Keele Learning | *Principles*

Keele Learning Principles set out our approach to learning, teaching and assessment, and our expectations about programme structure. This document should be read in conjunction with our other frames of reference, policies and regulations, including our Curriculum Expectations, Graduate Attributes, Code of Practice on Assessment and Feedback, and the Inclusive Education framework.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment. At the core of all our teaching is the conviction that students learn best when they are actively engaged and working in partnership with academics and peers – interacting with teaching staff and collaborating with other students. Students acquire and test new knowledge, build confidence and skills and apply their understanding to settings and tasks which will be relevant to their future.

The key Principles underpinning our teaching approach are:

- Active social learning
- Digital enhancement of learning
- Flexibility and responsiveness to students' learning and study needs
- Diverse and authentic assessment for learning
- Feedback supporting learning

Learning, teaching and assessment at Keele involve the deliberate use of technology to enhance and support learning, and to offer additional flexibility for learners to learn effectively. The precise balance of in-person and digital (on-line) experience is carefully planned by programme teams to be most appropriate to the nature of the course and students. The rationale for the design of the programme is made clear to students in course information.

We use the following principles to guide our teaching approach:

- In-person class teaching is designed to ensure students have rich opportunities to **engage and interact** with teaching staff and fellow students. These sessions provide added value through social, collaborative and active learning.

- Teaching is supported by the deliberate use of on-line/digital tools. Students have access to learning resources and activities as a wrap-around to class sessions, which serve to orientate and prepare them for class learning, provide valuable follow-up or consolidation activities. Collaborative spaces through the KLE enable students to engage around class sessions. Recordings of live sessions form part of the resources for student learning.

- **Content is** delivered in a way which ensures accessibility and encourages engagement. Where this is provided in a live taught class, including large group sessions/lectures, the expectation is that students are actively engaged through a variety of techniques, to check understanding, challenge and stimulate involvement. Where content is provided through digital resources, material is structured in a way which helps pace learning and maximise engagement.

- On-line resources are designed with attention to **inclusive learning and accessibility**.

- The pattern of learning and teaching on a module and programme basis should be made clear to students, expressed in terms of **expected engagement hours** to support students' time management and planning.

- Students are expected to **attend** all in-person scheduled sessions, unless identified in the timetable as opt-in. Attendance is monitored and low attendance will be followed up. **Academic advice** via academic mentoring and access to consultation hours with teaching staff are provided regularly, both on a group and individual basis, remotely if necessary.

Programme structure*. All programmes will be designed to ensure they are of the highest quality, fully aligned to the OfS B conditions and Keele's policies and frameworks.*

In addition, the following principles of programme structure will apply for programmes being designed or redesigned form Spring 2024 onwards:

1. Programmes must be designed to achieve a clear, coherent structure which enables students to build knowledge and skills progressively across modules and levels of study, reinforcing, consolidating and expanding learning.

2. The balance of **compulsory and optional modules** needs to be deliberate, with compulsory modules typically providing the foundations or core of the subject on which learning is built and expanded. Compulsory modules are an important way in which coherence of the programme is achieved.

3. Most commonly the first year of an undergraduate programme and first semester of a postgraduate programme will be weighted heavily towards foundational /compulsory modules, and optionality limited, or not offered at all.

4. Breadth of coverage of a subject can be offered through larger theme-based modules and through assessment design which enables choice of topic focus.

5. While the precise balance of compulsory and optional modules will depend on the discipline, the rationale for optionality should be driven by the requirements of the programme learning outcomes. This will be tested at validation.

6. Optional modules should be limited in number to ensure efficiency. Module viability is typically set at 40 students, with an absolute threshold of 20 students. Where numbers are lower than this, modules will typically be suspended.

7. Where optional modules are offered, the programme structure must be coherent and choices straightforward to navigate. In some cases it may be helpful to group optional modules into categories to guide students through likely routes (for the example, the development of certain specialisms).

8. Typically, there will be a maximum of 30 credits of option study at levels 4 and 5 for Single Honours Undergraduate programmes (including elective study) over the year, and a maximum of 15 credits for UG Combined Honours.

9. The ratio of modules to option slot would not normally exceed 2 to 1.

10. All undergraduate programmes should endeavour to accommodate Global Challenge Pathways and Languages, including the study of English for Academic Purposes. Where there is no optionality at Level 4, GCP should be available at Levels 5 and 6 unless this is constrained by the requirements of accrediting bodies or PSRBs.

11. Programmes should maximise the use of larger (30 credit) modules delivered over one or two semesters, especially at Level 4 and for PGT programmes. The Annex sets out typical programme structures.

12. Assessments should be designed as part of an overall programme strategy, ensuring efficiency, avoiding duplication, and using formative opportunities to reduce assessment burden and support student learning.

13. In the case of 30 credit single semester modules it is essential that the assessment load is managed to avoid overload at the end of the module, and to provide sufficient formative assessment opportunities to scaffold student learning and avoid risk to progression.

14. Combined Honours (CH) programmes should be limited to combinations which have strong academic synergy, no internal competition with similar programmes and clear student outcomes/destinations.

15. Programmes that share significant numbers of modules should be considered for merging into a single programme with specialist routes.

16. Opportunities should be sought for sharing modules across cognate programmes where relevant, for example, research skills/methods and ISP/dissertation modules.

17. Programmes are designed holistically, underpinned by the notion of **constructive alignment**, and with key skills developed progressively through the levels of study. This may be supported by dedicated skills-focussed modules which foreground skills development.

18. All programmes must articulate how academic and professional skills are developed through the programme, including through work-related and experiential learning opportunities.

19. Learning activities for students should be structured over the full duration of the teaching period as specified in the approved module specification. For students studying over standard semesters, for example, this will incorporate all weeks of the semester, with substantive learning activity planned from the start of Week 1 to the end of Week 12 (for standard courses).

20. There are no ‘reading’ weeks during semester which are free of learning activity. However, the intensity and nature of teaching delivery may vary at certain points, as specified in the module specification, to provide opportunities for students to pace their learning. Purposeful learning activity should take place throughout the semester.

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Annexe A

Programme structure principles

for implementation in design and redesign from March 2024

All programmes will be tested against the OfS B conditions to ensure they are of the highest quality, and adhere to Keele's internal frames of reference, including the Keele Learning Principles, Curriculum Expectations, Graduate Attributes, Code of Practice on Assessment and Feedback, and the Inclusive Education framework.

In addition:

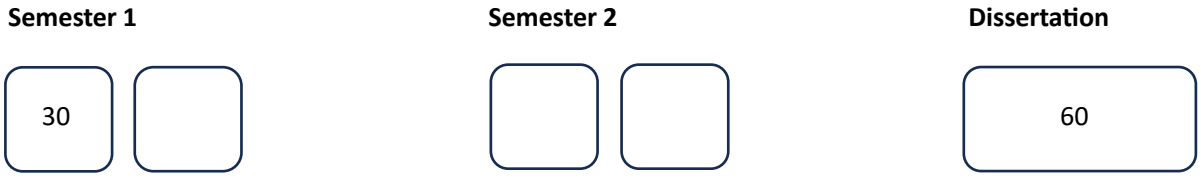
1. Programmes must be designed to achieve a clear, coherent structure which enables students to build knowledge and skills progressively across modules and levels of study, reinforcing, consolidating and expanding learning.
2. The balance of **compulsory and optional modules** needs to be deliberate, with compulsory modules typically providing the foundations or core of the subject on which learning is built and expanded. Compulsory modules are an important way in which coherence of the programme is achieved.
3. Most commonly the first year of an undergraduate programme and first semester of a postgraduate programme will be weighted heavily towards foundational /compulsory modules, and optionality limited, or not offered at all.
4. Breadth of coverage of a subject can be offered through larger theme-based modules and through assessment design which enables choice of topic focus.
5. While the precise balance of compulsory and optional modules will depend on the discipline, the rationale for optionality should be driven by the requirements of the programme learning outcomes. This will be tested at validation.
6. Optional modules should be limited in number to ensure efficiency. Module viability is typically set at 40 students, with an absolute threshold of 20 students. Where numbers are lower than this, modules will typically be suspended.
7. Where optional modules are offered, the programme structure must be coherent and choices straightforward to navigate. In some cases it may be helpful to group optional modules into categories to guide students through likely routes (for the example, the development of certain specialisms).
8. Typically, there will be a maximum of 30 credits of option study in any semester at levels 4 and 5 for Single Honours Undergraduate programmes (or 60 credits including elective study over the year), and a maximum of 15 credits for UG Combined Honours in any semester (or 30 credits over the year).
9. The ratio of modules to option slot would not normally exceed 2 to 1.
10. All undergraduate programmes should endeavour to accommodate Global Challenge Pathways and Languages. Where there is no optionality at Level 4, GCP should be available at Levels 5 and 6 unless this is constrained by the requirements of accrediting bodies or PSRBs.

11. Programmes should maximise the use of **larger credit modules** delivered over one or two semesters, especially at Level 4 and for PGT programmes. The Annex sets out typical programme structures.
12. Assessments should be designed as part of an overall programme strategy, ensuring efficiency, avoiding duplication, and using formative opportunities to reduce assessment burden and support student learning.
13. In the case of 30 credit single semester modules it is essential that the assessment load is managed to avoid overload at the end of the module, and to provide sufficient formative assessment opportunities to scaffold student learning and avoid risk to progression.
14. **Combined Honours (CH)** programmes should be limited to combinations which have strong academic synergy, no internal competition with similar programmes and clear student outcomes/destinations.
15. Programmes that share significant numbers of modules should be considered for merging into a single programme with specialist routes.
16. Opportunities should be sought for sharing modules across cognate programmes where relevant, for example, research skills/methods and ISP/dissertation modules.
17. Programmes are designed holistically, underpinned by the notion of **constructive alignment**, and with key skills developed progressively through the levels of study. This may be supported by dedicated skills-focussed modules which foreground skills development.
18. All programmes must articulate how academic and professional skills are developed through the programme, including through work-related and experiential learning opportunities.
19. Learning activities for students on standard semester dates take place in all 12 weeks of each semester in alignment with the approved module specification, with substantive learning content available from the start of Week 1 to the end of Week 12 (for standard courses).
20. There are no activity free weeks during semester, although the intensity and nature of learning activities may vary at certain points. In all cases this is pedagogically driven to support student learning.

Annex: Indicative module structures

(Variations to these structures should be discussed with and approved by the Dean of Education at the point of design)

1. Postgraduate Taught (180 credits)



2. Undergraduate (120 credits)

a) All 30 credits (especially relevant for Level 4)



b) 3 x 30 credits; 2 x 15 credits



c) 1 x long thin 15 credit both semesters (e.g. GCP)



d) 1 x long 30 credit (both semesters)



e) 1 x long 30 credit (e.g. dissertation, final year)

