

Guidance on the content of student handbooks

Whilst recognising that partner institutions may wish to develop their own distinctive style and to present information to students in different ways, the University has a minimum content for all student handbooks for validated awards, which is indicated below.

Information should be presented in a clear, accessible, student-friendly language. To avoid duplication of information, students should be clearly signposted to relevant institutional policy documents or referred to relevant web links. OUVV is happy to accept a variety of documents which together provide the students with information. This could be, for example, a generic College HE handbook supplemented with programme specific information.

Where a student handbook covers a set of related awards or modes of study, any special features must be clearly stated for each variation. For example, learning outcomes for validated exit awards should be specified in a positive language.

Programme specifications (item 7 below) will be subject to close scrutiny by validation panels and they may initially be stand-alone working documents that will be incorporated later in the final text once they have been approved by final validation panel. Institutions are to use the University's template for programme specifications, which is designed to be a **concise** description of the programme that is accessible to students, employers and other stakeholders.

Minimum Content to be included in the student handbook

1. **Welcome and introduction** (institution and department)
2. **Academic calendar** (including term, assessment and exam board dates)
3. **List of programme director and academic staff, their contact details and availability arrangements**
4. **List of support staff** (technical and administrative)
5. **Name, position and institution of the external examiner(s) involved in the programme**
6. **Introduction to the programme**
 - Background, history, philosophy
 - Where a programme leads to professional body recognition (e.g. engineering, teaching, social work) or accreditation, this should be clearly set out in the definitive student handbook.
 - Attendance requirements
 - Opportunities available to students on completion of the programme (employment, further academic study, etc).
7. **Programme specification**
 - Overview/factual information
 - Programme aims and objectives
 - Learning outcomes, which should be linked to:
 - teaching methods
 - assessment strategy
 - programme structure (including information on exit awards)

- curriculum map.

8. Student support, guidance and advice

- Induction arrangements
- Personal tutoring
- Study skills
- Careers advice
- Counselling
- Role of personal tutor
- Careers guidance at both institutional and programme level
- Counselling and student welfare
- Support for students with disabilities
- Financial advice and support
- Guide to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

9. Opportunities for personal development planning

10. Opportunities and support for study abroad (if applicable)

- Rationale
- Criteria and approval processes for suitable placements
- Responsibility for finding and arranging placement
- Supervision arrangements
- Student responsibilities
- Supporting and feedback arrangements.

11. Work placement information (if applicable)

- Rationale
- Criteria and approval processes for suitable placements
- Responsibility for finding and arranging placement
- Supervision arrangements
- Student responsibilities
- Supporting and feedback arrangements.

12. Facilities and Services

- Library/ e-learning resources
- Computing facilities
- Technical support and helpdesk
- Catering Services
- Multimedia.
- Workshop, laboratory, studio or study areas and other specialist accommodation available to support the programme.

- Equipment required to be provided by the student.

13. Assessment and progression regulations

Student handbooks should provide a clear explanation of the rules governing the assessment matters in a clear and succinct format that is accessible to students. (Regulations for Validated Awards of the Open University). This information should be conveyed in an accessible and jargon-free language. Some institutions may prefer to publish these regulations separately from student handbooks, in which case they must be circulated to all students. Where appropriate, the student handbook should refer students to any web links where the regulations can be found.

Guidelines to students on progression and assessment should cover:

- Identification of all elements of assessment, including type, volume weighting and timings of assessment
- Minimum pass marks for modules
- Rules governing extension to submission deadlines
- Penalties for late submission or non-submission of work
- Process for requesting deferral of modules
- Assessment of work-based learning, where applicable
- Assessment of presentations and performance, where applicable
- Definitions and consequences of academic misconduct, including plagiarism
- Mechanisms for provision of feedback to students on performance, and the role of formative and summative assessment
- Acceptable forms of academic referencing and citation
- Progression regulations
- Reassessment and re-sits
- Extenuating circumstances
- Appeals and complaints procedures
- Provision for students with special needs.

14. Dissertations and projects

- Support arrangements
- In the case of dissertations, explicit criteria for viva-voce.

15. Determination of results

- Assessment weightings for the overall scheme and within specific modules.
- How results are communicated
- Rules for determining degree classification, and for the award of honours, distinction, merit and pass as applicable.
- Brief explanation on the role of assessment boards and External Examiners and MRAQCP.

16. Other institutional policies and regulations

Some of the information below may be given in the form of general brief statements (ideally with links included) that refer students to separate generic institutional policy document.

- Disability statement
- Safeguarding [+Prevent]
- Grounds and procedures for appeals
- Equal opportunities statement
- Data protection
- Health and safety issues.

17. Student participation and evaluation

- Arrangements for student feedback and how the institution uses it
- Student representation on committees
- Registered student organisations
- Academic and professional organisations

18. General reading list (i.e. not module specific), including electronic resources.

Version history

Date	Version	Changes	Status	Approval
21/12/2021	V2.0	Section on Module Specifications removed	Final	Quality Management Group