

Guidance on the organisation, design and delivery of Combined Programmes and shared modules

This document provides guidance on the organisation, design and delivery of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Combined programmes and programmes where modules are delivered by one or more contributing Departments/Schools.

Aims of Guidance

- Improve **consistency** of the **student journey** across combined programmes and programmes where modules are delivered by one or more contributing Departments/Schools
- **Coherent** teaching and learning through **curriculum design**
- Creating a sense of belonging to an **academic community**

1. The Vision for Combined Honours and shared modules

- 1.1. Combined honours programmes consist of two or more subjects with some level of interdisciplinarity, allowing students to develop a range of attributes expected for University of Reading graduates. As with single honours programmes, combined honours programmes offer a coherent and consistent student experience.
- 1.2. Programmes where modules are delivered by one or more contributing Departments/Schools should allow students to develop a range of attributes expected for University of Reading graduates and offer a coherent and consistent student experience.

2. Ownership and Organisation

- 2.1. One school must be designated as the 'home'¹ school with responsibility for overseeing programme organisation and delivery.
- 2.2. To ensure integration, and consistency of the student experience, suites or groups of similar combined programmes should belong to the same 'home' school.
- 2.3. There must be a nominated Programme Director from the 'home' school with strategic oversight *across* the programme. For combined programmes, the

¹ Where the programme is made up of roughly two equal and distinct halves of separate single subjects, the 'Home' school should be the first named part of the programme in order to provide consistency.

appointment of Programme Directors will depend on the configuration, number and size of programmes within the 'home' school. For example, schools with a substantive combined programme portfolio but with small numbers of students taking each programme, may choose to nominate one Programme Director to oversee all combined programmes in the 'home' school.

- 2.4. For combined programmes and programmes where modules are delivered by one or more contributing Departments/Schools there must be a nominated individual from the 'partner' school who acts as the 'Subject Liaison' across the programme(s), working in partnership with the Programme Director, to ensure academic integration.
- 2.5. In line with University policy and procedures the Programme Director and programme team should ideally ensure a single set of expectations of how policy is being enacted across the programme, for example: when work is returned within the 15 working day standard turnaround time, procedures in relation to over-length coursework, and attendance. If this is not possible, a clear rationale and expectations need to be communicated to the students.

3. Programme design

- 3.1. The 'home' and 'partner' schools should work collaboratively to design a coherent programme, ensuring that teaching, learning, and assessment are aligned to the Programme learning outcomes (PLOs).
- 3.2. For combined programmes the expectation is that there will be PLOs that relate to discipline-specific knowledge, skills and attributes and some PLOs which are shared by the two subjects. These shared PLOs may articulate interdisciplinary skills and attributes and/or where there are overlaps in skills and attributes between disciplines.
- 3.3. Module convenors of shared modules should be cognisant of the needs of all students enrolled and design the curriculum accordingly.
- 3.4. For combined programmes, the programme team must work together to enhance the links between disciplines to ensure that students are provided with opportunities to bring together the knowledge of one or more disciplines.
- 3.5. Curriculum content and skills development must be coordinated and mapped progressively across the programme.
- 3.6. For joint programmes, the structure of the programme should enable students to transfer to single honours following Part 1.
- 3.7. The programme team should plan for parity of student workload between modules that have the same credit weighting.
- 3.8. Assessment should be carefully planned across the programme, with an appropriate balance between formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment should prepare students well for summative assessment.

4. Quality assurance

- 4.1. Programmes will follow the Programme Approval process, which will be led by the 'home' school in conjunction with the partner school.
- 4.2. Any amendments to programmes/modules will follow the Programme Lifecycle Policies and must be agreed in advance in consultation with the Programme Director.
- 4.3. The 'home' school is accountable for programme evaluation and will work with the 'partner' school throughout the process.
- 4.4. Each Combined Programme must be overseen by a Board of Studies and Student Experience (BoSSE) in the 'home' school. Cognate programmes can be grouped under the same BoSSE. Groupings will depend upon the configuration, number and size of programmes within the 'home' school. For example, it may be appropriate for a school with a substantive number of combined Programmes under its purview to operate a discrete BoSSE for combined Programmes. The 'home' school should ensure that BoSSE meetings have appropriate staff and student representation to facilitate dialogue and purposeful reflection at a programme-level. In programmes with substantive shared teaching a standing invitation to the BoSSE should be extended to a nominated individual from the 'partner' school.
- 4.5. The Board of External Examiners meeting will be organised by the 'home' school and will work with the 'partner' school throughout the process.

5. Student support and academic tutoring

- 5.1. Every student on the programme will be allocated an Academic Tutor from the 'home' school, as a minimum.
- 5.2. Academic Tutors must have oversight across the programme, to ensure they can work in partnership with students to take a holistic approach to their academic and personal and professional development.
- 5.3. There should be a named contact for students and Academic Tutors in the 'partner' school to ensure there is a consistent approach to academic support across the programme. For combined programmes, depending on the local context, this could be the 'Subject Liaison' person or another designated Academic Tutor from the 'partner' school.

6. Student Voice and Partnership

- 6.1. The student voice should be appropriately represented on Teaching and Learning boards, including Student Staff Partnership Groups and BoSSEs.
- 6.2. Students need to be involved in opportunities to provide feedback on their experience of the programme as a whole.
- 6.3. Student feedback on the programme needs to be communicated across schools and shared action should be agreed before closing the feedback loop.

6.4. Students should be actively involved in shaping the curriculum through opportunities to work in partnership across the programme.

7. Timetabling and assessment management

- 7.1. The Programme Director and Subject Liaison should work together with the timetabling team, to minimise clashes and ensure that the timetabling of teaching does not disadvantage students on combined programmes.
- 7.2. The programme team should work collaboratively to avoid bunching of assessment deadlines.
- 7.3. The programme team should provide clear, integrated, and timely information for students, especially where timetabling issues and assessment bunching cannot be avoided.

8. Communication

With students

- 8.1. Clear information on points of contact, student support and relevant Support Centre(s) should be communicated to students by the Programme Director and via a single Programme Handbook.
- 8.2. For combined programmes induction arrangements, including Welcome Week activities, should be negotiated between the 'home' and 'partner' schools, to ensure that students receive an induction to the whole programme. Presence of colleagues from both the 'home' and 'partner' school is a good way of establishing early relationships and help build a sense of belonging.
- 8.3. Programme Directors and module convenors of shared modules are responsible for ongoing communication with students, to support student understanding of disciplinary differences (e.g. academic writing and referencing).

Interdepartmental

- 8.4. The Programme Director in the 'home' school should communicate regularly with the Subject Liaison in the 'partner' school. Ongoing dialogue between departments is recommended to establish a coherent programme and consistent student experience.
- 8.5. The SDTL and /or SDAT in the home school should consult counterparts in the partner school as appropriate with regard to welfare, academic engagement, fitness to study, and academic misconduct issues.

Marketing and Admissions

- 9.1. The programme team should work together with Global Recruitment, Marketing Business Partners and Admissions to agree and create a clear and coherent marketing strategy for the programme, including coordination of dates for Open Days and Visit Days.

- 9.2. For combined programmes Open Days and Visit Days should involve staff from both Departments/Schools.
- 9.3. Programme information for prospective students should be clear and unambiguous about the course content. Guidance on options, module choices and placement/year abroad should be included.
- 9.4. Points of contact for the programme should be clearly communicated to prospective students.

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Document control

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