

Introduction

1. Kingston University's Strategic Plan has Learning, Teaching and the Curriculum as one of its four key elements:
 - To ensure a broad base of curricula while developing relevant, challenging and well-taught programmes that engage with theory and practice and with teaching informed by research.
 - To respond swiftly to new learning opportunities and lead the development of new areas within the curricula.
 - To support the growth of programmes, particularly at postgraduate level, that focus on identified areas of academic strength, and which will include provision for employer-led, work-based learning and continuing professional development.
 - To ensure that the curriculum takes full account of the challenges of our age.

[\(Strategic Plan 2008-13\)](#)

2. Good course design is the basis of our work with students so this guide is intended to provide support for colleagues by offering a framework of principles for curriculum design. These principles should be read in conjunction with section C of the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook.
3. Very few programme teams are able to start from scratch – most programmes are developed from existing programmes and modules. Even within these constraints there are fundamental questions that need to be debated as much as possible. People who deliver, manage and monitor the modules will be more committed to the curriculum if they have helped to design it. It is suggested, therefore, that at an early stage as many staff as possible are engaged in discussions and activities that will help with the design of the programme.

External factors

4. At all stages of programme development teams need to take account of subject benchmarks
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp>
and
The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) 2nd edition revised 2008
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf>
5. Teams designing Masters' level programmes should look at the definitions of masters level characteristics:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/masters/MastersDegreeCharacteristics.pdf>

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Teams designing Foundation Degrees should look at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationdegree/benchmark/fdqb.asp>

Internal factors

6. Programme teams should ensure that they take account of [The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy](#)

Kingston University's Graduate Attributes:

- A sound knowledge base within their subject
- A sense of preparedness for a knowledge driven economy
- Confidence
- KEYS: Self-awareness, Communication skills, Interpersonal Skills, Research and Information Literacy Skills, Numeracy Skills, Management and Literacy Skills and Creativity and Problem-Solving Skills
- A reflective approach to their own learning and an appreciation of the benefits of lifelong learning
- An awareness of the social, cultural and economic context of their university experience
- A respect for the views of others
- International horizons and an awareness of global citizenship
- Entrepreneurial zeal
- Commitment to Ethical Practice

Kingston University's Skills Framework

http://www.kingston.ac.uk/academic-development-centre/adc-publications/documents/key_skills.pdf

The Personal Development Planning Framework which states that all students will be introduced to the opportunity for PDP at the start of their programme

<http://staff.kingston.ac.uk/C4/Section%20C%20-%20Validation%20of%20New/default.aspx>

All students will be provided with opportunities (together with an accompanying rationale) for PDP at the start of their programme, on transition into programmes and subsequently at all levels of the programme of study

The Employability Strategy

<http://com.staff.kingston.ac.uk/sites/committees/VCA/VCAAD/VCAADGO/default.aspx>

Principles

7. The following principles for underpinning curriculum development include those published by Liverpool John Moores University (2010):

Principle 1: The curriculum should be holistic, coherent and aligned

8. **Aims.** The programme team should develop a common approach to the purpose of a programme and produced a list of aims (around 5/6 would be

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sufficient) Each module should also have a list of aims (but for the modules these will be limited to 2/3)

9. **Learning outcomes.** The team needs to discuss what students are intended to learn, how they are expected to learn and how the learning will be assessed. Constructive alignment (Biggs, 1999) requires that all parts of the curriculum relate to each other in a logical way. Thus the learning outcomes are statements of what a learner should know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a defined unit of learning. See <http://dep.staff.kingston.ac.uk/sites/AD/Staff%20Portal%20Documents/LANDTWEB%20DoCS/PDFs%20for%20ADC/Guide%20to%20Writing%20Learning%20Outcomes.pdf>
10. **Assessment.** Decisions need to be made early on which assessment methods will demonstrate the students' achievements of the learning outcomes and about the relationship between summative and formative assessment. It is helpful to consider assessment across a programme as well as at the module level:
 - Are there too many assessments?
 - Are deadlines too bunched?
 - Are there too many assessments of the same kind?
 - Where are the KEYS assessed?
11. Account needs to be taken of faculty guidelines regarding pass requirements in modules, for example in the balance between coursework and examinations and whether each element of assessment needs to be passed. It is important to ensure that the student is assessed against all programme learning outcomes but it is also important to ensure that students are not over-assessed. See the Kingston University Assessment Framework <http://www.kingston.ac.uk/academic-development-centre/quality-assurance-and-enhancement/documents/framework-assessment.pdf>
12. **Learning activities.** Once the learning outcomes and assessment tasks have been decided the next stage is to consider the learning activities that will give students the best chance of achieving the learning outcomes. These are likely to involve active learning techniques and the appropriate integration of virtual and physical spaces and technologies. It is also important to recognise the different uses of space and the use of technology to enhance flexibility in the curriculum.
13. **Each 15 credit module carries a notional 150 hours of study time.** The team need to consider how these hours are broken down into contact hours- and what form this contact will take and independent study –and what students will do with this independent study time as well as how they will use technologies.
14. The Programme Team is required to complete a Programme Specification (see <http://staff.kingston.ac.uk/C4/Section%20C%20-%20Validation%20of%20New/default.aspx>)

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15. In the “Features of the Field” section it is useful to draw out the particular focus and features of the programme, for example unique selling points, employer engagement and any work based learning opportunities.

Principle 2: The curriculum should be inclusive and accessible

16. The Equality Act 2010 replaced all existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The Act sets us, as a public body, a General Equality Duty (GED) to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
 - foster good relations between different groups.
17. The Equality Act extends the scope so now we must consider our work as relates to the characteristics of race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.
18. Our General Equality Duty tells us what we have to deliver but we are also set Specific Duties which tell us how we must deliver that Duty. The emphasis is on transparency in terms of data and outcomes so that those who are interested in our work can see the progress we make to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.
19. To enable this transparency we are required to assess and publicise the impact of our provision to ensure we meet our General Duty as it relates to the equality characteristics. This means when designing and delivering our curriculum we need to ensure we have taken the opportunity to advance equality of opportunity. In practical terms this means all modules and programmes have to be inclusive and in particular accessible to disabled students, provided that Health and Safety Standards can be met and academic standards are not undermined.
20. The curriculum is examined at many points: internally through validation, annual monitoring, internal subject reviews and externally through external examiners and institutional audits. There are therefore many opportunities to ensure we deliver our General Duty and this section provides some examples to help do this.

Developing a programme:

21. Thought should be given at the earliest stages of planning and development to issues of diversity. For example, will the programme be accessible to all students or do you need to plan in some anticipated reasonable adjustments? We need to consider the extent to which programmes and modules appeal to a diverse student body and encourage an understanding of diversity and equality issues. In what ways can cultural diversity be explored and cultural awareness and harmony promoted?

Learning Technologies

22. Learning technologies provide many options in expanding the range and approaches that can be implemented to meet different user needs. For advice and guidance please see the Techdis resources (<http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk>) and the help resources in Studyspace.

Annual Monitoring

23. The annual monitoring process can be used to consider the impact of the curriculum on groups of students. The data warehouse provides access to information which may help module leaders or course teams to take decisions on advancing equality. The evidence will be through our admissions, retention and attainment data as well as student feedback.

Principle 2a: The curriculum should be student centred

24. Consideration should be given to the role that learning technologies can play in enhancing student contribution and participation including the development of student authored resources. This may include providing students with edit access to modules to enable contribution, the use of tools that promote collaboration and student contribution including Wikis, Blogs, discussion groups, student created groups and networks and recognition of students personal and mobile technologies.

Principle 3: The curriculum should foster a deep approach to learning and encourage independence in learning

25. Research by Marton and Saljo (1979), Tait and Entwistle, 1996, Bandura, 1997, Dweck, 1999 has highlighted the ways in which students tend to approach their learning:
- Deep approaches where the learner seeks to understand the subject and engage meaningfully
 - Strategic approaches where the learner's focus is on achieving good grades and may adopt deep or surface approaches or even choose modules depending on what will achieve those grades
 - Surface approaches where the intention is to achieve a pass and may think that recalling information is the key requirement. Students may adopt surface approaches where their workload pressure is high or where assignments are bunched or where assessment tasks, such as examination questions, may allow them to rely on memory.
26. It is also important to consider student digital literacy's including research skills. Beetham et. al. (2009) summarise a number of challenges including:
- Learners information literacies are relatively weak but learners have little awareness of the problem
 - There is poor support for learners developing strategies for learning
 - Learners require intensive support in migrating to more ICT-based study practices

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27. Certain learning activities, such as an enquiry-based approach, may help students to engage more meaningfully.
28. Again it is important to stress the importance of examining the nature of assessment on the programme so that assignments aren't bunched and they prompt the application of learning rather than simply recall.

Principle 4: The curriculum should be based upon/have links to research/scholarship

- In designing the curriculum it is worth considering how links can be strengthened between research, teaching and research informed teaching. The programmes could be developed in ways that support the research process:
 - Current knowledge
 - Development of research skills/research mindedness
 - Support for critical thinking
29. The Academic Directorate Paper AD149 05/06 identified the University's definition of Research Informed Teaching. This paper recommended that the University should focus its activities in this area on:
"Research-based (teaching), where the curriculum is largely designed around inquiry-based activities rather than the acquisition of subject content per se. The experience of staff in processes of inquiry are integrated into the student learning activities and the division of the roles of student and teacher are minimised. The two-way interaction between teaching and research/scholarship is exploited. Individually designed, WBL and blended learning programmes are likely to feature strongly"
 30. In 2009 the University's approach to RIT was reviewed by an external consultant resulting in the development of a new guidance document "Research-mindedness: a curriculum approach to research informed teaching broadly based context.". This approach is summarised in the following diagram where students progress from a staff led acquisition of disciplinary knowledge to student led research building disciplinary knowledge:
Healey, M (2009) Unpublished manuscript for HEA

Principle 6: The Curriculum should be responsive to and build on the skills and resources, community and personalisation afforded to students through the Internet and web based and personal technologies.

34. The Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learning Experience reported in 'Higher Education in a Web 2.0 World' (CLEX, 2009), that there were a number of key issues facing Higher Education relevant to curriculum design including:
35. Information literacy
 - Connection between Web 2.0 environments used in the social and learning domains
 - Web 2.0 tools are well disposed to supporting active learning
 - Group based work supported by technologies in schools is likely to change expectations
 - The importance of communication, participation, networking and sharing skills are becoming essential for learning and employment, and Web 2.0 tools have an important role to play.

Help for teams

Learning Technologies

A range of institutional learning technologies are available to staff including:

- Studyspace (Blackboard) including mobile interface
 - Online assessment (Blackboard, Respondus and QMark Perception)
 - Turnitin Plagiarism Detection service
 - Online marking (Turnitin Grademark)
 - Restricted access blogs and wikis (via Blackboard)
 - Public facing Blogs and Wikis (blogs.kingston and Mediawiki)
 - Desktop video and audio conferencing (Blackboard Collaborate)
 - Video enabled instant messaging (Pronto)
 - Podcasting and other audio tools (Blackboard Collaborate)
 - Student controlled groups & networks (One Community)
 - Electronic Voting Systems and other mobile classroom technologies
 - Creating Learning Objects (Wimba Create)
 - Text Messaging (Txttools)
36. Staff development and resources are available for all of the above technologies in addition to support provided 3rd party mobile and personal technologies. Please see <http://www.kingston.ac.uk/academic-development-centre/educational-technology/>

Sustainable enhancement, review and action (SERA)

37. The Academic Development Centre is happy to support groups of staff on curriculum development by arranging half-day development sessions. The aim of SERA half-day development sessions is not to try and impose new teaching methods or a new lexicon of terminology but, rather, to give to staff a space to review, plan and implement new learning and teaching approaches within the

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context of a specific module, course or area of concern. The chosen area for development is drawn mainly, although not exclusively, from faculties' L&T Action Plan. The support staff involved in supporting faculty colleagues will have a range of expertise (widening participation, educational technology, work-based learning, learning and teaching). It may be appropriate to consider inviting students or course reps to these events.

38. The key aim of the workshop is to achieve pre-agreed objectives (e.g. the development of a specific learning activity) by the end of the session. During the workshop support staff mainly from the Academic Development Centre but also from Information Services and equipment (eg. video, audio) will be available to support these developments.
Contact Tony McNeill for further information.

Embedding equality into the Curriculum

39. Good practice guidelines and a series of examples of modules are available on the ADC website. For further guidance on the legislation and implication for the University visit the Equality Unit's online resources:
[http://staff.kingston.ac.uk/C9/C1/Diversity%20and%20Equality%20\(new\)/default.aspx](http://staff.kingston.ac.uk/C9/C1/Diversity%20and%20Equality%20(new)/default.aspx)

Academic Support for Education for Sustainability (ESD) delivery

40. The Sustainability Hub supports professional development of staff across all faculties. In addition to organising termly research seminars from key national figures and in house ESD workshops, they can provide assistance in course and module delivery.
41. Real world learning* is a key focus of Kingston sustainability education. In addition to providing expert knowledge to inform our students about sustainability issues, we aim also to encourage transformational and experiential learning. The Sustainability Hub can help academic staff work in partnership with local and regional groups to ensure students are exposed to cutting edge sustainability issues and understand the practical implementation of sustainability theories.
42. They can provide lectures on specific sustainability topics, and help you make links with other schools from across the University to help deliver interdisciplinary modules or projects. They are also able to help in the design development and promotion of alternative learning resources. The Hub hosts a repository of sustainability-relevant texts and policy documents and all visitors are welcome to consult and work from these within the Hub.
43. For more information and to access a **repository of ESD good practice** found across KU and beyond visit
www.kingston.ac.uk/sustainability/curriculum_academicsupport
44. Learning outside of the classroom and experiencing nature and culture first hand rather than using textbooks, computers or role-play scenarios.

Self-help questions

45. The following list, by no means definitive, offers the opportunity for colleagues to ask questions regarding proposed courses/modules:
- What are the most important intellectual /professional /creative/ technical processes that a student will undertake on this programme?
 - What are the skills, techniques, behaviours, professional practices that a student will develop?
 - What are the skills, knowledge and experience that students will bring to the programme?
 - What are the important values that inform this programme?
 - How is the curriculum organised to ensure the above? Does the team have a particular approach to the curriculum, why and how?
 - To what extent does the programme align with key university strategies eg LTA, Employability?
 - How does this programme of study relate to professional practice?
 - Is this programme more than a collection of modules? Will the students see the connections between modules?
 - Is there a balance between breadth of study and depth of study?
 - What makes the level at which the programme is to be delivered appropriate?
 - How does the programme use technology to enhance learning?
 - Has the Programme Specification been reviewed to ensure that it includes no unnecessary barriers to access for students from protected groups?
 - Does the programme promote equality of opportunity and good relations between all student groups?
 - Have resources *eg.* case studies (if available) been selected to appeal to students from a wide range of backgrounds and to demonstrate the strengths of those backgrounds?
 - Are staff clear on the core elements of a programme or module and where adjustments may, or may not, be made for disabled students?
 - Has a range of assessment tasks been used which are accessible to all students?
 - Are the team aware that alternative methods of assessment should be set to meet the needs of a range of disabilities if necessary?
 - Does the design of the programme, including teaching situations, ensure that equality aspects are included in the process which helps to promote equality across all groups
 - Are there any learning activities (such as field trips, laboratory sessions) that would prevent any students from accessing the curriculum?
 - Is there a variety of assessment methods?
 - Are there opportunities for formative assessment?
 - How will feedback be given to students on their progress?
 - Does the mode of delivery and assessment of learning encourage students to adopt a deep approach to learning?

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- Are there sufficient opportunities in the curriculum for students to show initiative and creativity?
- Does the programme encourage student involvement through enquiry-based work, independent enquiry?
- Have you sought student opinion about the programme?
- When/how should research skills be introduced into the curriculum?
- How can the team show that they draw upon research?
- How are sustainability issues addressed in your curriculum?
- How does the programme of study use 'Real World Learning' to enhance student learning?
- Have you considered using the campus as a learning resource?
- How are the students educated about plagiarism?
- Are there opportunities to disseminate student research?
- What are the opportunities for students to give feedback?

And finally:

- Does the programme meet the challenges set out in the Strategic Plan?

References

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Acknowledgement is given to Liverpool John Moores University upon whose Curriculum Design Guide (2010) these guidance notes are based And to David Baume (2010) *Course Design for increased student satisfaction* Leeds Metropolitan University