

ACADEMIC AWARDS FRAMEWORK

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1. Purpose

To set the parameters within which all the University's academic courses are designed and approved, thereby ensuring consistency both within the University and against external benchmarks.

2. Scope

Academic courses (sometimes called 'programmes') which are validated by Sheffield Hallam University. A course can be defined as 'any stand-alone, approved curriculum followed by a student, which carries academic credit or otherwise contributes to an award of the degree-awarding body.' [Quality Code, B1, Programme Design and Approval, QAA, 2013]

3. External Points of Reference

- The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QAA, 2008, revised 2014) - adherence to which ensures that the University's awards are comparable with those offered by the HE Sector in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and within the broader international context.
- Higher Education Credit Framework for England (QAA, 2008, revised 2014).
- Subject Benchmark Statements, as published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
- Frameworks published by accrediting professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies (PSRBs)

4. Internal Points of Reference

- [University Strategy](#)
- [University Quality Framework](#)
- [Standard Assessment Regulations](#)
- [Policy on Summative Assessment](#)
- University approach to Equality and Diversity
- Briefing on responsibilities of Boards of Governors in relation to HEFCE's new operating model for Quality

5. Course Design Principles

All University award-bearing courses should be designed to ensure that there is academic coherence. Students should experience a range of learning, teaching and assessment methods along with appropriate use of learning technologies and other resources. Students should gain skills, knowledge, scholarly attitudes and graduate attributes that are relevant to employment or career advancement, and they should be well prepared for both local and global employment and citizenship.

Study should be multi-disciplinary where possible and allow for 'real world' problem solving. Where possible, consideration should be given to innovative use of the academic year (e.g. accelerated courses) and the provision of work placements. All provision will be inclusive, supporting students from all background, providing the best opportunity to succeed.

6. Learning Outcomes

A learning outcome is defined by the Quality Assurance Agency as 'What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning' (QAA, FHEQ, 2008, revised October 2014). Learning outcomes for courses should align with the QAA's Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) Qualification Descriptors, national Subject Benchmark Statements and/or other relevant external reference points.

Module learning outcomes should be appropriate for achievement at the associated level. Whilst there should be a broad alignment between module learning outcomes at a particular level, most particularly where the course is accredited by a Professional, Statutory, Regulatory Body (PSRB), care should be taken not to 'over engineer' this to the extent that the student learning and assessment experience is weakened.. There should also be evidence of progression in the learning outcomes as the level of study increases, culminating in the ability to meet the course level learning outcomes and thereby evidence achievement appropriate for the award.

Learning outcomes should be easily understandable by students and other stakeholders and should be expressed in clear English.

7. Course Structure

A 'course structure' refers to the way in which the associated modules contribute towards both the intended award and all intermediate awards. This structure must be articulated for the course to be validated.

Course structures may be influenced by subject conventions, departmental requirements or the requirements of an accrediting body. The design of a course will be assessed at the point of validation and then reviewed over time through the normal quality and academic management processes.

The inclusion of opportunities for international exchange (Erasmus and non-Erasmus) in the design of the course is strongly encouraged, except where the requirements of an external accrediting body preclude such an arrangement.

8. Award title

The title of the intended award must relate to the course content and should adhere to relevant external reference points, including national Subject Benchmark Statements and QAA guidance on qualification nomenclature (The Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, Section 6, QAA, 2014). Intermediate award titles must also clearly relate to the learning outcomes of the associated modules.

9. Joint Honours Degrees

A joint honours degree award title should be used where a course comprises **two different academic subject areas / disciplines** in approximately equal proportions by credit value. The award title should reflect this balance of subject disciplines by using the standard format, in alphabetical order of subject unless otherwise validated, as follows: **A (subject 1) AND B (subject 2)**

10. Major-Minor Honours Degrees

A major-minor honours degree award title should be used where a course comprises **two different academic subject areas / disciplines** and will normally consist of 80 credits in the major subject and 40 credits in the minor subject at both levels 5 and 6. The award title should reflect this balance of subject disciplines by using the standard format of listing the major subject followed by the minor subject, as follows: **A (subject 1) WITH B (subject 2)**

Award titles should normally be limited to two subject components. Requests to combine three subject disciplines will be considered on a case by case basis.

11. Routes and Pathways

The term '**pathway**' is an informal term used to describe a designated pathway through the available modules on a course which implies a specialism, where this is not reflected in the award title. For example, BA(Hons) History may include a collection of modules on the history of the Soviet Union which students may elect to follow, but which will not make any difference to the title of their main award which will remain as BA(Hons) History. It should be noted that under the 'pathway' model, the students all remain on the same course (in contrast to the 'route' model) throughout.

The norm within the University is the '**pathway**' as described above however it is also possible to create a course which has a number of named '**routes**'. The term '**route**' is used to describe a designated route through the available modules on a course which leads to a distinct specialism. This is usually reflected in the award title. For example, a main award of BSc (Hons) Engineering may have an associated route leading to the award of BSc (Hons) Engineering (Sustainable Technologies). It is possible to have an associated 'route' where the modules and the learning outcomes are identical to the 'normal' course and, in this instance the specialism would come from the dissertation or project module.

Where a student opts to take a specific route, they will be transferred from the 'generic' course - for example, BSc (Hons) Engineering, onto the 'specific' course - for example, BSc (Hons) Engineering (Sustainable Technologies). This is sometimes done at the point of progression between Levels 4 and 5, and sometimes between Levels 5 and 6. It should be noted that although these courses can be aggregated for the purposes of internal reporting, they may

appear as separate courses within the NSS, the DLHE survey and HESA reporting.

12. Joint, Dual and Multiple Awards

According to the QAA 'Characteristics Statement for Qualifications involving more than one Degree-Awarding Body' (QAA, 2015 pp 7 - 8):

Joint Degrees arrangements

'... may be joint in all aspects, involving all partners (of which there may be more than two) in roughly equal proportions in all aspects of programme design, development, delivery, assessment, management and decision-making on student achievement. Students may spend time studying at each of the partners involved in the arrangement. Students successfully completing the programme gain a single certificate'

Double or Multiple Degrees occur where

'students completing a programme that is otherwise wholly joint (as described above) are awarded two (or more) certificates, one from each degree-awarding body involved. The certificate and/or transcript or record of achievement, or Diploma Supplement, of at least the UK degree-awarding body or bodies refer to the existence of the other(s) and makes clear that they refer to the completion of a single, jointly conceived, programme. Where legally permissible, the same reference is included on the documents issued by the other degree-awarding body or bodies.'

Dual Degrees occur where

'a student does not need to satisfy the requirements of all the partners to receive an award. In this case, the programmes are designed to enable students to achieve more than one distinct set of criteria (learning outcomes or other requirements), although in some arrangements the different sets may overlap.'

'One example of this type involved two degree-awarding bodies jointly designing a programme of study comprising a joint initial curriculum (or two parallel and equivalent curricula), followed by two separate blocks taken consecutively at each partner in turn, leading to two separate qualifications awarded individually by the two degree-awarding bodies. The qualifications may be at different levels. Students who successfully complete both programmes receive separate institutional or national certificates, one for each of the two separate qualifications, granted by each of the awarding bodies involved. Each degree-awarding body is responsible for its own award but the two components form a single package, and the overall arrangement is a joint enterprise that requires elements of joint management and oversight. Each degree-awarding body generally delivers a substantial proportion of the programme at the level of the qualification they award. A distinguishing feature of this type of arrangement is that the overall study period and volume of learning is longer than for either of the individual awards separately, but typically shorter than if each of the programmes of study had been taken consecutively. This is because they are designed to lock together with overlapping curricula.'

Proposals for dual/double or joint degrees will be examined in the context of the partner and the educational framework operating if the partner is beyond the UK. The university cannot devolve standards to another institution and so how SHU assures itself of these standards in designing the award(s) with its partners will be at the heart of the approval process. Joint degrees require **a single set of regulations** agreed by both parties which are academically jointly managed. Dual or Double degrees should have a single agreed set of regulations though this is not an absolute requirement as it is with Joint awards.

13. Intermediate Awards

A set of standard intermediate awards, with defined learning outcomes, should be available for all award-bearing courses as defined within the Academic Awards Framework (See Awards Table, Section 31). These will be approved at validation. Intermediate award titles must be justified by the relevant learning outcomes and modules studied.

Intermediate awards are only conferred to students who choose to (or are required to) exit the course at an

intermediate stage and who have met the requirements for the intermediate award. Students cannot rejoin the same course with the intention of achieving the intended award without first forgoing the intermediate award. This is to prevent the use of the same credit for more than one award. The preceding sentence does not apply to discreetly constructed 'step on – step off'/'credit escalators' professional qualifications where the CPD nature requires to student to build up credit, awards and competencies as they progress in their professional lives.

14. Alternative Awards

Courses accredited by a relevant professional, statutory and/or regulatory body (PSRB) must have alternative awards available to students who may pass the requisite modules and gain academic credit appropriate to the named award, but who are not eligible for the accredited award because they have not met the specified PSRB requirements. Students who are unable to meet the requirements for an accredited award must be provided with opportunities to transfer to a non- accredited, but academically related award, at the appropriate stage within the programme.

15. Exemptions for Accredited Programmes

All courses are expected to adhere to the Academic Awards Framework, except where the requirements for accreditation as specified by a relevant Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Body (PSRB) require a deviation. In such cases, exemption from the University's Academic Awards Framework will be required via whatever process currently in place to seek and agree such..

16. Modes of Study and Intensity of Study

Courses can be validated with any of the following modes of study: full time, sandwich, part time with attendance, part time by distance learning or full time by distance learning.

In accordance with HEFCE definitions, full time students are normally required to study for periods amounting to at least 21 hours per week, for 24 weeks within the year of study. Part-time students study, on average, less than 21 hours per week for less than 24 weeks per year or are studying on a FT course which lasts for less than 24 weeks.

Distance Learning Mode

Courses which are not delivered at a University campus or at an offsite partner campus or other location but are wholly delivered by the University 'at a distance', using online delivery methods only or a combination of online delivery and a limited amount of residential or block delivery, are termed 'distance learning' courses. Distance learning courses can be validated in either full time or part time mode (FT DL or PT DL).

Sandwich Mode

The 'sandwich mode' of study applies to courses which incorporate a significant period of supervised work experience or industrial placement of at least an academic year, which is non-credit bearing. Sandwich courses are distinct from other courses that are offered in FT or PT mode which may include credit bearing work- based learning modules involving shorter periods of placement. For external reporting purposes, sandwich years are defined by HEFCE as either a 'thick' or a 'thin' sandwich according to the following criteria:

- **Thick sandwich** students are those for which an industrial (or other) placement causes a continuous absence from full-time study of at least one academic year.
- **Thin sandwich** must involve the student in an average of more than 21 hours study a week for a minimum of 24 weeks study/placement.

To carry an award title of 'degree in sandwich mode', a course must adhere to one of these definitions.

Where a course is offered in sandwich mode, it must also be offered in full time mode. This is to ensure an alternative for students who are unable to gain a sandwich year placement.

Sandwich courses should incorporate both pre- and post-placement modules that enable students to prepare for their sandwich year and allow an opportunity to reflect on their learning during the sandwich year after they have returned to full time study during the fourth and final year of the sandwich course.

Note on Blended Learning

Blended Learning is not a recognised mode of study by HESA and as such it is not possible to use the term to be the formal designator of how a course is delivered.. The term is usually used when describing a course which integrates face to face taught and distance learning/online learning delivery methods and this is to be encouraged as part of good course design but the mode of study would remain Full Time, Part Time or Sandwich.

17. Credit Values

A full time **undergraduate** course should consist of 120 credits per academic year, and must consist of at least 90 credits per academic year. A part time academic year of study at undergraduate level must consist of less than 90 credits (i.e. 90 credits equals full time and 89 credits equals part time).

A full time **postgraduate** course should consist of 180 credits per calendar year. A part time postgraduate course should consist of between 60 and 90 credits per academic year.

18. Maximum Course Duration

In order to protect the integrity, currency and relevance of awards, a maximum duration is specified for all taught courses (based on the assumption that students enter at the lowest level of the award). The maximum duration applies to the highest level (the intended target award of the student) and does not preclude the awarding of intermediate awards to students who do not achieve their intended award.

Undergraduate Awards

	Normal Full Time	Maximum Full Time	Maximum Part Time
Integrated Masters* (incl SW mode)	5 years	7 years	9 years
Sandwich Degree with Honours	4 years	7 years	9 years
Honours Degree	3 years	6 years	8 years
Degree (non honours)	3 years	6 years	7 years
Honours Degree (top-up degree, L6 only)	1 year	2 years	3 years
Foundation Degree	2 years	4 years	6 years
DipHE	2 years	4 years	6 years
CertHE	1 year	2 years	3 years
HND	2 years	4 years	6 years
HNC	2 years	2 years	3 years
Graduate Diploma	1 year	2 years	3 years
Graduate Certificate	1 year	1 year	2 years

* Integrated Masters meet the requirements for a first UG degree for course duration, fees and funding purposes.

Professionally accredited UG courses may have a lower maximum duration to meet the requirements of the Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Body (PSRB). Such courses will be subject to formal exemption being granted by the University.

Postgraduate Awards

	Normal Duration	Maximum Full Time	Maximum Part Time
PGCE or Professional Certificate in Education (PCE)	1 year	2 years	4 years
PgCert	1 year	2 years	2 years
PgDip	1 year	2 years	4 years
Masters Degree (taught)	1 year	3 years	6 years

*does not apply to Integrated Masters - see UG durations table, above

19. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The University conforms to sector norms on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The University has procedures for the approval of claims for RPL from individual applicants. The maximum amount of RPL that can be claimed towards a UG honours degree is 240 credits (120 L4 and 120 L5) out of 360 credits. The maximum amount of RPL that can be claimed towards a masters degree is 120 credits out of 180 credits at level 7. The maximum amount of RPL that can be claimed for 'top-up degrees' and ordinary degrees are as set out in the procedures, regulations and maximum credit values for the [Recognition of Prior Learning](#), published separately. Some accredited courses may be exempt from the recognition of prior learning in order to meet all requirements for accreditation. Where this is the case, this will be stipulated by the relevant Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Body.

20. Accredited Courses - Additional Regulations or Criteria

Courses may incorporate additional regulations or other criteria for passing the whole course or elements of the course to meet professional requirements for accredited courses. In such cases, this must be considered as part of the validation process.

21. Modules and Course Design Principles

Module Definition

A module is defined as a self-contained, structured learning experience with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. A number of credits are assigned to each module to indicate the amount of learning undertaken (see also notional study hours) and a single level is assigned to indicate the relative depth of learning involved. Together, these are known as the **credit value of a module**.

Module Credit

Undergraduate modules should be available in multiples of 20 credits, up to a maximum of 120 credits. The exception to this is the **University Language Scheme** which offers 10 and 20 credit elective modules at undergraduate level. Use of 10 credit modules (delivered over a semester) or 20 credit modules (delivered over an academic year) as elective modules requires careful consideration of the overall structure of the course.

Postgraduate modules should be available in multiples of 15 credits, up to a maximum of 60 credits (exceptionally projects or dissertations of 75 or 90 credits may be considered at validation).

Course designers need to be aware that module of more than 20 credits are not eligible for compensation under the [Standard Assessment Regulations](#).

Module Duration and Assessment

Modules should be delivered within a specified period, normally not more than once per academic or calendar year (NB: students who do not complete the specified final module assessment task within a period of 13 months may be defined as 'non-completers' for external reporting purposes).

Module assessment marks and the award of credit for all students within each individual module cohort are ratified at the next relevant Department Assessment Board (DAB).

The course structure must specify the way in which all modules contribute to all awards associated with the course, including intermediate awards.

Module Designation and Course Design

Mandatory Modules are required within all awards and are approved at validation. Mandatory modules are those which a student must pass in order to achieve a named award and are designated as 'mandatory' because they deliver the essential content and skills required for the achievement of the course learning outcomes. The relationship between the learning outcomes of mandatory modules and the overall course learning outcomes is considered and approved at validation. Mandatory modules may be compensated (unless an exemption from [Standard Assessment Regulations](#) has been approved), but cannot be substituted.

Elective Modules are modules chosen from an agreed list of electives which is specific to the course and is approved at validation. Elective modules also contribute to the overall course learning outcomes. The list may change from year to year and modules can be added or removed throughout the time a course is operational. Any such amendments to the agreed list of electives, subsequent to a validation, are subject to approval by the relevant Departmental Board. Elective modules may be compensated or substituted. The overall number and availability of elective modules will be determined by individual Faculties or Departments to ensure that all provision remains viable.

At **postgraduate level**, a minimum of 60 credits (out of 180 credits overall) must be designated as mandatory. At the **Pg Cert and Pg Dip** stages of the award, the mandatory and elective modules may be distributed as appropriate to the individual design of the award. At **Masters stage**, all credit must be designated as mandatory and must comprise either:

- 60 credit dissertation/project module **or**
- 15 credit research methods module plus a 45 credit dissertation/project module

Prerequisite Modules

Where necessary to meet accreditation requirements or similar, and where academically appropriate, there may be a formal pre-requisite relationship specified between modules, requiring the study of the prerequisite before a student can proceed on to study the related module. If a module is to be a formal pre-requisite for the study of another module then this must be specified in the course structure and approved at validation. The expectation is that the prerequisite module will be at a lower level of study than the related module.

Non-Credit Bearing Modules

Some courses may include modules which, although non-credit bearing, must be passed in order to gain a sandwich degree or an accredited degree (for example, a placement module on a sandwich course). Traditional assessment methods are not appropriate for non credit bearing 'sandwich' modules though the 'sandwich' should have clear criteria for student success. Such modules are approved at validation and cannot be introduced or modified, post-validation, without University approval by the Departmental Board in consultation with AQS. These modules are recorded on SITS (the student and curriculum management system) as carrying one credit to signify that they must be passed in order to gain an award. The exception to this is modules on non-credit bearing courses, where the credit count is zero in line with the non-credit bearing status of the course. Finally, there are also activities which are sometimes informally represented as modules, such as 'study enhancement sessions'. These will always carry zero credits.

Independent Study Modules (ISMs)

Independent Study Modules (ISMs) consist of credit-bearing, individually-negotiated learning activities and outcomes that fall outside of a taught module. ISMs are not normally appropriate for level 4 study other than in exceptional circumstances, e.g. to retrieve a credit shortfall which could not otherwise be retrieved by study of another module that is currently available and being delivered as part of a taught course. Independent Study Modules are not formally approved as taught modules within an award and are therefore subject to a separate approval process (via the relevant Departmental Board) in line with the University's [policy](#), regulations and requirements for ISMs. ISMs may be permitted up to a maximum of 20 credits at level 5 or 6 within an undergraduate award and, exceptionally, up to a maximum of 40 credits per level. At postgraduate level, an ISM may be permitted up to 15 credits and, exceptionally, up to a maximum of 30 credits within a Masters award. Where an ISM is to be undertaken to retrieve a credit deficit (eg. as a replacement for a failed mandatory module that is no longer available) to enable the student to gain an award, the agreed learning outcomes for the ISM must be consistent with those of the module that has been replaced

Module Delivery Patterns

Module delivery patterns will need to be specified for each module and approved at validation. Modules may be delivered in one or more of the following ways:

- In a single semester (also known as 'short fat')
- Across two semesters (also known as 'year-long')
- Across three trimesters in circumstances where the academic year exceeds 36 weeks (eg pre-registration

- nursing or accelerated degrees)
- In designated blocks of study (also known as 'block delivery')
- By distance learning/online learning (student studies at a distance from the University).

Single semester delivery of modules is important to support the internationalisation of courses, particularly when study abroad, Erasmus or other international exchanges are seen as a goal of the course. Where international exchanges do occur it is important that the students are able to join in with existing cohorts and thereby create a genuinely international experience. Having international students study by themselves is not recommended.

Notional Study Hours

Notional study hours are the average hours of study which will be required for a student to complete a module successfully. These are based on 10 notional study hours per 1 academic credit, e.g. 200 hours per 20 credits and continuing on the same scale for modules of higher credit values. A typical full-time undergraduate year of 120 credits will require 1,200 notional study hours.

Credit and Notional Study Hours

If modules are delivered according to the standard academic calendar then it is recognised that all notional study hours must be accommodated within the student study year. For a FT undergraduate degree course delivering 120 credits per academic year, 1200 notional study hours will normally be delivered within an academic year equating to two semester (though there are exceptions to this, e.g. pre-registration nursing). For a FT postgraduate Masters degree course delivering 180 credits in 1800 notional study hours these will normally cover a calendar year or longer. The overall period allowed to incorporate the relevant number of notional study hours will cover teaching weeks, study weeks, the submission of all coursework and/or completion of all scheduled examinations. Notional Study Hours per module are approved at validation and are documented in standard module descriptors. **The overall delivery of the course should ensure students (either UG or PG) are not required to study for more than 48 hours per week to achieve the correct number of notional study hours required for the course - i.e. scheduled hours plus guided independent study.**

Modules and Teaching Delivery

Modules delivered in a single semester/trimester are taught over 12 teaching weeks and modules delivered across the full year are taught over 24 weeks (UG) and 24 or 36 weeks (PG). Any modules delivered over a shorter period than this will be considered as 'block delivery' and the delivery period should be detailed in course documentation. Where modules are delivered outside of traditional semester/trimester weekly delivery patterns, course designers must ensure that students can achieve the required number of notional study hours in a way that supports their learning and is agreed at validation.

Arrangement of Modules across Semesters

Each semester does not need to have the appearance of a balanced credit number (i.e. 60 credits) but course designers must ensure that student work and assessment loads are appropriate to the award and are not more onerous than needed to assure the standard of the award.

22. Foundation Degrees: Specific Design Features

Foundation Degrees must align with the national Qualification Benchmark for Foundation Degrees (QAA, 2010).

All Foundation Degrees must incorporate the following features:

- Significant sector involvement relevant to the main subject of the FD
- Significant experiential / work-related learning element for both full-time and part-time students
- Flexible pathways into Foundation Degrees to promote access for students studying on a part-time, full-time or distance learning basis, on and off-campus
- Articulation arrangements with at least one University Honours Degree for Foundation Degree graduates, plus a statement of progression opportunities to professional qualifications or higher-level NVQs
- An appropriate use of recognition of prior learning (RPL) to facilitate both entry to a Foundation Degree and progression to an associated Honours Degree. As with other University awards, RPL may lead to exemption from academic and/or work-based learning elements of the curriculum - this should be clearly

specified in course documentation.

23. Accelerated Degrees

Accelerated degrees offer a concentrated approach to study that largely benefits vocationally based disciplines and particularly courses utilising significant work placement and/or work experience. All 360 credits are delivered across two calendar (as opposed to academic) years structured into trimesters. The default delivery model would see the student study at the university between October and May and then undertake two substantial 60 credit work placements (at the start of level 5 and again to complete level 6) during each summer. This model allows the student to share time with students on campus who are following a traditional 3 year degree as well as to benefit from intensive application to be found in the work placements. An alternative model would see the whole 2 year course based in employment with the use of block delivery, residential, etc., for some of the academic content delivery. These two models are not exclusive however and a purely campus based study option based on two full years structured into trimesters would be available for courses not requiring work based elements. The university has good experience of delivering over the full calendar year, whether with pre-registration Nursing or the summer schools that contribute to the TAR UC dual degrees. As accelerated degrees become more established within the sector the university will seek to inform and contribute to sector best practice.

24. Integrated Masters Awards and Course Structure

Integrated masters degrees are level 7, second cycle qualifications and are positioned at masters level in alignment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), and the HE Credit Framework for England (QAA, 2008, revised 2014). Integrated masters degrees are normally delivered over a minimum of 4 years and contain at least 480 credits, including a minimum of 120 credits at level 7 to meet the requirements for a masters level award. Integrated Masters awards are required to the FHEQ Qualification Descriptors for levels 6 and 7 in full. The remaining 360 credits are designed to meet the requirements for a first honours degree and are recognised as such for funding, fees and external reporting purposes. These awards comply with the University's [Standard Assessment Regulations](#) and are classified in line with the classification system for first degrees (i.e. bachelor's degrees with honours). Integrated masters will use modules based on 20 credits (and multiples thereof) at levels 4, 5 and 6 and may elect to use this tariff at level 7 also or may use the standard PG modules of 15 credits (and multiples thereof).

25. PGCE, ProfGCE and PGDE

The awards of Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (ProfGCE) and Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) are specialist education and teacher training courses in primary, secondary or Post-16 education and lead to qualified teacher status (QTS). The courses are designed to provide a range of routes into teaching and incorporate a substantial proportion of time on placement in partner schools (typically 120 days / 24 weeks) to enable students to meet the professional Teaching Standards requirements for QTS. The courses are aimed at graduates but can be studied either at masters level (PGCE or PGDE) or undergraduate level (ProfGCE). PGCE and PGDE courses are delivered in full time or part time mode over one or two years and comprise 60 or 120 masters/level 7 academic credits, respectively. The Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (ProfGCE) is similar in structure to the PGCE and allows trainee teachers to work towards Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) but comprises academic credit at level 6. On successful completion of an award, the University will make a recommendation to the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) for the award of QTS. The courses are offered via a range of delivery and funding models. Delivery may be University-led with study based both at the University and on placement in schools or may be School-led, whereby students are based in a school setting throughout their studies. The University offers a range of School-led delivery models in partnership with external organisations or schools' consortia, including School Direct, School-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) and Teach First.

26. Small Awards and Transcripts for Academic Credit

Small Awards

The University's range of 'small' awards are generally aimed at those returning to higher education, particularly in the context of work-based learning (pre-degree) or for the purposes of recognising achievement in continuing professional development (post experience and/or postgraduate). Small awards fall within the scope of the

Academic Awards Framework and are subject to the same formal approval processes as standard awards.

Only coherent course of study that are formally validated as award-bearing provision (with credit and level requirements as specified in Table 6.3 below) will lead to eligible students being conferred with the appropriate small award and will be recognised by a relevant formal award certificate.

Table of Credit and Level Requirements for Small Awards

Award	Minimum Number of Credits Required	Minimum Number of Credits at the Level of Award	FHEQ Level
Transcript of Credit Only	Undergraduate (Levels 4, 5, 6) Minimum of 20 credits, up to 60 credits Postgraduate (Level 7) Minimum of 15 credits, up to 30 credits	Transcript of credit only. The amount and level of credit will vary depending on the module or combinations of modules taken as unprogrammed.	Transcript of credit only. The amount and level of credit will vary depending on the module or combination of modules taken as unprogrammed.
Pre-degree (the following awards are subject to validation)			
University Certificate	60	40 @ L4	4
University Diploma	60	40 @ L5	5
University Advanced Diploma	60	60 @ L6	6
Post-experience (the following awards are subject to validation)			
University Professional Certificate	60 - 100	60 @ L5	5
University Professional Diploma	60 - 100	60 @ L6	6
University Advanced Professional Certificate	30 – 45	30 @ L7	7
Practice Certificate in Independent Prescribing	30	30 @ L7	7

The conferment of any of the small awards described in the table above will **not** lead to eligibility to attend any of the University's main graduation ceremonies.

Transcripts of Academic Credit for CPD or Extra-Curricular Activity

Individual, unprogrammed or free-standing modules or groups of modules amounting to a total of credit less than 60 credits (UG) or 30 credits (PG) are not normally approved as leading to a formal University award, but will be recognised through a formal transcript of academic credit.

Individual or groups of modules may be approved as part of validated, award-bearing provision, but may also be used for unprogrammed, free-standing delivery outside a specific award-bearing course.

Alternatively, individual credit-bearing modules or groups of modules may be approved separately, for the purposes of providing CPD provision or other extra-curricula activities such as short, credit-bearing courses which do not lead to a University main or 'small' award.

27. Non-Credit Bearing Activity / Short Courses, Events, Exchanges

This may include:

- short training courses
- conferences, workshops, seminars, single day or residential events designed for the purposes of continuing professional development

- 'taster' course, summer schools, other recruitment activities or extended induction course for potential applicants/students
- UK, Europe or overseas exchange visits that are not part of a formal, approved course structure

The duration of the above may vary in length from a day or more to a significant number of weeks. This type of activity cannot require any formal summative assessment leading to the award of academic credit or any other type of academic award.

Specific requirements for **non-credit bearing** short course are not defined within the Academic Awards Framework and are not subject to quality processes described within the [Quality Framework](#). Such activities do not lead to academic credit or academic awards and therefore do not form part of formally validated awards as specified by the Academic Awards Framework. On this basis, formal University approval is not required for this type of activity. Department Boards may wish to consider as good practice having some mechanism to assure themselves that such activity is being undertaken to standards commensurate with all other University activity. Business planning, costing, fees and specific resource requirements for this type of non credit-bearing, non award-bearing activity are a matter for local determination by individual faculties' planning groups. Faculties should negotiate with relevant University Directorates in cases where access to specific learning resources (including BlackBoard) is required to support non credit-bearing, non-award bearing activities.

Recognition of non-credit bearing activity

Faculties may wish to provide a formal letter or confirmation of attendance/completion document to recognise these types of non-credit bearing activities, events and training sessions. Production of a formal confirmation of attendance document must be agreed with Registry Services who are responsible for the security of all aspects of University certificate-type production and the use of University logos and/or crest on any documents provided in recognition of non-credit bearing activities. Confirmation of attendance/completion documents can only be produced according to standard specification by, and with prior permission of, Registry Services.

28. Foundation years, extended degrees and sub HE credit.

Extended degrees, preparatory years, foundation courses and all other pre or sub HE qualifications are outside of UK and European HE frameworks. Please note that the term 'foundation' in this context is in no way related to 'Foundation Degrees' which are a Level 5 nationally defined HE qualification. Unless explicitly stated and agreed at validation any such awards and its constituent credit is not a part of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Credit within such courses is sometimes referred to as 'Level 0' and sometimes as 'Level 3'. It is important if using the term 'Level 3' that it is made explicit that this is not QCF Level 3 but rather Sheffield Hallam University's own internal credit, which unlike HE credit (Levels 4 to 7), has no currency beyond the University. Other Universities may accept such credit as part of entry onto Level 4 of an award but they are not required to do so. When designing Foundation years/courses it must be explicit what the successful student can progress onto as result of completing the foundation course. Extended Degrees by their nature have seamless progression for students passing the first (sub HE) year. Consideration should be given as to whether foundation or preparing years allowing progression onto an accelerated degree may prove an attractive package, especially to international students.

29. Research Degree Courses

Research Degree Courses

Research degree courses are individual programmes of guided research designed to meet a set of specific aims and objectives. Research Degree Programmes, including Professional Doctorates, are not credit rated at Sheffield Hallam University. Specific outcomes, which must be met by a candidate to be eligible for the award of each type of research degree, are as set out the section on Research Degree Outcomes below.

Research Degree Courses will comprise the following elements:

- An approved title
- A statement of the Aims and Objectives which defines the research problem to be addressed or the hypothesis to be tested
- A supporting programme of related studies or guided reading tailored to the needs of the student, with an

emphasis on relevant research methodologies

- A review of existing scholarly work in the field of study, through a review of literature or other work, thus setting the programme in an appropriate disciplinary context
- Collection, analysis and ordering of data relevant to the research, using appropriate methodologies
- Generation of findings from the research process, coherently related to the research problem or hypothesis, evidenced by the relevant data and related to the framework of existing knowledge in the field.

All research projects leading to a research degree award require formal Ethics approval through the relevant University Ethics process or External Research Ethics body.

And will culminate in:

- The production of a written thesis, supported by artefacts and other media as appropriate, which demonstrates the achievement of the programme's aims and objectives and which is defended at an oral examination.

Research Degree Outcomes

The following outcomes must be demonstrated by all research degree candidates in order to be eligible for the relevant award to be conferred:

Masters Degree by Research (MbyRes History, English and LLM) will be awarded to successful candidates on the basis of:

- Mastery of an approved research topic or an area of professional practice, correlated with the established field of knowledge and/or professional practice
- Demonstration of competence in research methods appropriate to the field
- Demonstration of achievement of Learning Outcomes at Level 7

Master of Professional Studies Degree (MProf)* will be awarded to successful candidates on the basis of:

- Mastery of an approved research topic or an area of advanced professional practice, correlated with the established field of knowledge and/or professional practice
- Demonstration of competence in research methods appropriate to the field
- Demonstration of achievement of Learning Outcomes at Level 7

***Note on MProf Awards:** Candidates who are unable to complete a Professional Doctorate programme, or leave the programme before the final assessment, may apply for an MProf award provided they have successfully completed 2 years of study and meet all other eligibility criteria for the award of MProf as set out above. An MProf can also be awarded to candidates who are assessed for a Professional Doctorate award but who do not meet the requirements outlined above.

Master of Philosophy degree (MPhil)** will be awarded to successful candidates on the basis of:

- Mastery of an approved research topic, correlated with the established field of knowledge
- demonstration of competence in research methods appropriate to the field
- demonstration of achievement Learning Outcomes at L7

****Note on MPhil Awards:** Candidates may apply to study for MPhil only. PhD candidates who leave the PhD programme before the final assessment may apply to write up for MPhil. Candidates who fail at Confirmation of PhD stage may be advised to write-up for MPhil. An MPhil can also be awarded to candidates who are assessed for a PhD but who do not meet the requirements outlined above. In all cases, candidates must meet all other eligibility criteria for the award of MPhil as set out above.

Professional Doctorate (e.g. DBA/DProf/EdD) will be awarded to successful candidates on the basis of:

- Mastery of an approved research topic or an area of advanced professional practice that extends the understanding of an established field of knowledge and/or advanced professional practice
- consolidation of competence in research methods appropriate to the field
- demonstration of achievement of Generic Learning Outcomes at L8

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) will be awarded to successful candidates on the basis of:

- Mastery of an approved research topic, extending the understanding of an established field of knowledge
- consolidation of competence in research methods appropriate to the field
- demonstration of achievement of Generic Learning Outcomes at L8

Higher Doctorate award (e.g. DLitt/ DEng/ DSc/ LLD) will be awarded to successful candidates on the basis of:

- Demonstration of a major original contribution to the advancement or application of knowledge and the status of the individual as a leading authority in the field of study.

Research Programme Supervision

Research students will be supervised by supervisory teams with appropriate subject expertise, supervisory experience and time to supervise students. The University encourages team supervision but individual supervisors with sufficient expertise and experience may be proposed – this is a matter for local determination.

Research Programme Duration

Students and their supervisors will determine the expected duration of the programme of research in accordance with the mode of study. In order to protect the integrity and relevance of awards, students will be expected to submit a thesis for examination normally within the following minimum and maximum permissible timescales:

All Doctoral candidates will undertake the Confirmation of PhD/Doctoral process as a formal interim assessment point in order to progress towards assessment for a Doctoral award.

Degree & Mode	Normal minimum permissible time for completion from date of enrolment*	Normal maximum permissible time for completion from date of enrolment**
MPhil		
Full-time	18 months	24 months
Part-time	30 months	36 months
PhD FT/PT		
Full-time	24 months	48 months
Part-time	36 months	84 months
Professional Doctorates		
Full-time	36 months	60 months
Part-time	48 months	84 months

**The Research Degree Durations included here were confirmed by Research Degrees Sub-committee for the start of the 2014-15 academic year (durations are subject to change following approval of further revisions to the University's Research Degree Regulations)*

***Allowing for any period of enforced interruption of study approved via suspension.*

30. Work Based Learning Framework

Purpose

The University-wide Work-Based Learning Framework (WBLF) provides a range of work-based programmes from level 4 to level 7 for delivery both onsite and in collaboration with UK and international partners. The Framework is

designed to support bespoke work-based learning programmes, including higher and degree apprenticeships, for students from across all four faculties of the University.

Employer-led Provision

Framework provides the University with a flexible, cross-faculty approach to the 'fast-track' development of new work-based awards to meet a growing demand for employer-led, CPD-type provision aimed at corporate clients and collaborative partners. The Framework is anticipated to address a decline in part-time provision at the University; to support the development of new Higher Apprenticeships and other government initiatives in this area; create a platform for certain types of corporate/collaborative partnerships and provide a responsive mechanism to support the 'City Region' agenda.

The WBLF provides SHU with a long-term approach to employer provision, building on the innovation of a small number of advocates and practitioners and moving towards longer term sustainable critical mass. The processes and systems are intended to help each Faculty establish a way of working and ensure it can evolve and be refreshed in line with the [SHU strategy](#).

Key Features

The WBLF is intended to provide development teams with a flexible approach to the design of employer programmes and to compete with sector standards for work-based learning. Specifically, the innovative features of the Framework are:

- A recognition that the workplace is a legitimate site of knowledge.
- Critical Reflection as an intellectual and practical tool used for personal and professional development e.g. personal and professional development theme
- Widening participation and access to HE agenda
- Allowing learners to take responsibility for their own learning, including its nature, and within certain parameters, its focus and pace
- Negotiation as a key concept, both at programme level and within modules e.g. Work-based Project and Academic Credit for CPD modules.
- Awarding academic credit for work related learning arising experientially in the workplace as well as learning that is applied in the workplace.
- Emphasising opportunities for RPL, both experiential and certificated, and developing the skills of learners to make a RPL claim via the Preparing for RPL module
- The provision of a credit rating process and system to recognise employer or sector based programmes not originally situated within HE, but designed and delivered 'in-house' rather than directly by the HE sector itself
- A set of guiding systems and process to ensure that SHU is 'fleet of foot' in responding to employer demands whilst maintaining academic standards

Higher Degree Apprenticeships

The WBLF has been the main vehicle for approving higher and degree apprenticeships at SHU and allows us to develop a high quality consistent approach to the design, development and delivery of degree apprenticeships. A Teaching Essentials toolkit has been developed to support work-based learning and degree apprenticeship and covers:

- the core modules of work based project;
- personal and professional development and negotiated learning ensuring efficiency;
- sharing of good practice;
- a model to prepare the apprentice for the end-point assessment.

In line with our strategic ambition to be the leading provider of degree apprenticeships the AAF and WBLF will enable innovative design and approval of higher and degree apprenticeship to meet both employer needs and the requirements of the apprenticeship standard.

31. Minimum Level Credit Requirements and Maximum Duration of Study

University Award	Minimum Overall Credits	Minimum Required at Highest Level	Other Credit and Level Requirements	QAA FHEQ Qualification Level	FQ-EHEA Cycle	ECTS Credits Equivalence	Intermediate Awards	Max Duration of Course in FT Mode
University Preparatory Year (Extended Degree Programmes) <i>NB: this does not confer an HE award and is only available as part of an extended degree</i>	120	120 @ L3 (not QCF L3)		-		60	n/a	2 years
University Certificate of Higher Education (Cert HE)	120	120 @ L4		4		60	n/a	2 years
BTEC Higher National Certificate (HNC)	120	120 @ L4		4		60	n/a	2 years
Certificate in Education (CertEd)	120	60 @ L5	Remaining 60 @ L4 or higher	4		60	n/a	2 years
University Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)	240	120 @ L5	Remaining 120 @ L4 or higher	5	SHORT CYCLE (within or linked to the first cycle) qualifications	120	Cert HE	4 years
BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND)	240	120 @ L5	Remaining 120 @ L4 or higher	5		120	Cert HE	4 years
Foundation Degree eg. FdA / FdSc / FdEng	240	120 @ L5	Minimum of 100 @ L4 or higher	5		120	Cert HE	4 years
Advanced Diploma of Higher Education	300	60 @ L6	Minimum of 120 @ L5 and remaining 120 @ L4 or higher	5		150	n/a	3 years
Graduate Certificate	60	60 @ L6		6		30	n/a	1 year
Graduate Diploma	120	120 @ L6		6		60	Grad Cert	2 years

Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (ProfGCE)	60	60 @ L6	Includes compulsory non-credit bearing modules designed to meet the requirements for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or equivalent	6		60	n/a	1 year
Bachelor's Degree* (ordinary degree) e.g. BA / BSc / BEng	300	60@L6	Minimum of 120 @ L5 and remaining 120 @ L4 or higher	6	FIRST CYCLE (end of cycle) quals	150	Cert HE Dip HE	5 years
Bachelor's Degree with Honours* (honours degree) e.g. BA (Hons), BSc (Hons), BEng (Hons), LLB (Hons)	360	120 @ L6	Minimum of 120 @ L5 and remaining 120 at L4 or higher	6		180	Cert HE Dip HE Ordinary Degree	6 years or 7 years in SW mode; 2 years for L6 'top-up'
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)	60	60 @ L7	Includes compulsory non-credit bearing modules designed to meet the requirements for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or equivalent	7		60	PgCert (non-QTS) to recognise L7 credit	
Postgraduate Certificate (Pg Cert)	60	60 @ L7		7		30	n/a	3 years
Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)	120	120 @ L7	Designed to meet the requirements for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or equivalent	7		60	PgCert (non-QTS award) to recognise level 7 credits or PGCE	3 years
Postgraduate Diploma (Pg Dip)	120	120 @ L7		7		60	Pg Cert	3 years

Integrated Masters Degree (first degree)* eg. MEng / MSci / MArt / MComp / MArch / MDes See Note 6.	480	120 @ L7	Remaining 360 meets the requirements of an honours degree	7	SECOND CYCLE (end of cycle) quals	240	Cert HE Dip HE Degree	7 years
Masters Degree (PG taught) eg. MA / MSc / MTL / MBA / MRes / MMedSci / LLM / Med/MFA	180	180 @ L7	MFA 240 2 years plus in PG award Master of Fine Art	7		90	Pg Cert Pg Dip	6 years (including all stages)
Masters Degree by Research eg. LLM by Research; MA in English by Research	Non credit-rated		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery of an approved research topic or an area of professional practice, correlated with the established field of knowledge and/or professional practice • Demonstration of competence in research methods appropriate to the field • Demonstration of achievement of Generic Learning Outcomes at Level 7 	7				24 months
Master of Professional Studies (MProf)	Non credit-rated		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery of an approved research topic or an area of advanced professional practice, correlated with the established field of knowledge and/or professional practice • Demonstration of competence in research methods appropriate to the field • Demonstration of achievement of Generic Learning Outcomes at Level 7 	7				24 months

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	Non credit-rated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery of an approved research topic, correlated with the established field of knowledge • demonstration of competence in research methods appropriate to the field • demonstration of achievement of Generic Learning Outcomes at L7 	7				24 months
Professional Doctorate eg. DBA / EdD / DProf	Non credit-rated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery of an approved research topic or an area of advanced professional practice that extends the understanding of an established field of knowledge and/or advanced professional practice • consolidation of competence in research methods appropriate to the field • demonstration of achievement of Generic Learning Outcomes at L8 	8	THIRD CYCLE (end of cycle) quals	-		60 months
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Non credit-rated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery of an approved research topic, extending the understanding of an established field of knowledge • consolidation of competence in research methods appropriate to the field • demonstration of achievement of Generic Learning Outcomes at L8 	8		-		48 months
Higher Doctorate eg. DEng / DLitt / DSci / LLD	Non credit-rated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of a major original contribution to the advancement or application of knowledge and the status of the individual as a leading authority in the field of study 	8		-		

Notes on Sheffield Hallam University Academic Awards Framework

1. The University's Academic Awards Framework is a common Framework for the design of undergraduate and postgraduate courses through which the academic standards of all the University's awards can be defined and can be cross-referenced to relevant external frameworks and benchmarks including [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(QAA, October 2014\)](#)
2. Sandwich Mode: University awards marked with an asterisk * are also available as 'sandwich' awards. In addition to the credit requirements shown in the table above, these awards include a substantial period of supervised work experience as a requirement of the award (see AAF, Section 3.9, Mode of Study). Achievement of a sandwich award is indicated on University Certificates and Transcripts.
3. Awards may include credit that has been recognised through the University's procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning. Credit derived from such procedures is indicated on the University Transcript.
4. Substitution of higher level credit, for deficiencies at lower levels, may be permitted subject the relevant [Standard Assessment Regulation](#) and to meeting the specific aims, learning outcomes and other requirements of individual named awards.
5. Compensation may be applied to all the main Undergraduate awards defined in the table above unless an exemption has been approved. The rules for compensation are detailed in the University's Assessment Regulations. Compensation is not available for any Postgraduate award.
6. Integrated Masters degrees are level 7, second cycle qualifications and are positioned at masters level in alignment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), (QAA, 2008) and the HE Credit Framework for England (QAA, 2008). Integrated masters degrees are normally delivered over a minimum of 4 years and contain at least 480 credits, including a minimum of 120 credits at L7 to meet the requirements for a masters level award. The remaining 360 credits are designed to meet the requirements for a first honours degree. Integrated masters awards are recognised as undergraduate for funding, fees and external reporting purposes. Integrated masters awards are required meet to the FHEQ Qualification Descriptors for levels 6 and 7 in full. These awards conform to the University's Assessment Regulations for undergraduate awards and are classified in line with the classification methods for bachelor's degrees with honours. Further information is provided in the [Standard Assessment Regulations](#).
7. An associated PGCE award (see below) may be approved for the purposes of providing an alternative award to recognise achievement of 60 credits and eligibility for QTS, subject to meeting all requirements for QTS.
8. The minimum credit and level requirements must be met for all awards, as specified above. Exemptions will be required where credit and level requirements would be exceeded and this will only be considered for the purposes of meeting the specific requirements for accreditation by a relevant Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Body (PSRB).

32. External Appendices

1. *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (QAA, October 2014)*
2. *Summary of the England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI) generic credit level descriptors (previously known as NICATS) (Appendix B, Higher Education Credit Framework for England, QAA, 2008)*