# Curriculum Framework

## (Amended December 2023)

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WEST *of* SCOTLAND
UWS

# Contents

## Summary of Amendments (December 2023)

Key updates to the Curriculum Framework are as follows:

- Learning and Teaching Principles (April 2023) incorporated within the Framework and consequent adjustment of Curriculum Framework Principle of Flexible and Hybrid.

- Removal of table of interdependencies and updated outline of current Curriculum Framework implementation approach.

- Removal of reference to threshold module in Undergraduate Programme Design.

- Updated ASPIRE information incorporated within the Framework.

- Clarified need for programme level authentic approach to embedding anti-racist curriculum principles.

- Updated information reflecting the development of the Master's in Professional Practice incorporated within the Framework and removal of reference to Master's in Professional Development.

# Executive summary

The UWS Curriculum Framework is a key component of the Learning and Teaching Thematic Plan. It aims to articulate the pedagogical and curriculum design principles through which we make real the strategic goals for education in the UWS Strategy 2025:

1. Our portfolio of programmes is contemporary, relevant and sustainable and allows students to thrive in the rapidly-changing 21st century workplace.

2. The delivery modes of our programmes of study are student-centred, and provide rich on-campus experiences supported by digitally-enabled learning in our physical and digital environments.

3. Our online and physical learning environments are dynamic, technology-rich and support world-class pedagogy.

4. Students are at the heart of what we do. The UWS student journey is personal, seamless, and supported by outstanding professional and academic staff and functional, student-centred and user-friendly systems and processes.

5. Our graduates are leaders, with world-ready, interdisciplinary meta-skills and flexible, global perspectives.

6. Our talented staff employ innovative student-centred teaching and learning practice and engage in continuing development in pedagogy, digital learning innovation and student support.

The Framework was developed in 2021 following significant University-wide consultation. Following launch in 2021, an amended version was produced in 2022. To maintain the relevance of the Framework, further amendments made in December 2023 were proposed and endorsed by a steering group consisting of representation from all Schools, professional services, and student representation. Approval was received by VCE and Senate.


The Curriculum Framework will continue to be implemented through the work of Schools and other University Departments using such plans, policies and projects as approved via Senate, the Learning and Teaching Committee and Student Experience Committee in the support of *Strategy 2025*, and the forthcoming Strategy 2030.

# Background

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

1. Our portfolio of programmes is contemporary, relevant, sustainable, and allows students to thrive in the rapidly-changing 21st century workplace.

2. The delivery modes of our programmes of study are student-centred, and provide rich on-campus experiences supported by digitally-enabled learning in our physical and digital environments.

3. Our online and physical learning environments are dynamic, technology-rich and support world-class pedagogy.

4. Students are at the heart of what we do. The UWS student journey is personal, seamless, and supported by outstanding professional and academic staff and functional, student-centred and user-friendly systems and processes.

5. Our graduates are leaders, with world-ready, interdisciplinary meta-skills and flexible, global perspectives.

6. Our talented staff employ innovative, student-centred, teaching and learning practice and engage in continuing development in pedagogy, digital learning innovation and student support.

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

- **Student-centred** – Meeting the diverse needs of the distinctive UWS student cohorts, using an approach to curriculum that considers and seeks to impact positively on the wellbeing of all students.

- **Engaging and active** – Using best-in-class technologies and pedagogies, to provide engaging and active learning experiences meeting the learning needs of students in contemporary Scotland.

- **Simple and coherent** – Providing carefully-designed linear pathways for students whether part-time or full-time; on-campus or online, starting in first year or joining at any time in their degree pathway.

- **Authentic** – Using real-world learning activities and assessments to best prepare students for the complex and ever-changing professional world and society in which they live and work.

- **Inclusive** – Recognising the diversity of the student body, and the need to be accessible to all.

- **Sustainable** – With efficient structures, pathways and number of modules.

Schools will work with cross-functional teams to align Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Undergraduate (UG) programmes with this Framework. Whilst these principles should inform all programme design at UWS, there may be occasions where a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requires a different approach in order to secure accreditation or formal recognition. This Framework encourages collaborative partnership working with PSRBs to identify solutions to provide robust and authentic programmes that meet the needs of students, industry, and the ethos of the University.

# UWS curriculum design principles and commitments

## Principle - Student-centred

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

**Programme and Module Design implications**

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

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

**Programme and Module Design implications**

- All learning activities at UWS will be designed from a student-centred perspective, with opportunities for interactive activities mirroring authentic professional practice and/or shaped by local and global societal issues.
- On-campus learning events will focus on providing active and interactive learning. These will be supported by asynchronous pre- and post- learning event preparation and consolidation activities.
- Programmes approved for online delivery will equally focus on active and interactive learning, delivered synchronously or asynchronously, according to the programme approval decisions.

### Commitment - UWS students are partners in their own learning.

**Programme and Module Design implications**

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

# Principle - Engaging and active learning experiences

## Commitment – Teaching and Learning at UWS will be student-centered, and provide rich on-campus experiences supported by digitally-enabled learning in our physical and digital environments.

**Programme and Module Design implications**

- A 20-credit module includes 200 learning hours, including a minimum of 36 and maximum of 48 contact hours as timetabled learning events. These contact hours will be synchronous and delivered on-campus when programmes have been approved as on-campus programmes.
- On-campus learning events focus on providing active and interactive learning, supported by readings, resources and other activities for students to prepare (pre-learning event) and consolidate learning (post-learning event)
- Asynchronous activities will be provided and designed as supplementary activities to support on-campus learning events. These should be associated with learning event preparation or post-learning event consolidation. Such activities will not be included within module contact time.
- Programmes approved for online delivery will equally focus on active and interactive learning, delivered synchronously or asynchronously, according to the programme approval decisions.

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

**Programme and Module Design implications**

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

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

**Programme and Module Design implications**

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

# Principle - Simple and coherent

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

**Programme and Module Design implications**

- Programmes will be designed with simple, linear pathways, allowing students to develop skills and knowledge in a coherent and sequential way. All learning activity and assessment of learning outcomes will be designed at programme level.
- Holistic, synoptic, programme-level assessment beyond individual modules will be an encouraged aspect of programme design.
- Programme design is consistent with subject benchmarks and/or PSRB requirements.

# Principles - Authentic

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

**Programme and Module Design implications**

- Module learning activities should be based around real professional scenarios and/or related to real-world local and global issues. They should explicitly develop both subject-specific and meta-skills.
- Learning activities will develop 21st century academic skills such as digital skills, creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and entrepreneurship and social enterprise, and these will be explicitly taught and assessed.
- Students are actively involved in the production of online knowledge through real-world tasks.
- Complementary to theory and knowledge-based disciplinary content, modules will explicitly deliver personal and professional development curriculum, as programmes are designed to support student success, wellbeing and employability. Where appropriate, programmes will share common modules which are co-created and delivered by outstanding professional and academic staff to develop students' 21st-century skills and attributes.

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

**Programme and Module Design implications**

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

# Principles - Inclusive

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

**Programme and Module Design implications**

- Every programme should outline an authentic approach to embedding anti-racist curriculum principles.
- Learning activities should be structured to meet the accessibility requirements of all learners.
- Learning content, activities and scenarios should reflect the diversity of UWS learners in terms of culture, ethnicity, age, gender and sexuality: all students should see themselves in models of successful academic practice.
- Digital learning activities and assessments should be designed such that no student is disadvantaged by lack of access to personal IT resources.

# Principles - Sustainable

## Commitment - Programmes will be designed to ensure sustainable delivery and a coherent experience.

**Programme and Module Design implications**

- UWS will set thresholds for minimum programme and module enrolment that ensures module delivery is sustainable.
- Programmes can only be designed utilising sustainably-delivered modules.
- Programme sustainability and academic coherence is improved by the sharing of modules and module-sets, in particular at SCQF levels 7 and 8.

# Module design, delivery & assessment

The following pedagogical principles underpin module design at UWS:

a.  We recognise that the teaching and learning world of 2020 is very different from ten years ago; and perhaps most markedly so in the post-pandemic educational environment. Delivery mode should be clearly specified and purposefully designed. Where designed for on-campus delivery, modules should provide purposeful on-campus activities that leverage the physical presence of students in "hands on" and interactive learning. Students are expected to prepare and actively contribute to on-campus activities.

    On-campus learning events will focus on providing active and interactive learning, supported by readings, resources and other activities for students to prepare (pre-learning event) and consolidate learning (post-learning event). These asynchronous activities will be provided and designed as supplementary activities to support on-campus learning events and will be associated with learning event preparation or post-learning event consolidation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

    Learning activities should be structured to meet the accessibility requirements of all learners. Digital learning activities and assessments should be designed such that no student is disadvantaged by lack of access to personal IT resources.

g. UWS will take an authentic, best-practice and forward-looking approach to learning activities and assessment. Module learning activities should be based around real professional scenarios and/or related to real-world local and global issues, through which students explicitly develop both subject-specific and meta-skills. Learning activities will develop 21st century skills such as digital skills, creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and entrepreneurship and social enterprise, and these will be explicitly taught and assessed. Students are actively involved in the production of online knowledge through real-world tasks.

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

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

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

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

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

All modules will be designed within the following parameters:

- A 20-credit module normally constitutes 200 hours of total learning and assessment time for the student.

- A 20-credit module includes a minimum of 36 and maximum of 48 contact hours as timetabled learning events. Contact hours may vary.

Programme teams are expected to demonstrate at validation their transparent approach to the total hours of student effort and learning, and staff workload.

# Undergraduate programme design

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

a. **Every programme should be designed to develop students' skills and knowledge in a linear and sequenced way, and should contain a final capstone module.** For instance, for a four-year Honours programme, a core sequence of modules would be:

Level 7 module

Level 8 module

Level 8 module

Level 9 module

Level 9 module

Level 10 module
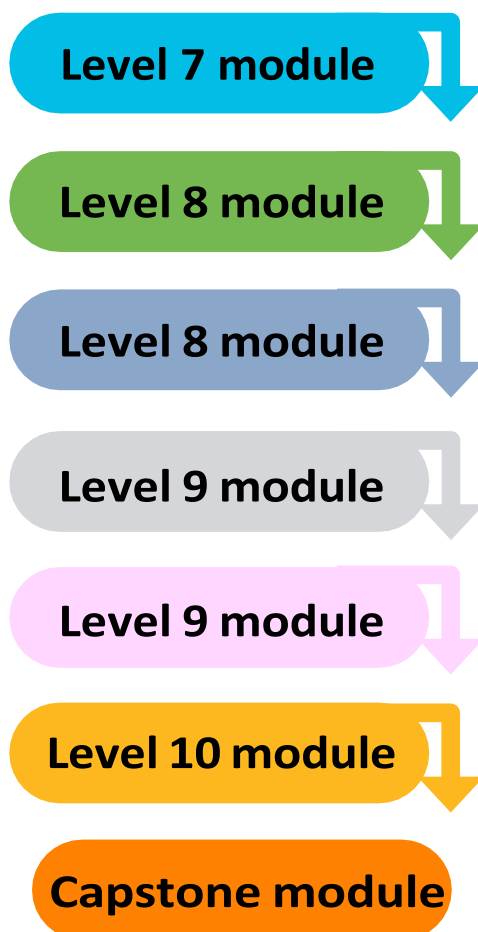
Capstone module

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

b. **Each programme will comprise a set of modules designed to support academic, personal and professional development.**
   All modules should be designed to support student success, wellbeing and employability. Professional development is enhanced by curriculum centred on career-ready skills, with modules providing students with the space to explore and reflect individually and as a cohort. That all UG programmes support academic, professional and personal development is a fundamental UWS vision which, where appropriate, aligns to PSRB requirements.

Each programme will comprise a set of modules designed to support academic, personal and professional development which align to the principles and learning outcomes of ASPIRE. This will apply to all undergraduate programmes at Level 7 by AY 2025/6, and at Level 8 by AY 2026/7.

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

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

Students need to have a broad curriculum at SCQF level 7 and 8 enabling them to experience the full range of the discipline they are studying. This should constitute a defined 'core' curriculum at Levels 7 and 8, which should develop into increasing optionality and choice at Levels 9 and 10 alongside the individual choice of focus on the final dissertation/ project module.

To support increasing optionality and student choice, programme teams are encouraged to share modules between programmes within cognate disciplines. The provision of optional modules should reflect anticipated student numbers.

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

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

# Postgraduate taught programmes

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

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

### Named master's no options e.g. M Commerce
- Lack of options is related to the need to ensure all curriculum and content meets PSRB requirements for accreditation.
- Limited potential for advanced entry or entry with CPD credit or accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL).
- The fully core nature of the award means that should a student fail a module they would be able to exit with a lower named exit (subject to credit/award requirements)

### Named master's with options e.g. M Commerce (Lunar Marketing)
- This could take the shape of a single award with options or could represent a framework where the options enable the awarding of a specialist pathway.
- Opportunities for optional modules to be replaced by CPD credits or accreditation from prior learning (APL)/recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- Failure of an optional module can be overtaken but failure of a core module would result in the student exiting with a lower named exit (subject to credit/award requirements).

### Master's in Professional Practice
- A new flexible master's award for inter- and cross- disciplinary cohorts, which sits across all Schools within the institution.
- A catalogue of modules will be available for students to choose from with input from all Schools. Previous CPD and micro-credentialling credits can be recognised as can suitable prior learning to facilitate top up.
- A suite of core modules, which provide a long-thin spine to support learners as they transition into the postgraduate journey and engage in a partnership with staff as they co-create their own curriculum and select modules in an informed and meaningful way.

The Master's in Professional Practice (MProf) plays a central role in aligning with the wider ambitions discussed in the Curriculum Framework:
- The Framework emphasises the maximisation of interdisciplinary study at the PGT level and encourages authentic, applied and industry-situated learning. It also highlights the involvement of postgraduate students in co-creating the curriculum, leveraging their professional experience and capacity to support both their own learning, and respond to the development needs of others in their professional context.
- The Master's in Professional Practice (MProf) provides particular flexibility for students to manage the mode, intensity, and duration of study, and whilst it is not the primary function of the programme, it can provide students with the flexibility to transfer and have further freedom in module selections or to overcome credit deficit where this has been a prior barrier.

- The Master's in Professional Practice has been designed to respond to the commitments and shifting patterns of engagement for PGT learners with existing professional and diverse personal commitments.

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

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

c. **Industry-focused micro-credentials will be available for each taught postgraduate programme.**
As a default, these 5 or 10 credit "half modules" we will embedded across one or more standard modules that focus on the development and credentialing of specific industry-focused skills. While they contribute to the programme, they are also available as stand-alone credentials, and as potential components of the Master's in Professional Practice.

d. **We will maximise RPL and APEL in the design of PGT programmes.**
Unless required for PSRB accreditation, all master's programmes should have optional spaces within the PgC/PgD taught element to allow for recognition of prior CPD and informal learning, and to enable students to tailor the programme to their own needs and interests.

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

f. **Learning will be authentic and industry-situated.**
Programme teams should ensure opportunities for students to learn and be assessed on their participation in real-world learning that is relevant and aligned with contemporary and authentic practice in industry, professions and related fields. Relevant industry and professional engagement should be designed into the programme.

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