

TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE FRAMEWORK MASTERS LEVEL PROGRAMMES

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1 Introduction

This Framework is a reference for all staff at QMU who wish to develop a taught postgraduate programme at M-level, or who are involved with the operation of such an award. It will also act as a point of reference for students registered on taught M-level programmes at the University.

1.1 Justification for the Framework

The Queen Margaret University (QMU) Taught Postgraduate Framework is designed to provide educational, regulatory and structural architecture for all taught postgraduate study in the University. The Framework is research based and vocational in emphasis. It accommodates specialist, multi-disciplinary and conversion programmes and it offers a wide range of choice to students in the types of programmes and the modes of study available.

The M-level Framework has been designed using the modular, credit accumulation approach used at undergraduate level in QMU. This provides the necessary flexibility to meet the needs and demands of individual students, while providing a structure which can be easily understood by students, deliverers and planners of postgraduate programmes of study. These design features of the programme are particularly important for the increasing numbers of students who are engaged in either Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or lifelong learning within QMU.

A student may choose to study for a taught Masters Award, a Postgraduate Diploma, or a Postgraduate Certificate. Modules may be accrued through a named route programme or through a more individually designed study route and study may be full or part time. A student who does not wish to study for a full award may join the University as an associate student and complete chosen modules without registering for a specific award.

1.2 Aims of the Framework

The aims of this document are to:

- a) regulate the provision of all taught M-level programmes;
- b) ensure that all taught M-level programmes are governed by a common quality framework;
- c) ensure an equity in standards across all modules and programmes;
- d) provide a reference for all elements relating to module/programme management;
- e) facilitate the growth and development of flexible, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and professional programmes.

1.3 Flexibility and Postgraduate Education

- 1.3.1 Depending on her/his needs and demands, a student's selected programme of study can be designed to:

- a) develop areas of study relevant to the professions, employment/industrial sector or academic discipline in which the student is currently engaged;
- b) update the knowledge of those engaged in a field especially where the discipline at undergraduate level is subject to expansion or change;
- c) provide an analytical in-depth treatment of an area beyond their first degree level in the same area;
- d) act as a re-orientation or conversion in areas new to the student or in areas not directly related to the scope of the student's first degree;
- e) synthesise and integrate a number of disciplines or subjects;
- f) develop applied studies or to extend an area of study that cannot be pursued adequately at undergraduate level.

1.3.2 Within the Framework, specialist, multi-disciplinary and conversion programmes can be designed.

- a) **Specialist programmes** extend and deepen knowledge of a particular discipline and are designed to follow on directly from study.
- b) **Multi-disciplinary programmes** are designed to bring together a number of different disciplines interrelating subjects within a unifying academic or professional approach. Material in such programmes may have occurred in a different form in the students' undergraduate study. The intellectual demands arise from the need to synthesise and integrate information from different disciplines.
- c) **Conversion programmes** are designed to enable graduates from one discipline to acquire knowledge in another disciplinary area, or to develop and apply first degree knowledge to a related area. These programmes may contain material that appears in undergraduate programmes, but would be assessed at M-level. The intellectual demand arises not from the post graduate nature of the material itself, nor from the synthesis of different disciplines, but from the nature of the teaching, learning process and learning outcomes. Conversion programmes may be proportionately longer than other Masters programmes to allow for students to develop knowledge and skills in entirely new areas.

2 Level of Awards

2.1 Within the SCQF, there are two parameters that determine qualifications: level of learning outcomes and volume of outcomes, calculated as number of credits. SCQF Level 11 includes a number of qualifications that differ only in the volume of credit, not in level of outcomes. The taught awards of Queen Margaret University that fall within the Level 11 category are: MSc, MA, MFA, MBA, Executive Masters, European Masters, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate. Credit definitions for each of these qualifications are given in the QAA Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland, 2014 (QAA, 2014)

- 2.2 Standards of awards will be determined by the demand made on learners and their response to that demand. Standards will be benchmarked against the appropriate external reference points such as expectations of professional bodies and standards of similar awards in other universities as determined by the external examining system.

3 Aims and Learning Outcomes

The following generic aims and learning outcomes apply to all programmes which are encompassed by this Taught Postgraduate Framework.

3.1 Aims

The shared aims of all programmes are to enable learners to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of the relevant body of knowledge and their personal and professional skills in order to contribute to development of a subject area, field or profession;
- Engage in critical reflection on practice and independent study for life long learning.

3.2 Learning Outcomes (Postgraduate Graduate Attributes)

Upon successful completion of a programme, graduates will be able to:

- Demonstrate, through practice, knowledge of how strategies for research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the subject area, field or profession;
- Systematically and critically evaluate the practices, research and scholarship in a particular subject area, field or profession;
- Critically evaluate, interrelate and apply knowledge and processes relevant to a subject area, field or profession, much of which may be at, or informed by, the forefront of developments;
- Exercise responsibility, initiative and self-direction to support and further independent study and professional development;
- Contribute to a development of a given subject area, field or profession;
- Critically reflect on practice to develop skills of self-appraisal and insight;
- Identify, critically analyse and respond creatively to complex problems;
- Communicate effectively to diverse audiences through media appropriate for the subject area, field or professional practice;
- Take an inter-disciplinary approach to study;
- Demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge and/or practice.

These learning outcomes articulate with the characteristic outcomes described in the Level 11 descriptors of the SCQF Framework (SCQF, 2012).

- 3.3 It is expected that programmes validated under the Taught Postgraduate Framework will also have programme-specific aims and learning outcomes. Programmes may also have learning outcomes that reflect expectations of professional bodies. The programme-specific outcomes must be cross-referred to the SCQF Level 11 descriptors and defined in the Programme Specifications.

4 Mode of Study

- 4.1 The QMU Taught Postgraduate Framework is designed to facilitate student choice and to allow students to pursue postgraduate study while still in employment. It is therefore intended that the modules will be available in ways that allow both part-time and full-time study. Thus the modules may be offered, depending on demand:

- in the evening or at week-ends,
- in concentrated blocks of full-time study
- in normal working hours during the week-days, and
- by flexible learning
- by work based learning.

5 Entrance Requirements, Admission and Fees

Please refer to the [University's Admissions Policy](#) for full information on entrance requirements and procedures.

Fees will be set each year by the relevant authorities within the University. Copies of the relevant fees applicable to taught postgraduate programmes will be available on the University website, and will be sent out with each offer made.

6 Programme Structure

6.1 Taught Postgraduate Degrees

The taught postgraduate degrees programme is offered through either full or part-time routes, requiring a minimum of 45 weeks of full-time study (one calendar year for a Masters).

- 6.1.1 The minimum and maximum registration periods for standard taught postgraduate programmes are as follows:

Programme		Maximum period for completion	Minimum period for completion
Masters	FT	4 calendar years	1 calendar year
	NFT	7 calendar years	2½ calendar years
PgDip	FT	3 calendar years	1 calendar year
	NFT	5 calendar years	2 calendar years
PgCert	FT	2 calendar years	1 semester
	NFT	4 calendar years*	1 calendar year

* For example, if modules run in Semester 2 only and student takes one module a year, or if modules run in alternate years.

However the **Professional** PgDips (ie those leading to registration with a professional body) may take between 12 and 24 months depending on the requirements of the programme. Therefore suggested periods are:

Programme		Maximum period for completion	Minimum period for completion
Professional Masters	FT	5 calendar years	2 calendar years
	NFT	7 calendar years	4 calendar years
Professional PgDip	FT	4 calendar years	18-24 months
	NFT	6 calendar years	3 calendar years
Professional Dissertation	FT	18 months	3 months
	NFT	3 years	1 year

Principles: Students are allowed 1 year out and then 1 further year to complete. No programme may take longer than 7 years in total.

Students should refer to the individual Programme Specification for details.

Additional delivery formats may include blocked timetables, distance learning, Summer School or alternatively, learning contracts and supervised learning in the workplace.

For further information on registration, please refer to the University's [Registration Regulations](#).

Masters

- 6.1.2 The Masters Degree, in line with SCQF level 11 requirements and standards, will be awarded on the completion of modules resulting in the total of at least 180 credits equivalent to 12 modules at 15 M credits each. Each 15 credit module is estimated to require 150 hours of student effort.
- 6.1.3 A Masters Degree will normally be awarded when the student has successfully completed:
- a) the equivalent of eight modules each contributing 15 M level credits. Two research methods modules will normally be compulsory. However, some Masters degrees will require only one research methods module where it can be demonstrated that the equivalent of 15 credits of research methods is embedded in other core modules;
 - b) a Masters Project either by research, a portfolio, a professional intervention, creative piece of work or work-based study which includes theoretical testing and analysis to the same high standard as required from a piece of empirical research. The project is weighted at four modules i.e. 60 M level credits. Where students are required to complete a portfolio for the award of MFA, the portfolio will be weighted at 240 credits.

Postgraduate Diploma

- 6.1.4 The Postgraduate Diploma will involve the equivalent of 30 weeks of full-time study. It will be awarded on the successful completion of the equivalent of eight 15 credit modules each estimated to require 150 hours of student effort.
- 6.1.6 To be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Diploma in a designated subject the equivalent of eight 15 credit modules must be successfully completed, as appropriate for each designated award. Of the eight modules:
- a) One of these must be a research module or a specialist taught module in which research methods are integrated.
 - b) Depending upon the regulations for the specific award chosen, modules must be made from a selection related to the area of the designated award (the specific award modules). See relevant award handbooks.

Postgraduate Certificate

- 6.1.7 To be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Certificate in a designated subject area a student must have successfully completed the equivalent of 15 weeks of full time study in the form of four modules each requiring 150 hours of student effort or equivalent.
- 6.1.8 To be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate a student must successfully complete four modules in a specified field.
- 6.1.9 Exceptionally, a structure may be approved that does not conform strictly to these requirements, for example a programme may be validated without a traditional 60 credit Masters Project. In such cases, the approval panel will take account of competitor analysis and will need to be satisfied that the programme meets the requirements of the generic postgraduate attributes.

6.2 Titles of Masters Degree

A programme of study at Masters level may lead either to the award of MA, MBA, MFA, Executive Masters, European Masters or of MSc. The MA will be awarded where the programme is predominately concerned with the fields of art, design and the humanities. The MBA will be awarded where the programme is based predominately on the study of business management and its applications. The MFA will be awarded where the programme is based predominately in the Fine Arts. The MSc will be awarded where the programme is based predominately on science and its applications.

6.3 Continuing Professional Development Awards

Students successfully completing modules for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Lifelong learning (LLL) will be awarded with a transcript with the M level credits awarded for that module.

- 6.3.1 These free-standing modules will be assessed at M level (M level 15 Credits) or composed of LLL micro-credit modules of less than 15 credits. Students attending micro-credit modules are awarded potential credit and a certificate of attendance at the end of LLL activity, but this is not assessed.

6.3.2 The student may later elect to convert potential credit into general or specific credit, through an assessment negotiated through discuss and agreement with a study advisor and approved by a Programme Committee/Field Board (or an agreed sub-committee). The assessment may cover the learning outcomes of a single activity or may span several activities and may develop and expand these learning outcomes through, for example, reflection and application. The assessment will be a minimum of 15 credits at Master's level.

6.3.3 These credits may be accumulated and used towards either entering a named award or obtaining a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma. It is also possible to use a learning contract to assess learning that has taken place as a result of CPD activity and may cover the specific learning in the CPD module(s) together with the evaluation/application of that learning to the workplace.

6.4 **The Module**

A module is a self-contained part of a programme with separate aims, pre-requisites, syllabus and assessment scheme.

6.4.1 A postgraduate module normally comprises 15 credit points or multiples thereof. Each module will be located in a specific subject area within a School of the University. The appropriate Dean of School has the ultimate responsibility for the successful operation of the module. The syllabus and level of treatment for all modules in the Taught Postgraduate Framework is offered at postgraduate standard.

6.4.2 Each module offered is subject to a process of review and approval which is designed to examine levels of excellence in terms of subject matter, provisional standard of the lecturers (both academic and non-academic) and support materials. The aim is the best provision of best possible programmes in each field presented by lecturers who are expert in that field. Appropriate learning methods for each module will vary to suit the material. However, all require a similar student effort and meet the requirements of SCQF level 11. The modules are of a high standard in terms of relevance to modern professional practice, currency of content and intellectual demand.

6.4.3 The building block of the taught postgraduate programmes is the standard module (15 credits), which is defined in terms of student study time. The equivalent of twelve postgraduate modules to be completed to fulfil the requirements of a Masters programme and the duration of a full time Masters programme is 45 weeks.

6.4.4 Student performance on a module is assessed by appropriate assessment strategies – for example, course work, formal examination, or a combination of both; or portfolio. The relative weighting of these components varies from module to module, and is set out in the module descriptors and reflects the nature and aims of the module. Students will be informed in writing at the beginning of a module of the assessment structure, number of pieces of coursework required, and submission deadlines.

6.5 The Framework has been designed to allow students a wide variety of options in the way they formulate subject and module combinations. Each award has its own particular requirements, but students have a wide choice of awards,

and within each award programme there is a further choice through options and free choice modules.

- 6.6 The School Academic Board has overall responsibility for the programme of study taken by students and retains the authority to limit or constrain a student's choice of modules.
- 6.7 The student's choice of programme must be approved by the appropriate Programme Leader; and by the Module Co-ordinator of each proposed module. The Programme Leader will normally be able to act on behalf of modules offered by that subject area and on behalf of the research modules. Cases of doubt should be referred to the School Academic Board.
- 6.8 Programmes for Associate students and students proceeding to a general award will be dealt with by the Senior Admissions Officer and the designated Postgraduate Admissions Tutor.

6.9 **Credit for Previous Study**

Regulations covering the Recognition of Prior Learning can be found in the Governance and Regulations section of the Quality website.

- 6.9.1 At the discretion of the Programme Leader students admitted to programmes may be given credit for previous postgraduate study at QMU or another equivalent programme completed not more than five years previously. Credit may also be given for prior experiential learning. Normally credit given will be specific rather than general, i.e. on a subject for subject basis, and must be M level. The marks or grades achieved in these earlier modules will not normally contribute towards a student's final assessment mark. No more than half the credit for a QMU postgraduate award may be gained for study outside the institution. Where a Masters programme includes a dissertation or similar substantial project amounting to 60 credits or more, the student must complete this at Queen Margaret University to gain the award.
- 6.9.2 Students wishing to enter taught postgraduate programmes with advanced standing may request credit for up to 50% of the programme, where applicable to the specific programme outcomes. Alternative arrangements for specific programmes must be agreed in advance and approved through the validation or committee approvals process. QMU graduates who wish to utilise credit from previous postgraduate programmes (PgCert, PgDip, MSc, MA, MBA, MFA, Executive Masters, European Masters) will be advised that the existing credit is subsidiary to the new qualification and that this would be noted on the transcript where possible. If students change award to another subject they would need to provide additional evidence that the existing credit matches the specific learning outcomes of the relevant component(s) of the new programme.

6.10 **Change of Study Programme**

Students may change their agreed programme of study. Such changes require the approval of the Award Co-ordinator(s) and Module co-ordinators. This acts as a check that the student has a good reason for the change, that the revised programme is still coherent, that the necessary prerequisite qualifications are fulfilled, and that the registration period is still within the allowed time.

Applications from students wishing to follow a programme of study leading to a general award of MSc, MA, MBA, MFA, PgDip or Pg Cert will be vetted by the School Academic Board to ensure that the chosen programme exhibits relevance, some degree of coherence, and has the potential to lead to a dissertation in an area suitable to the level of award, appropriate to the interests and expertise of staff.

6.11 Choices of Study Programme

It is intended that students will choose their programme of study from the **available** options and in consultation with their Programme Leader. Programmes leading to professional registration may require students to follow a prescribed programme with limited/no options.

6.11.1 A student's choice of dissertation is subject to the agreement of the Programme Committee and the dissertation supervisor; this agreement is given on the authority of the School Academic Boards.

6.11.2 The specific agreement of the appropriate School Academic Board is required by a student who designs a study programme which is undefined in subject area content and which leads to the award of a general Masters degree (either MSc or MA). Guidelines regarding the construction can be found in Appendix 2.

6.11.3 It is expected that students will choose programmes and modes of study appropriate to their own particular needs. Students may register on individual modules without necessarily being required to register for an award, and they will be eligible for assessment and for an academic transcript of performance on the individual modules. Associate students, for the purpose of administration and assessment, must be aligned to a specific award.

7 Programme Operation and Management

7.1 Introduction

The Taught Postgraduate Framework (M-level) is inter-disciplinary. It provides a structure for a range of awards, and it allows different types of awards to be developed. This Framework has been established in order to provide:

- a) a general policy and overall decision making body with authority for the operation of the Framework – the Student Experience Committee – having a membership which is drawn from across the institution in academic subject areas and professional services;
- b) interpretation of the taught postgraduate regulations to facilitate the development and operation of programmes within Schools by the School Academic Boards. Details of Committee remit and membership can be found in the Committee Structure section of the Governance and Regulations.
- c) operation of the Framework through Programme Committees and subject area examination boards.

7.2 Programme Leader

Each programme is based in a Division and a School. The School provides administrative support, a focus for student interaction, the source of information, and easy contact between the Programme Leader and students. In most cases, the Division will be easily identified, as the Division providing the major input to the programme. The Dean of School is responsible for determining the home Subject Area and for approving any change thereof.

7.2.1 A Programme Leader will be drawn from the home Division and be nominated by the Head of Division. In the unavoidable absence of a Programme Leader, an acting Programme Leader will be appointed by the Head of Division. A Programme Leader is accountable in day-to-day operational terms to the Head of Division; and will normally hold office for a full cycle of the programme, and possibly longer.

7.2.2 The appointment of the subsidiary office-bearers such as admissions tutors, personal academic tutors etc is at the discretion of the Head of Division. In the case of very large or complex programmes it may be appropriate to appoint an assistant programme leader.

7.2.3 In particular, a Programme Leader's responsibilities are:

- (a) as Convener of the Programme Committee to ensure the effective organisation and conduct of the programme within agreed policies and regulations;
- (b) ensuring in consultation with the appropriate Dean(s) of School and Head(s) of Division that the delivery and assessment of Divisional modules is consistent with the content of the programme as validated;
- (c) counselling students on their choice of modules;
- (d) liaison with relevant module coordinators;
- (e) assisting in the development of new specialist modules for the award;
- (f) agreeing the number of offers that should be made to meet the admission targets in consultation with admission tutors and Heads of Division;
- (g) approving changes to students' programmes of study in consultation with programme committee/subject area panel;
- (h) advising the School Academic Board on admission matters;
- (i) monitoring the operation of the programme on an ongoing basis, and co-ordinating its annual evaluation;
- (j) leading the academic development of the programme;
- (k) negotiating with the Head(s) of Division the allocation of appropriate staff for teaching and other duties required by the programme;

- (l) co-ordinating any necessary interaction with professional and external validating bodies through the appropriate internal mechanisms;
- (m) keeping in close touch with the academic welfare and progress of students in the programme, and to be closely aware of students' views about the programme;
- (n) in consultation with the module co-ordinators agreeing an assessment schedule;
- (o) presenting student marks and grades to the relevant Board of Examiners;
- (p) taking executive action as agreed by the Programme Committee.

7.2.4 The Programme Leader will normally be responsible for the co-ordination of all assessments for the programme, for ensuring that the examination papers are dispatched to the external examiner and the responses addressed, and for presenting the student marks and grades to the Board of Examiners.

7.2.5 It is permissible in cases, and will be necessary in complex programmes for a subject leader to take responsibility for all the modules that form the subject/discipline irrespective of the various awards to which the modules contribute. For example, the examination papers for a Psychology module should be the responsibility of the Psychology discipline leader, irrespective of the number of awards to which that Psychology module contributes. It is the responsibility of the programme co-ordinator to define in writing any such arrangement.

7.3 Responsibilities of Heads of Division

7.3.1 Heads of Division are responsible for the quality of work carried out by their staff and for the standard of work achieved in the modules for which the Division is responsible, (the Programme Committee/Division Panel is responsible for monitoring the quality of delivery) and also for ensuring provision of the resources necessary to achieve this.

7.3.2 The Head of Division fulfils these functions, inter alia, by taking responsibility for the academic development of the staff in terms of their research, scholarly and professional activities.

7.3.3 Particular duties involved in carrying out these responsibilities include ensuring provision of the resources to teach the modules in the way that has been agreed. This will require:

- (a) ensuring provision of staff hours for the modules to be taught as approved;
- (b) provision of subject specialist rooms and equipment;
- (c) ensuring that all subject staff involved are undertaking their duties appropriately and making arrangements for someone to act in their

place if necessary;

- (d) nominating internal moderators with whom Module Co-ordinators should clear their examination papers, coursework arrangements and mark sheets and ensuring that marking deadlines are met.

7.4 Programme Student/Staff Committee

Please also see the Programme Management section on the Quality website.

7.4.1 There will be a Postgraduate Student-Staff Consultative Committee responsible for providing feedback on the programme as a whole, and for making appropriate recommendations to the Programme Committee, and through the Programme Committee to the School Academic Board and Student Experience Committee.

7.4.2 Membership of the Programme Student/Staff Consultative Committee will comprise:

Programme Leader(s)/Subject Area Co-ordinator(s)

Selected Module Coordinators

A majority of students drawn from those registered for the award

7.4.3 There will be a Programme Committee responsible for oversight of the operation of the programme. The Committee may be responsible for one programme, or several linked programmes. The Programme Committee will:

- exercise the overall academic and operational responsibility for the programme and its development within defined policies, procedures and regulations;
- be responsible for maintaining and enhancing the academic standards of the programme through the:
 - a) monitoring and evaluation of the aims, objectives and structure of the programme;
 - b) establishment and development of mechanisms to ensure student feedback;
 - c) review of academic regulations, admissions policy statements and assessment instruments;
 - d) development of teaching and learning methods.
- ensure that the programme is resourced to agreed levels by recommendations to, and negotiations with, the Dean of School, and the Deans of any contributing Schools;
- ensure that programme/programme delivery is effectively managed, including programme/year/subject time-tabling, access to teaching rooms, access to specialist facilities, etc;
- through the appropriate committee, nominate proposed external examiner(s) to Senate;
- monitor student admission and student progress;
- monitor and evaluate the provision of student counselling and welfare provision;
- be responsible for the formal submission of the necessary documentation for the approval, accreditation or assessment of the

programme to the appropriate professional and accreditation bodies, in line with the University's established procedures.

- submit minutes of its meetings to the School Academic Board.

7.4.4 Membership consists of the following:

- Convener - Subject or Programme Manager
- Ex Officio - Dean of School
- Subject leaders
- A representative from each of the contributing disciplines, all of whom should teach on the programme.
- Staff with specified programme responsibilities such as admissions, clinical supervision and projects.
- Two students from each programme
- Exceptionally, external membership may be proposed where directly relevant to the operation of the programme.

7.4.5 The Programme Committee will meet at least twice a year. For programmes that are substantial in scale, range of subjects or complexity, a small Core Executive Group defined by, and responsible to, the Programme Committee will normally manage the day-to-day operation of the programme within the agreed scheme. The Group would operate informally, be organised by the Subject/Programme Leader and typically include staff with key programme responsibilities. For relatively simple courses, the Subject/Programme Leaders will themselves normally manage the day-to-day operation of the programme.

7.5 Student Support

7.5.1 The nature of the taught postgraduate programmes demands that the students' work is predominately independent. It is recognised that there is a need to maintain a strong support structure and to ensure that students are aware of its availability. Part time and mature students have particular needs in terms of access to counselling and flexible access to facilities. The University Guide to Student Services will provide detailed information. Students will be supported by Personal Academic Tutors, and by the University Counselling service.

7.6 Personal Academic Tutors

Each student will be allocated to a Personal Academic Tutor who is a member of the departmental staff offering the designated award. The responsibilities shall include:

- a) periodic review of the progress of each student;
- b) advice and assistance with any difficulties which may arise in connection with a student's studies;
- c) keeping a brief record of the meetings discussed and action agreed at each meeting;
- d) identification of any student who may be at risk in relation to achieving

the requirements of the award, and

- e) directing students to other sources of help within the University.

7.7 Scheduling Modules

- 7.7.1 The target number of students to be recruited for each module/programme is agreed in advance by the Dean of School and communicated to Module Co-ordinators and Programme Leaders.
- 7.7.2 On applying for admission to the taught postgraduate programmes students will submit their proposals for choice of modules. At matriculation students will agree their choice of modules with the Programme Leader, taking into account pre-requisites, core modules for designated awards and availability.
- 7.7.3 Experience in operating the programme will be used to improve operations e.g. planning and which modules require to be delivered more often and which are unpopular and should be withdrawn.
- 7.7.4 Most modules will require a minimum number of students in order to run and a maximum limit on the number of places available. Programme Leaders / Subject Area Co-ordinators should liaise with co-ordinators of joint modules advising of expected and actual students numbers, based initially on accepted offers and confirmed by matriculation numbers.
- 7.7.5 The addition of modules into programmes will be advertised to new and existing students via inclusion in the taught postgraduate module catalogue.
- 7.7.6 When a module previously scheduled has to be withdrawn due to staff shortage or lack of student numbers, the affected students will be counselled on how to revise their planned programme of study by the Programme Leader.
- 7.7.7 The School Academic Board reserves the right to vary the number of modules, timing and mode of delivery of modules.

8 Programme Curriculum

The outline details of the curriculum are contained in the postgraduate prospectus.

9 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- 9.1 In accordance with the University's Student Experience Strategy, all taught postgraduate programmes will be learner-centred. Therefore, learners will be expected to take responsibility for their own learning, and the teaching and assessment strategies will be designed to enable independent progress within a supportive framework.
- 9.2 Guided by the principles of constructive alignment and recognising diversity of learning styles and background, learning will be facilitated and assessed

using strategies most appropriate to support achievement of learning outcomes within the discipline.

- 9.3 Teaching and assessment strategies will enable learners to develop their full potential by recognising and building on prior knowledge and experience and by facilitating development of subject related and transferable skills. Strategies should develop and reward critical, evaluative and enquiry-based approaches to study. At this level it is important that there is interchange and collaboration which can extend the learning experiences for all.
- 9.4 Assessment influences what and how people learn, and therefore all assessment should be formative. Learners should be given feedback on all aspects of their performance whether or not the assessment contributes to their award.
- 9.5 Assessment of Masters degrees will typically include a major piece of work worth 60 credits at SCQF Level 11 and allowing the measurement of multiple outcomes. Dependent on the award, this significant assessment may be a dissertation, an original and creative work, a work-based study, a portfolio or a professional intervention, but must include theoretical evaluation and analysis of a high standard equivalent to a piece of empirical research and must contribute to the development of the subject or profession.
- 9.6 Paragraph 6.1.1 outlines the indicative study time required for the postgraduate qualifications within the Framework.
- 9.7 Appendix 3 summarises the portfolio of learning, teaching and assessment approaches which will be adopted by programme teams as appropriate to context and learning outcomes for awards.

10 Assessment, Examination and Awards

- 10.1 Please refer to the [Assessment Regulations](#) on the Quality website.
 - 10.1.1 Students should have a broad appreciation of the range of methodologies that are available to researchers, including both quantitative and qualitative modes of inquiry. They should understand the general principles and characteristic practices of those various approaches to doing research, for example, the theoretical underpinnings, data gathering techniques and forms of data analysis. Students should be able to appreciate the reasons why researchers come to adopt a particular methodology which is appropriate both to their object of study and to the aims of their investigation. They will also benefit from an understanding of the ethical and political issues that can arise in the planning, conduct and presentation of a research project.
 - 10.1.2 Students must be encouraged to develop a deeper working knowledge of the key methodologies that are employed in their chosen subject area or discipline. They should be able to critically evaluate contemporary research developments in that field. Most importantly, students should develop the conceptual and practical skills necessary to carry out independent research in the form of a Masters project so that they are competent to define a manageable topic of study, decide on appropriate strategies for inquiry, development, analysis and conclusions, and are able to present results in appropriate formats and media. The Masters project is amongst the most

important learning activities for Masters students and is therefore weighted equivalent to four taught modules.

- 10.1.3 A core research methods module should provide a broad overview of various methodologies, as well as developing IT and bibliographical skills. It should aim to develop students' more specialised research skills closely related to their subject area or discipline.

The Masters Project

- 10.2** The general guidelines for Masters projects are given in Appendix 1.
- 10.2.1 The achievement of a study of sufficient depth and quality to satisfy the requirements of a Masters project cannot necessarily be programmed within specific time limits. Whereas students will be encouraged not to delay the process, more importance will be placed on the quality and maturity of their work than the speed with which they achieve it. The registration period for the project is set at a maximum of 24 months from the approval of the proposal, subject to the regulations on the maximum period of registration for the award. The minimum period for the project work to be completed is unlikely to be less than three months.
- 10.2.2 Students may submit a synopsis of the proposed dissertation/project early, the timing of which to be discussed with the dissertation/project co-ordinator. This will allow some preparatory work for a proposal or full outline to commence.
- 10.2.3 Supervised work on the project will formally commence when the student has passed 50% (in credit value) of the taught modules. Students may not submit their project until all pre-requisites defined by the programme have been met. Normally it will be required that all taught modules have been passed by the internal examiners.
- 10.2.4 Those conducting the assessment of the project will be the supervisor and a member of staff appointed as a second independent marker for the project. A copy of the project should be sent to each of the assessors and one copy should be kept by the student.
- 10.2.5 After submission of the formal report, the supervisor may arrange an oral examination at which the second marker and an External Examiner will be present. The date set for the oral examination should allow sufficient time for the examiners to read the project and should normally be no later than one month after submission of the project.
- 10.2.6 Students whose progress in their projects is deemed unsatisfactory by the examiners and who fail to achieve the minimum acceptable level may be permitted to be re-examined within a time limit set by the Board of Examiners.

10.3 Examination Boards

Examination boards for taught postgraduate programmes will normally operate on a two-tier basis, comprising of a Programme Examination Board and a School Postgraduate Examination Board. However, self-contained

programmes may operate as single tier boards, with the permission of the Dean of School.

10.3.1 **Programme Examination Boards**

The size of the Programme Examination Board will be decided by the School and may comprise of a single programme or a range of common programmes or a permutation of these options.

Composition

Head of Division (convener)

Programme Leader(s)

Module co-ordinators (including module co-ordinators from other subject areas contributing to the award, **if required**).

External examiner(s)

Secretary (appointed by the University Secretary)

10.3.2 The Programme Examination Board is responsible to School Postgraduate Examination Board for:

- (a) making decisions on student performance in all modules for which it has responsibility, including forms of reassessment where appropriate;
- (b) ensuring consistency of standards in assessments across all modules for which the board is responsible and, as far as it is able taking account of institutional and national standards of award.

10.3.3 **School Postgraduate Examination Board**

Composition

To be chaired by Dean of School or another nominated member of senior academic staff.

Programme Leaders and/or Subject Area Co-ordinators

External Examiners

Secretary (appointed by the University Secretary)

10.3.4 The School Postgraduate Examination Board is responsible for:

- (a) receiving decisions of Programme Examination Boards on student grades on modules;
- (b) considering each student's full profile and making decisions on each student's continued registration and progression;
- (c) making decisions on the award to be granted to each student on completion of studies when considering full profiles;
- (d) ensuring consistency of standards in assessments across all awards for which the board is responsible and, as far as it is able taking account of institutional and national standards of award.

Decisions on reassessments for individual modules made at Programme Examination Boards may need to be revised at the School Postgraduate

Examination Board when considering the complete profile of the student. All decisions on awards made by the School Postgraduate Examination Boards are subject to formal ratification by Senate.

10.4 **External Examiners**

The role of external examiners is of crucial importance in maintaining the postgraduate standard of the modules. Individual external examiners may be responsible for a specific set of modules or for a whole programme, including projects.

10.4.1 External examiner(s) will be appointed to each Programme Examination Board with responsibility for either a set of modules or range of programmes where appropriate.

10.4.2 The School Postgraduate Examination Board will include an external examiner drawn from one of the current related Programme Examination Board external examiners.

10.4.3 In addition to the roles and responsibilities as detailed in the Governance & Regulations Handbook, the School Postgraduate Examination Board external examiners will have responsibility for standards across a range of programmes.

11 **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM**

This section should be read in conjunction with the University's Framework for an Institutional Response to Plagiarism.

11.1 **Introduction**

11.1.1 This institution's degrees and other academic awards are given in recognition of the candidate's achievement. Plagiarism, together with other forms of academic dishonesty such as personation, falsification of data, computer and calculation fraud, examination room cheating and bribery, is therefore considered an act of academic fraud and is an offence against University discipline.

11.1.2 Plagiarism is defined as follows:

The presentation by an individual of another person's ideas or work (in any medium, published or unpublished) as though they were his or her own.

11.1.3 In the following circumstances academic collusion represents a form of plagiarism:

Academic collusion is deemed to be unauthorised and unacceptable where it involves the unattributed collaboration of students or others resulting in plagiarism, which is against the University regulations.

11.1.4 QMU has a policy to use the TurnItIn UK plagiarism detection system, or other equivalent systems, to help students avoid plagiarism and improve their scholarship skills. This service is available to all matriculated

students at QMU. QMU tutors may submit student work to TurnItIn UK, or another equivalent system.

11.2 Referencing

Students' attention is drawn to the guide to referencing available in the library.

11.3 Prevention

11.3.1 All members of staff should explain to their students at the start of each session that plagiarism and academic fraud are unacceptable forms of cheating, which will be penalised severely. Such warnings should be repeated during the session and are especially necessary where dissertations, projects or coursework are substantial elements of the curriculum. Every opportunity should be taken to reinforce this message by incorporating it in published material such as Programme or scheme guides and, in the case of doctoral candidates, by its inclusion in the Doctoral Candidates' Handbook.

11.3.2 These warnings should be accompanied by specific advice from subject areas about what constitutes plagiarism and academic fraud. For example, such advice should indicate where a particular discipline makes the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate use of acknowledged or unacknowledged sources; what is regarded as acceptable collaboration between students undertaking joint project work; and what is expected of a dissertation or thesis. Dissertations should clearly indicate whether it is an original contribution to knowledge or a critical survey of published material. Training students to make such distinctions is part of the academic process and should be formally and publicly acknowledged as such. This is particularly significant since some of the cases arising stem from genuine ignorance on the part of the students who have never received guidance on how to acknowledge sources properly.

11.3.3 Scrutiny of academic work should be sufficient to ensure that signs of plagiarism or unacceptable levels of co-operation, whether intentional or not, are detected at an early stage and brought to students' attention through tutorial guidance and in some cases perhaps by written warning.

11.3.4 Dissertation supervisors and other academic staff responsible for assessment and guidance should be aware of cultural relativities that may affect some students' approach to referencing. In providing guidance, staff will be expected to acknowledge cultural differences and to exercise appropriate sensitivity.

11.4 Identifying and reporting

All concerns by tutors related to plagiarism must initially be discussed with the Programme Leader or other designated person who is responsible for making the decision to progress the case further under the University's guidelines.

If it is judged that the case falls into the category of poor academic practice that requires only remedial action, then the Programme Leader shall inform

the student and either carry out the actions required or ensure that they are carried out via the referring tutor such as referring a student to the Effective Learning Service.

If it is judged that there is academic misbehaviour or academic misconduct, then the case will be referred to the Dean of School under the QMU Code of Discipline. The Programme Leader will be responsible for the submission of evidential material to the Dean of School and for informing the student or students involved and any referring staff member of the decision to move to the Disciplinary process.

11.5 Investigation

The Dean of School or other person designated by the Dean shall investigate all referred cases. In consultation with the University Secretary, the Dean will determine if the case may be dealt with summarily under Section 5 of the QMU Code of Discipline.

The Dean will interview the student before any other steps are taken under the Code of Discipline. The Dean will advise the student in writing of the referral, invite the student to make representations and advise the student of the support mechanisms available.

At the interview, a friend or representative may accompany the student. If the Dean considers it appropriate to do so, and if the student agrees, the matter may be dealt with summarily, without recourse to a disciplinary committee.

A designated member of the School Office will attend the student interview.

The School Office will maintain records of all cases referred to the Dean or to a Disciplinary Committee. The member of the School Office acting as the Secretary to the Examination Board, will report the outcome of the case to the Board. This will be appropriate only in those cases where the allegation has been upheld, and the penalty applied by the Dean of School or the Disciplinary Committee.

The designated member of the School Office will also, when appropriate:

- migrate case records to a new field in ISIS;
- delete migrated records from ISIS after the expiry date defined by QMU regulations;
- remove case records when a student leaves QMU.

The student will be responsible for:

- Providing evidence on request;
- Attending an investigatory meeting;
- Either accepting a disciplinary recommendation or proceeding to an appeal under the provisions of the Code of Discipline.

In the case of a distance learning student an investigatory meeting can be conducted by any appropriate means.

At all times, students will be able to call upon the support and guidance of the Student's Union. It is expected that the Student's Union will have trained staff to support students and to attend interviews/meetings with the Dean and/or the Disciplinary Committee.

If the matter is dealt with summarily, the Dean will consider written or oral evidence as he or she thinks fit. That may include any plagiarism detection software or other dishonesty detection mechanisms made available by QMU. It will also include any evidence or representations from the student or students involved as well as from the Programme Leader or from any other member of staff deemed necessary to make a determination. This can include "expert witnesses". The QMU student record system may also be checked for previous recorded instances of proven plagiarism.

If there is a possibility that the allegation, if proved, may lead to the suspension or exclusion of the student, then the case must be referred to a Disciplinary Committee.

In the case of a distance learning student, a telephone or video conference interview will be organised and the student fully briefed about the timing and structure of the interview;

If a finding of guilt is made, the Dean may impose any of the penalties set out in the Code of Discipline, other than expulsion from the University.

At the termination of the proceedings, the Dean will write a short report. In the event of a finding of guilt, the report will set out the misconduct alleged, a brief summary of evidence received, the grounds for the finding of guilt, the penalty imposed, and the factors taken into account in deciding the penalty. A copy of the report will be sent to the student, to the Programme Leader and to the referring Tutor. If the report contains recommendations concerning examination marks, a copy of the report will also be sent to the appropriate Board of Examiners.

There is a right of appeal against a finding of guilt.

12 Introducing Changes to a Masters Programme

In order to keep the Framework dynamic, current and responsive to the need for change, various alterations may be implemented with due authorisation. Please refer to the Programme development, modification, monitoring and review section of the Governance and Regulations. Normally changes should be proposed and approved well in advance of the implementation date and usually at least one semester before the proposed change (accepting that the programme runs across three semesters in the year).

13 Other information

For further information on University policies please refer to the Governance and Regulations website as appropriate:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulations-policies-and-procedures/regulations-policies-and-procedures/>

QMU TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE FRAMEWORK

PART A – M-LEVEL

The Masters Project

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Students will be counselled fully on whether they should proceed from Diploma to Masters award.
- 1.2 The project is the culmination of the Masters programme. It carries a weight equivalent to four taught modules (60 credits) and thus represents around 600 hours of student effort. In general the project must reflect sufficient evidence of independent thought to justify the award at Masters level.
- 1.3 Ideally the subject of the project is based on work with which the student is already involved or represents development within a cognate academic discipline. It should be something the student finds interesting and must be intellectually demanding. The nature of the project is normally discussed with senior professional(s) or academic(s) within the field, one of who may be invited to act as a mentor. Students are advised to consult and seek support from their employers who should be aware of the significant burden on time and resources.
- 1.4 The project should be an exposition of the student's own work and ideas. If the work for the project forms part of a group endeavour e.g. within the student's employing organisation, it is essential that the student's personal contribution is clearly identified and access to copyright or ownership of data is obtained.
- 1.5 In assessing the standard of projects, examiners will seek to ensure that the student has met with the aims of this part of the programme.

2 The Aims of the Project

- 2.1 The general aims of the project are to:
 - a) enable students to develop and apply the skills of research and enquiry to produce original work which contributes to a subject, field or profession
 - b) engage students in study which demands a professional approach, academic rigour, independence and self-direction
- 2.2 The specific aims of the project are to enable the student to:
 - a) explore and apply relevant intellectual approaches and practical skills, including those acquired in the taught components, to the chosen topic;
 - b) develop critically, strategically and in depth a topic or area of interest arising from the work done within the Taught Postgraduate Framework and in the student's area of academic or professional interest;

- c) develop further the research skills as acquired in the two taught research modules, to demonstrate an ability to set the project in its wider context, to sustain argument and to present conclusions;
- d) present and be able to defend their rationale, approach or methodology, outcomes and conclusions.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 As a participant the student is required to:

- a) decide on the proposed area of study in consultation with the academic tutor and, if appropriate, the employer;
- b) discuss with the allocated supervisor the type of guidelines and form of contact most helpful, and come to agreement on a schedule of meetings;
- c) take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties with the supervisor;
- d) produce work in accordance with the schedule agreed with the supervisor, ensuring that material is presented in sufficient time to allow for comment, discussion and alterations before proceeding to the next stage;
- e) take account of:
 - referencing guidelines;
 - rules about plagiarism;
 - the academic appeals procedure;
 - ethics relating to research;
 - regulations governing the presentation of the project.
- f) meet the submission deadline.

3.2 The **Co-ordinator of the Designated Award** is responsible for:

- a) assisting the student to decide on an area of study for the project and on identifying further possible sources of information;
- b) assisting in the appointment of an appropriate supervisor and of an examiner, for the project.

3.3 **Project Supervisors** will be appointed by the Programme Committee based on their specialist expertise and research experience. They will be responsible for:

- a) providing guidance on the student's chosen field of study;
- b) advising on data, literature sources and copyright;
- c) advising on the plan for the project proposal;

- d) suggesting specialists whom the student may consult for additional advice;
- e) providing the student with supervisory sessions as contracted, giving support and monitoring progress;
- f) facilitating planning and writing and giving advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work in order to meet the submission deadline;
- g) ensuring academic rigour; and
- h) liaising with employer supervision;
- i) reporting progress to the Programme Committee.

3.4 The role of the **Programme Committees** is to:

- a) advise students of staff members' research interests;
- b) obtain advice and recommendations from departments relating to project matters;
- c) approve, moderate, modify and advise on project proposals;
- d) approve academic supervisors;
- e) approve nominations of expert or professional advisors.
- f) provide links between students seeking help in deciding on project topics and staff expertise and research interests;
- g) approve the commencement of the supervised period of project work subsequent to approval of the proposal;
- h) receive progress reports;
- i) approve internal examiners.

4 The Choice of and Approval of Project Topic

4.1 Project topics will generally come into being through one of three routes. A candidate may come from work with a particular issue and through discussion with academic supervisors, a title is formulated. Alternatively, in some Schools with large, active research projects, specific or application oriented aspects may be available as Masters projects. Thirdly, topics may be specially designed to pull together knowledge from several modules making up a programme.

4.2 The student must submit an outline proposal to the Programme Committee. This outline should be prepared in consultation with academic staff and be a well considered starting point from which the final project can evolve. It should consist of not more than 1,000 words.

Format for Project Proposals

Title: Sufficiently detailed to inform the Programme Committee of what is proposed (*2 lines*).

Introduction: Outline of the problem, issue or topic for the project and why it has been chosen. A review of background material should be included to put the project in context of recent relevant literature and with other work done in the field. This should include journals as well as books (*maximum 500 words*).

Research Question: A statement of the proposed research/project, to include aim(s), if appropriate, state hypothesis to be tested. (*a paragraph*).

Ethical Considerations: Appropriate ethical approval form(s) should be completed and appended.

Methods or Protocol: Outline of the methods to be applied. For example, an empirical study should include: sampling techniques, nature of population, sample size, power of sample size, technique of investigation, facilities or equipment needed, the exact site where work will be undertaken, design, selection of participants, independent and extraneous variables procedures to be used for analysis.

Timetable: Outline of the time scale of the project, including the anticipated starting date for formal supervised period of project work, and the commencement of the registration period.

Resources: Outline of the resources/budget required. Projects that are expensive in terms of resources may not be approved.

References: Use of a standard system: recommended by the Programme Committee or Harvard Systems.

- 4.3 Following the appointment of an appropriate academic supervisor, the final revised version of the proposal will be drawn up after discussion between the student and the supervisor and should include the starting date for the period of supervision of the project. It is useful at this stage to estimate likely resource requirements in terms of computer hardware and software, access to patients or clients, use of laboratories etc. to give an idea of the extent of coverage and depth of the planned work if appropriate to the field of study. The student is responsible for preparing a full proposal for formal approval.
- 4.4 Ethical approval (following QMU ethics guidelines) must be obtained if appropriate and may be required before approval by the Programme Committee.
- 4.5 Students who fail to submit a satisfactory proposal after two attempts may be required to withdraw from the award or Programme on completion of the requirements for a Postgraduate Diploma award, or may be requested to revise the proposal.
- 4.6 Project Supervisors are allocated by the Programme Committee. Supervisors will be members of the academic staff of the University, although external experts may provide additional specialist advice or joint supervision.

Supervisors are responsible to the appropriate Dean of School/Subject. Any change of supervisor will be carried out only after consultation between a student, the relevant award co-ordinator, and the supervisor, and is subject to the approval of the Programme Committee.

5 The Structure of the Project

- 5.1 The project will normally contain the following sections or chapters, normally in 10,000 - 15,000 words.

Title: Title of work, author's name, award and year.

Abstract: This should be a summary of the content of the project and the main conclusions reached (< 300 words).

Index: This is a table of contents with page numbers including illustrations, figures, tables and appendices if included.

Introduction: This should clearly define the area/topic which has been investigated, the reasons for the student's interest in the area/topic, the steps which have been taken to explore and deal with it and a statement as to the main outcomes and/or conclusions.

Literature Review: This should take the form of a critique of material drawn from several sources: books, journal articles, reports or audio-visual material.

Methodology: This should include: the theoretical framework guiding methods of inquiry; a full description of the methods of research/inquiry employed in the work; where appropriate, methods for data collection and analysis, statistical methods, the rationale behind the choice of methodology and a discussion about the limitations or the strengths of the methodology.

Results: This will comprise a clear presentation of project outcomes.

Discussion: This section presents a detailed consideration of the project outcomes, in the context of methodology and relevant literature, with an assessment of the significance of the inferences made or the impact.

Conclusions and Recommendations: This should be a brief resume of the key outcomes in relation to stated aim(s) and objectives, the process through which it was investigated and the conclusions reached. Recommendations may be proposed, for example, further research or changes in practice or policy.

References: This is an accurate list of authors and their works that are acknowledged in the text, in a standard manner.

Acknowledgements (optional)

Appendices: If included, these should be numbered in sequence and may contain material relevant to the work but not essential for inclusion in the main body of the work: for example interview schedules or questionnaires, maps, diagrams, data or tables etc.

- 5.2 A draft version of a substantial portion of the project should be submitted to the supervisor at an early stage. For example, this might include the introductory and literature survey chapters together with the proposed page of contents. This will enable the supervisor to comment on content, style, structure and presentation and allow their suggestions to be incorporated into further chapters. Students will be encouraged to submit drafts of all the chapters to ensure that the project adequately reflects the quality of their efforts.
- 5.3 The student should submit the completed project one month before the date for the examination board and at least three months before the end of the registration period.

6 Presentation

- 6.1 Projects should be submitted to the following specifications:
- a) **two** copies of the project should be submitted by the date stipulated in the assessment schedule; normally one month before the examination board.
 - b) Projects must be presented in a permanent legible (word processed or typed) form on 80 or 90 grams A4 white paper.

Double spacing should be used.

The left margins should be set at 1.25 inches to allow enough room for binding, the right margin should be set at 0.75 inches for single sided printing;
 - c) Illustrations should be dry mounted or computer scanned. Figures, tables and diagrams may be inserted into the text, with adjacent legends or titles. Relevant audio visual records to be consulted in conjunction with the text must be fully labelled as in 6.1.a
 - d) The project should be comb bound in laminated card and the cover should contain the following information:

Title
Candidate's Name
Name of Award
Name of University
Date of Submission.

- 6.2 Candidates may propose alternative specifications for approval.

7 Project Examination and Moderation

- 7.1 The assessors will agree marks for process, report, presentation and oral examination, where there is one. The following criteria will guide the allocation of marks but the weighting given to each individual point may vary depending on the nature of the project:

Process:

Demonstrates appreciation and comprehension of the task planned and undertaken showing initiative and thorough grasp of relevant literature to demonstrate a sound understanding and knowledge in a subject new to the student; showing competence in the use of new apparatus or technique(s), computer data and/or statistical applications; new technology; success, creativity and resourcefulness in meeting project objective(s); thoroughness in undertaking of the investigation; overall, particular credit will be given for originality of thought and/or execution.

Report:

Thoroughness and penetration of review of past work and use of relevant literature; care in presentation including diagrams if appropriate; clarity of prose; organisation of report into logical sequence; choice of style of presentation as shown by clarity of results; intellectual quality of analysis; discussion of results, conclusions and suggestions for further work. The whole assessment team will jointly determine the mark for the report.

Oral examination: (if convened)

Demonstration of complete grasp of the topic; achievement of the objectives; attention to cost and quality if appropriate; presentation and communication skills. The mark for oral examination will be contributed to by the whole assessment team comprising the supervisor and the moderator.

- 7.2 Marks will be awarded by those assessing the project using the preceding criteria. The precise allocation will depend on the nature of the award and a distinction may be awarded to indicate an outstanding achievement. A good or high standard is one that indicates suitability for entry into a programme of research leading to a higher degree.
- 7.3 The presentation and oral examination includes the demonstration of the results in a project that has an experimental component. For projects that are predominantly theoretical or design oriented, the assessment component for the report may be increased relative to the oral examination components at the discretion of the assessment team.
- 7.4 Examiners wishing to deviate from the guidelines may do so but should provide written reasons for their decisions to the Board of Examiners.
- 7.5 The external examiners play a crucial role in establishing the standard of the project. As well as being involved in the oral and the assessment of the report, they may be consulted on the nature of the project.

QMU TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE FRAMEWORK

PART A – M-LEVEL

Guideline Criteria for Staff and Students Regarding the Construction of Free-Route Programmes

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Taught Postgraduate Framework has been designed to allow students a wide variety of options in the way they formulate their subject and module combinations. On the one hand a student may focus on a particular subject (named award). At the other end of the spectrum is the programme of study, which has no specified subject theme but is derived from modules offered by a variety of subjects (awards) within the Framework. Such a programme is referred to as the "free-route" and the product would be an unnamed Masters degree.
- 1.2 It is anticipated that the free-route student will be the exception rather than the rule within the Framework.
- 1.3 The academic validity of a programme of study drawn from a variety of subject areas (named awards) must be carefully considered. Any such programme proposed by a student will be rigorously scrutinised. **Final responsibility for approval of a free-route programme of study will rest with the School Academic Board.**
- 1.4 The concept of "free-route" is in some ways something of a misnomer since the programme will **NOT** allow an unrestricted mix and match of modules to formulate content. A range of subject modules may however be put together which do not provide the depth of study to be eligible for a named award but have the academic coherence appropriate for a general award.

2 Constraints

- 2.1 There will be a number of constraints which will govern the composition of the subject content of any free-route programme as follows:
- Modules within named awards from which free route students may choose are neither random nor independent. Rather, they have been designed to provide subject themes that have academic depth, progression and cohesion. **Students on the free-route programme will be constrained by such pre-requisites** and are most likely to put together groups of modules within subject areas (named awards).
- 2.2 **The free-route is therefore not an easy option for a student.** They will have to justify their chosen module combination and show that they have considered their programme in its entirety. They will have to take account of the restrictions and requirements outlined above.
- 2.3 While the School Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for accepting and approving a free-route programme of study it is the responsibility of the student's Personal Academic Tutor to provide advice and support for the free-

route student so that pre-requisite requirements for modules, research methodology underpinning and academic validity and cohesion of proposed combinations are addressed. The student will need to explore convincingly, with the Personal Academic Tutor, their reasons for embarking on their proposed free-route programme so that the counsellor can support the case forwarded to the Board.

- 2.4 The description above of the free-route programme provides the basis for formulating a checklist of criteria which should be addressed by both the student drawing up their proposal and those validating the programme, namely the Personal Academic Tutor and the School Academic Board.
- 2.5 The School Academic Board will appoint a Personal Academic Tutor or designate a Programme Leader to fulfil this role, in conjunction with adviser(s).

3 Criteria

- 3.1 In order to meet the general philosophy and aims of the Taught Postgraduate Framework criteria, elements that should be considered are as follows:
- The proposal should state clearly the level of award for which the student is to register.
 - Free-routes will lead to unnamed awards at Postgraduate Diploma and Masters Degree (MA or MSc depending on simple majority of modules) level, subject to approval by the School Academic Board.
 - A statement of **learning and, if appropriate, career objectives** should be included.
 - The proposal should demonstrate the **rationale for the combination of modules** in relation to learning and/or career objectives.
 - Module combinations **must satisfy all pre-requisite requirements** within the programme.
 - Module combinations must show sufficient content of **interpersonal skills and research methodology** consistent with needs of study programmes at the appropriate level.
 - Module combinations for proposed Masters Degree programmes must demonstrate **adequate academic grounding in the topic area** proposed for independent research in the masters' project.
 - The proposal must demonstrate that both the module combination and module sequence is **logical and has academic acceptability**. One such demonstration would be identifying an appropriate willing academic supervisor.
- 3.2 Students may **EITHER** elect to enrol onto a free-route programme at the beginning of their studies **OR** transfer to a free-route programme at any point provided they satisfy the guidelines outlined above, there are no timetable restrictions and subject to approval by the School Academic Board

- 3.3 The nature and module content of the proposed free route programmes is likely to vary considerably and each case will need to be assessed on its merit. Nevertheless, these criteria provide a framework for ensuring reasonable academic consistency across a diverse range of proposed free-route programmes.

QMU TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE FRAMEWORK

PART A – M-LEVEL

Teaching and Learning and Assessment Strategies

Discussions:

Discussions are intended to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experiences and perspectives, which will reinforce the inter-professional nature of the programme. Analysis and academic debate are central to these discussions.

Workshops:

Workshops are designed to provide experience in collaborative problem-solving. The workshop will include relevant case studies, investigative laboratories and simulation exercises.

Seminars/Presentations:

These will give participants the opportunity to investigate topics and present their findings to the rest of the group. They will have threefold purposes of providing investigatory experience, the sharing of knowledge gained and the justification to others of the conclusions reached.

Tutorials:

Tutorials are participative learning exercises where small groups of students share knowledge and experience and attempt to resolve problems arising from the formal programme or from self-directed study.

Critique of Written Work:

Critiques provide direct feedback on the students ability to apply the knowledge and skills developed in the research modules, when identifying a piece of work, seeking out and reviewing appropriate literature and communicating the findings.

Directed Study:

Directed study refers to the research and preparation of work for tutorials, seminars, workshops, assessment, presentations and back ground knowledge that broadens and deepens understanding.

Lectures:

Lectures will be employed for orientation purposes and for the presentation of updated specialised knowledge in an organised form. The lecture will provide a model of the process of critical evaluation and will act as the platform for self-directed learning.

Interactive Lectures:

This is a term used to describe the form of lecture where the lecturer encourages discussion on major points made during the presentation and interacts with the participants by adapting the content and pace of the lecture according to their responses.

Field Work:

This refers to the application of research techniques in a field location external to laboratory/lecture room. Fieldwork may include field visits but in essence is participatory rather than observational. Field visits maybe used in fieldwork to orientated students to enable them to develop more work based projects.

Work Based Learning:

This is a generic term that is used to describe a range of learning strategies which occur at, in, or which are related to, the work of the individual.

The term includes such activities as prior or prospective experiential learning, learning contracts, assignments/case studies/projects, which require the learner to focus on his/her practice. The term `reflective practitioner' is frequently used in these cases. Innovative methods of detailing the information that is generated through these methods of learning can be employed, including learning diaries.

It may include the requirement that the nature of the study is descriptive, analytical, evaluative or critical, depending on the demands, intellectual rigour and context in which the study takes place.

Project:

Projects provide an opportunity to undertake an independent in-depth study, in which students can undertake a critical review of relevant literature, and select and apply appropriate methods linking theory to practice.

Assessment Types**Unseen Examinations:**

At Masters level, unseen examination papers are designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to synthesise information from competing sources, and produce a high level, coherent argument within a fixed time scale under formal examination conditions.

Seen Examination Papers:

Seen papers give students notice of topics or questions in advance of an examination. Students are therefore given greater opportunity to prepare specific topics, but still complete a paper within a fixed time scale. A variety of different forms of seen paper may be used.

These include: -

- papers being written under formal examination conditions:

- open book examinations where topic areas are disclosed;
- a range of questions being disclosed but only a given number appearing on the examination paper; a range of questions being disclosed, with all appearing on the examination paper;
- students completing an entire examination paper in their own time to be submitted in a predetermined form on a given time and date.

Open Book Examinations:

Students have access to literature or other material during the examination. This may involve specified material or a specific number of items of material in order to fulfil the requirements of the examination.

Problem Solution:

Problem solving assessment offers students the opportunity to apply knowledge and extend the boundaries of logical thinking in an applied situation. This may be done under examination conditions, for instance through evaluation of video or technical material, or through independent or group work. Problem-solving may use real or simulated exercises and this form of assessment allows the process as well as the outcome of students' work to be assessed.

Case Studies:

Case studies describe a situation in which the student's powers of analysis, creative thinking, communication and self-evaluation are used in addressing and resolving specific situations. Presentation may be written and/or verbal.

Critical Reviews:

Critical review of a body of literature or other material enables students to address ideas which are new to them in a mature and discriminating manner.

Essays:

Essays at Master's level allow students to present analysis of existing material and closely reasoned argument about the relative merits of a variety of approaches to a topic. Essays are presented in acceptable prose, within a given word limit.

Student Led Seminars:

Assessed student led seminars allow students to present material in a form accessible to their peers. The skills required include an understanding of the subject area, the ability to present the information in a coherent, cohesive and concise manner and the ability to motivate peers to be engaged in the presentation. This is one method of demonstrating oral presentation skills. Peer and self-assessment may be built into the marking of such presentations.

Practical Assessments:

Practical assessments cover a wide range of activities at Master's level, from small-scale laboratory investigations to interpersonal or professional skills based

assessments. All of these activities require the demonstration of a high level of practical skills, and a high level of ability to relate theory to practice. This includes the ability to demonstrate change in practical work as a result of the increased academic knowledge and skills.

Project:

This is a significant piece of work which may be a research-based dissertation, an original and creative work, a work-based study, a portfolio or a professional intervention, but must include theoretical evaluation and analysis of a high standard equivalent to a piece of empirical research and must contribute to the development of the subject or profession.

GRADE MARKING CRITERIA FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE MODULES

From September 2015 the following grade bands will apply.

The student will provide evidence of the following to achieve recognition of the grade banding:

Grade A* 80%+

Outstanding performance, exceptionally able – pass

- Mastery of the specialist area that demonstrates exceptional insight and breadth of knowledge.
- Exceptional comprehension of scholarly techniques and / or the research-base.
- Presents extensive evidence of outstanding scholarship with exceptional critical analysis and consistent deep knowledge of the specialist and related areas.
- Demonstrates outstanding awareness of and sensitivity to the limitations of evidence
- Outstanding ability to challenge and develop existing theory and/or professional practice within the specialist area.
- Demonstrates outstanding originality, creativity or innovation in the application of knowledge and / or practice
- Demonstrates exceptional synthesis in development and inter-relationship between concepts, theories, policies and practice.
- Displays outstanding potential to undertake research or be a leading practitioner within a specialist area.
- Demonstrates exceptional ability in synthesising knowledge from different disciplines.
- Outstanding ability to communicate knowledge (written, verbal, practical, visual)
- Meets the learning outcomes of the module or assessment.

Grade A 70- 79.9%

Excellent performance [distinction mark is 70%] - pass

- Mastery of the specialist area that demonstrates excellent insight and breadth of knowledge.
- Excellent comprehension of scholarly techniques and / or the research-base.
- Presents extensive evidence of excellent scholarship including critical analysis and deep knowledge of the specialist and related areas.
- Demonstrates excellent awareness of and sensitivity to the limitations of evidence
- Excellent ability to challenge existing theory and/or professional practice within the specialist area with some insight into potential developments.
- Demonstrates excellent creativity or innovation in the application of knowledge and / or practice with potential originality
- Demonstrates excellent synthesis in development and inter-relationship between concepts, theories, policies and practice.
- Displays excellent potential to undertake research or be a leading practitioner within a specialist area.

- Demonstrates excellent ability in synthesising knowledge from different disciplines.
- Excellent ability to communicate knowledge (written, verbal, practical, visual)
- Meets the learning outcomes of the module or assessment.

Grade B 60- 69.9%

Very Good performance [merit mark is 60-69.9%] - pass

- Very good insight and breadth of knowledge in specialist area.
- Very good comprehension of scholarly techniques and / or the research-base.
- Presents evidence of very good scholarship including critical analysis and some depth of knowledge of the specialist and related areas.
- Demonstrates very good awareness of and some sensitivity to the limitations of evidence
- Very good ability to challenge existing theory and/or professional practice within the specialist area with some insight into potential developments.
- Demonstrates some creativity or innovation in the application of knowledge and / or practice.
- Demonstrates very good synthesis in development and inter-relationship between concepts, theories, policies and practice.
- Displays some potential to undertake research or lead practice within a specialist area.
- Demonstrates very good ability in synthesising knowledge from different disciplines.
- Very good ability to communicate knowledge (written, verbal, practical)
- Meets the learning outcomes of the module or assessment.

Grade C 50- 59.9%

Satisfactory performance - pass

- Satisfactory insight and knowledge in specialist area.
- Some comprehension of scholarly techniques and / or the research-base.
- Presents some evidence of scholarship including critical analysis but lacking depth or critique in some areas.
- Demonstrates some awareness of and some sensitivity to the limitations of evidence but these may not always be clearly articulated or understood
- Presents existing theory or comments on practice within the specialist area but with unsubstantiated claims or limited insight into alternative perspectives.
- Superficial understanding in the application of knowledge.
- Limited synthesis in development and inter-relationship between concepts, theories, policies and practice.
- Some ability to synthesise knowledge from different disciplines.
- Satisfactory ability to communicate knowledge (written, verbal, practical)
- Meets the learning outcomes of the module or assessment.

Grade D 40-49.9%

Unsatisfactory performance - fail

- Unsatisfactory insight and knowledge in specialist area.
- Insufficient evidence of scholarly techniques and / or knowledge of the research-base.
- Lacks critical analysis or depth of argument in some areas.
- Limited awareness of the evidence with muddled understanding

- Presents some theory or comments on practice but highly descriptive and uncritical with unsubstantiated claims.
- Limited ability to apply knowledge.
- Limited synthesis of concepts, theories, policies and practice.
- Limited ability to synthesise knowledge from different disciplines.
- Limited ability to communicate knowledge (written, verbal, practical)
- Does not meet all the learning outcomes of the module or assessment.

Grade E 30-39.9%

Unsatisfactory performance - fail

- Unsatisfactory insight and knowledge in specialist area.
- Lack of evidence of scholarly techniques and / or knowledge of the research-base.
- Lack of critical analysis or depth of argument.
- Lack of awareness of the evidence and muddled understanding
- Presents little theory or limited comments on practice with highly descriptive and unsubstantiated claims.
- Lack of ability to apply knowledge.
- Lack of synthesis of concepts, theories, policies and practice.
- Lack of ability to synthesise knowledge from different disciplines.
- Lack of ability to communicate knowledge (written, verbal, practical)
- Does not meet all the learning outcomes of the module or assessment.

Grade F 20-29.9%

Unsatisfactory performance - fail

- Unsatisfactory insight or knowledge in specialist area.
- No evidence of scholarly techniques with minimal knowledge of the evidence or the research-base.
- Lack of analysis, depth of argument or attempts to apply knowledge.
- Presents minimal relevant theory or relevant comments on practice.
- Lack of attempt to synthesis concepts, theories, policies and practice.
- Very poor ability to communicate knowledge (written, verbal, practical)
- Does not meet the learning outcomes of the module or assessment.

Grade G <20%

Unsatisfactory performance and non-submission - fail

- No insight or knowledge in specialist area.
- No evidence of scholarly techniques or knowledge of the research-base.
- No analysis or depth of argument.
- No awareness or understanding of the evidence.
- Presents no relevant theory or relevant comments on practice.
- No attempt to apply knowledge.
- No attempt to synthesis concepts, theories, policies and practice.
- No evidence of ability to synthesise knowledge from different disciplines.
- Extremely poor ability to communicate knowledge (written, verbal, practical)
- Does not meet the learning outcomes of the module or assessment.

Grade-Mark conversion table

If a **postgraduate** subject is assessed using a grade only, then the following grade-to-mark conversion scheme shall be used for the purpose of computation.

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Mark	85	75	65	55	45	35	25	10

In most cases, the mark is set at the midpoint of the band. However, the mark at Grade A* is limited to 85 to reflect the comparatively few marks likely to be awarded over 90%.