

University of Sussex Academic Framework

The Academic Framework of the University of Sussex

1. Preamble

1.1 The Academic Framework establishes the criteria and rules for courses of the University of Sussex. It sets out the basic criteria for awards by establishing the design parameters necessary to assure the quality and academic standing of University courses in accordance with the *Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (2008)*, the *Higher Education Credit Framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England (2008)*; and the *European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (Bergen 2005)*.

1.2 Course specific regulations may, following approval through the University's curriculum approvals process, set specific requirements for the award of named degrees, diplomas and certificates and for which the requirements may be more stringent than those set out in this document for example to meet the requirements of a Professional and Statutory Body (PSB).

2. Credit

2.1 Credit is a quantified means of expressing equivalence of learning. Credit is awarded to a learner in recognition of the verified achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level for a complete module. It is a way of comparing learning achieved in a variety of different contexts.

2.2 All credit-bearing modules shall be credit rated according to level and volume.

Credit Level

The Level shall be:

Level 3 (foundation year)

Level 4 (undergraduate/certificate level)

Level 5 (undergraduate/diploma level)

Level 6 (undergraduate/honours level)

Level 7 (masters level)

Credit volume

The credit volume reflects the notional student effort to complete a module successfully. It is determined by calculating the required learning hours on the basis of 1 credit for 10 hours of learning. The credit volume reflects all student effort in particular, taught provision, independent or guided study, assessment and revision. All University of Sussex undergraduate and postgraduate modules between FHEQ Level 3 to Level 7 shall be weighted as 15 credits or multiples thereof. Exceptions to this rule are limited to University externally validated provision delivered by affiliated partners of the University.

NB: an exception is languages where 30 credits may be taken at Level 3 on an undergraduate award to enable ab initio entry to language study.

3. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate degree structures

3.1 University of Sussex taught degrees, diplomas and certificates shall be designed in accordance with the credit values and rules stated in the table below.

PhD/DPhils are not typically credit rated under the FHEQ framework¹.

Award Title	FHEQ Level	Minimum Credit requirement	Minimum Credit requirement at the level of the award	Minimum² Period of Registration	Award rules
Professional Doctorate	8	540	360	3yrs FT	
Masters MA/MSc/ MFA/MEd/ LLM/MBA		180	150	1yr FT	Typically delivered over a single academic year (12-month period) and incorporating a research dissertation normally of 60 credits.
MRes		180	150	1yr FT	Typically delivered over a single academic year (12-month period) and incorporating a research dissertation normally of 90 credits.
European Masters		240	210	1yr FT	Typically delivered over two years (24 months) and normally incorporating a research dissertation ≥60 credits.
Postgraduate		120	90	1yr FT	These awards may be approved as stand-alone awards or as exit awards embedded

¹ Source: Higher Education Credit Framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England, August 2008

² The maximum period of registration for a taught award is the minimum period plus 3 years for undergraduate and plus 1 year for postgraduate irrespective of f/t or p/t mode of study. The maximum period of registration is not extended for any time spent on temporary withdrawal.

Award Title	FHEQ Level	Minimum Credit requirement	Minimum Credit requirement at the level of the award	Minimum ² Period of Registration	Award rules
Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	45	1yr FT	within a Masters degree course. The name of the award (entry or exit) shall be specified in course documentation in the following format e.g. Postgraduate Certificate in 'Subject X'.
Integrated Masters Degree (MEng, MChem, MPhys, MMath, MSci)		480	120	4yrs FT	A four-stage degree programme normally incorporating an embedded exit route at Honours Level 6. Students typically decide during stage 2 whether to continue on the 4-stage pathway or to transfer to the 3-stage Honours route, subject to minimum levels of academic achievement. Students failing to achieve the progression threshold at the end of stage 3 on the 4-stage route may be eligible to exit with the honours award.
Graduate Diploma Graduate Certificate	6	90	90	1yr FT	A professional 'conversion' course, based largely on undergraduate material, and taken usually by those who are already graduates in another discipline.
		45	45	1yr FT	
BA/BSc/LLB/BEng (Hons) Single Major	6	360	90	3yrs FT	This is a degree comprising a main area of study from a single School. It may include modules from outside the 'major' area of study, but shall incorporate at least 240 out of 360 credits from the major area. At least 90 credits shall be at Level 6.
BA/BSc/LLB (Hons) Single Major (with named elective exit pathway)	6	360	90	3yrs FT	This is a degree comprising a single main area of study. It may include modules from outside the 'major' area of study, but shall incorporate at least 240 out of 360 credits from the major area. At least 90 credits must be passed at Level 6. The electives pathway shall incorporate at least 60 credits (with 30 credits at level 5). The named electives pathway warrants specific recognition on the degree certificate but does not constitute a named entry route as it is designed to facilitate student choice after entry.

Award Title	FHEQ Level	Minimum Credit requirement	Minimum Credit requirement at the level of the award	Minimum Period of Registration	Award rules
BA/BSc/LLB Hons Single Major (with Minor)	6	360	60 (major) 30 (minor)	3yrs FT	This is a degree comprising two main areas of study. The major component shall consist of 270 credits with a minimum of 60 credits at Level 6. The minor component shall consist of a coherent element of study to the value of 90 credits of which 30 must be passed at level 6. The Minor element of study warrants specific recognition on the degree certificate and constitutes a named entry route for applicants.
BA/BSc (Hons) Joint Major	6	360	90 (of which a minimum of 30 credits shall be in each major)	3yrs FT	This is a degree comprising two main areas of study each of which shall consist of 180 credits. At least 90 credits shall be at Level 6. A minimum of 30 credits in each major shall be at this level. Each Major element of study warrants specific recognition on the degree certificate and constitutes a named entry route for applicants.
(Award With Study Abroad Year)	(5)	(120)	(120)	1 year for the Year Abroad	The period of study abroad may be incorporated within a 4-stage undergraduate degree course. The period of study abroad shall be equivalent to 120 credits. A Study Abroad Year may be offered as an entry or as an exit route. Designation as an entry route requires the University to guarantee the Year Abroad to all applicants. Designation as an exit route requires the University to facilitate students in identifying/gaining access to opportunities to a Study Abroad Year. Students wishing to access a Study Abroad Year once on a course shall register for transfer during Term 1 of Stage 2 to the approved 4-stage pathway in accordance with validated course requirements. Courses with an approved entry/exit route with a Study Abroad Year shall have this element of study recognised in the degree certificate in the format – ‘Degree title (with Study Abroad Year)’.
(Award With Professional /Industrial Placement Year)	(5)	(120)	(120)	1 year for the Placement Year	The Professional/Industrial Placement Year outwith the University may be incorporated within a 4-stage (480 credit) undergraduate degree course. The period of professional/industrial placement shall be equivalent to 120 credits. A Professional /Industrial Placement Year may be offered as an entry or as an exit route. Designation as an entry route normally requires the University to guarantee

Award Title	FHEQ Level	Minimum Credit requirement	Minimum Credit requirement at the level of the award	Minimum Period of Registration	Award rules
					the Professional /Industrial Placement Year to all applicants. Designation as an exit route requires the University to facilitate students in identifying/gaining access to opportunities to a Professional/Industrial Placement Year. Students wishing to access a Professional/Industrial Placement Year once on a course shall register to transfer to the approved 4-stage course pathway during Term 1 of stage 2 in accordance with validated course requirements. Courses with an approved entry/exit route with a Professional/Industrial Placement Year shall have this element of study recognised in the degree certificate in the format – ‘Degree title (with Professional /Industrial Placement Year)’.
A Study Abroad Term	(5)	(60)	(5)	1 Term	Incorporated within a 3-stage (360 credit) degree course to broaden student learning. Incorporating a study abroad period warrants specific recognition on the degree certificate but does not constitute a named entry route as it is designed to facilitate student choice after entry.
Professional /Industrial Placement Term	(5)	(60)	(60)	1 Term	Incorporated within a 3-stage (360 credit) degree course to broaden student learning. Incorporating a professional/industrial placement period warrants specific recognition on the degree certificate but does not constitute a named entry route as it is designed to facilitate student choice after entry.
Ordinary Bachelor degree (BA/BSc)	6	300	60		This is an exit award granted in recognition of student learning where insufficient credit has been achieved to award an undergraduate honours degree in the subject.
Foundation Degree	5	240	90	2 yrs FT	The course must include an assessed and credit-rated element of work experience comprising no less than 15 credits at Level 5.
Diploma of Higher Education	5	240	90	2 yrs FT	These awards may be approved as an exit award only. The name of the award appearing on the award certificate shall be Diploma or Certificate of Higher Education without reference to a subject of study.

Award Title	FHEQ Level	Minimum Credit requirement	Minimum Credit requirement at the level of the award	Minimum Period of Registration	Award rules
Certificate of Higher Education	4	120	90	1 yr FT	
University of Sussex Certificate of Education	(3)	120	90	1 yr FT	This is an exit ward for student failing to attain the necessary threshold for admission to undergraduate study from the Foundation Year.

BA Philosophy, Politics and Economics is a degree comprising three subject areas. It includes 360 credits with at least 60 credits in each discipline overall. There shall be 120 credits in the final stage, including 90 credits at Level 6, which will include 30 credits at Level 6 in two of the three subjects."

NB: a 12 month period abroad or placement is only possible within a 4 stage course whereas a 3 month period abroad or placement opportunity represents a curriculum variation that requires the approval of the Teaching and Learning Committee

4. Credit and module status in undergraduate and postgraduate courses

4.1 Credit is module specific and is available upon completion of the module. Undergraduate courses comprise a sequence of credit-rated modules to the value of 120 credits per academic year for students studying full time. All modules contributing to an award must be credit-bearing. For full-time undergraduate courses the usual pattern of delivery will be 60 credits in the Autumn Term and 60 credits in the Spring Term.

4.2 For full-time postgraduate courses comprising 180 credits the usual pattern of delivery will be 60 credits in the Autumn Term, 60 credits in the Spring Term and 60 credits in the Summer Term. Exceptions to this may be explicitly approved, subject to the delivery of a maximum 75 credit in any term. Taught modules in the Summer Term will be limited to a maximum of 30 credits, normally where the dissertation/project is less than 60 credits.

4.3 Students can normally take up to 30 credits at the **lower** level as indicated by the credit requirements for the award above. Students are not permitted to take any credits at the **higher** level in any stage in an undergraduate course.

4.4 Individual undergraduate modules may contribute to more than one course, but the credit volume and level of the module shall be the same irrespective of the course to which the module contributes.

4.5 Two modules at different levels may rationalise resources by co-teaching. Where this occurs the shared teaching element must be at the lower level with an equivalent proportion of teaching delivered independently to the student studying at the higher level. In addition both modules must have differentiated titles, learning outcomes and assessments.

4.6 Modules may be delivered within a single term or across two terms. Where a module is delivered across two terms the minimum credit volume will be 30 credits.

4.7 Undergraduate courses may designate modules in the following ways. The designations are *course-specific* and will be set out in relevant published course documents.

Module type	Description
Core	A module that all students <i>must study as part of their course</i> . Normally these modules are owned and delivered within a single School. Exceptionally core modules may be explicitly approved by the University Teaching and Learning Committee for cross-school delivery where there is a compelling pedagogical rationale . All core modules shall be weighted as 15 credits or multiples thereof.
Option	A module that forms part of a group of options owned and delivered within a School. Exceptionally option modules may be explicitly approved by the University Teaching and Learning Committee for cross-school delivery where there is a compelling pedagogical rationale. All option modules shall be weighted as 15 credits or multiples thereof.
Elective	A module timetabled into the University Elective Timetable for Single Honour courses. An elective may be positioned at either NQF level 3, 4 or 5 in the University's Academic Framework. All electives shall be weighted as 15 credits. There are two types of electives: Free Standing Electives (FSE) and Approved Pathway Electives (APEs). Students may be offered a choice between an approved option or an elective.
Free Standing Electives (FSE)	These are individual modules positioned at NQF level 3, 4 or level 5 in the University's Academic Framework. They are designed to enable students to broaden their learning beyond the core subjects of Single Honours. They may be taught in each teaching term, depending upon demand, and must be approved by the University Teaching and Learning Committee and timetabled to be delivered within the University's Elective Timetable. Stage 1 students shall study NQF level 3/4 electives and Stage 2 students shall study NQF level 4/5 electives.
Approved Pathway Electives (APEs)	Approved Pathway Electives is the generic name given to an electives pathway consisting of 60 credits (4x15). The Pathway consists of a cohesive course of study that provides academic progression with at least 30 credits at level 4 or 5. The aim of the Pathway is to provide students with a focused programme of study to broaden their learning and shall consist of sufficient academic credit to warrant specific recognition on the degree certificate but does not constitute an entry pathway. The APEs shall be made available to Single Honours programmes which opt into the Elective Scheme and shall be delivered within the University's Elective Timetable. Exceptionally, language electives forming part of an APE may be delivered in Stage 3 where this compliments a particular pattern of delivery, for example where a student is away from campus during a placement period or to enable entry to study a language at the ab initio level. The award certificate shall

Module type	Description
	<p>record the achievement of the Pathway as a designated aspect of the award. In relation to languages the award certificate shall be recorded as “x with proficiency in ‘language’ (intermediate)” where the language has been taken at levels 3 and 4 and “x with proficiency in ‘language’ (advanced)” where the language has been taken at levels 4 and 5.</p>

5. Credit and module status in postgraduate courses

- 5.1 Credit is module specific and is available upon completion of the module. All modules contributing to an award must be credit-bearing.
- 5.2 For full-time postgraduate courses comprising 180 credits the usual pattern of delivery will be 60 credits in the Autumn Term, 60 credits in the Spring Term and 60 credits in the Summer Term. Exceptions to this may be explicitly approved, subject to the delivery of a maximum 75 credit in any term. Taught modules in the Summer Term will be limited to a maximum of 30 credits, normally where the dissertation/project is less than 60 credits.
- 5.3 Individual modules may contribute to more than one course, but the credit volume and level of the module shall be the same irrespective of the course to which the module contributes.
- 5.4 Two modules at different levels may rationalise resources by co-teaching. Where this occurs the shared teaching element must be in addition to an equivalent proportion of teaching on both individual modules at their respective levels. In addition both modules must have differentiated titles, learning outcomes and assessments. Exceptionally, alternative arrangements may be approved by TLC.
- 5.5 Modules may be delivered within a single term or across two terms. Where a module is delivered across two terms the minimum credit volume will be 30 credits.

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