

### Scope and aims

- 12.1 The Academic Framework sets out the design principles for programmes at York St John University. It applies to all programmes leading to an award or credit, including any taught components within research degree awards, except for the Master of Fine Art.
- 12.2 It is noted that whilst Apprenticeship programmes will seek to align with the Academic Framework, this may not always be possible due to the constraints of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard. Where the relevant Apprenticeship Standard conflicts with the Academic Framework, that Standard will take priority.
- 12.3 The Academic Framework aims to inform the design and delivery of the University's awards, in line with the Academic Regulations and policies published in the [Code of Practice for Assessment and Academic-Related Matters](#).
- 12.4 The Framework aims to provide a consistent approach to the design and delivery of awards and to minimise structural complexity to provide the best and equitable student experience of the learning, teaching and assessment at the University.

### Awards and programme structures

- 12.5 In line with the [Academic Regulations](#), awards of the University may be single or joint honours.
- 12.6 The University may approve:
  - a) Single Honours awards

These could be made up of one or two subjects. Programmes validated as a single award could have a designated 'and' or 'with' where there are two subjects reflected in the award title.
  - b) Joint Honours awards

These have a designated 'and' between two subject areas, this denotes a joint honours award where both subjects are given equal weighting.
- 12.7 For Joint honours awards the dissertation or capstone module can be studied in either subject area or a combination of both subjects.
- 12.8 Integrated Master's degrees are defined as an undergraduate degree and should therefore follow the general regulations for undergraduate awards.
- 12.9 Credit is awarded on the principle that 10 credits relate to a notional 100 hours of learning time.
- 12.10 Awards should be made up of modules that normally follow a 20 credit pattern for undergraduate degrees and 30 credits for postgraduate taught degrees, in line with the assessment scheme of compensation (refer to the Award and Progression sections of the [Code of Practice for Assessment](#)), apart from the designated dissertation or capstone modules, which should be 40 credits or more.
- 12.11 Modules should not be deemed non-compensable, or have qualifying fail marks, except where:
  - a) This is required by a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body.
  - b) The item(s) of assessment in question are the only item(s) of assessment which measure a Programme Learning Outcome.

- 12.12 Programmes can be made up of compulsory and optional modules.
- a) Having a programme comprising no optional modules is as valid as a programme comprising some optionality.
  - b) Level 4 of a programme of study should normally comprise only compulsory modules.
  - c) The number and range of optional modules at other levels should be reasonable and should be carefully chosen to ensure a programme of study remains coherent and programme learning outcomes can be met. We would normally expect no more than double the number of modules available for the choices to be made (e.g. if a student needs to choose 60 credits, the maximum number of credits making up the optional modules available would equal no more than 120 credits).
  - d) Optional modules cannot be the sole module delivering a specific programme learning outcome.
- 12.13 It is an expectation of the University that modules will have a minimum number of students to ensure that an appropriate student experience can be delivered. Programme structures should ensure minimum student numbers on modules can be delivered. Expected minimum numbers of students on modules are 10 for undergraduate modules and 8 for postgraduate taught modules.
- 12.14 Dual level modules, where students can study the same content but undertake summative assessments as appropriate for the level in which the student is currently studying, may be permitted in certain circumstances, such as for programmes with professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements. These are assessed against the Programme Learning Outcomes and marking criteria for the appropriate level.
- 12.15 It is expected that modules will follow a semesterised delivery pattern unless an alternative delivery pattern is agreed for progression by the Academic Quality team and approved at the point of validation, revalidation or amendment. Delivery in a condensed format is not normally expected.
- 12.16 Zero-credit modules may be used in limited circumstances.
- 12.17 Compulsory zero-credit modules would normally be limited to the following circumstances:
- a) Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements where it is not appropriate for this to be accommodated within a credit-bearing module.
  - b) Requirements to complete an external qualification which is compulsory to the programme.
  - c) Requirements linked to End-Point Assessments associated with non-integrated apprenticeships.
  - d) Placement or study abroad modules.
- 12.18 The inclusion of any non-compulsory zero-credit modules is expected to be used in exceptional circumstances only. Any proposals must be agreed by the Academic Quality team and approved by validation panels and/or the Programme Amendment and Scrutiny Panel.

## **Delivery approach**

- 12.19 The default delivery mode for validated timetabled contact time at the University is face to face.
- 12.20 Alternative delivery modes, such as online delivery, will be considered early in any institutional quality processes and approved through those processes. This should be no later than at the point of review by Strategic Portfolio Committee.
- 12.21 The use of alternative delivery modes, including online timetabled contact time, will be noted in programme documentation (programme and module specifications).
- 12.22 Online timetabled contact time should be delivered synchronously and in ways that provide students with opportunities to engage in the sessions.
- 12.23 Where timetabled contact time is face to face, it is expected that students engage face to face; any technological aids such as lecture recording are for learning enhancement at a later stage.

## Contact Time

- 12.24 Baseline expected levels of timetabled contact time will differ between some module types and, in some cases, between some subject areas.
- 12.25 It is normally expected that the baseline expected timetabled contact time for a classroom or laboratory-based module would be 15% of overall learning hours (equating to 30 hours or 2.5 hours per week across a 12-week semester for a 20-credit module). Other module types have more flexibility in the minimum level of timetabled contact time.
- 12.26 Programmes constrained by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements around timetabled contact time may have different levels of contact time than those set out above; these will be agreed for progression by the Academic Quality team and approved at the point of validation, revalidation or amendment.

## Assessment

- 12.27 In line with the [Principles of Assessment](#), assessment load should be proportionate and reasonable. It is recommended that there is a maximum of two components of summative assessment per module.
- 12.28 All summative assessment weightings must add up to 100%. Where there is more than one assessment component, due regard should be given to staggering deadlines to avoid bunching of assessments.
- 12.29 Each assessment component should be given one mark only. Should an assessment component be required to be given two marks, each mark should then be designated as separate components. No mark calculations should take place outside of the student records system.
- 12.30 Where a portfolio is an assessment component, this should be marked holistically and given one mark, without calculations made using marks from individual parts of the portfolio. A portfolio should meet the description outlined in the Assessment Formats Policy in the [Code of Practice for Assessment](#).
- 12.31 As a general guide, the size of each summative assessment component for a 20 credit module for undergraduate programmes should be as detailed in the Assessment Formats Policy in the [Code of Practice for Assessment](#).
- 12.32 As a general guide, the size of each summative assessment component for a 30 credit module for postgraduate programmes should be as detailed in the Assessment Formats Policy in the [Code of Practice for Assessment](#).
- 12.33 All taught programmes must include a dissertation, capstone or individual study module of at least 40 credits. This should be at Level 6 for three-year Bachelor's degrees and at Level 7 for integrated Master's degrees and postgraduate taught programmes. They usually take place at the end of the programme of study.
- 12.34 All research programmes will include a thesis or equivalent, of a size suitable to the nature of the programme.

## Award titles

- 12.35 The University will not approve more than one programme with the same award title. This includes awards that may be validated for collaborative provision.
- 12.36 Programmes with different titles must contain sufficient volumes of differentiation in content, for both intended and exit awards. Programmes should be differentiated as follows:
  - a) Undergraduate degree: minimum of 80 credits, which must include 40 credits difference at Level 5 and 40 credits different at Level 6, excluding the dissertation / capstone module.
  - b) Postgraduate taught degree: minimum of 30 credits at Level 7, excluding the dissertation / capstone module.
  - c) Integrated Master's degree: minimum of 120 credits, with 80 credits difference matching the difference in the linked Bachelor's degree and 40 credits being at Level 7, excluding the dissertation / capstone module.

- 12.37 It is normally expected that awards approved for delivery by franchise partners will also be delivered by the University.
- 12.38 Where a Foundation Year has been taken with an undergraduate degree, this will not be reflected in the title of the award.
- 12.39 Awards can be approved as both exit and intended awards. Exit awards will usually have the same title as the intended award except where the intended award is a protected title or where insufficient specialist knowledge has been gained at the point of the exit award.
- 12.40 Where a BSc, MSc or MSci is awarded, it is expected that the majority of the award studied will be of a scientific nature. This should be more than 80 credits in each level for undergraduate awards and 100 credits at level 7 for postgraduate taught awards. Otherwise, the award will be designated as a BA, MA or MArt award.
- 12.41 Except where required by a professional, regulatory or statutory body, award titles do not include mode of study, location of study, partner organisation or abbreviations.

### **Employability and graduate attributes**

- 12.42 All programmes should include the principles of employability design encompassed in the [Work Related Experiential Framework](#). These principles enable work-based learning and employability skills to be built into the curriculum.
- 12.43 All programmes should demonstrate how they will instil the graduate attributes and will be required to do so in the design narrative when going through (re)validation.

### **Inclusive education**

- 12.44 Programmes should be designed to ensure that all groups of learners, regardless of their background or demographic characteristics, have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- 12.45 To achieve this, programme teams should use the [Inclusive Higher Education Framework](#) to audit practice, identify areas for development and design interventions to ensure that programmes are as inclusive as possible.
- 12.46 All programmes should demonstrate their engagement with the above as part of the design narrative when going through (re)validation.

### **Programme amendments**

- 12.47 Programmes at the University are validated on a six yearly cycle, with revalidations taking place in the fifth year of delivery. Revalidated programmes can only immediately replace the earlier version of the programme if this has been requested and approved in the revalidation process if required. Timelines may vary where there are Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) requirements.
- 12.48 [Changes to programmes](#) before the revalidation cycle can be made through the Programme Amendment Scrutiny Panel (PASP) or approved by School Quality Panels.
- 12.49 Amendments to programmes requested through the Programme Amendment Scrutiny Panel that amount to:
- a change to the programme learning outcomes; or
  - a change to the overall programme assessment strategy; or
  - a new award title; or
  - replacing more than 33 per cent of the curriculum
- could potentially result in a programme requiring a full business case and/or to be fully revalidated. Levels of changes to programmes between validations are monitored by PASP.

## Minimum cohort numbers

- 12.50 Programmes are typically viable with a minimum cohort of 10 students for undergraduate programmes and 8 students for postgraduate taught programmes.
- 12.51 For programmes starting in September, programme numbers will be reviewed on or before 31 July, with a recommendation for suspension then being put forward to Strategic Portfolio Committee if minimum numbers are not reached. For other entry points, this will be two months before the start of the programme.

## Internal reference points

- [Inclusive Higher Education Framework](#)
- [Principles of Assessment](#)
- [Liberation, Equality and Diversity Guidelines for Validation Events](#)
- [Academic Regulations](#)
- [Code of Practice for Assessment and Academic-Related Matters](#)
- [Work-Related Experiential Learning Framework](#)

## External reference points

- [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
- [Subject Benchmark Statements](#)
- [The UK Quality Code](#)
- [Office for Students Regulatory Conditions](#)

## Version control statement

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Version:	3
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Approved by:	Academic Board
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## Amendments since approval

Version	Detail of revision:	Date of revision:	Revision approved by:
1	Initial version	28/06/2023	Academic Board
2	Scope updated to include taught components within research degrees and exempt Master of Fine Art (MFA) awards from the framework. Updated to include guidance on expected quantity of optional modules. Updated to include guidance on expected use of zero credit modules and process for approving non-compulsory zero credit modules. Two new sections added to include guidance on: Delivery approach and, Contact Time	26/06/2024	Academic Board
3	Updated to confirm the minimum cohort size for postgraduate taught programmes has changed from 5 to 8. This minimum cohort size may impact the range of module choices available to students.	25/06/2025	Academic Board