



New College Durham

Academic Regulations for the Awards of Foundation Degree

Section B: Regulations Governing the Design, Validation, Approval and Review of a Foundation Degree

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B1 Principles Governing the Design, Validation, Approval, and Review of a Foundation Degree

- B1.1 The Corporation of New College Durham (the College) under its authority of Foundation Degree Awarding Powers is responsible for setting the standards of its degrees within the context of common guidelines (such as subject benchmark statements, professional body requirements, and so on) and is subject to internal quality assurance procedures.
- B1.2 All approved awards of the College are required to undergo formal academic approval prior to delivery. The regulations governing the design, validation, approval and review of foundation degrees are supplemented by a series of processes and procedures and should be read in conjunction with them.
- B1.3 All approved awards of the College are required to undergo a continual monitoring and review process. This will include, but not be exclusive to: course team self-evaluation, external peer review, student review, and where relevant other stakeholder review.
- B1.4 Staff engaged in the design, validation, approval, and periodic review of a New College Durham Foundation Degrees must be fully informed and conversant of the regulations, processes and procedures associated with such activities.

B2 Definitions of Key Processes for Design, Approval, Validation, Monitoring and Review

The definitions adopted by the College for the purpose of these Regulations are as follows:

- B2.1 **Design** is the process of constructing a programme that meets the requirements for a specific award of the College. The design must facilitate the delivery of the intended learning outcomes and required standards as specified by such external bodies as Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB's) and QAA. Development teams should ensure that the design of a programme of study is integrated with the processes of approval, monitoring and review.
- B2.2 **Validation** is the process whereby a judgement is reached by a panel of peers about whether or not a programme of study designed to lead to a New College Durham validated award meets the principles and requirements for that award. The validated award must be equivalent in standard to comparable awards delivered by other higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.
- B2.3 **Approval** is the process whereby the Principal authorises an award to proceed to delivery based on a judgement having been reached through peer review on whether a programme designed or modified meets, or through

periodic review continues to meet, the principles and requirements for that award as determined by the College.

- B2.4 **Periodic Review** is the process which provides an in-depth assessment of the development of a programme (or group of programmes), over a period of time, together with an appraisal of its continued relevance and standing, leading to formal recommendations concerning the future of the programme and which may lead to revalidation of the programme(s). Periodic review is based on the evidence generated by the annual reports produced by teaching teams for their programmes.
- B2.5 **Programme:** a programme is a complete study route with its own aims and learning outcomes consisting of combinations of modules and leading to a specific named academic award. The programmes included in the academic regulations of New College Durham are those leading to the validated award of Foundation Degree, and to the New College Durham Higher Education Certificate of Achievement (NCDHECA). The NCDHECA is available for students who have enrolled on a foundation degree but are unable to continue their studies after they have achieved at least 120 credits at level 4.
- B2.6 **Course:** The College uses the term 'course' to define any programme of study regardless of duration or credit value.
- B2.7 **Academic Award:** an academic award is an award granted to a student on successfully completing a designated course at the appropriate level(s), with a specific title. Where an award is a nationally recognised qualification the standards of the award align with the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). A record of awards validated by the College are held on a central College register. A student who is awarded a New College Durham Higher Education Certificate of Achievement (NCDHECA) is said to have achieved a conditional award.
- B2.8 **Credit:** this is a measure of the volume of student learning time required to achieve defined learning outcomes at a given level. A full-time undergraduate workload is normally 120 credits per year representing 1200 hours of notional learning time
- B2.9 **Credit rating:** the process of assigning to a module a number of credits at a specific level, and the result of that process.
- B2.10 **Notional learning time:** the length of learning time which it is estimated will be taken on average by a typical student to achieve a given volume of credit. Quality Assurance Agency guidance is that 1 HE credit is normally equivalent to 10 notional learning hours.
- B2.11 **Level:** the indicator of challenge, complexity, depth of study and learner autonomy. All modules are attributed to an academic level and an individual module cannot span more than 1 level. There are eight credit levels used in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and of these levels 4 to 8 represent the types of work undertaken in HE as described in the FHEQ and the related

national credit guidelines. Foundation degrees sit within levels 4 and 5 of the FHEQ.

- B2.12 **Stage:** an indication of the structure of a programme such that each stage normally equates to one academic year of study irrespective of the level(s) of the modules taken within that stage.
- B2.13 **Year:** an indication of the progress of study of a student defined by the number of years (usually academic years) for which he/she has been registered for a programme. This is irrespective of the stage of study and of the level(s) of the modules involved.
- B2.14 **Semesterisation:** The division of a normal year of study into two study periods of equal length.
- B2.15 **Learning outcomes:** statements of what the successful learner will know, understand and/or be able to do. Achievement of learning outcomes is demonstrated through summative assessments.
- B2.16 **Threshold Standards** are the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic award. The threshold level of achievement should be the same as similar or equivalent awards across the UK. Threshold standards may incorporate both academic and practice based standards, where relevant.

B3 Programme Design

- B3.1 The principles underpinning the design of a new programme, or major modification to existing provision, are such that programme teams must:
- (a) take due account of external reference points such as subject benchmark statements, national frameworks for higher education qualifications, national occupational standards and, where appropriate, the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB's), employers and any relevant national legislation or commitments to European and international processes;
 - (b) ensure the programme design takes account of student views, where relevant;
 - (c) ensure compatibility of the programme design with the college mission and strategy and any cross college approach adopted for the provision;
 - (d) ensure that the proposed design facilitates the delivery of the intended aims and learning outcomes of the programme; and
 - (e) establish the necessary resource planning and identify the level of risk involved in any new proposal.

B3.2 The FHEQ determines how many credits have to be achieved in order to complete a level (or stage, as it is sometimes called). 120 credits must be achieved at level 4, and 120 at level 5.

B3.3 A Foundation degree consists of two levels, level 4 and level 5. Modules are designated as either level 4 or level 5 modules. The first half of a course is made up of level 4 modules, and the second half of level 5 modules. What is broadly expected of students studying at level 4 and level 5 is nationally determined by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Level 5 is higher than level 4, and this is reflected in what the FHEQ states a student who has completed level 4 studies will be expected to demonstrate at level 5.

B3.4 The standard College structure for foundation degrees consists of six modules at each level, each made up of 20 credits. However any of the following module sizes are permissible with approval:

Size	Credit rating	Notional Learning Hours
Half	10	100
Single (Standard)	20	200
One and a half	30	300
Double	40	400

B3.5 All college Foundation degrees must have a core element of personal and professional development and work related learning. The recommended college structure is 20 credits of each at each level.

B3.6 An award title incorporating 'and' to connect 2 subject disciplines must have equally weighted subject components to be a true reflection of the award title. An award structure would normally contain as a minimum 40 credits of mandatory subject components of each discipline area at each level. Work related learning must enable a student to experience both subject disciplines. The award structure may utilise either or both core and designated options only.

Level 4	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject B	20 credits subject B	20 credits PPD	20 credits WRL
Level 5	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject B	20 credits subject B	20 credits PPD	20 credits WRL

B3.7 An award title incorporating 'with', to connect 2 subject disciplines must have sufficient ancillary component to allow both subject titles to be a true reflection of the award structure. An award structure would normally contain as a minimum 60 credits of mandatory components of the principal specialist discipline area and 20 credits of mandatory components of the subsidiary specialist discipline at each level. Work Related Learning must enable a student to experience the principal specialist discipline, and may also

incorporate an experience of the minor subject discipline. The award structure may utilise either or both core and designated options only.

Level 4	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject B	20 credits PPD	20 credits WRL
Level 5	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject A	20 credits subject B	20 credits PPD	20 credits WRL

B3.8 Types of modules are as follows;

- a) Core: a mandatory module
- b) Option: a module that a student must choose from a group offered within the programme.
- c) Designated Option: A programme may determine the options to be studied in order to inform the specific award title that the student is seeking. Such options are referred to as designated options.

For example, 'a student must choose:

- one module from the either of the 2 designated options listed,
 - two modules from a group of the 3 designated options listed, etc.'
- d) Pre-requisite: a module which a student must pass, or be credited with, before progressing to the next level. Pre-requisites are not permitted within a level
 - e) Co-requisite: a module which students must take in conjunction with another specific module at the same level.
 - f) Generic: a module which is core for more than one course. There may only be one version of the module in use at any one time.
 - g) Common: a module which is core for more than one course but which may have various editions. The module will have identical title, level, credit size, aims, and normally the same learning outcomes, however these, as well as the assessment methods, may vary slightly to allow contextualisation to the course sector.

B3.9 All courses share a common structure. For each level of the course there is a set of learning outcomes which are expressed in general terms. These course level learning outcomes summarise what a student who has successfully completed each stage will know, understand, and be able to do. course learning outcomes represent a combination of subject knowledge and skills. The outcomes are designated in four key areas: knowledge and understanding, cognitive/intellectual skills, personal/professional skills, transferable skills (also referred to as key skills)

- B3.10 Course learning outcomes are achieved through the study of individual modules at each level. A student must be able to achieve a course level learning outcome through the study of more than one module.
- B3.11 Modules are discrete units of assessed learning with coherent aims and learning outcomes. Module outcomes are expressed in a language that is compatible with the QAA FHEQ level that is being assessed. They can be categorised in the same way as course learning outcomes i.e. knowledge and understanding, and skills. Each module is given a credit rating which indicates the amount of notional learning time which the typical student is expected to spend to achieve the learning outcomes.
- B3.12 Credit is awarded for the achievement of the specified learning outcomes of the module. Credit is accumulated sequentially, by level. This means that as student's progress through a course they build up credits as and when they successfully complete modules. These credits cannot be taken away. Credits are nationally recognised and may be transferable and accredited towards another similar or equivalent course of study at the discretion of relevant the awarding body through accreditation of prior achievement.
- B3.13 It is recommended that a 20 credit module will normally have four learning outcomes. Modules with a lower credit value may have proportionately fewer learning outcomes and those with a higher credit value may have proportionately more.
- B3.14 Learning time includes both contact time and private, including assessment and independent learning. A 20 credit module represents at least 200 hours of student learning activity (10 learning hours per single credit). An example for full time delivery may include contact time, directed learning, assessed work and private study. There is no minimum specified contact time required under the terms of these Regulations. The contact time allocated to modules should be based upon judgements about the nature and complexity of the learning outcomes for the module and the learning needs of the students who will be undertaking the modules.
- B3.15 For the purposes of these Regulations: contact time is defined as any study undertaken under the direct supervision of a module tutor and includes but is not limited to lectures, seminars, and workshops; directed learning is learning activity which a module tutor has instructed students to undertake but which is not subject to direct supervision; assessed work is the time devoted to preparing for and carrying out any form of assessment used in the module; and private study is work a student carries out to support his or her learning which has not been directed by the module tutor and is therefore independent.
- B3.16 Each approved module is expressed within a module specification. The module specification must specify the module title, the number of credits attached to it and the level of those credits, the learning outcomes categorised as knowledge and skill, the subject content, the details of how it will be assessed and of the teaching /learning strategy used in its delivery, the

resources used to support it including a reading list, and the person responsible for leading the module.

B3.17 The College delivery model is normally using a semesterised structure, in which each year of study is divided into two study periods of equal length. These are semesters. On an award completed over two years the standard delivery arrangement is that in each of the four semesters making up the award there will be three 20 credit modules, or equivalent credit value. Thereby students complete 60 credits within each semester. This standard delivery arrangement may be varied where an alternative model better supports the learning needs of the students. A variation to this model is permissible with approval carried out in accordance with the published procedure. A change or addition to an approved model of delivery must be approved in accordance with the College's major modification procedure.

B3.18 Each module should be supported by a module guide, which is designed to provide students with all the information they require to be able to study it successfully. Students are entitled to receive the module guide when they commence their study of the module. The guide may be provided as a hard copy or be available on the College VLE.

B4 Approval of an Award

B4.1 The formal system adopted under these Regulations to govern the approval, including validation of all new awards and the revalidation of existing awards, is designed;

- (a) to secure and promote planned and managed growth and development within the context of the College's Higher Education Strategy;
- (b) to stimulate thinking about programme development and content in order to bring about the provision of high quality programmes for students;
- (c) to ensure that programme teams collaborate widely in the design of programmes;
- (d) to secure and promote the contribution of peers to programme development; and
- (e) to ensure that new programme proposals address themselves to any relevant policies and requirements as laid down by the College, PSRB's and the QAA.

B4.2 The nature of programme validation is associated with judgements about the validity of proposals. Programme documentation submitted for consideration is in essence a collection of statements of intent. The validation process is centrally concerned with ensuring that such statements of intent are clear and well thought out, educationally sound, coherent, consistent, responsive, and matched to identified needs.

- B4.3 Foundation degree awards of the College acquire their validity by completing the procedure set out by the College for programme approval. The approval procedure is described in the supplementary processes and procedures of these Regulations. No award can be approved that has not successfully completed all the stages in this procedure.
- B4.4 The record of each stage in the procedure must be minuted and the full record of the progression of a proposed award is required to be maintained electronically for the period of validation of the programme as evidence that the award has been formally approved and validated.
- B4.5 No award may proceed to delivery without final approval by the Principal.

B5 Review of an Award

- B5.1 Each programme is subject to annual review. This is a process of self-evaluation carried out annually by course teams to consider the effectiveness of their course in achieving its stated aims and the success of students in attaining the intended learning outcomes. It enables a team to ensure they are maintaining the academic, and where relevant practice based, threshold standards as well as providing trend analysis of key performance measures.
- B5.2 Annual review draws upon feedback on the standards and quality of provision from external examiners, students, stakeholders, and staff. The annual review process is described in the supplementary processes and procedures of these Regulations.
- B5.3 An external examiner will be appointed to each course of study to provide confirmation that the standards of performance being achieved by students and the appropriateness of the assessments being undertaken by students at all levels are of a comparable minimum standard to those found in other higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.
- B5.4 Students will be surveyed annually for their opinion of their experience whilst undertaking their programme of study. As a minimum they should be asked to provide feedback on the quality of their experience of teaching, learning, assessment, support and guidance, resources, and where relevant work placement and personal development.
- B5.5 Each course is subject to periodic review. This will normally take place within 5 years of programme approval. (Refer Section A4.9) It will enable a programme of study to be critically appraised by a panel of peers, and through which plans for change are considered and their validity confirmed. This is in order to enhance programme development and delivery and to confirm that the programme continues to meet the requirements for validated awards of the College.
- B5.6 Subject to regulation B3.5 no award can be re-approved for a further period of approval that has not successfully completed the stages of periodic review process.

B6 Award Study Framework

- B6.1 The mode of study will usually determine the load a student may complete in a single stage. This would normally be 120 credits per year by way of full time study, or up to 80 credits by part time study. However if a student is undertaking work related learning through blended study then part time or full time may be determined by the amount of contact time they receive. The load(s) and mode(s) of study for each programme will be determined at the time of programme approval.
- B6.2 The normal duration period of study a student can take to complete their studies will be determined by their mode of study i.e. full time or part time. However, the duration of a student's studies may be affected and become longer than originally planned for. For example, a student may apply for an interruption to their studies if they have relevant extenuating circumstances (known as a suspension of study), or a student may due to academic failure or extenuating circumstances be required to repeat some elements of the course. To ensure currency of the knowledge and skills a student gains whilst studying the following definitive duration periods for a student to complete their course of study has been determined.

Normal duration period	Definitive duration period
18 months	3years
2 years	4 years
3 years	5 years
4 years	6 years

- B6.3 In additional to taught /contact time, students are expected to undertake sufficient independent/private study to meet the Notional Learning Time associated with modules.
- B6.4 Other than in approved cases students are expected to undertake all elements of assessment associated with individual modules.
- B6.5 Other than in the case of specialist language modules, the language of tuition and assessment for all College foundation degrees is English.

B 7 Student Registration

- B7.1 Students are required to conform to the College's processes and schedules for module and course registration which are published annually. Module change or late registration is not permitted unless agreed by Course and Module Leaders having given due regard to specified, exceptional and individual circumstances.
- B7.2 Each student must be registered in each academic year of study for the course to which he/she has been admitted and for the modules within that course structure which he/she is to take.

- B7.3 A student may not register on a foundation degree for more than 120 credits in one academic year unless he/she is trailing a failed module in which case he/she may register for 140 credits.
- B7.4 A student who wishes to study additional modules to those which make up their award may be allowed to do so only on the condition that any additional module is identified at the start of each stage of study and is registered as a stand-alone modules. A separate fee is charged for this. The assessment of such modules will not contribute to the assessment of the student's primary programme of study nor classification of their award.
- B7.5 At each stage students must register for modules in line with any course-specific regulations which specify compulsory modules and option modules.
- B7.6 The maximum number of credits which may be awarded for a student entering to study at each level of a course under APA procedures to enable a student to be eligible for an award at that level is 50 per cent of the total credits of the level enabling a student to be awarded up to 60 credits at level 4 or 60 credits at level 5. A student may apply for direct entry to level 5 where they can evidence that they fully meet all level 4 learning outcomes through accreditation of prior learning. In this circumstance APL of 120 level 4 credits would be approved. (Refer to Section E: Regulatory Principles Governing Recruitment and Admissions to Programmes)