Curriculum Framework 2022
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Executive summary

The UWS Curriculum Framework is a key component of the new Learning and Teaching Thematic Plan, and the Student Experience Programme through which that plan will be implemented. It aims to articulate the pedagogical and curriculum design principles through which we make real the strategic goals for education in the UWS Strategy 2025:

1. Our portfolio of programmes is contemporary, relevant and sustainable and allows students to thrive in the rapidly-changing 21st century workplace.
2. The delivery modes of our programmes of study are flexible and student-centred, allowing students to manage the mode, intensity and duration of study. All have hybrid delivery options.
3. Our online and physical learning environments are dynamic, technology-rich and support world-class pedagogy.
4. Students are at the heart of what we do. The UWS student journey is personal, seamless, and supported by outstanding professional and academic staff and functional, student-centred and user-friendly systems and processes.
5. Our graduates are leaders, with world-ready, interdisciplinary meta-skills and flexible, global perspectives.
6. Our talented staff employ innovative student-centred teaching and learning practice and engage in continuing development in pedagogy, digital learning innovation and student support.

The Framework was developed in draft by the Vice-Principal Learning Teaching & Students, and teams within that portfolio in consultation with the Provost, Deans and school leadership during January-February 2021. It has received significant University-wide consultation, including at a Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group (VCEG) workshop in February; two meetings of Education Advisory Committee (EAC) and its subcommittees; focus groups with all programme leaders, who then workshopped with programme teams and provided feedback; workshops with UWS Academy, Education Futures and Student Services; and a survey of all UWS staff conducted in May 2021.

Interdependencies

The following activities were identified as necessary for successful implementation of the Framework.

• Learning & Teaching Thematic Plan
• Student Experience Programme:
  • Workstream 1/2: Curriculum Renewal
  • Workstream 3: Learning Environment and Digital Infrastructure
  • Workstream 4: Student Journey
  • Workstream 5: Policy, Process and Documentation Review
  • Workstream 6: Performance Culture, Learning Analytics and Management Information
Background

UWS Strategy 2025 sets out the ambitions for the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) for the next five years as well as laying the foundation for the University towards 2050. The Learning and Teaching Thematic Plan fleshes out that strategy with six overall objectives:

1. Our portfolio of programmes is contemporary, relevant, sustainable, and allows students to thrive in the rapidly-changing 21st century workplace.
2. The delivery modes of our programmes of study are flexible and student-centred, allowing students to manage the mode, intensity and duration of study. All have hybrid delivery options.
3. Our online and physical learning environments are dynamic, technology-rich and support world-class pedagogy.
4. Students are at the heart of what we do. The UWS student journey is personal, seamless, and supported by outstanding professional and academic staff and functional, student-centred and user-friendly systems and processes.
5. Our graduates are leaders, with world-ready, interdisciplinary meta-skills and flexible, global perspectives.
6. Our talented staff employ innovative, student-centred, teaching and learning practice and engage in continuing development in pedagogy, digital learning innovation and student support.

Key to the achievement of these objectives is an underpinning approach to curriculum design, learning, teaching and assessment. This document outlines that underpinning approach as the UWS Curriculum Framework. It adopts the following curriculum design principles:

- **Student-centred** – Meeting the diverse needs of the distinctive UWS student cohorts, using a flexible and agile approach to curriculum that responds better to the needs of each student and considers and seeks to impact positively on the wellbeing of all students.
- **Flexible and hybrid** – Using best-in-class technologies and pedagogies, meeting the learning needs of students in contemporary Scotland.
- **Simple and coherent** – Providing carefully-designed linear pathways for students whether part-time or full-time; on-campus or online, starting in first year or joining at any time in their degree pathway.
- **Authentic** – Using real-world learning activities and assessments to best prepare students for the complex and ever-changing professional world and society in which they live and work.
- **Inclusive** – Recognising the diversity of the student body, and the need to be accessible to all.
- **Sustainable** – With efficient structures, pathways and number of modules.

Schools will work with cross-functional teams to align Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Undergraduate (UG) programmes with this Framework. Alignment will take place from 21/22 onwards as part of a phased implementation within the UWS Student Experience Programme (Workstream 1: Curriculum Renewal). Full Curriculum Framework implementation will be achieved by the start of session 2025/26.

Whilst these principles should inform all programme design at UWS, there may be occasions where a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requires a different approach in order to secure accreditation or formal recognition. This Framework encourages collaborative partnership working with PSRBs to identify solutions to provide robust and authentic programmes that meet the needs of students, industry, and the ethos of the University.
UWS curriculum design principles and commitments

Principle – Student-centred

Commitment - UWS will provide a student-centred, personalised and distinctive learning and teaching environment.

Programme and Module Design implications
• Learning activities, assessment and feedback will, where appropriate, provide students with choice to allow them to focus on their personal needs and learning goals.
• Module design will include purposefully-designed opportunities for students to access support from peers, academics and professional services specialists.
• Module leaders should be able to access personalised learner analytics to support students’ individual learning needs.
• UWS will provide innovative, digitally-enabled physical learning spaces that meet the needs and expectations of all our students, and are inclusive and welcoming to create a sense of learning community and belonging.

Commitment – Teaching and learning at UWS will be active, engaging and social.

Programme and Module Design implications
• All learning activities at UWS will be designed from a student-centred perspective, with opportunities for interactive activities mirroring authentic professional practice and/or shaped by local and global societal issues.
• Face-to-face activities will be reserved for interactive and applied learning. Simple transmission of content is best done digitally, in formats designed for that purpose (e.g. videos rather than recorded lectures).

Commitment – UWS students are partners in their own learning.

Programme and Module Design implications
• Design of learning activities will recognise that students are part of a community of learners and will seek to leverage the power of peer learning, students’ capacity to support each other’s learning, and explicitly develop meta-skills in teamwork and collaboration.
• Students will be actively involved in the co-creation of their learning and assessment.
Principle – Flexible and hybrid

Commitment – Teaching and Learning at UWS will be flexible and hybrid, enabling students to engage physically and digitally as suits their needs and opportunities.

Programme and Module Design implications
• Aligned with our hybrid learning and teaching approach, all modules should include opportunity for online learning and assessment, that is digital by design and meets the needs of hybrid learners, as well as providing optionality and choice.
• Modules should provide purposeful on-campus activities that leverage the physical presence of students in “hands on” and interactive learning.
• Online interaction should provide synchronous and asynchronous options for students.
• All required readings and other resources should be available online in digital format wherever possible.

Commitment – Programme design will support the different trajectories of all our students, including supporting the needs of lifelong learners.

Programme and Module Design implications
• Programme design will support multiple opportunities for people to learn through their life, through innovative approaches to structures, credentialing, and a portfolio model of learning that includes the recognition of prior and experiential learning.

Commitment – Programme design will support the delivery of programmes at different campuses and with different partners.

Programme and Module Design implications
• The use of transportable online materials to underpin programme design will enable the same programme to be delivered in multiple campuses or contexts, or with multiple partners, with common UWS teaching materials and content being used to support students’ on-campus experience in different locations by different teaching staff.
• When designing learning, teaching and assessment materials, there should be a common spine of learning activities, but also the opportunity for learning activities adapted to localised content or contexts.
Principle - Simple and coherent

Commitment - Programmes are designed with simple pathways that allow students to develop the skills and knowledge needed through linear progression.

Programme and Module Design implications

- Programmes will be designed with simple, linear pathways, allowing students to develop skills and knowledge in a coherent and sequential way. All learning activity and assessment of learning outcomes will be designed at programme level.
- Flexible online and hybrid learning modes and module scheduling will allow students to progress through these pathways at a pace and timing suiting their needs.
- Holistic, synoptic, programme-level assessment beyond individual modules will be an encouraged aspect of programme design.
- Programme design is consistent with subject benchmarks and/or PSRB requirements.

Principles - Authentic

Commitment - UWS programmes support students as active globally-conscious citizens through developing employability, enterprise and world-ready meta skills.

Programme and Module Design implications

- Module learning activities should be based around real professional scenarios and/or related to real-world local and global issues. They should explicitly develop both subject-specific and meta-skills.
- Learning activities will develop 21st century academic skills such as digital skills, creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and entrepreneurship and social enterprise, and these will be explicitly taught and assessed.
- Students are actively involved in the production of online knowledge through real-world tasks.
- We will develop a suite of core and common modules ("Academic, Professional and Personal Development modules", see page 13 for more detail). Across all programmes that develop students’ 21st-century skills and attributes, and complement the theory and knowledge-based modules. We will consider the viability of these being common module(s) for all UWS undergraduate students.

Commitment - Assessment will be authentic, developmental, and aligned with real-world learning outcomes.

Programme and Module Design implications

- Assessment should mirror real-world activities and challenges. Within the constraints of professional accreditation, invigilated examinations should be minimised in favour of authentic alternatives.
- Summative assessment should be preceded by relevant formative opportunities giving students actionable "feed-forward".
- Modules will use the most up-to-date appropriate technology for assessment format and feedback. Unless there are technological and logistical impediments, all assessment should be able to be completed and submitted online.
**Principles – Inclusive**

**Commitment – Teaching and learning will be inclusive, recognise the diversity of the student body, and be accessible to all.**

**Programme and Module Design implications**

• Learning activities should be structured to meet the accessibility requirements of all learners.

• Learning content, activities and scenarios should reflect the diversity of UWS learners in terms of culture, ethnicity, age, gender and sexuality: all students should see themselves in models of successful academic practice.

• Digital learning activities and assessments should be designed such that no student is disadvantaged by lack of access to personal IT resources.

• Every programme will be asked to articulate its response to the “anti-racist curriculum” project.

**Principles – Sustainable**

**Commitment – Programmes will be designed to ensure sustainable delivery and a coherent experience.**

**Programme and Module Design implications**

• UWS will set thresholds for minimum programme and module enrolment that ensures module delivery is sustainable.

• Programmes can only be designed utilising sustainably-delivered modules.

• Programme sustainability and academic coherence is improved by the sharing of modules and module-sets, in particular at SCQF levels 7 and 8.
Module design, delivery & assessment

The following pedagogical principles underpin module design at UWS:

a. Every module will be redesigned specifically for hybrid delivery. We recognise that the teaching and learning world of 2020 is very different from ten years ago; and perhaps most markedly so in the post-pandemic educational environment. Time spent on campus needs to be spent valuably and actively: being a passive participant in a lecture theatre fits neither criteria. Modules should provide purposeful on-campus activities that leverage the physical presence of students in "hands on" and interactive learning.

The default learning experience at UWS will be flipped: where essential, learning activities that are purely transmission of information will be provided through digitally created content and pre-recorded materials. Face-to-face learning events (both on-campus and online) will provide interactive learning opportunities for students to construct, apply and test their learning with others. All module learning activities and assessments should have digital options, and these options are designed specifically for the needs of online learners. These online activities should provide synchronous and asynchronous options for students. All required readings and other resources should be available online in digital format wherever possible.

b. Modules in a programme will be designed by the programme team with a consistent/coherent pedagogical approach and consistent expectations for students. A team-based approach to design will be taken for all modules. A consistent pedagogical philosophy (situated learning, practice-based learning, inquiry-based learning – as appropriate to the discipline) will be articulated for the programme, possibly nuanced for different cohorts (e.g. first-year students). Consistent expectations for students across the modules which comprise the programme will be set and met.

c. Module design will be student-centred. Explicit engagement and interaction strategies will be designed in all modules. This may involve the use of academic staff, teacher-clinicians, industry specialists or professional student support staff working with students in the online environment as part of the teaching team.

Learning activities, assessment and feedback will, where appropriate, provide students with choice to allow them to focus on their personal needs and learning goals. Co-creation of learning, teaching and assessment activities is encouraged to support partnership working with students. Module design will include purposefully-designed opportunities for students to access support from peers, academics and student services.

d. Module leaders should be able to access personalised learner analytics to support students’ individual learning needs, and be empowered, along with personal tutors and Student Services specialists, to use these analytic data to proactively support students who may benefit.

e. Design for team-based delivery will be the default. Programmes and modules will be delivered by teams of teachers who are able to rotate into and out of roles within large-enrolment modules. Smaller, more specialised Advanced modules will be the only modules in which a single lecturer will be largely responsible for the student experience.

f. Modules will be designed for inclusivity and accessibility. Learning content, activities and scenarios should reflect the diversity of UWS learners in terms of culture, ethnicity, age, gender and sexuality: all students should see themselves in models of successful academic practice. UWS will deliver an anti-racist curriculum.

Learning activities should be structured to meet the accessibility requirements of all learners. Digital learning activities and assessments should be designed such that no student is disadvantaged by lack of access to personal IT resources.
g. UWS will take an authentic, best-practice and forward-looking approach to learning activities and assessment. Module learning activities should be based around real professional scenarios and/or related to real-world local and global issues, through which students explicitly develop both subject-specific and meta-skills. Learning activities will develop 21st century skills such as digital skills, creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and entrepreneurship and social enterprise, and these will be explicitly taught and assessed. Students are actively involved in the production of online knowledge through real-world tasks.

UWS is committed to the principle that higher education is inquiry-led and research-based. Learning activities should build students’ capabilities to draw on current research, disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives and inquiry-based methodologies to provide original solutions to complex, unclear and ambiguous problems.

Early, formative assessment will be designed into every Level 7 module. Research is clear that early, formative assessment with timely feedback significantly increases students’ likelihood of success. Summative assessment should be preceded by relevant formative opportunities giving students actionable “feed-forward”.

Assessment should mirror real-world activities and challenges. Within the constraints of professional accreditation, invigilated examinations should be minimized in favour of authentic alternatives.

Modules will use the most up-to-date appropriate technology for assessment format and feedback. Unless there are technological and logistical impediments, all assessment should be able to be completed and submitted online.

h. All modules will be designed and delivered sustainably for staff and students. UWS will set thresholds for minimum module enrolment that ensures module delivery is sustainable. The resource to deliver modules must be explicitly considered at the point of approval.

All modules will be designed within the following parameters:

• A 20-credit module normally constitutes 200 hours of total learning and assessment time for the student.
• Most 20-credit modules will normally require no more than 36 hours’ academic-led activity. Some practical modules will require up to 48 hours. Hybrid design of modules will provide a coherent mix of on-campus and online learning experiences. Online learning should include resources and activities available flexibly to students.

Programme teams are expected to demonstrate at validation their transparent approach to the total hours of student effort and learning, and staff workload.
The following programme-level design principles underpin the undergraduate curricula at UWS:

a. **Every programme should be designed to develop students’ skills and knowledge in a linear and sequenced way, and should contain a threshold foundation module and a final capstone module.**

   For instance, for a four-year Honours programme, a core sequence of modules would be:

```
Threshold module
Level 7 module
Level 8 module
Level 8 module
Level 9 module
Level 9 module
Level 10 module
Capstone module
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The threshold module should orient students to the programme and the discipline(s) to which it belongs. This can be a combination of online and on campus activity and should be completed in the first six weeks of the first term of each programme (similar integrating activities should be developed at other points for all programmes where students articulate from UK and International partner institutions).

Part of the threshold module includes working with a Personal Tutor to orient the student to UWS, the expectations of study (including online study), awareness of support available, and the identification of particular study and support needs for that student.

A capstone module is taken at or near the end of the degree, allowing students to demonstrate holistically what they have learnt and skills developed throughout the programme. It might consist of a research project, an industry internship, an applied project or the completion of a portfolio of work commenced earlier in the programme. It is closely aligned with the demonstration of programme learning outcomes, and can be the vehicle through which programme-level holistic assessment is completed by the student.
b. Each programme will contain a set of common “Academic, Professional and Personal Development modules”.

These modules should be central to supporting student success, wellbeing and employability through the development of 21st-century meta-skills and attributes at levels 7, 8 and 9. These should be delivered by personal tutors supported by programme teams and professional services as appropriate.

They consist of a common curriculum which should be delivered in the context of subject specialism. There may be some programmes where it is already a PSRB requirement to support academic, professional and personal development. Such programmes can apply for exemption. Working titles for proposed modules are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Academic, Professional and Personal Development (APPD) module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Your Success at UWS (APPD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Planning Your Future (APPD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Becoming a Professional (APPD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Modules and programmes need to be sustainable and coherent.

Module offerings need to be managed within a programme to maximise sustainability and linear coherence for students. Viability of existing programmes and proposals for new programmes will be considered on an annual basis during portfolio review. Programmes with cohort sizes of less than 25 will not normally be considered viable.

Students need to have a broad curriculum at SCQF level 7 and 8 enabling them to experience the full range of the discipline they are studying. At level 9 a small optional offer is helpful with slightly wider choice at level 10 alongside the individual choice of focus on the final dissertation/project module.

In order to manage this the following approach will be taken at validation.

- At level 7 the curriculum will normally consist of 120 credits of core modules (including the academic development module) shared between programmes within cognate disciplines. Within this core there can be the provision of up to 20 credits of guided student choice to support students’ personal learning needs.
- At level 8 the curriculum will consist of 100 credit points of core modules (including the academic development module) which may be unique to the programme or shared between programmes within cognate disciplines. Programme teams can choose to offer up to 20 credits of open choice.
- At level 9 programme teams may introduce up to 40 credits of choice. The number of options must reflect the number of students on the programme with at least 20 students enrolled on any elective module for it to be viable. The level 9 curriculum should also include the academic development module.
- At level 10 programme teams may introduce up to 80 credits of choice. The number of electives must reflect the number of students on the programme with at least 20 students enrolled on any elective module for it to be viable.

d. Programme design will support the delivery of programmes at different campuses and with different partners.

The use of transportable online materials to underpin programme design will enable the same programme to be delivered in multiple campuses or contexts, or with multiple partners, with common UWS teaching materials and content being used to support students’ on-campus experience in different locations by different teaching staff.
**Postgraduate taught programmes**

The following programme-level design principles underpin the postgraduate taught curricula at UWS:

a. **There will be three types of master’s programmes at UWS.**
   
   Each will also contain exit points at PgC and PgD level.

### Named master’s no options e.g. M Commerce

- Lack of options is related to the need to ensure all curriculum and content meets PSRB requirements for accreditation.
- Limited potential for advanced entry or entry with CPD credit or accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL).
- The fully core nature of the award means that should a student fail a module they would be able to exit with a lower named exit (subject to credit/award requirements) or could transfer to a Master’s in Professional Development and make up missing credit.

### Named master’s with options e.g. M Commerce (Lunar Marketing)

- This could take the shape of a single award with options or could represent a framework where the options enable the awarding of a specialist pathway.
- Opportunities for optional modules to be replaced by CPD credits or accreditation from prior learning (APL)/recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- Failure of an optional module can be overtaken but failure of a core module would result in the student exiting with a lower named exit (subject to credit/award requirements) or they could transfer to Master’s in Professional Development and make up missing credit.

### Master’s in Professional Development

- A fully flexible master’s award which underpins all master’s provision, students can opt-in at any stage of their studies or enrol directly.
- A catalogue of modules will be available for students to choose from with input from all Schools. Previous CPD and microcredentiliaising credits can be recognised as can any prior learning to facilitate top up.
- One "long thin" core module in which students work with an academic advisor/personal tutor to identify a career plan, complete APEL and RPL, and make appropriate module choices to meet programme level learning outcomes.

All master’s programmes will be accredited to sit within the overarching Master’s in Professional Development (MPD) to provide students with an option to transfer and have further freedom in module selections or to overcome credit deficit. The core module of the (MPD) will be a flexible-enrolment module that will be available for year-round entry – allowing students to start their studies on any working day of the year.

To continue to facilitate named titles in areas of lower recruitment, the named master’s with options framework should be used. Rather than creating single titles in specific areas i.e. a MA in Fashion & Textiles and MA in Fashion Design and a MA in Fashion Management which may not recruit to the University’s target for viable master’s provision, consider developing a MA Fashion framework where you have one programme specification but a range of exit titles subject to module choices: MA Fashion/MA Fashion (Design)/MA Fashion (Textiles)/MA Fashion (Management).
b. **We will grow a suite of integrated masters programmes.**

Each type of master’s will allow for the creation of integrated bachelor/master’s programmes in which student are admitted to a combined programme of study, normally comprising 600 credits with students graduating with an integrated master’s qualification after five years full-time study (or part-time equivalent). Such programmes, which comply with Scottish Funding Council (SFC) criteria for integrated masters’ funding, are particularly suited to the typical disciplines and students at UWS, and should be seen as a typical rather than atypical pathway.

c. **Industry-focused micro-credentials will be available for each taught postgraduate programme.**

As a default, these 5 or 10 credit “half modules” we will embedded across one or more standard modules that focus on the development and credentialing of specific industry-focused skills. While they contribute to the programme, they are also available as stand-alone credentials, and as potential components of the Master’s in Professional Development.

d. **We will maximise RPL and APEL in the design of PGT programmes.**

Unless required for PSRB accreditation, all master’s programmes should have optional spaces within the PgC/PgD taught element to allow for recognition of prior CPD and informal learning, and to enable students to tailor the programme to their own needs and interests.

e. **We will maximise the possibility for interdisciplinary study at PGT level.**

Schools will identify and contribute modules to form a UWS master’s level option bank. Sharing of modules across School and Divisions is encouraged to ensure the viability of modules and to enable student to have wider choice of options to tailor programmes to their interests. Programme Teams will be asked to use existing modules in areas such as research methods or dissertation modules and to look at modules available in other divisions rather than creating new modules.

f. **Learning will be authentic and industry-situated.**

Programme Teams will be asked to use existing modules in areas such as research methods or dissertation modules and to look at modules available in other Divisions rather than creating new modules.

g. **Postgraduate students will co-create the curriculum.**

Design of learning activities will recognise that typical postgraduate students are often already mature members of professional communities. Learning design will leverage the power of peer learning, students’ capacity to support each other’s learning, and explicitly develop meta-skills in teamwork and collaboration. These students will be actively involved in the co-creation of their learning and assessment.