LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

1.   The University of Suffolk Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework sets out expectations underpinning the design, delivery and assessment of all undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses within the University and its partner institutions. The nature of delivery and assessment of courses is both rich and diverse, configured to suit the requirements of a broad range of students, subject areas and learning locations. This framework sets out common principles that are expected to underpin the design, delivery and assessment of all University of Suffolk courses, in order to ensure that there is parity of student experience and that rigorous assessment practices are employed to maintain appropriate academic standards.

2.   This framework has been informed by the [Office for Students Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England](#) B conditions, and the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (2023).

3.   This framework should be read alongside the current University [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy](#), and supporting materials published by the Centre of Excellence for Learning and Teaching (CELT), in particular the Course Design Blueprint. Readers should also refer to the [Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework](#) and other relevant University of Suffolk regulations, policies and procedures relating to learning, teaching and assessment published on the [University website.](#)

Principles for course design and delivery

4.   The design and delivery of a course should be informed by relevant Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) qualification frameworks, qualification characteristics statements and subject benchmark statements, as well as relevant professional standards. Course teams should draw on current subject and pedagogical research, and should also take into consideration developments within industry and/or professional practice when designing courses. Teams should also consider the University's graduate attributes; an agreed set of skills students should develop during their academic journey. Teams should ensure that employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship are embedded within the curriculum. Contemporary approaches to support and enable quality in students' learning should also inform course design, for example including the use of relevant digital learning technologies.

5.   Course teams should agree and clearly communicate to students a coherent strategy for learning, teaching and assessment. Course teams should ensure that there are clear links for students between the design and delivery of the course and the assessment strategies employed

to enable student learning. Course teams should prepare students for their learning experiences, for example through pre-entry guidance, on-course diagnostic assessments and embedded study skills development.

6.   The design of courses should adhere to a planned approach allowing students to move from supported learning, to negotiated learning and finally independent learning when students are autonomous learners. Course design will recognise students' individual needs and learning processes and be responsive and adaptive to these. Learning experiences should provide clear aspirational pathways for students, with embedded opportunities to explore their own personal and professional development and make informed decisions for their future career and personal progression.

7.   All course provision should be inclusive and should not discriminate against or marginalise any students, so that all students have similar opportunities to be involved in the learning process and to demonstrate achievement of the associated learning outcomes. Recognising the University's anticipatory duty to provide reasonable adjustments for students, it is important for course teams to take a strategic approach to addressing the barriers that might potentially impede students during the course design, validation and delivery phases.

8.   Individual reasonable adjustments should be made to support the needs of students with particular needs which are not able to be pre-empted or anticipated (for example because of a disability, health condition or specific learning difficulty), in accordance with the University's Code of Practice on Reasonable Adjustments for Students.

9.   The design of courses should recognise, anticipate and value the diversity of student learning needs through use of a variety of teaching and assessment methods that facilitate students' academic and personal development.

10.   All courses should be designed to include learning opportunities that are engaging, motivational and challenging, encouraging higher order cognitive skills, critical thinking and deeper learning. Courses should be designed within a culture in which learning is valued and students are engaged as full and active participants of learning communities.

11.   Course teams should take active steps to liberate the curriculum whenever possible, aiming to ensure that content is free from bias in relation to all protected characteristics. Inclusivity

of curriculum design should span course content, learning and teaching approaches, assessment and feedback.

12.   It should be clear to students what is expected of them in order to achieve academic success, for example in terms of engagement with the subject, with course delivery and with formative and summative assessment. Learning outcomes should be clearly defined for each module, level of study and course, so that students, staff and other relevant stakeholders are clear about what students are expected to be able to do on completion of the relevant period of study and how each module contributes to the overall course learning outcomes. Course teams should ensure that all learning activities and assessments are aligned with the learning outcomes.

13.   In accordance with the Framework and Regulations for the relevant type of award, there should usually be 10 hours of student learning (including formal contact time, tutorial support, independent study and assessment activities) associated with one credit. The breakdown of study hours should be clearly outlined in each module specification. Students should be provided with clear schedules for their planned contact time and for the related assessment(s) for each module, year of study and overall course, to enable them to plan and manage their own study activities. While such statements constitute the normal learning experience for students, the experience of individual students will be determined through their engagement with further study and learning support opportunities, and through their independent learning activities.

14.   The University and/or relevant partner institution should maintain an appropriate learning environment for students, with particular attention to:
- the provision of appropriate teaching spaces, practical work spaces and equipment
- the availability of appropriate learning resources, including digital resources
- where relevant, the provision of appropriate, well-resourced and supported workplace learning environments
- access to appropriate digital technologies, including wireless connectivity on campus and remote access to resources and services, for example through the online learning environment (for example, Brightspace)
- access to quiet study spaces and social spaces
- the provision of appropriate student support and guidance, including a Personal Academic Coach (or equivalent) and access to specialist support services (for example, disability and wellbeing support, counselling, or financial advice). Services may be offered 'in house' or supported via referral to external specialist advisory services.

15.   The University has adopted the Harvard referencing style as the standard for all academic writing. All courses should use the Harvard referencing style unless a different referencing style is considered to be the convention for that particular subject area. In such cases, the referencing style to be used should be agreed at validation and clearly stated in the course handbook. All courses will follow the standardised version of their referencing style as set out on the Cite Them Right website. Guidance for course teams is available on the CELT Course Design webpages.

Learning and teaching

16.   Course delivery should be based on established good pedagogic principles and should be aligned to the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. This should include sessions which are well structured, make good use of the allocated time and that effectively engage students. A range of learning experiences should be facilitated and may include a blend of synchronous and asynchronous activities, flipped learning, problem-based learning, and the embedding of a coaching culture. Activities should deploy relevant visual and audio support, learning technologies and practical resources as determined to help meet the relevant learning objectives.

17.   Course teams should develop collaborative learning approaches that help build partnerships between staff and students, in order to increase student engagement and success. There is an expectation that a continuous conversation to review the effectiveness of learning opportunities is maintained between the two parties. Enabling students to become active members of a learning community promotes their development as independent learners who recognise and take responsibility for their own learning.

18.   Course teams should endeavour to make effective use of expertise from across and outside the University or partner institution to enhance the student experience. This may involve links to industry, clinical practice and the community. This also includes the use of mentors in work-based learning.

19.   Those involved in the design of a course, its teaching and/or the support of students should recognise their responsibility as a role model to their students. Academic staff are expected to maintain a professional approach to their activities and demonstrate commitment to their specialism and its value system and to their own active and ongoing professional development.

Assessment

20.   Assessment practices must ensure that students are assessed effectively; that each assessment is valid and reliable; and that parity of standards is maintained across levels and

courses. Each course's assessment strategy is approved as an outcome of validation or re-approval. Any subsequent changes to assessment must be approved in accordance with the University's Procedure for the Approval of Changes to Existing Courses.

21.   All assessment processes should be carried out in accordance with the University's assessment regulations, policies and procedures. In accordance with the Assessment Moderation Policy, all summative assessments (including reassessment tasks and retake examination papers) are subject to verification by an independent team member, normally appointed by the Course Leader, with the majority of assessments also submitted to the External Examiner.

22.   Assessment should be designed to assess students' developing knowledge and understanding, subject specific and/or technical proficiency and personal skills, and to signal to the student their academic progress. Where relevant, assessments should also enable scrutiny of practice competence. Assessment methods should be appropriate to assess each of the modules' validated learning outcomes.

23.   Where the same module is delivered at more than one site, the assessment at each site must be equivalent, and arrangements for cross moderation should be put in place to ensure equity of marking practices.

24.   Consideration should be given to the planning and scheduling of assessments in order to provide balanced workloads across the students' study time and to avoid over-assessment. The following is provided as an indicative guide to assessment load, in order to ensure parity of approach, with more detailed guidance covering different assessment methods available in the Course Design Blueprint:

Module type	Recommended word count (or equivalent for non-written outputs)
20 credit undergraduate module	3,000 words
20 credit taught postgraduate module	5,000 words
40 credit undergraduate dissertation module (Level 6)	10,000 to 12,000 words
60 credit taught postgraduate dissertation module (Level 7)	10,000 to 15,000 words

25.   Assessment tasks should be interesting, challenging and level appropriate, and should provide students with opportunities to develop, practice and demonstrate academic and work-ready skills and attributes. As students progress through their studies, assessment methods should increasingly promote and encourage learner autonomy. Innovative approaches to assessment are encouraged and where used should be explicitly evaluated, including through the consideration of assessment outcomes and student feedback.

26.   Where possible, all courses should include opportunities for students to work and be assessed in groups. The [Assessment of Group Work Policy](#) provides guidance on group work employed in summative assessments.

27.   In designing assessment tasks, course teams should consider how to discourage academic misconduct such as plagiarism and the inappropriate use of artificial intelligence systems. In addition to the use of online tools to detect plagiarism and collusion, this could be achieved by requiring responses that relate to the individuals' own situation, or by the inclusion of an assessment that is carried out under tutor supervision.

Information and guidance on assessments

28.   Information on assessment should be clear and easily accessible to students. The following information should be provided:

a) within course handbooks, an assessment summary for the whole course

b) within module specifications, details of formative and summative assessment tasks for each module

c) an annual assessment schedule, issued at the beginning of each academic year, with information on summative assessments for the whole academic year (including submission deadlines and expected feedback dates within the University's three working week turnaround time)

d) a detailed assessment brief for each individual assessment task, given out to students as early as possible within the module, including:
   – assessment title
   – weighting as percentage of total module assessment and whether it is a core or non-core component of assessment
   – module learning outcomes assessed
   – hand-out date and submission deadline
   – confirmation of whether late submissions are permitted
   – submission procedure

- – expected feedback dates within the University's three working week turnaround time
- – assessment aims
- – assessment guidelines giving clear and specific information on the task, associated word count (or equivalent) limits and any special presentation requirements
- – marking criteria linked to learning outcomes.

29. Word count limits (or equivalent) should be used to give students a clear indication of the minimum and maximum acceptable length of a piece of assessed work. The word count should include the main body of the text (including quotations, in-text citations, footnotes, tables, diagrams and graphs), but not reference lists, bibliographies or appendices. The University does not apply standardised penalties for failure to adhere to specified word limits, but students should be made aware that not meeting the minimum word count or exceeding the maximum word count may affect the academic judgement of the piece of work and may result in the award of a lower mark.

30. Students should be provided with appropriate advice, guidance and support with their coursework assessments and examination preparation. This may include practice in assessment techniques prior to embarking on summative assessments (for example via the use of formative assessment) and/or opportunities to receive feedback on their work prior to the final submission (for example via tutorial time, submission of essay plans, peer assessment opportunities or group review sessions). Pre-submission feedback should not include any indication of speculative mark.

Assessment submission

31. Course teams should require students to submit assessed work online to facilitate the use of online plagiarism detection tools. The online submission process should be clearly documented in order to ensure that both staff and students fully understand their responsibilities and the processes involved.

32. Where it is not possible to submit assessments online (for example, artefacts or poster presentations), students are required to submit a summary of the assessment (for example, a photograph of the artefact) to ensure there is a digital record of the assessment available. The original assessment should also be submitted to the relevant Assessment Office (or equivalent). Students should receive a receipt which they need to retain until after the relevant assessment period. Assessment Offices should maintain records of all receipts issued for each assessment period.

33. In accordance with the Additional Time due to Extenuating Circumstances Policy, students with extenuating circumstances may submit a claim for additional time to complete assessments,

either in the form of self-certified additional time; or an extension; or deferral of the submission deadline, usually to the next assessment period following the relevant Assessment Board. Work submitted late without approved extenuating circumstances will be subject to a penalty as outlined in the Framework and Regulations for the relevant type of award.

<u>Marking and feedback</u>

34.   Marking of assessed work should be undertaken in accordance with the Framework and Regulations for the relevant type of award and the Assessment Moderation Policy. Wherever possible, anonymised marking should be employed. Marking criteria agreed between tutors should be used to ensure consistency of approach. For undergraduate provision, the University's generic marking criteria and rubric provides a framework within which course teams can develop their own marking criteria relevant to the level, subject areas and assessment types offered.

35.   Students should be provided with timely, detailed and constructively critical feedback on coursework (based on the learning outcomes and relevant marking criteria) to promote learning from their assessment experience and advising on ways in which aspects of their future or re-submitted work might be improved. Feed forward comments should also be provided to all students regardless of their pass mark, including the signposting of developmental activities which might support academic skills and knowledge development, with the aim of improving future achievement or performance. A range of feedback methods may be utilised, including feedback forms, in-text comments or audio/video feedback. It should be apparent from the feedback how the overall mark for any assessment was reached.

36.   Feedback should be timely to enable students to learn from it, ideally before the next assessment and normally within three working weeks of the submission deadline. Where this timescale cannot be met, a rationale and revised timescale for the provision of feedback must be outlined to students. To enable timely feedback, work can be returned to students before consideration by the external examiner and Assessment Boards have taken place. In these circumstances, students should be informed that all marks are provisional (or 'unratified') and subject to External Examiner and Assessment Board approval.

37.   Written feedback may be supplemented with oral feedback and additional academic tutorial support where appropriate. Tutorial support is important and must be made available for any referred or deferred student in a timely way prior to any resubmission opportunity.

Staff development and support

38.   Learning, teaching and assessment practices are best developed within a mutually supportive environment where staff and students work together to form a learning community focused on developing, implementing and rewarding best practice. Led by CELT, it is expected that course teams and broader groupings of staff within the University and its partner institutions will be openly supportive of the ongoing development of each other's practice, working collaboratively to provide positive student experiences and encouraging the exploration of new and innovative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. All academic staff at the University are expected to engage annually in the University's Peer Review and Enhancement (PRE) scheme (or in an equivalent peer observation scheme within the partner institutions). Academic staff will also be supported in their ongoing professional development by their line managers and by relevant professional support services, with schemes in place to recognise and reward excellent teaching practice and commitment to ongoing continuing professional development.

39.   All academic staff are encouraged to engage with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and with Higher Education Academy (HEA) activities. They are also encouraged to seek relevant HEA recognition via the University's Pathways for Academic and Support Staff to Professional Recognition of Teaching (PASSPoRT) scheme. It is an expectation that academic staff will hold a relevant teaching in higher education qualification. New academic staff within the University or those without such a qualification will usually be required to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) or Academic Professional Apprenticeship. Exceptions should be agreed by the Dean of School or a nominee.

40.   Academic staff are also encouraged to engage in research, scholarly activity and/or professional practice commensurate with their teaching responsibilities, in order to ensure that their practice is scholarly and research informed as well as to create a contemporary knowledge-based learning environment for students. CELT provides a varied CPD programme and published resources to support these activities. The [Suffolk Academic Framework](#) sets out the academic pathways built to support the University's Strategy and Vision 2020-2030.

Quality assurance and enhancement

41.   The effectiveness of course design, delivery and assessment practices will be considered via continuous monitoring processes which run throughout the academic year, and the [Procedure for the Re-approval of Existing Courses](#) which is usually undertaken every five years. The continuous monitoring processes should include the identification of approaches to learning,

teaching and assessment that are found to be particularly effective and their dissemination within the University and beyond, in the interests of sharing good practice.