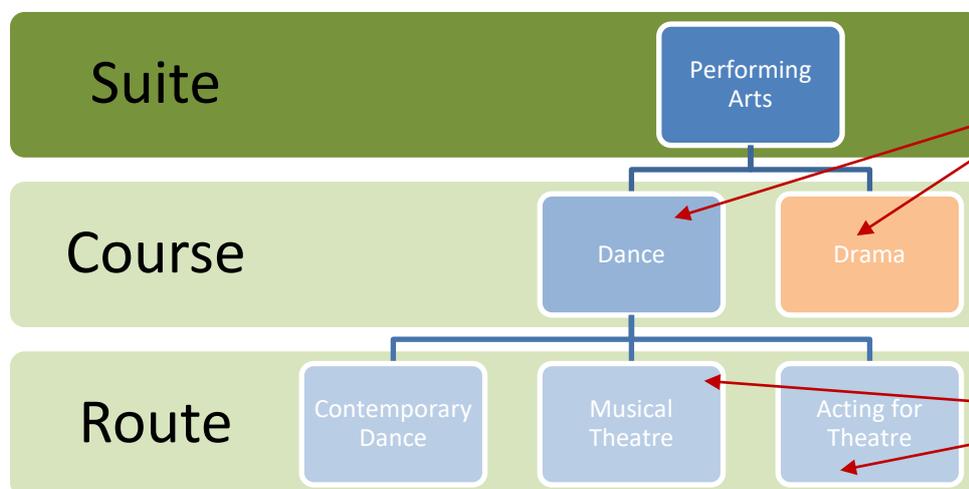


Figure 2: Undergraduate example



**Figure 3: Postgraduate Taught example**



Differences between courses: minimum of one-third of the credit value of the award.  
E.g. for a taught Master's award, Dance (course) must be at least 60 credits different from Drama (course), excluding the dissertation.

In this example for a taught Master's, Acting for Theatre (route) must be at least 40 credits different from Musical Theatre (route), excluding the dissertation or individual study.  
Choice of this differentiation must be the same for all routes within a course.

4.5 The following should be noted:

- (i) there is no requirement to have both courses and routes available as exit and entry awards, but this is permitted;
- (ii) both courses and routes can be advertised on UCAS;
- (iii) moving between a course and its routes is undertaken at the time of module option choice and not through the changes to study processes;
- (iv) routes will have a title which does not require but may include the use of brackets.

**Courses**

4.6 It is a requirement that courses are differentiated by one-third of the credit value of the award, as follows:

- (i) Taught Master's Degree: 60 credits, excluding the dissertation.
- (ii) Integrated Master's Degree: 160 credits, with 120 credits difference matching the differences in the linked Bachelor's degree and 40 credits being at Level 7 excluding the required individual study.
- (iii) Bachelor's Degree: 120 credits, which must include at least 40 credits difference at Level 5 and at least 60 credit difference at Level 6.
- (iv) Foundation Degree: 80 credits.

**Routes**

4.7 It is a requirement that routes within a course are differentiated at the level of the named award as follows:

- (i) For undergraduate courses, EITHER
  - (a) a minimum of 40 credits, excluding any dissertation or individual study;

OR

(b) a minimum of 60 credits, including any dissertation or individual study, where the dissertation is fully differentiated at the course approval stage and the academic integrity of the differentiated routes is maintained.

(ii) For postgraduate taught courses, a minimum of 40 credits, excluding any dissertation or individual study.

4.8 The choice must be the same for all routes within a course and should be agreed as part of course approval.

#### **Combination of routes**

4.9 Routes may be combined within a course, as long as there is the required credit differentiation. In such instances, they will become a route of the course and not part of the combined honours arrangements.

#### **Options**

4.10 Courses and routes may have the following maximum number of slots in which any optional modules should be delivered at each Level:

- (i) Level 0: slot for 20 credits in Semester 2;
- (ii) Level 4: slot for 20 credits in Semester 2;
- (iii) Level 5: slots for 40 credits in both Semester 1 and Semester 2;
- (iv) Level 6: slots for 100 credits at the Level;
- (v) Level 7: slots for 120 credits at the level, excluding a 60-credit dissertation, or a 40-credit dissertation and 20-credit research methods module.

#### **Naming of exit routes**

4.11 A target award may have a default title for those who achieve sufficient credit, but do not meet professional requirements, e.g. LLB and BA Legal Studies.

4.12 An exit award does not have to have the same title as the target award, and this may be the case when specialist knowledge is delivered at Level 6. e.g. BA Ophthalmology might have a Dip HE, Health Studies.

4.13 Where the exit awards of two routes have the same set of modules the same title must be used, e.g. BA Modern History, BA Medieval History might have Dip HE History.

#### **Management**

Clause 4.14(i) is applicable for the 2020/21 business planning cycle. Clause 4.14(ii) is applicable for the 2021/22 annual course monitoring cycle.
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4.14 Governance processes will operate at the course or suite level, as required, excepting that:

- (i) student number planning will operate at course level, except where planning at the route level is required by a PSRB;
- (ii) annual course monitoring will operate at course level, with consideration given to all routes on that course.

## **5 Combined Honours**

- 5.1 The combined honours arrangements enable students to combine two undergraduate courses.
- 5.2 All courses will be included within the combined honours arrangements unless specifically excluded by ASC.
- 5.3 The two courses may be: EITHER
- (i) equally-weighted, in which case the conjunction “and” is used in the award title; OR
  - (ii) in a major/minor arrangement, in which case the conjunction “with” is used in the award title.
- 5.4 The specific modules comprising the course that is included in the combined honours arrangements will be agreed during the course development process approved at the Course Approval Event.
- 5.5 Subjects will be equally-weighted during Level 4 and all Level 4 exit awards will be made as “and”, except where a major/minor arrangement at Level 4 has been explicitly permitted by ASC.
- 5.6 Permitted combinations within the combined honours arrangements will be determined by ASC and any additional combinations must receive ASC approval prior to advertisement.
- 5.7 The inclusion of a course within the combined honours arrangements does not prevent the approval of the same set of modules as part of a single honours award.
- 5.8 Routes will be available for combination within the combined honours arrangements only where ASC has given explicit permission for the combination of a route.

## **6 Course Design**

### **Definitive Course Documentation**

- 6.1 The definitive course documentation comprises the following
- (i) a Course Specification for each course and for each route within a course;
  - (ii) a Course Document to cover the course and all its routes;
  - (iii) a Module Specification for each module within the course;
  - (iv) a Module Descriptor or Module Handbook for each module within the course
  - (v) a student handbook for each course;
  - (vi) a Placement Handbook, where applicable;
  - (vii) a Mentor Handbook, where applicable.
- 6.2 The Course Specification and Module Specification carry material information and cannot be changed, except through the University’s course change process.
- 6.3 No arrangement set out in either the Course Document or Module Descriptor/Module Handbook may be changed, except through the University’s course change process, if it affects the material information in the Course Specification or the Module Specification.

## **Main elements of the Course Document**

- 6.4 The following guidance must be followed during the process of course design: <https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-enhancement/docs/Guidance-and-books/Course-design-and-development.pdf>

## **7 Course Approval**

- 7.1 All courses are subject to the approval of Academic Board. It follows, therefore, that no student may be registered on a course that has not been approved in its final form by the Academic Board.
- 7.2 A course may be advertised prior to the approval of Academic Board only in the following circumstances:
- (i) the Faculty Portfolio Planning Executive [FPPE] has given permission for this to happen at the detailed planning stage of programme development;
  - (ii) it is made clear to applicants, in accessible language that makes the conditional nature of the offer clear, that the Course offered is subject to approval.

## **8 Course Changes**

- 8.1 All Courses are subject to reapproval not later than six years after their last approval, unless Academic Board has granted an extension for academic or strategic reasons. It will, from time to time, be necessary to change a Course during this period of approval. Such course changes:
- (i) must be approved by the appropriate University body, and cannot take effect until that approval is secured;
  - (ii) must align with the University's Change Policy;
  - (iii) cannot apply to a module on which students are already studying, except in exceptional circumstances and where the procedure for such instances set out in the University's Change Policy is followed in full.

## **9 Short Courses**

- 9.1 A Faculty may, through its Faculty Quality Committee, approve a short course, as follows:
- (i) a University Certificate for a short course at any level except Level 8 of either (a) 40 credits and/or 400 hours of learning or (b) 20 credits and/or 200 hours of learning.
- 9.2 Each University Certificate and University Diploma must be assigned to a level.
- 9.3 No short course will be recognized as awarded by the University, unless it has been approved by a Faculty Quality Committee or by Academic Board as meeting these requirements.

## **10 Naming Conventions**

### **Requirements for award titles**

- 10.1 Award designation will be written without punctuation (e.g. BA and not B.A.; MSc and not M.Sc.).
- 10.2 Short forms of award names do not include the word "in" between the award designator and award title (e.g.: MSc Sociology is the correct form not MSc in Sociology).

- 10.3 Award titles must:
- (i) be consistent in their use of capitalisation and punctuation;
  - (ii) be as short as possible while retaining academic meaning;
  - (iii) exclude "and" whenever possible.
- 10.4 ASC will agree to a long title or the use of "and" where there is a demonstrable need.
- 10.5 Award titles will not include the following attributes which will be established for certification and transcript purposes through the student record system:
- (i) semester/trimester/year abroad;
  - (ii) professional/industrial placement is indicated through student choice in SITS and will be displayed (when appropriate) on the award certificate. These elements are not shown as part of the award title.
- 10.6 Except where required by a PSRB or where ASC allows an exception for clear market need, Award titles do not include any of the following:
- (i) mode of study (e.g. part-time);
  - (ii) location of study (e.g. Medway Campus)
  - (iii) partner organization (e.g. Mid-Kent College);
  - (iv) abbreviations.
- 10.7 Award titles should be limited to 41 characters (including spaces and punctuation but excluding the award type) except for 10.8 below.
- 10.8 Award titles may be of more than 41 characters subject to a maximum length of 120 characters awards where:
- (i) the Course is prevented by PSRB requirements from inclusion in the Combined Honours arrangements; AND
  - (ii) ASC has, at the in-principle proposal stage, given approval for the full award title.
- 10.9 The conjunction "and" will be rendered as follows, except where ASC has given specific permission for an alternative to be used:
- (i) where it is used *within* a subject, it shall be represented by an ampersand (&), such as, for example, "Sport & Exercise" or "Accounting & Finance";
  - (ii) where it is used *between* subjects, it will be represented by "and" (AND), such as, for example, history and archaeology;
  - (iii) for single honours programmes that contain names from two subject areas, "and" is used to join the two subject names and "&" is used within each subject name so that, for example, only "Physical Education and Sports & Exercise Science" is permitted.
- 10.10 The conjunction "with" are not permitted within award titles except to combine two titles to form an award in the Combined Honours arrangements.

10.11 The following punctuation and capitalisation rules will apply:

- (i) brackets (parenthesis) are only permitted to denote routes;
- (ii) commas are permitted to separate lists but a comma before “and” is not permitted. No other punctuation marks are permitted;
- (iii) all words in an award title must start with a capital letter, except for common words such as and, with, a, an, the, for, it, which must not begin with a capital letter.

**Requirements for module titles**

10.12 The conjunctions “and” and “with” are permitted in module titles.

10.13 The ampersand symbol (&) is not required, but is permitted, for module titles.

**Terminology**

10.14 It should be noted that the terms “first degree” and “undergraduate degree” are used by HESA and other bodies in particular ways. They include Integrated Master’s degrees but not Foundation Degrees. When undergraduate degrees other than Integrated Master’s Degrees and Foundation Degrees are being referred to specifically, the term “Bachelor’s Degree” provides clarity.

10.15 A 360-credit Bachelor’s Degree is designated by the inclusion of (Hons), e.g. BA (Hons) or BSc (Hons). A 300-credit ordinary degree is designated without (Hons), e.g. BA, BSc. No designation is appended to represent ordinary degree status.