

# Integrated Framework for Curriculum Development and Review: II. Taught Postgraduate Programmes

## Contents

Section		Page
1	Background <i>Background, Overall principles, Principles specific to TPg programmes, Nomenclature</i>	2
2	Main Elements	4
3	Objectives, Philosophy and Coverage <i>Objective, Philosophy, Coherence and basis, Coverage, Documentation</i>	5
4	Course and Programme Planning <i>Frequency, Programme planning, Course planning, Dissemination</i>	6
5	Course Reviews <i>Frequency, Format and content, Dissemination</i>	7
6	Annual Progress Review <i>Frequency, Format and content</i>	7
7	Programme Self-evaluation <i>Dissemination, Frequency, Format and content</i>	8
8	Flexibility in Implementation	9
9	Programme Reviews <i>Nature and frequency, Review panel, Review procedure, Reporting procedure, Action plan, Judgement on progress and improvements, Judgement on quality and processes, Consideration by the Faculty Board, Dissemination, Review by a panel of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, Review by the Committee on Self-financed Taught Postgraduate Programmes</i>	9
10	Professional Development	11
11	Incentives <i>Programme level, Individual level</i>	12
12	Evaluation	12
<b>Attachment</b>		
1	Guide for programme self-evaluation	13

May 2007

## 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 as it applies to taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes. A parallel document; *Integrated framework for curriculum development and review: I undergraduate programmes*, should be consulted for undergraduate (Ug) programmes.

### 1.2 Overall principles

- 1.2.1 Among others, the following principles were used to guide the formulation of the integrated 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 programme development, programme review, course development and course review. Evaluation or feedback is central to the model as it informs reflection upon practice.

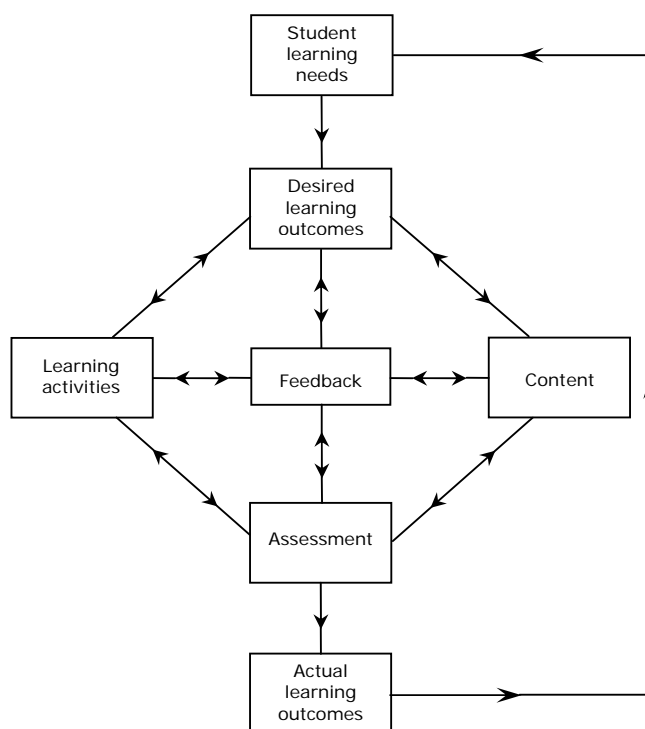


Figure 1. A model of an aligned curriculum

### 1.3 Principles specific to TPg programmes

1.3.1 Among others, the following principles specific to TPg programmes were used to guide the formulation of this part of the framework so as to make it suitable for the nature of TPg programmes and their students, and distinct from the Ug framework:

- The students enrolling in TPg programmes are more mature and so teaching should be consistent with the principles of adult learning.
- The students are likely to be active in the field or profession and possess relevant experience and knowledge. Students' experience should be utilised in the programme.
- The expected learning outcomes are likely to be quite specific and often professional in nature.
- Most TPg programmes are self-financed, and student choice imposes an implicit quality assurance mechanism.
- Many TPg programmes are offered to meet demands resulting from technological developments or societal changes. They therefore need to be launched with a short lead-time and phased out as demands are satisfied.
- The framework for TPg programmes, therefore, needs to be flexible. Embedded quality assurance procedures need to be formulated so as to ensure a high standard of teaching and learning while not imposing a bureaucracy which discourages enterprise.

### 1.4 Nomenclature

1.4.1 In the following, the term *course* also means *module* (which is used in some disciplines); the term *graduate division* includes *programme committee* and any other unit that might be responsible for academic programmes; and the term *teacher* includes *instructor* as well.

1.4.2 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:

- (a) The **planning** of courses and programmes should be documented in broad conformity with standard templates, at programme launch and upon major changes.
- (b) The programme should engage students in **course evaluation** every year for each course offered. The evaluation results should be taken into consideration in the process of course review to be conducted by the programme committee.
- (c) The programme committee for each TPg programme, together with the responsible teacher(s), should conduct and document its own **course reviews** at least once every three years. This could be in the form of review by external examiner together with the responses taken on the comments. Programmes that have not been reviewed under the external examiner system should conduct an internal course review against the original course plan and, where appropriate, revised course plans should be formulated.
- (d) The TPg programme should conduct an annual programme meeting leading to a brief **annual programme report** on teaching and learning, showing evidence of reflection on available data and focusing on progress with respect to the action plan once it has been formulated. This report should be submitted to the Department Board to note.
- (e) Each TPg programme should conduct its own **programme self-evaluation** and a formal **external programme review** at least once every six years. The programme self-evaluation should be conducted and documented against the original programme plan and, where appropriate, revised programme plans should be formulated. This self-evaluation forms the basis for the external programme review. An external review panel appointed by the Faculty Board considers the substance of the teaching and learning processes, and also monitors the effort and effectiveness of the self-evaluation.
- (f) The **programme review report** consists of both the self-evaluation and external review components, and should be submitted to the Faculty Board for discussion of follow-up actions and formulation of an **action plan** to address any issues for which there is potential for improvement. Documents, including the programme review report and action plan, should then be forwarded to the Graduate School for submission to the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning. The Faculty Dean and the Faculty Board are responsible for ensuring that the action plan is implemented.
- (g) A programme of **professional development** for teaching assistants and new teachers at the rank of Assistant Professor or below is mandatory in most cases. Programmes are also expected to have a plan to ensure the quality of teaching by part-time staff.

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

Cycle	Action	Documents required	Submit to
Once every year	i) Course evaluation (per term)	Summary of course evaluation results	Department [for record]
	ii) Annual Programme Meeting	Brief one-page <i>annual programme report</i>	Department Board Meeting [to note]
Once every three years	iii) Course review (External Examiners' reports can be accepted as equivalence)	Review report from the external examiner/ internal review report by programme	Annual Programme Meeting [to note]
Once every six years	In addition to i), ii) and iii) mentioned above, the following should also be conducted: iv) Self-evaluation as a basis for v) external programme review (review panel to be appointed by the Faculty Board)	<i>Programme review report</i> , including self-evaluation of the programme and comments from external review panel	Faculty Board [for discussion of follow-up actions], together with the <i>action plan</i> to the Graduate School for submission to the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning

### 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* are 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 taught programmes. For reference, quality assurance procedures for Ug programmes are dealt with in the document *Integrated framework for curriculum development and review: 1 undergraduate programmes*.

3.4.2 TPg programmes come under the Graduate School and operate under a different set of regulations. They, therefore, follow this quality assurance framework which is somewhat different from the Ug one, but nevertheless was formulated from the same set of principles.

3.4.3 Research postgraduate (RPg) programmes are fundamentally different, and are subject to other systems managed by the Graduate School.

### **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.

## **4. Course and Programme Planning**

### **4.1 Frequency**

4.1.1 A course/ programme planning document should be prepared whenever a new course/ programme is launched, or when there are major changes.

### **4.2 Programme planning**

4.2.1 Graduate divisions planning new TPg programmes are requested to use the template *Proposal for introduction of new self-financed taught postgraduate programme* for the formal submission document for programme proposals and budgets. This document is available from the Graduate School website.

4.2.2 Proposals need first to be approved by the Faculty Board. Self-financed programmes are then screened by the Committee on Self-financed Taught Postgraduate Programmes. They are then forwarded to the Graduate Council and Senate for consideration.

### **4.3 Course planning**

4.3.1 Course planning should include a specification of (a) expected learning outcomes, (b) subject content, (c) intended distribution of learning activities, (d) the assessment scheme, and (e) intended channels to collect feedback for evaluation. Graduate divisions submitting new course proposals are requested to use the template *Course description form*. This document is available from the Graduate School website.

### **4.4 Dissemination**

4.4.1 Relevant sections of the course planning document, with minor modifications, could become the course outline to be provided to students at the beginning of the teaching term. It is recommended that course outlines be posted on the departmental webpage, so as to be available to prospective students.

## **5. Course Reviews**

### **5.1 Frequency**

5.1.1 Each of the courses should be reviewed by the teacher(s) concerned and the programme committee at least once every three years, or more frequently as necessary (e.g., when first launched or upon major changes). Review by the external examiner is accepted as an appropriate mechanism for course review.

### **5.2 Format and content**

5.2.1 The course review, should refer to the course planning document, and should cover (a) learning outcomes, (b) subject content, (c) learning activities, (d) the assessment scheme, and (e) an action plan in the light of the reflection on (a)–(d), which in each case should be supported by relevant sources of feedback. In cases where the action calls for major changes, this initiates a new cycle of course planning.

### **5.3 Dissemination**

5.3.1 The course review is internal to the programme committee but should be noted in the annual programme report.

## **6. Annual Progress Review**

### **6.1 Frequency**

6.1.1 Each division should engage in at least one session of annual review on all matters related to the programme(s) it offers, including each TPg programme offered, as a summary of the programme review discussion. This can simply take the form of an item on the agenda of a Department Board meeting or retreat to discuss and record issues, changes and improvements. In normal years the annual review will result in the formulation of the brief

annual programme report designed to record key decisions about the programme's development. At least once every six years the review on each TPg programme should be more substantial, and is subject to monitoring.

## **6.2 Format and content**

6.2.1 In years other than that for the programme review, a brief annual programme report (typically one page) should be prepared on each TPg programme. The report will be submitted to the Department Board for noting. The report need not contain evidence for reported progress and should highlight key current features of the programme's teaching and learning activity. In the report the programme team are expected to reflect upon the elements of teaching and learning incorporated in the curriculum development model which underpins the integrated framework, namely:

- learning outcomes
- content
- learning activities
- assessment.

6.2.2 In the annual report there should be reflection upon the following statistical data, where pertinent, though the data themselves do not need to be reported:

- number admitted
- number of applications and some breakdown by quality
- attrition figures
- number of courses offered and who teaches them
- grade distributions
- external examiner's reports and action taken
- financial side: income, payment rate for teachers.

6.2.3 As the primary responsibility for ensuring the quality assurance of TPg programmes rests with the Dean of the Faculty, requests can be made for these annual programme reports to be forwarded to the Faculty Office.

## **7. Programme Self-evaluation**

### **7.1 Dissemination**

7.1.1 The programme self-evaluation is an internal programme committee document, but should form the basis for a formal programme review by the panel appointed by the Faculty Board.

### **7.2 Frequency**

7.2.1 Each division should conduct self-evaluations of its TPg 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. The self-evaluation is in preparation for the programme review.

### **7.3 Format and content**

7.3.1 The self-evaluation should refer to relevant sections from the programme planning document, and 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 ensuring the quality of teaching and providing professional development for all teaching staff, (g) if applicable, the training and evaluation of teaching assistants and/or part-time teachers, and (h) a summary of changes and improvements previously decided and/or implemented since the last review (and as reported in the annual progress reports); these may include responses to recommendations in the report of the visiting/ external examiner if applicable. All items (a)–(h) should be supported by relevant sources of feedback. An action plan in the light of the reflection on (a)–(h) should be included. If the action plan calls for major changes, a new cycle of programme planning should be initiated.

- 7.3.2 A suggested guide for sections (a) to (e) is included as Attachment 1. These are only suggested guidelines for the format of the self-reflection document, and should be adapted to suit the circumstances of each faculty.

## 8. Flexibility in Implementation

- 8.1 The details of the internal review mechanism mentioned in sections 4 to 7 above are broad outline suggestions. Each faculty is encouraged to reflect and decide on such adaptations as may be appropriate for its particular circumstances. There should also be flexibility with respect to the nature of individual programmes, the background of the students and the level of enrolment. However, significance differences from the direction of this framework should be reported to, and endorsed by, the Graduate Council.

- 8.2 A baseline of data has been collected from all TPg programmes through a stocktaking template. This aids the identification of areas of good practice, which is helpful to review panels in formulating recommendations.

## 9. Programme Reviews

### 9.1 Nature and frequency

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

- 9.1.2 The primary responsibility for conducting reviews lies with the Faculty. The Faculty is responsible for arranging a timetable for the six-year review cycle, and should inform the Graduate Council and the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning of the arrangements.

### 9.2 Review panel

- 9.2.1 The review panel is appointed by the Faculty Board. This differs from the Ug case because it offers greater flexibility in order to deal with the greater degree of variation among TPg programmes. The panel may include the visiting/ external examiner of the programme. It is expected that expertise both in the subject and in pedagogy should be represented. The panel will normally include one or two members of the faculty.

### **9.3 Review procedure**

- 9.3.1 The programme committee offering the programme conducts a self-evaluation (see Section 7) and produces related documentation and supporting evidence in accordance with the guidelines for programme review.
- 9.3.2 The documentation for the programme review should be the same as that for programme self-evaluation, augmented as appropriate. The programme review panel may seek additional information, e.g., in regard to particular courses specified by the panel. The review panel will not normally meet with teaching staff, students or alumni of the department, but may do so if it feels that the information in the self-evaluation document is insufficient.

### **9.4 Reporting procedure**

- 9.4.1 Following a review, the panel prepares findings and recommendations to which the programme committee responds. The documentation produced by the panel and the programme committee is forwarded to the Faculty Board for follow-up action and endorsement. The Graduate School and the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning will receive a copy of the report for record and will be informed of follow-up action taken.
- 9.4.2 One key component of the programme committee'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.
- 9.4.3 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.

### **9.5 Action plan**

- 9.5.1 The programme self-evaluation document requires the programme committee 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 programme committee.
- 9.5.2 In subsequent reviews, the panel assesses the progress against the original action plan. Progress on action plans can be tracked via the annual programme reports by programme committees to the Department Board.

### **9.6 Judgement on progress and improvements**

- 9.6.1 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.

## **9.7 Judgement on quality and processes**

- 9.7.1 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.

## **9.8 Consideration by the Faculty Board**

- 9.8.1 The Faculty Board considers the review panel's report, including its judgement on progress and on the quality in teaching and learning. The Faculty Board then makes final recommendations to the programme committee for action.

## **9.9 Dissemination**

- 9.9.1 The programme review reports and the programme committee's response are made available to the division, the Faculty Board, the Graduate School and the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning.

## **9.10 Review by a Panel of the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning**

- 9.10.1 Each year a small number of the programmes reviewed by Faculty panels will be selected for further review by a panel appointed by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning. The composition of the panel and the review procedures followed will be as for UG programmes.

## **9.11 Review by the Committee on Self-financed Taught Postgraduate Programmes**

- 9.11.1 Programmes endorsed by the Committee on Self-financed Taught Postgraduate Programmes will be reviewed after three cohorts of intake, principally on the resource management of the programme.

## **10. Professional Development**

- 10.1 A professional development course for new teaching staff and instructors, previously offered on a voluntary basis, is now compulsory for all new teaching staff at the level of Assistant Professor or below. Evidence of satisfactory completion is required for consideration of contract renewal, substantiation and promotion. New teachers in other ranks are also encouraged to take the course.
- 10.2 The course focuses on teaching methodology rather than the subject matter. It consists of four half-day sessions, and includes a group project in which each group demonstrates and teaches the rest of the class about a selected form of teaching and learning.
- 10.3 Programme committees are also expected to have in place effective procedures for ensuring the quality of teaching by any part-time teaching staff. These measures should be reported in the programme self-evaluation document.

## 11. Incentives

11.1 Incentives, at both the individual and the programme level, are incorporated into University policies and procedures to promote attention to the matters contained in this integrated framework. Faculties are expected to ensure that there are high levels of commitment.

### **11.2 Programme level**

11.2.1 The Dean of a Faculty is responsible for ensuring that programme committees take appropriate action in respect of action plans formulated by programme committees in response to recommendations of review panels. The actions of the Dean are reinforced by the endorsement of action plans by Faculty Boards. Where necessary, action will be reinforced by the Chair of the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning. In extreme cases the Faculty Dean and/or the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning may recommend to the Graduate Council that the programme committee be informed that new enrolments may be suspended if specified steps in the action plan are not implemented.

### **11.3 Individual level**

11.3.1 Course evaluation is used to ensure the quality of teaching of individual teachers.

## 12. Evaluation

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. The format chosen for evaluation needs to be appropriate for the nature of the course or programme and student numbers.

12.2 All TPg programmes are expected to conduct evaluation for each course and to have programme-level evaluation administered on graduation.

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

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.

## Learning outcomes

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

*Relevant sources of feedback are:*

Qualitative feedback from student panels/ forums/ internet forums	mandatory
Reports from professional accreditation	applicable to professional programmes
Graduate surveys	mandatory
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.

*Relevant sources of feedback are:*

Programme-level evaluation	optional
Course evaluation	mandatory
Visiting/ external examiner reports	if available
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.

*Additional relevant sources of feedback are:*

Qualitative feedback from student panels/ forums/ internet forums	mandatory
Programme-level evaluation	optional
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.

*Additional relevant sources of feedback are:*

Visiting/ external examiner reports	if available
Departmental reflection	mandatory

## 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										
<b>Total for programme</b>										
<b>Total (as % of programme)</b>										

## 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											
<b>Total for programme</b>											
<b>Total (as % of programme)</b>											