**Differentiation Proposal to PASC**

**Background**

The changing nature of the University portfolio and the way content is shared across and between programmes has resulted in a number of programmes being presented for approval which are deemed to have insufficient differentiation to other existing programmes to justify an alternative award title.

The issue is compounded where there are prolific option modules or where core modules on one programme are offered as option modules on a similar programme. In such circumstances there is the potential for students to study the same module diet, but exit with different award titles.

We have also encountered a lack of consistency across the University in the way that specialist routes which lead to a bracketed pathway showing on the certificate or diploma supplement are agreed.

To support programme teams in the development of their programmes PASC felt it necessary to develop best practice guidelines to address this issue.

**External environment**

There are no definitive guidelines from QAA to identify the degree of differentiation required for a specific award title.

As a result a search of current practice across UKHEI’s (where this was published by the institution) was undertaken and feedback was sought via the ARC quality practitioners group.

A summary of the feedback received is included in appendix 1.

**Proposal considered and approved by PASC 6th March 2020, RSC 5 June 2020 with minor revisions and ULTC 23rd June 2020:**

**Typical definitions:**

Specialist pathways – routes through a named programme which result in specialist knowledge not present in other routes through that programme.

“With” means that there is a “major” and “minor” component to the programme such that one subject is dominant in content over the other.

“And” means that there is an equal representation of each subject within a programme.

1. Standard Undergraduate programmes: different degree title awards should normally be differentiated by at least 30 credits of unique[[1]](#footnote-1) content at Stage F, excluding any project module.
2. Standard Postgraduate programmes: different degree title awards should normally[[2]](#footnote-2) be differentiated by at least 30 credits of the taught elements, excluding any project module
3. Specialist (bracketed) pathways or routes: should normally be differentiated by at least 15 credits of unique at Stage F, excluding any project module.
4. Named awards with ‘with’ in the title: should normally be 75/25 split in Stage 2 and Stage F to reflect the major/minor nature of the programme
5. Named awards with ‘and’ in the titles: should normally be 50/50 split across all years.
6. The proposals will be included in the Design Principles for Programme Approval and Modification.

**Next steps:**

Please note: There will be no expectation that this is applied retrospectively to currently approved programmes unless they are presented for major revision or are subject to Periodic or PSRB review.

**Appendix 1: Amount of Differentiation (quick overview)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Institution** | **Level 4** | **Level 5** | **Level 6** | **In Regulations?** |
| UoW (33% over 3 levels: 360 credits, 20 credit framework) | 40 credits | 40 credits | 40 credits | YES |
| Worcester (15/30 credit framework) | X | X | 30 credits (minimum) | NO, embedded in “Principals and Guidance of UG courses” |
| ARC feedback: institution not known | X | 40 credits (ideally, but could be reduced to 20 credits dependent on student option choices) | 40 credits (ideally, but could be reduced to 20 credits dependent on student option choices) | YES? |
| ARC feedback: institution not known | ? | ? | ? | Not clear, 60 credits differentiation, but does not specify level |
| Edgehill University  (20 credit framework) | X | 40 credits (minimum) | 40 credits (minimum) | YES, regulations state that “…at least 1/3 of level 5 and 6 credit must be programme-specific to justify a distinctive named degree award title”. |
| ARC feedback: institution not known | 1 unit? | 1 unit? | 1 unit? | NO, no clear definition, only that named title cannot allow students to follow an exact same diet of units as on another named title |

1. Unique content refers to a credit combination that is different to that offered in other similar programmes: e.g. When a suite of similar programmes are compared there should be 30 credits that are different in stage F between each discreet programmes. It does not mean that the content has to be unique to an individual programme, but that it is different to other programmes within the discipline. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Unless there is a case whereby the topic of the dissertation provides clear differentiation. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)