

Handbook for Undergraduate Programme Review

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Purpose of this document

This document is a sub-set of the *Integrated framework for undergraduate curriculum development and review*. That document deals with:

- course planning
- course review
- programme planning
- programme review.

This document contains only the sections relevant to the review of undergraduate programmes.

1. Background

1.1 The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) regards teaching and learning as a core function; the University places great importance on the culture embedded in the institution and its history, and also on explicit systems and procedures to assure and enhance the quality of the educational experience for students. The development of the system and procedures has gone through several stages as the University has grown in size and complexity, and the measured pace of changes has won acceptance and ownership among teachers and students. This document constitutes the current status of the University's evolving quality assurance framework for teaching and learning.

1.2 Principles

1.2.1 Among others, the following principles were used to guide the formulation of the framework:

- The importance of reflection upon the achievement of desired learning outcomes as a stimulus to curriculum refinement.
- The value of periodic peer review as a spur to self-reflection and the provision of wider insights.
- The importance of diagnostic feedback in providing evidence to inform the process of reflection.
- The appropriateness of taking an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning by focusing on student learning outcomes.
- The importance of achieving alignment between desired learning outcomes and the curriculum.
- The value of deriving principles of excellent teaching at CUHK from the principles and practices of those judged to be the best teachers at the University.
- The importance of developing a framework which is effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning, while minimizing bureaucracy and paperwork.
- These principles have been incorporated into a curriculum development model, shown in Figure 1. The model commences with student learning needs which are utilised to formulate desired learning outcomes. These lead to five elements of the curriculum which are incorporated into the integrated curriculum framework: desired learning outcomes, content, learning activities, assessment and feedback. These five elements are incorporated into procedures for course development, course review, programme development and programme review. Evaluation or feedback is central to the model as it informs reflection upon practice.

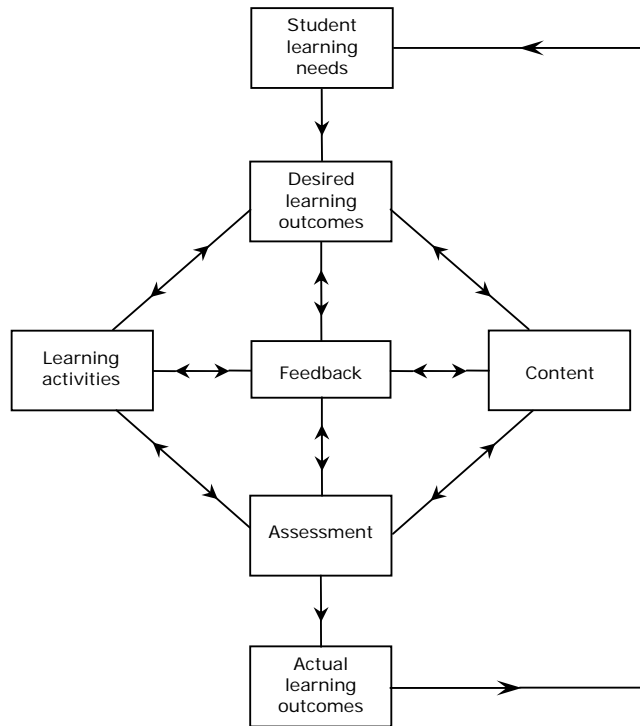


Figure 1. A model of an aligned curriculum

1.3 Nomenclature

- 1.3.1 In the following, the term *course* also means *module* (which is used in some disciplines); the term *department* includes *programme committee* and any other unit that might be responsible for academic programmes; the term *department chairman* includes *programme director*; and the term *teacher* includes *instructor* as well.
- 1.3.2 All guides and associated documents are to be used flexibly and adapted to suit practices and terminology within departments and faculties.

2. Main Elements

- 2.1 The integrated framework consists of the following main elements:
- The **planning** of courses and programmes should be documented in broad conformity with a standard template, at programme launch and upon major changes.
 - Each department together with the responsible teacher(s) should conduct and document its own (“internal”) **course reviews** at least once every three years, against the original course plan and, where appropriate, revised course plans should be formulated.
 - As part of its Annual Departmental Records submitted to the Vice-Chancellor, each department should provide a brief **annual progress report** on teaching and learning, focussing on progress with respect to the action plan.

- (d) Each department should conduct and document its own *programme self-evaluation* at least once every six years, against the original programme plan and, where appropriate, revised programme plans should be formulated.
- (e) The Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning appoints a panel, including the visiting/ external examiner, to conduct a *programme review* at least once every six years. The review panel considers the substance of the teaching and learning processes, and also monitors the effort and effectiveness of the self-evaluation.
- (f) A programme of *professional development* for teaching assistants and new teachers at the rank of Assistant Professor or below is mandatory in most cases.
- (g) *Incentives* are provided in two ways. (i) The findings of the programme review and the evaluation of the annual progress report informs the allocation to the departmental one-line budget. (ii) The contributions of individual staff to teaching development are recognized in personnel decisions.
- (h) The implementation of these tasks requires that decisions are taken on the basis of firm evidence; therefore diagnostic *instruments* are utilised at three levels: (i) for course evaluation, (ii) for monitoring student engagement in the entire programme, and (iii) for evaluating learning outcomes in the workplace after the students graduate.
- (i) The role of *visiting/ external examiners* has been revised to shift the emphasis from student assessment to teaching and learning, and to incorporate the examiner's inputs into the proposed periodic programme reviews.

3. Objectives, Philosophy and Coverage

3.1 Objective

- 3.1.1 The main objective of the present framework is to ensure that teachers and programmes engage in *reflection* about teaching and learning, that such reflection is rooted in *evidence* and leads to *action* for improvement, and that *incentives* be provided for such efforts.

3.2 Philosophy

- 3.2.1 Traditionally, curriculum planning and review, as well as the assurance of standards and quality, have focused on subject matter and its mastery, and on teaching, with an implicit emphasis on delivery of the course material in a lecture format. While CUHK has been doing extremely well in this regard, a principle aim of the present framework is to promote and sustain progress beyond this relatively narrow definition of the educational experience.
- 3.2.2 First of all, the focus should be equally, if not predominantly, on student learning and the attainment of desired learning outcomes. These encompass competencies, skills, values and attitudes developed, as well as subject-specific knowledge. Second, changes to curriculum and teaching strategies should be supported by diagnostic evidence.

3.3 Coherence and basis

3.3.1 Consistency is maintained by utilising the same five elements of curriculum design at the planning and review stages, both for an entire programme and for individual courses, namely:

- (a) learning outcomes
- (b) content
- (c) learning activities
- (d) assessment
- (e) feedback for evaluation.

3.3.2 These five elements of curriculum design and review and the associated instruments were derived from the principles of good teaching obtained from an analysis of the transcripts of interviews with 18 CUHK teachers awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Exemplary Teaching Awards. This work has been published as:

Kember, D., Ma, R. S. F., McNaught, C., & 18 excellent teachers (2006). *Excellent university teaching*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

These principles are consistent with the extensive international literature in the area of excellent university teaching.

3.4 Coverage

3.4.1 The integrated framework applies on a mandatory basis to all undergraduate (Ug) major programmes. The School of Continuing Studies (SCS) has a related set of quality assurance procedures appropriate for the types of continuing education programmes offered. If, in the future, SCS programmes lead to CUHK degrees, then the integrated framework will apply as it does to other Ug programmes.

3.4.2 Taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes come under the Graduate School; so operate under a different set of regulations. They, therefore, follow a quality assurance framework which is somewhat different, but nevertheless was formulated from the same set of principles. Research postgraduate (RPg) programmes are fundamentally different, and are subject to other systems managed by the Graduate School.

3.4.3 General Education shares some attributes of major programmes, and has adopted a similar framework, based upon the same principles, suitably adapted to its circumstances. The courses are designed and offered by departments whereas the overall quality assurance is the responsibility of a separate committee (the Senate Committee on General Education and its Standing Committee) and office (the Office of University General Education). Therefore, while the philosophy is identical, a different set of procedures are appropriate and there are measures already in place.

3.5 Documentation

3.5.1 Documentation is not an objective per se and is deliberately kept to a minimum. Such paperwork as may be required for the most part consists of existing documentation brought into a more uniform format, in order for the University to exercise a degree of scrutiny.

6. Annual Progress Report

6.1 Frequency

- 6.1.1 Each department should engage in at least one session of annual review on all matters related to the programme(s) it offers. This can simply take the form of an item on the agenda of a Board meeting or departmental retreat to discuss and record issues, changes and improvements, but at least once every three years the review should be more substantial, and is subject to monitoring (see Section 6.2.2).

6.2 Format and content

6.2.1 Initial annual report

Departments not involved in the first round of reviews were required to submit their own action plan to the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning in 2004–05. The department was expected to identify strengths and aspects where attention was needed. The plans were expected to specify steps to be taken to address each of these aspects.

6.2.2 Full annual progress report

In the third year after a programme review the progress report should be a full report on action taken with respect to each part of the action plan. This report should contain evidence, from sources suggested in the guide for programme review, for all progress reported. An update of the action plan is provided in the light of the progress already achieved. This full annual progress report is monitored by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning and its views reported to the Resource Allocation Committee (RAC).

6.2.3 Brief annual progress report

In years 1, 2, 4 and 5 after the programme review, the report may be shorter and take the form of a section (typically one page) within the Annual Department Records, and need not contain evidence for reported progress.

7. Programme Self-evaluation

7.1 Frequency

- 7.1.1 Each department should conduct self-evaluations of its programmes at least once every six years, ahead of the programme reviews (below). For new programmes or those experiencing rapid changes, self-evaluations should be conducted earlier, say immediately after a cohort has graduated.

7.2 Format and content

- 7.2.1 The self-evaluation, performed against the programme planning document as the reference, should cover (a) aims and desired learning outcomes, (b) subject content, (c) learning activities, (d) the assessment scheme, (e) the effectiveness of procedures for programme management and quality assurance, (f) procedures for the professional development of all teaching staff in curriculum design and teaching effectiveness, (g) in particular, the training and evaluation of teaching assistants, and the use of evaluation results to fine-tune the assignments of teaching assistants, (h) a summary of changes and improvements already

decided and/or implemented since the last review (and as reported in the annual progress reports) and as responses to recommendations in the report of the visiting/ external examiner, and (i) an action plan in the light of the reflection on (a)–(h), in each case supported by relevant sources of feedback. If the action calls for major changes, a new cycle of programme planning should be initiated.

- 7.2.2 A suggested guide is on page 11. These are only suggested guidelines for programme review, and should be adapted to suit the circumstances of each faculty.

7.3 Dissemination

- 7.3.1 The programme self-evaluation is an internal departmental document, but should form the basis for the formal programme review by the panel appointed by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning.

9. Programme Reviews

9.1 Nature and frequency

- 9.1.1 Programme reviews involve parties external to the department, and are conducted only once every six years, keeping to a minimum the burden of being subject to external scrutiny.

9.2 Review panel

The review panel is appointed by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning in consultation with the faculty concerned. The panel should include the visiting/ external examiner of the programme, and at least one member of the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning. It is expected that expertise both in the subject and in pedagogy should be represented.

9.3 Selection of visiting/ external examiners

- 9.3.1 Visiting/ external examiners are nominated by departments for appointment by the Council on the recommendation of the Senate. Under normal circumstances the visiting/ external examiners are re-appointed for a second three-year term, so as to be consistent with the timetable for the review process.

- 9.3.2 Since visiting/ external examiners (whose terms of service coincide with the time for a programme review) are involved in the review process, departments should ensure that nominees are informed, interested in pedagogical issues, and willing to contribute to the programme review.

9.4 Review procedure

- 9.4.1 The department offering the programme conducts a self-evaluation (see Section 7) and produce related documentation and supporting evidence in accordance with the guidelines for programme review.

- 9.4.2 The documentation for the programme review should be the same as that for programme self-evaluation (see Section 7), augmented as appropriate. The programme review panel may seek additional information, e.g., in regard to courses specified by the panel. The review panel then meets with appropriate teaching staff of the department, and with students

and alumni.

9.5 Reporting procedure

- 9.5.1 Following a review, the panel prepares findings and recommendations to which the department responds. The documentation produced by the panel and the department is forwarded to the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning.
- 9.5.2 One key component of the department's self-evaluation and response documentation should be a recommended *action plan* to deal with challenges and to improve the quality of teaching and learning within the programme.
- 9.5.3 Key elements of the review panel's report are:
- *judgement on the progress and improvements* made, especially in relation to goals set in previous action plans; and
 - *judgement on the quality of teaching and learning*, as well as the processes for their enhancement.

9.6 Action plan

- 9.6.1 The programme self-evaluation document requires departments to identify strengths and challenges within a programme. In addition the panel makes its own assessment of these and provides recommendations to departments. Identification of strengths provides useful information on best practice for other programmes. Identification of challenges should lead to an action plan for improvement. The action plan should be formulated by the department.
- 9.6.2 In subsequent reviews, the panel assesses the progress against the original action plan. Progress on action plans is monitored via progress reports by departments to the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning.

9.7 Judgement on progress and improvements

- 9.7.1 Judgements on progress and improvements are made on each element of the action plan. In addition, an overall evaluative comment is made, taking into account the relative importance of different elements.

9.8 Judgement on quality and processes

- 9.8.1 The panel makes a judgement on the quality of teaching and learning in the programme by commenting on each of the following aspects: (a) learning outcomes, (b), content (c) learning activities, (d) assessment, and (e) the effectiveness of procedures for programme management and quality assurance.

9.9 Consideration by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning

- 9.9.1 The Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning considers the review panel's report, including its judgement on progress and on the quality in teaching and learning. The Senate Committee then makes final recommendations for RAC consideration. The Senate Committee may wish to review the relative weightings of the two components annually and make changes as circumstances evolve.
- 9.9.2 For multidisciplinary programmes offered by more than one department, the Panel may inform the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning of perceived divisions of

responsibility for progress and overall quality.

9.9.3 RAC allocates up to 5% of the funding on the basis of these recommendations. Funding re-allocations are only applicable to programmes funded by block grant.

9.9.4 The progress reports submitted by each department in respect of each programme in the third year after the programme review should be more substantive, and are expected to contain evaluation evidence of learning outcomes. Each report is reviewed by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning, which in turn makes updated recommendations to RAC. It is expected that decisions made on the basis of progress reports before the first programme review (for those programmes that are not scheduled for review in the first few years) will not affect funding levels.

9.10 Dissemination

9.10.1 The programme review reports and the department's response are made available to the department, the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning, RAC and the University administration.

9.11 Summary timetable

9.11.1 The following timetable shows the steps in a normal six-year review cycle.

year	review process	reports from department	visiting/ external examiner
1	programme review	programme self-evaluation	visit scheduled
2		brief annual progress report	
3		brief annual progress report	
4		full annual progress report	visit scheduled
5		brief annual progress report	
6		brief annual progress report	
1	programme review	programme self-evaluation	visit scheduled

9.11.2 Prior to the initial review, an action plan should be submitted in the first year of operation, with subsequent years following the reporting requirements in the table above.

11. Incentives

11.1 Incentives, at both the individual and the department level, are built in to promote attention to the matters contained in this integrated framework.

11.2 Department level

11.2.1 RAC has approved that starting from 2006–07, up to 5% of the total allocation to all teaching units will be distributed in a manner that is informed by the actual performance and the efforts at improvement in matters related to teaching and learning, as assessed through the programme reviews once every six years, and through the annual progress reports as

assessed in other years.

12. Instruments

12.1 The present framework is premised on the assumption that strategies must not be simply propelled by enthusiasm, compliance with administrative directives or change for change's sake; rather, strategies must be firmly rooted in evidence. Such evidence may be gathered by a variety of means, including student focus groups and discussion forums (either face-to-face or on the web), and informal feedback from employers or professional groups. In addition, there needs to be formal survey questionnaires that are constructed upon a sound theoretical base and professionally validated.

12.2 Three levels of questionnaires have been adopted across the University, and constitute core instruments in the present framework, by providing diagnostic evidence of the attainment of learning outcomes. The three levels of questionnaires are:

(a) Course evaluation questionnaires

Course questionnaires are designed and administered at the department or faculty level. Consistency across the University is achieved by each course evaluation questionnaire using a number of agreed constructs, endorsed by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning. Administration is mandatory for each offering of every course. Selected results from the questionnaires are centrally archived.

(b) Student Engagement Questionnaire at programme level

This questionnaire, for programme-level evaluation, contains a standardised core of scales seeking feedback on the attainment of generic learning outcomes and the quality of the teaching and learning environment. In addition to the standardised core, programmes may include additional scales specific to desired learning outcomes appropriate for the programme in question. The questionnaire is administered to students of undergraduate programmes at least every other year, in a rolling cycle.

(c) Graduate questionnaires

A questionnaire on learning outcomes of fresh graduates in the workplace is administered periodically to fresh graduates and the objective of this survey is to determine, in the view of alumni, if their previous learning experiences in CUHK has had direct influence on the quality of their work as employees. This questionnaire is intended for diagnostic purpose only, and will not be directly related to funding.

In addition programmes are progressively introducing graduate surveys which seek feedback on the attainment of learning outcomes specific to the programme.

Guide for self-evaluation document

This document provides a guide to the format of the programme self-evaluation to be conducted prior to these reviews.

This document is an annotated version of the Guide for Programme Review which is part of the Integrated Framework for Curriculum Development and Review. Annotations are in boxes.

The department responsible for the programme will be expected to provide its own reflections on the programme under the headings of the curriculum elements. Evidence should be drawn from the sources of feedback specified in the programme plan. The reflections should identify strengths and challenges. Action taken, or to be taken, to make improvements should be included.

Programme management and quality assurance

This section should describe the quality assurance procedures used to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the programme. A brief report should be provided on the functioning of the curriculum committee or other body which oversees programme management and quality assurance procedures. Available evidence of the effectiveness of processes in improving the quality of teaching and learning should be included.

A summary of the quality assurance system that has been put in place by the faculty/ department/ programme team serves as a useful introduction to the self-reflection document. The emphasis should be on the sources of evidence and the processes that are used to reflect on and learn from the information gathered.

Learning outcomes

This section should report on the achievement of learning outcomes included in the programme plan, including the development of graduate capabilities.

In programme teams, there is often some discussion about the qualities graduates need in the current professional and global climate. This section of the self-reflection document should highlight two matters:

1. How have programme teams articulated these qualities or capabilities?
2. How they have reflected on the evidence they have gathered about whether their graduates are equipped for likely future careers and lives?

Relevant sources of feedback on the learning outcomes are listed here. If any of these sources of feedback are used, then it is suggested that the data, or a summary thereof, be put in an appendix and a brief summary of the reflection be given here. For each source of feedback, this means answering questions such as:

- How can we best interpret this data?
- Do we have enough feedback to make this data meaningful?
- What is likely to be the best way to address any challenges or problems that are suggested by this data?

Relevant sources of feedback are:

Qualitative feedback from student panels/ forums/ internet forums	mandatory
Student Engagement Questionnaire (scales on capability development)	mandatory
Reports from professional accreditation	applicable to professional programmes
Graduate surveys conducted by the Department/Faculty	optional
Departmental reflection (including evidence from assessment)	mandatory

Content

Programme level review of content is partially an aggregation of course-level processes. An important additional consideration is the coherence of the curriculum.

Often the content of the courses is described in great detail in course outlines; these syllabus documents can be added as an appendix. However, the point of the review is to show that evidence-based reflection on this choice of content has taken place. The focus of the review document is on reflection.

Relevant sources of feedback on the choice of content are listed here. If any of these sources of feedback are used, then it is suggested that the data, or a summary thereof, be put in an appendix and a brief summary of the reflection be given here. For each source of feedback, this means answering questions such as:

- How can we best interpret this data?
- Do we have enough feedback to make this data meaningful?
- What is likely to be the best way to address any challenges or problems that are suggested by this data?

In the early reviews, there may be less data. This is to be expected when a process is new. It is expected that once programme teams refine their own internal quality assurance systems, that richer, more longitudinal data will be available. In these initial reviews, it is not the quantity of data which is paramount, but rather the reflection on its import and the implications for planning that will be examined.

Relevant sources of feedback are:

Student Engagement Questionnaire (coherence of curriculum scale)	mandatory
Visiting/ external examiner reports	mandatory
Reports from professional accreditation	applicable to professional programmes
Departmental reflection	mandatory

Learning activities

Learning activities should be reported on the proforma shown below. Reflections on the range of learning activities should encompass variety, balance and effectiveness in promoting specified learning outcomes.

In many programmes, especially those that have been through some professional accreditation, the nature of the learning activities is explained well. The proforma in the Integrated Framework suggests a list of all courses with an indication of whether they are compulsory or optional. For each course the nature of teaching and learning activities is requested. Some categories are: Lecture, Interactive tutorial, Laboratory, Discussion of case, Field-trip, Clinic, Projects, Web-based teaching, Other. The number of hours for each type of teaching and learning activity is requested, both in and out of class. Pertinent details of the description of the learning activities can be provided in an appendix.

What is needed in this section of the self-reflection document is the reflection on how useful the overall range and balance of teaching and learning activities has been in assisting students to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Relevant sources of feedback on the choice of learning activities are listed here. If any of these sources of feedback are used, then it is suggested that the data, or a summary thereof, be in an appendix and a summary of the reflection be given here. For each source of feedback, this means answering questions such as:

- How can we best interpret this data?
- Do we have enough feedback to make this data meaningful?
- What is likely to be the best way to address any challenges or problems that are suggested by this data?

Additional relevant sources of feedback are:

Qualitative feedback from student panels/ forums/ internet forums	mandatory
Student Engagement Questionnaire (scales on teaching and learning environment)	mandatory
Course questionnaire	mandatory
Tailored questionnaire	optional
Departmental reflection	mandatory

Assessment

Assessment should be reported on the proforma shown below. Discussion of assessment should encompass variety, fairness and, most importantly, relationship to learning outcomes.

In many programmes, especially those that have been through some professional accreditation, the nature of the assessment is explained well. The proforma in the Integrated Framework suggests a list of all courses with an indication of whether they are compulsory or optional. For each course the nature of assessment is requested, with a percentage for each component. Some categories are: Essay test or exam, Short answer test or exam, Objective test or exam, Essays, Presentation, Lab reports, Projects, Cases, Other.

Pertinent details of the description of the assessment can be provided in an appendix.

In this section of the self-reflection document it is essential to reflect on how closely matched the assessment tasks are to the desired learning outcomes. What evidence do we have that the grades given to assessment tasks throughout the programme reflect how well our graduates are equipped for their future careers and lives? Clearly, the type of assessment in later years is critical here, but a logical and coherent development of assessment throughout the programme should be in place as well.

Relevant sources of feedback on the choice of assessment are listed here. If any of these sources of feedback are used, then it is suggested that the data, or a summary thereof, be put in an appendix and a brief summary of the reflection be given here. For each source of feedback, this means answering questions such as:

- How can we best interpret this data?
- Do we have enough feedback to make this data meaningful?
- What is likely to be the best way to address any challenges or problems that are suggested by this data?

Additional relevant sources of feedback are:

Visiting/ external examiner reports

mandatory

Departmental reflection

mandatory

Professional development

The procedures for the professional development of all teaching staff in curriculum design and teaching effectiveness should be described and reflected upon. Departments which use teaching assistants for a significant part of teaching in a programme should detail the professional development provided. This should include an evaluation of the adequacy of that professional development.

Teaching staff

There are a number of avenues that programmes might have taken with respect to professional development of all the teaching staff. Examples of evidence are:

- reports of how annual retreats are conducted,
- accounts of how the services of CLEAR are used,
- courses outside CUHK that teachers have participated in, and/or
- conferences or seminars on teaching and learning that teachers have participated in.

Teaching Assistants

This may include feedback provided by CLEAR on sessions they have run, but should also include evaluation of internal departmental events and processes for monitoring and supporting teaching assistants.

Responses to Visiting/ External Examiner Report

The self-reflection document should note any comments and suggestions, relevant to teaching and learning, which were included in the report of the visiting/ external examiner. This section should also report responses to and actions taken in response to the comments and suggestions. This section is likely to involve cross-referencing to other sections of the self-reflection document.

Learning Activities

The number of hours of time allocated to each type of learning activity. Data is entered by course and can then be aggregated to give programme level data.

Types of activity should be customised to suit the nature of teaching in a department.

	Compulsory/ optional	Lecture (hr) in/out class	Interactive tutorial (hr) in/out class	Lab (hr) in/out class	Discussion of case (hr) in/out class	Field trip (hr) in/out class	Clinic (hr) in/out class	Projects (hr) in/out class	Web-based teaching (hr) in/out class	Other (hr) in/out class
Course 1										
Course 2										
Course 3										
Course N										
Total for programme										
Total (as % of programme)										

Assessment

The percentage of marks allocated to each type of assessment.
 Categories should be customised to suit the nature of assessment in a department.

	Compulsory / optional	Essay test or exam (%)	Short answer test or exam (%)	Objective test or exam (%)	Essays (%)	Presentation (%)	Problem sets (%)	Lab reports (%)	Projects (%)	Cases (%)	Other (%)
Course 1											
Course 2											
Course 3											
Course N											
Total for programme											
Total (as % of programme)											