

# THE UNIVERSITY OF READING CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Curriculum Framework is informed by, and contributes to, the realisation of the ambitions for Educating for 21st century lives set out in the University's Strategy:

## **Educating for 21st century lives**

*We will be recognised for delivering strong programmes at all levels of higher education, within distinctive and innovative models, rooted in research and closely aligned with practice. We will continually refresh our view of how learning can best be achieved, devise learning pathways to suit individual needs and develop new ways of delivering and accessing teaching and learning within them. By doing so, we will enable learners at all stages of their careers to develop and fulfil their intellectual and personal potential by combining broadly based knowledge and expertise with experience in creating opportunities, analysing needs and implementing solutions. These developments will bring about a change in the balance of our expanded student body, within which we expect to see an increasingly higher proportion of students on postgraduate and executive education programmes.*

## **Introduction**

The University of Reading Curriculum Framework:

- articulates the knowledge, competencies and skills that we want our graduates to attain;
- establishes a set of academic principles upon which our curriculum is based;
- defines a set of pedagogic principles which underpin our curriculum; and
- aligns with processes for programme design, approval and review.

The Curriculum Framework is used to inform the design, approval, and review of programmes.

## **The Curriculum**

The curriculum encompasses all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment delivered by programmes towards the attainment of learning outcomes and the acquisition of graduate attributes. It encompasses all aspects of students' learning, both directed and self-directed, and is enhanced by co-curricular and extra-curricular engagements. Students are actively involved in shaping the curriculum and are supported through their studies by a variety of academic and pastoral support services.

This framework is designed to be used by Programme Directors and staff contributing to programmes in the design of new programmes and the regular review of existing programmes. The framework is very much focused at the programme (rather than the module) level in order to help ensure the design and delivery of cohesive programmes.

## Graduate Attributes

Graduates of the University of Reading develop a range of attributes. The particular knowledge, competencies and skills which all programmes inculcate and enable students to demonstrate are outlined below. The curriculum seeks to engender the following attributes:

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|---|--|
| <b>Mastery of the discipline</b>                      | Breadth and depth of knowledge of one or more disciplines and its/their use/applicability in real-world contexts. Discipline-specific skills and attributes. Understanding of disciplinary epistemology and methodology. Awareness of current research in the discipline/s. Ability to undertake research and enquiry within their discipline/s. Autonomous learning within the discipline/s.  |
| <b>Skills in research and enquiry</b>                 | Ability to learn through research and enquiry. Ability to design, undertake and present research as appropriate to their discipline. Ability to consume and appraise research critically.  |
| <b>Personal effectiveness and self-awareness</b>      | Ability to communicate effectively in an increasingly digital world for a variety of purposes and audiences, and through a range of appropriate media. Ability to articulate what and how they have learned, awareness of their strengths and areas to develop, and commitment to learning and reflection. Desire for self-improvement. Personal self-awareness and reflection, self-efficacy, intellectual curiosity, adaptability, resilience and commitment to lifelong learning. |
| <b>Global engagement and multi-cultural awareness</b> | Intercultural competence and global outlook. Social and civic responsibility. Ability to collaborate effectively and adapt to different work or study contexts. Appreciation of multiple perspectives and valuing of diversity.  |

## Academic Principles

The following academic principles underpin the curriculum at the University of Reading:

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|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Discipline based</b>      | The curriculum is based upon the primacy of the discipline/field of study. It enables the acquisition of deep knowledge of one or more disciplines/fields of study, with each articulating the knowledge and skills that its students will attain.   |
| <b>Research based</b>        | Students and staff work together within a community of scholars. The curriculum engages students in research and enquiry throughout their studies. Students learn about current research in their discipline/s; engage in research discussions; are equipped to progressively develop their skills in research and enquiry; and pursue their own research and enquiry. They are provided with opportunities to disseminate their research and enquiry. |
| <b>Diverse and Inclusive</b> | The curriculum is designed to meet the needs and be representative of the world we live in, recognising the contributions made by different genders, cultures, races and the perspectives of/impact on different groups. It is representative of the discipline's subject matter and the contributions and perspectives of different groups on that subject matter.  |
| <b>Global</b>                | The curriculum is not limited by the scholarly perspective of one culture or country; rather, it is defined by the opportunities it gives students to consider global perspectives on their subject and its application, and to develop intercultural competence.  |
| <b>Contextual</b>            | Concepts, theories and ideas are related to the current context so that students gain an understanding of their applicability and use. Students develop an understanding of how knowledge/skills can be applied to real world problems. They develop critical perspectives on current thinking and practice by drawing on theories and wider research.   |

## Pedagogic Principles

The University of Reading curriculum is carefully **designed** to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are aligned to the learning outcomes of programmes and of associated modules. It is informed by an engagement with up-to-date research and scholarship in teaching and learning. Opportunities offered by use of technology to broaden, diversify and support the design of curriculum are considered.

The curriculum is designed in collaboration with students and other stakeholders and is mindful of the need to prepare students for life beyond university. Programme Directors are trained and supported to lead their teams to effectively deliver cohesive programmes.

The curriculum has momentum. It is appropriately and progressively **challenging** from the outset; building on prior learning and attainment; maximising student potential and attainment. Skill development is mapped across programmes. The curriculum progressively builds students' confidence in transitioning to autonomous learning.

Curriculum delivery is informed by **pedagogies appropriate to the discipline**. These are articulated and shared with students.

Programmes are planned to ensure that students are well **prepared** for and actively **engaged** in their learning and are designed to make maximum use of learning hours and to encourage and enable careful planning of independent study time. Preparedness and careful planning of out-of-class learning increasingly means that time in the classroom can be spent on discussion, problem solving, application, and experiential activities.

The curriculum is delivered using **inspiring approaches** to teaching and learning that are innovative and effectively incorporate evolving technology enhanced learning methods, where appropriate, to ensure access to the best learning environment possible.

Students are part of a community of learners; their programme provides them with opportunities to learn **collaboratively** as well as individually.

**Research** forms an integral part of student learning, including the development of their skills in engaging in their own research and disseminating this in forms appropriate to their audience. All programmes work progressively towards enabling students to undertake a substantial piece of independent research.

The curriculum is **diverse** and **inclusive**. It takes proactive and anticipatory account of the varied student body, including, for example, educational, cultural and social backgrounds and experiences, as well as the presence of any physical or sensory impairment and their mental well-being. It anticipates the challenges and barriers for different students and addresses these needs in the core curriculum, promoting a holistic approach to meeting students' entitlements. It evolves with the profile of students.

The curriculum includes opportunities for experiential learning and **real world engagement**. Not only are concepts, ideas and theories related to the current context to understand their applicability and current use, all programmes provide the opportunity for students to learn within a workplace, through a placement and/or work based learning activities.

**Assessment** is for learning. It is carefully planned across a programme. It contributes directly to learning and skill development; it is authentic, varied and proportionate. There is an appropriate balance between formative and summative assessment, and formative assessment prepares students well for summative assessment. Where possible, students are provided with some choice in assessment methods. Feedback on assessment feeds forward; it is regular, accessible, thorough, and timely.

## Implementation of the Framework

Each School will review its undergraduate programmes in light of the Curriculum Framework over a 3 year period from 2016-17 to 2018-19. The framework will also be used to inform the development of any undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in new areas.

