



FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

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Flexible Curriculum Framework
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Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Purpose	5
3. Definitions	5
4. Definitions	6
5. Delivery	6
6. Registration and Fees	7
7. Level	7
8. Credit, Workload and Contact Hours	7
9. Assessment and Academic Regulations	8
10. Transcripts and Certificates	8
11. Awards	8
12. Recognition of Prior Learning	9
13. Monitoring	9

Summary

What is this document about?

This Framework sets out the University's Flexible Curriculum Framework for Credit Bearing Short Courses (CBSC), Non-Credit Bearing Short Courses (NCBSC), and the accumulation of credit into University awards.

Who is this document for?

This Framework is primarily for course developers, course administrators, faculty innovation leads, and professional services who are responsible for designing, delivering and administering Credit Bearing Short Courses (CBSC) and/or Non-Credit Bearing Short Courses (NCBSC).

How does the University check if this Document is followed?

This Framework is monitored through course approval, through annual and periodic review processes, and through Student and Course Management validation exercises.

Who should I contact if I have any queries about this Document?

If you have any questions about this Framework please contact academicregistry@port.ac.uk

1. Introduction

1.1 The University Strategy 2030 includes a commitment to proactively respond to changing demands and meet future employer and skill needs through our continuing professional development (CPD) and flexible modes of study. The Flexible Curriculum Framework supports this commitment through setting out the policy governing the development of CPD and other short courses, the delivery of existing units to different cohorts of learners and the structures through which credit can be accumulated and awards conferred. It incorporates, and supersedes, the former policies relating to credit and non-credit bearing short courses. It should be read in conjunction with the Curriculum Framework which sets out the detailed principles underpinning the development and delivery of all University of Portsmouth courses. An Operational Handbook containing the detailed processes and guidance supports this Framework document.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of the Framework is:

- To enable departments to respond quickly to opportunities for the development and delivery of short courses for employers, organisations and the general public;
- To allow for more flexible delivery of existing units to different cohorts of learners;
- To facilitate pathways into higher education through the provision of credit bearing short courses which lead to a range of awards;
- To support research and innovation activities through the development of relationships with a range of collaborative partners in the private and public sectors;
- To establish robust but proportionate quality assurance processes which align with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the relevant sections of the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education.

3. Definitions

3.1. A short course is defined as a planned and structured learning experience of 550 or less notional learning hours. This may include tutor-supported distance learning and guided independent learning. A short course can be designed and delivered for a specific group of learners, organisations or employers, or it can be offered to the general public.

3.2 A short course may be one of three types:

- **Type 1:** Designed and delivered as a standalone course.

- **Type 2:** An existing module on an existing named undergraduate or postgraduate award which is made available at the same time and through the same mode of delivery to other learners.
- **Type 3:** An existing module which is delivered at a different time, location or mode to a different cohort of learners

- 3.3 A short course can be either credit bearing or non- credit bearing. A Credit Bearing Short Course (CBSC) is a course carrying 55 or less academic credits at level 4 to level 8 of the FHEQ and which does not necessarily lead to an award. However, credits from CBSCs may entitle learners to a University Certificate or may be accumulated over time towards an award.
- 3.4 A non-credit bearing short course (non-CBSC) is a taught course which does not lead to the award of credit or to any award of the University. A non-CBSC offered by a University professional service is not covered by this Framework.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 Course proposers must submit the relevant documentation outlined in the Operational Handbook and secure the appropriate level of sign-off prior to delivery.
- 4.2 Type 1 CBSCs must be approved by the Head of School, Executive Dean and Associate Dean (Academic) prior to the commencement of delivery, and subsequently reported to Faculty Executive Committee.
- 4.3 Type 2 and Type 3 CBSCs and all types of non-CBSCs must be approved by the Head of School and Executive Dean prior to commencement of delivery, and subsequently reported to Faculty Executive Committee.
- 4.4 Where a short course (credit or non-credit bearing) is delivered in collaboration with a partner organisation, a partner risk assessment form must be completed for all collaborative short courses.
- 4.5 Where a credit bearing short course is with a new collaborative partner organisation, then approval by the Academic Registrar (or nominee) prior to commencement of delivery, and subsequently reported to Faculty Executive Committee.

5. Delivery

- 5.1 Types 1 and 3 short courses are not governed by standard academic year dates and may be offered through a range of delivery mechanisms, modes, durations and locations appropriate to market and employer demands.
- 5.2 All short courses must comply with the operational set up requirements detailed in the Operational Handbook.

6. Registration and Fees

- 6.1 Learners undertaking CBSCs will be registered as part-time learners on the Student and Course Management System by the relevant administrator and will be entitled to use normal University services.
- 6.2 Learners undertaking non-CBSCs will not be entitled to use normal University services unless specifically arranged and agreed in advance with the relevant Head of Service.
- 6.3 Learners on all short courses will book and pay the appropriate fee through the University of Portsmouth online store, unless an agreement has been reached with an employer or other sponsoring organisation for a block fee payment.
- 6.4 The fee for learners undertaking a Type 1 or Type 3 course will be agreed as part of the course approval process.
- 6.5 The fee for learners undertaking a Type 2 course will be a pro rata unit fee based on the part-time course fee.
- 6.6 Part two of the current academic year Tuition Fee Policy will apply to learners registered on all short courses covered by the Framework. Further information is available via the search box in MyPort.

7. Level

- 7.1 All CBSCs must be assigned to an appropriate level in the FHEQ. The level indicates the relative academic demand, complexity of understanding, depth of learning and degree of autonomy expected of the learner undertaking the course.
- 7.2 CBSCs must be assessed at the relevant level and to earn credit, a learner must meet the learning outcomes and satisfy the relevant assessment criteria.
- 7.3 Non-CBSCs must have a set of learning outcomes which may, if appropriate, be cross referenced to a FHEQ level.

8. Credit, Workload and Contact Hours

- 8.1 CBSCs can be multiples of five credits, with five credits being the smallest volume of credit offered at any level and 55 credits being the largest volume offered at any level.
- 8.2 The credit and notional learning hours for CBSCs should be calculated on the basis of one credit equals ten hours of learning.
- 8.3 Contact hours for CBSCs delivered face-to-face should be referenced to the University expectations set out in the Curriculum Framework, but may be varied where there is a clear rationale (e.g. contractual obligations with a specific organisation).

9. Assessment and Academic Regulations

- 9.1 Maximum assessment loads for CBSCs must be set with reference to the University Maximum Assessment Loads Policy, scaled up or down as appropriate to the number of credits.
- 9.2 A set of specific [CBSC University Assessment and Examination Regulations](#) apply to these courses. All CBSCs have a nominated Subject External Examiner in accordance with the External Examiners Regulations and Procedures. The Subject External Examiner is typically an existing examiner for the relevant subject group.

10. Transcripts and Certificates

- 10.1 Learners who pass a CBSC which has a credit value of less than 30 credits will receive a Transcript of Studies. Learners who pass a CBSC which has a credit value of 30–55 credits will receive a Transcript of Studies and a University Certificate.
- 10.2 Learners who complete a non-CBSC may be issued with a transcript of studies. This does not constitute an award but does provide recognition that the learner attended the course and, where relevant, assessments have been completed satisfactorily.

11. Awards

- 11.1 Learners may accumulate credit gained through short courses for an award of the University. The default course title is Continuing Professional Development. Where relevant, specific course titles can be developed by departments to meet the needs of employers, organisations or groups of learners.

Departments apply for specific titles using the Programme Modification process to approve the exit awards. The Programme Modification form will list the courses which make up the total credit for the award and a Learning Outcomes map will be prepared and attached to the Modification form. The Learning Outcomes map will map the different course Learning Outcomes to the generic Learning Outcomes of the over-arching Continuing a Professional Development award.
- 11.2 All awards will have a programme specification document which will comply with the standards and credit requirements set out in Awards of the University of Portsmouth Policy, the University of Portsmouth Curriculum Framework and with the relevant QAA Qualifications Characteristics Statement. Honours and Master's degrees will require learners to demonstrate the appropriate amount of independent study towards a dissertation or other project-based work.

Table 1 -The number of credits required for each exit award

LEVEL	AWARD	CREDITS
4/5/6/7/8	University Certificate	30 – 55 credits
4	Certificate of Higher Education	120 credits
5	Diploma of Higher Education	240 credits
6	Graduate Certificate (graduates only)	60 credits
	Graduate Diploma (graduates only)	120 credits
	Ordinary Degree	300 credits
	Honours Degree	360 credits
7	Postgraduate Certificate	60 credits
	Postgraduate Diploma	120 credits
	Master’s Degree	180 credits

12. Recognition of Prior Learning

- 12.1 There is no formal limit on the period of time over which credit from CBSCs may be accumulated towards an award, but where the credit has been obtained more than five years before the proposed date of the award, applicants must provide appropriate additional evidence that demonstrates the continued currency of the learning.
- 12.2 Learners may also use the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy to enter existing undergraduate and postgraduate degrees with up to two thirds of credit towards the final award. The RPL process will consider whether the learning outcomes from the accumulated credit map sufficiently to the learning outcomes of the award to which the applicant wishes to progress, using the general principles outlined in the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

13. Monitoring

- 13.1 All CBSCs are included in the annual monitoring cycle. The annual monitoring process is designed to ensure the maintenance and consistency of the standards of the University’s provision and the quality of learning opportunities for all learners.
- 13.2 A file (or equivalent) must be maintained by the department offering a short course which contains copies of all publicity and marketing materials, course attendance lists, all course information and materials issued to learners including any assessment materials if relevant, completed evaluation forms and any other relevant course management and learner experience documentation.
- 13.3 For full details of the annual monitoring procedures refer to Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy and supporting Operational Handbook.