



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

COURSE SPECIFICATION

Guidance notes for completing the Course Specification template

**Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships
Department of Student and Academic Administration**

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Introduction

The Course Specification (see [Course Specification template](#)) is a key document that definitively describes any named award of the University. It plays a central role in course approval and review and is publicly available on the University's website. The framework for the use of the course specification is given below:

1. The primary purpose of the course specification is to be an integral part of course approval and review with the intended audiences being the academic community and students (current and prospective).
2. Course specifications provide a concise description of the expected knowledge and understanding and cognitive, practical and transferable skills of students who have successfully completed the course. They will describe the learning, teaching and assessment strategies and provide a web link to the underpinning course and module structures that enable those outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated. In addition, information of a generic nature relating to student support, evaluation, enhancement and indicators of quality and standards, and academic regulations will also be referenced by way of a link to the University's [Quality Assurance Document webpage](#). This webpage holds a wide range of documentation that relates to all courses across the University. The course specification is therefore designed to address specific and distinctive items that relate to the course further to the generic items.
3. The course specification will also provide a link to the relevant Department/School/Subject Area and course webpages including the admissions criteria. The course webpages form an important outward facing part of our course offering and should be viewed as an integral part of the course documentation and therefore form part of the annual review of the course specification document.
4. Course specifications will be prepared for all University of Portsmouth award-bearing courses and will follow the agreed University format. Where a course forms a route through an overarching programme of courses then generic programme aims and learning outcomes may also be included.

Collaborative Course Specifications

5. Collaborative courses must have separate course specifications from the home delivered course specification.

Combined Honours Degree Course Specifications

6. Combined Honours Degree course specifications will be prepared as one document by the home Department using the standard course specification template and should include all the learning outcomes of the programme. This should reflect appropriate aspects of both parts of the course working in consultation with the Course Leader in the away department.

Courses including work-based learning or placements

7. For any course where work-based learning or placement (including study abroad) is a part of the curriculum, whether compulsory or not, reference is made in the guidance notes in this document but reference should also be made to the University of Portsmouth's [Code of Practice for Work-based and Placement Learning](#).

Learning outcomes

8. The course or subject learning outcomes will be developed taking account of external reference points, e.g. Subject Benchmark Statements, [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#), Occupational Standards etc, and will be achievable regardless of the modules selected by students. It is also acceptable, although not encouraged, to include learning outcomes that are conditional upon the selection of particular modules or groups of modules. These will be clearly expressed as conditional along with an indication of the modules required to achieve them.

9. The course specification learning outcomes will be set at threshold level, i.e. it will be expected that students who have successfully completed the course will be able to demonstrate the learning outcomes. This will be made clear in the introductory wording along with generic qualification descriptor/s for every award it is possible to achieve, including lower exit awards where applicable. The Course Specification Document will include a web link to the University's [Quality Assurance Document webpage](#) that references these generic learning outcomes.

Mapping and course approval

10. During Course Approval, course specifications will be accompanied by a Consolidated Mapping Document which specifies further details regarding modules, assessments, hallmarks and benchmarks. Module details for new courses must also be given on a separate [Course Structure Form](#) and once a course has been approved, the course structure will be available as a report from the Student Record database.
11. The Consolidated Mapping Document includes details of:
- Course Learning Outcomes – showing in which modules the course learning outcomes are taught and assessed. It is generally assumed that the course learning outcomes are achieved in the core modules. If this is the case, then it is only necessary to map the core modules. If it is not the case, you must demonstrate where the learning outcomes can be achieved regardless of the option choices selected.
 - Hallmarks map – the course learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment strategies should be developed to embed employability skills and reflect the [Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate](#). The Hallmarks map indicates where these are developed in the curriculum. A [checklist](#) has been developed to act as a prompt when considering the Hallmarks.
 - [Subject Benchmark Statements](#) / other key Standards specific to the course (e.g. Degree Apprenticeship standards) showing in which modules the benchmarks / standards are mapped
 - Course Assessment – showing the overall range of assessments and their specifications (e.g. length of examination, word counts for essays, etc)

Recognition of Prior Learning

12. The course specification should make reference to the [Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning](#) if appropriate.

Dissemination to students

13. The information contained in the course specification will be conveyed to students. This might be through the course specification itself or via course handbooks. Students may review their progress in achieving the course learning outcomes in their Personal Development Planning.

Currency of data and review process

14. The currency, relevance and coherence of the academic content of courses will be reviewed on an annual basis with the course specification being revised, if necessary, for the forthcoming academic year. This will also include a review of the course specific web page.
15. Uniform course specification templates will be used across the University. Course teams may add subfields to these templates to accommodate the requirements of their anticipated audiences.
16. Each course specification will include a Disclaimer.

Completion of the Course Specification template

The following is a copy of the MS Word template with guidance notes in red text.

Course Title	Title of ALL named awards, including staged awards if applicable
Final Award	Award type e.g. BSc, BA, LLB, MSc
Exit Awards	e.g. Certificate in Higher Education, Diploma in Higher Education
Course Code / UCAS code (if applicable)	The Student Records 'C' or 'R' code and UCAS code (if applicable). These will both be provided by Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships for new courses following Phase 1 approval
Mode of study	e.g. full time, part time
Mode of delivery	e.g. Campus, Distance Learning
Normal length of course	e.g. 3 years, 4 years with placement
Cohort(s) to which this course specification applies	e.g. from September 2019 intake onwards
Awarding Body	This will usually be University of Portsmouth but may be another body (e.g. Pearson for Higher Nationals).
Teaching Institution	This will always be University of Portsmouth except for courses delivered with/by others such as collaborative courses, when it may be the name of the partner institution (AND its specific department if applicable).
Faculty	Enter the full name of the University of Portsmouth Faculty that owns the course.
School/Department/Subject Group	Enter the full name of the University of Portsmouth Department/School/Subject Group that owns the course
School/Department/Subject Group webpage	Enter the School/Department Subject Group web page url
Course webpage including entry criteria	Enter the course web page url
Professional and/or Statutory Regulatory Body accreditations	Add the names of any accrediting bodies.
Quality Assurance Agency Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level	e.g. level 6,7,8

The section below is standard wording included on all course specifications.

This course specification provides a summary of the main features of the course, identifies the aims and learning outcomes of the course, the teaching, learning and assessment methods used by teaching staff, and the reference points used to inform the curriculum.

This information is therefore useful to potential students to help them choose the right course of study, to current students on the course and to staff teaching and administering the course.

Further detailed information on the individual modules within the course may be found in the relevant module descriptors and the Course Handbook provided to students on enrolment.

Please refer to the [Module Web Search](#) for further information on the course structure and modules.

Educational aims of the course

The aims should be phrased as the broad intentions of the course. These may be general or subject specific. They are under the control of the teaching team and are what you wish to achieve with your course. They can be written as text, as bullet points or numbered e.g.:

- To provide a challenging and stimulating study environment
- To provide a framework allowing students to follow a flexible coherent programme of study
- To equip students with the necessary transferable skills for lifelong learning, employability and flexibility in the context of changing labour markets
- To provide students with the skills and knowledge required to maximise career and postgraduate study opportunities

The aims must clearly reflect the specific purposes of any placement or work-based learning elements (including study abroad). If it is not compulsory, include a sentence that indicates the programme “provides an opportunity for students to gain experience and skills relevant to employment (or further study) within ***** sector/subject area by choosing relevant work placement/work based learning/study options”.

Further examples for Foundation degrees:

- To provide a framework within which academic knowledge and understanding is integrated with vocational skills and competency
- To offer an accessible, flexible and coherent programme in which work based learning is an integral part

Further examples for Combined Honours routes:

- To enable students to study two subject areas and develop specialist interests and knowledge
- To provide an opportunity for students to create links between two different subject areas

Also list the various routes that this route is currently in combination with and include a short 4/5 line synopsis on the rationale for each combination, e.g.:

European Studies – The BA (Hons) European Studies and Politics degree provides students with an excellent opportunity to study two inter-related subjects in depth. The study of European history, ideas and social and political change is strengthened through an understanding of political power and conflict at the local, national, regional and global levels. Moreover, the study of Politics is enhanced through a concentration on the region of Europe.

Course Learning Outcomes and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies

The [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#) sets out a national framework of qualification levels, and the associated standards of achievement are found in their [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) document.

The Course Learning Outcomes for this course are outlined in the tables below.

Notes:

The first column contains the number of each course learning outcome.

The second column contains the content of each course learning outcome. As a guide, the preferred number of learning outcomes would typically be in the range of 1 - 3 for each of the four domains and not exceed 5 within an individual domain.

In the third column, state the learning and teaching methods used to enable students to achieve these outcomes.

In the fourth column, state the assessment methods/strategies used to test that a student has achieved these outcomes.

Please note the third and fourth columns should also reflect how the activities enhance employability and assist in developing Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate.

As with module learning outcomes, the course learning outcomes should be phrased in measurable terms. They should be greater than the sum of the parts (i.e. more than module learning outcomes) - the course allows a bringing together of these individual outcomes. These are what students will be expected to know and be able to do on successful completion of the whole course. At Portsmouth, we have chosen to express these at threshold level. The phrasing of the Learning Outcomes should draw on the [Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate](#) and should be expressed as broad outcomes. To facilitate cross-referencing, the learning outcomes should be written as numbered statements following on from the opening phrase. For further guidance, see [Guidance notes for writing module and course aims and learning outcomes](#).

Courses with work-based learning (WBL) and/or placements (including study abroad) should reflect the expectations of what students will learn through the placement or WBL experience. Consider that students might well be expected to develop further knowledge and understanding or cognitive skills through a work based or study abroad experience, not only practical or transferable skills. If placement/WBL is not a compulsory requirement, you can indicate that specific learning outcomes can be met if certain options are chosen.

Postgraduate staged awards should include general learning outcomes for the whole programme and specific learning outcomes for the Postgraduate Diploma and Master's degree.

Combined Honours routes should include the following:

Generic Learning Outcomes of the Combined Honours Degree course

Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Understand the key aspects of two subject areas
- Apply appropriate techniques of analysis to two subject areas
- Research topics and devise and sustain arguments related to two specific subject areas
- Discuss current research and scholarship related to two subject areas
- Discuss the current limits of knowledge in specific subject areas
- Take responsibility for their own learning in a Combined Honours Degree Course
- Carry out an extended piece of independent enquiry into one or more subject areas
- Communicate information in a manner appropriate to the subject and the intended audience
- Show initiative and be able to make and justify decisions

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

LO number	Learning outcome	Learning and Teaching methods	Assessment methods
A1	Add details of the knowledge and understanding that the students will demonstrate on completion of the course.	This section should outline the strategies (e.g. lectures, seminars, laboratory work, group work, simulations etc.) that enable the learning outcomes to be achieved. Reference to WBL and/or placement experience should also be included if applicable Please comment in this section on how the learning and teaching strategy	This section should outline the assessment strategies (e.g. essays, dossiers, portfolios, presentations etc.) that enable the numbered learning outcomes to be demonstrated. Include a consideration of opportunities for formative assessment. Where WBL and/or placement learning is included, ensure reference is made to both

LO number	Learning outcome	Learning and Teaching methods	Assessment methods
		develops employability skills.	formative and summative assessment. It is appropriate to include some mention about whether employers and/or other partners are involved in formative and/or summative assessment. Be clear about the nature of artefacts required. As standard generic University assessment criteria may not be appropriate, refer to equivalent but customised criteria for work based requirements where relevant.

B. Cognitive (Intellectual or Thinking) skills, able to:

LO number	Learning outcome	Learning and Teaching methods	Assessment methods
B1	Add details of the cognitive skills that the students will demonstrate on completion of the course.	As for section A	As for section A

C. Practical (Professional or Subject) skills, able to:

LO number	Learning outcome	Learning and Teaching methods	Assessment methods
C1	Add details of the practical skills that the students will demonstrate on completion of the course.	As for section A	As for section A

D. Transferrable (Graduate and Employability) skills, able to:

LO number	Learning outcome	Learning and Teaching methods	Assessment methods
D1	Add details of the transferrable skills that the students will demonstrate on completion of the course. This section should cover skills not already covered in the sections above. Its focus is on the more generic skills that graduates need when moving into their career.	As for section A	As for section A

Academic Regulations

The current University of Portsmouth [Academic Regulations](#) will apply to this course.

or

The current University of Portsmouth [Academic Regulations for Collaborative Partners](#) will apply to this course.

Delete as applicable.

Please choose one of the above statements and delete the one that is not applicable

Support for Student Learning

The University of Portsmouth provides a comprehensive range of support services for students throughout their course, details of which are available at the [MyPort](#) student portal.

In addition to these University support services this course also provides...

Please add additional distinctive items where relevant, or delete the above sentence.

Consider supplementing the above list with some of the following (or more):

- Laboratory/specialist teaching facilities.
- Workplace tutors.
- Student mentoring.
- Support prior to, during and following WBL and/or placements (including study abroad). Include roles of tutors, placement co-ordinators, administrators, supervisors and mentors as appropriate. Refer to learning support resources that will be available to students whilst off-campus. Make it clear that there are handbooks and/or other resources available that are of specific relevance to the WBL and/or placement experience.

Evaluation and Enhancement of Standards and Quality in Learning and Teaching

The University of Portsmouth undertakes comprehensive monitoring, review and evaluation of courses within clearly assigned staff responsibilities. Student feedback is a key feature in these evaluations, as represented in our [Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice](#).

The link to the central quality web page will detail the standard mechanisms. Consider including here any additional features distinctive to the course e.g.

- Course Accreditation
- Mechanisms regarding WBL and/or placements (including study abroad), e.g. Employer or partner institution feedback, systems that might be in place to either regularly audit placements or moderate judgements of competence, any specific partnership management boards
- Collaborative partnership course specific mechanisms

Reference Points

In this section set out the reference points that have been consulted in the development of the course that demonstrate the programme has currency and relevance within the academic, professional and employer communities. These may include some of the following:

The course and outcomes have been developed taking account of:

[University of Portsmouth Curriculum Framework Specification](#)

[University of Portsmouth Education Strategy 2016 - 2020](#)

[University of Portsmouth Code of Practice for Work-based and Placement Learning \(if applicable\)](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency Qualification Characteristic Statements](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency Subject Benchmark Statement](#) for *enter the relevant statement for this course*

Requirements of Professional and/or Statutory Regulatory Bodies: *add name(s) of PSRB(s)*

Vocational and professional experience, scholarship and research expertise of the University of Portsmouth's academic members of staff

National Occupational Standards

Insert additional reference points or delete as required

The sections below are standard wording included on all course specifications.

Disclaimer

The University of Portsmouth has checked the information provided in this Course Specification and will endeavour to deliver this course in keeping with this Course Specification. However, changes to the course may sometimes be required arising from annual monitoring, student feedback, and the review and update of modules and courses.

Where this activity leads to significant changes to modules and courses there will be prior consultation with students and others, wherever possible, and the University of Portsmouth will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to students.

It is also possible that the University of Portsmouth may not be able to offer a module or course for reasons outside of its control, for example, due to the absence of a member of staff or low student registration numbers. Where this is the case, the University of Portsmouth will endeavour to inform applicants and students as soon as possible, and where appropriate, will facilitate the transfer of affected students to another suitable course.

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Document details

Author	<i>Enter the name of the author of the Course Specification</i>
Date of production and version number	<i>Insert the original date of production and version number e.g. June 2018, v1</i>
Date of update and version number	<i>e.g. August 2019 v2</i>
Minimum student registration numbers	<i>Insert the minimum number of students needed for the course to run, as agreed with Faculty</i>