Flexible Curriculum Framework for Accredited Provision
Introduction

1.1 The Corporate Strategy 2012-2017 recognises innovation, competitiveness, professionalism, employability and enterprise, and commits to these as its driving force in the future. It supports the HEFCE strategic priority to promote Higher Education learning through employer engagement and workforce development and it recognises the value of building international strategic partnerships. The Flexible Curriculum Framework has been developed as one of the means of addressing these strategic imperatives and provides the general principles and requirements for the structural design of all flexible accredited provision of the University.

1.2 The key drivers for the development of the Flexible Curriculum Framework are:

- To respond with speed to the requirements of key stakeholders to develop Units and / or courses for the UK and international market responding to specific needs of commissioners and the workplace;
- To promote participation in Higher Education through flexible work-related learning provision, with new access routes and enhanced self-directed learning opportunities;
- To innovate continually by creating new and flexible provision that meets the changing demands of employers;
- To develop full cost Units and, where appropriate, courses for corporate markets thus diversifying income streams.

1.3 In shaping the future of its flexible provision, the University will seek to establish and develop new relationships with a range of organisations. The Flexible Curriculum Framework has been developed to meet the requirements of collaborative partners, commercial enterprises, public sector institutions or other educational establishments who wish to develop a wide range of accredited initiatives that have the ability to enhance the participating organisation’s overall strategy. It does this through the provisions of credit bearing Units that may be aggregated into awards of Manchester Metropolitan University. The term Flexible Curriculum Framework has been chosen to signal that this framework provides the flexibility required to meet the various needs of different employers looking to commission bespoke or generic Units and / or courses for their workplace. The framework will enable the responsive development and approval of a broader range of study opportunities through a ‘light-touch’ process, whilst maintaining academic standards and meeting external benchmarks through rigorous quality procedures.

1.4 Programmes of learning need to be relevant, specific to the organisational requirements and are often based on the solutions to problems. This may require study to cross traditional subject boundaries in order to address particular requirements or staff development needs, thus reinforcing the desirability of a common University framework.

1.5 This document specifically defines the curriculum and credit structure of flexible provision that may or may not lead to awards of the University. This defines curriculum that is distinctive from that delivered within the MMU Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Frameworks in that Units and awards will have been developed in collaboration with particular organisations to meet specific needs and there has been a particular request for Unit sizes and other requirements that cannot be met using the MMU Undergraduate or Postgraduate Curriculum Frameworks. It aligns with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), QAUK Quality Code for Higher Education, and the Higher Education Credit Framework for England, and complements the University’s Institutional Codes of Practice for Placement and Work-Based Learning and Collaborative Provision.

The Client Profile

2.1 Over recent years, there has been a considerable increase in the number of organisations requesting generic and bespoke accredited learning provision to support their
Features of the Flexible Curriculum Framework

4.1 The key feature is to deliver a flexible curriculum utilising a variety of teaching and learning methods in order to provide a blended approach that will optimise the learning achievement of the learner. This flexibility includes modes and location of learning, and start / end dates of study (within the term to deliver outside the Academic Calendar dates). The Flexible Curriculum Framework will frequently involve collaborative partnerships. Typically, the curriculum will be made up of one or more of the following modes of learning to: learners, international partners of MMU and commissioners’ needs:

- Part-time learning;
- On-campus learning;
- Collaborative delivery with FE Colleges and other organisations;
- Off-campus learning including:
  - Online / distance learning;
  - Work-based learning;
  - Independent Study.

4.2 The following characteristics are central to study within the framework: Study should:

- Enable learners to engage with and understand different modes of study, for example a tool to explore and demonstrate their work-based learning;
- Enable the design of the learning design and negotiate an agreement with the University which sets out the focus of the learning arrangement. This can encompass the negotiation of a single or a number of Units of varying sizes, or negotiation of an entire course through a learning agreement;
- Where there is learning in the workplace, recognise the diverse professional and personal development needs of learners;
- Pay for access to the flexible delivery of Learning (APEL).

Principles of Curriculum Design

5.1 The primary principle is that the achievement of credit is based on the successful achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level. The amount of credit achieved relates to the amount of learning, with each credit representing a 10-hour of student learning. Students receive academic credit in respect of their learning achievements as expressed in terms of Learning Outcomes.

5.2 All flexible provision:

- May be offered at FHEQ levels from Foundation to Postgraduate;
- Must demonstrate how learning and teaching technology and other resources are utilised to facilitate work-based learning, thus enabling people to learn at a pace that is convenient to them;
- Requires relevant documentation including a Flexible Provision Specification where awards are to be offered, Unit Specification(s) and Handbook(s);
- Requires academic and support staff, organisations and learners to be in agreement with the University or international partners of MMU and articulated in the Programme Specification;
- Requires clear and straightforward assessment and evaluation strategies adhering to University review principles;
- Requires flexible admissions criteria, which recognise non-student learning and experience;
- Must demonstrate that appropriate ethical, commercial confidentiality and data protection issues are taken into consideration at the planning, delivery and assessment stages.

5.3 The framework has been developed to offer:

- Certificates of Achievement: Awarded to successful candidates completing individual Units or related packages of Unit study. Such study may be made up of single or multiple Units;

Minor Awards

Typically stand-alone awards for study within the University, including, at undergraduate level, the University Certificate; University Diploma and the Graduate Certificate for graduate entry.

Major Awards

Degree that also offers extended points of Graduate Diploma, CertHE, DipHE, PgCert and PGDip.

6.4 Many learners on the Flexible Framework will be accessing Higher Education for the first time, and therefore may wish to build up their studies in order to achieve a minor or honours degree from their studies. The Flexible Curriculum Framework enables the opportunity for learners to do this. For example, it will be possible for learners to embark upon Units of study, gain a Certificate of Achievement, then progress onto a minor award and eventually have access to a degree. In order to facilitate academic progression within the University, the Flexible Curriculum Framework will be identified at the approval stage. However, it will be necessary for course teams to consider the currency of the Units as part of the Accreditation of Prior Learning process development and which are articulated in the Programme Specification.

5.5 The Learning Outcomes, assessment strategy and content of Units or courses will be negotiated with MMU Faculty or international partners of MMU and articulated in the Programme or Unit Specifications. Course or Unit leaders and, where Collaborative Partnerships exist, MMU link tutors will be responsible for advising on the level of learning outcomes and appropriately aligned assessment tasks.

Support for Learners

6.1 In order to ensure the effective implementation and success of the study, all participating organisations must work in co-operation with the agreement and the University for any Unit or course of study. The organisation is required to provide appropriate and support to the learner or cohort, the details of which will be contained in the case of Collaborative Partnerships arrangements the Agreement for any Unit or course of study. The organistaion to address Learning support;
- Support from the workplace;
- Student Handbook;
- Introduction to their Unit and / or information, advice and guidance that appropriately reflect the level, context and extent of study.

5.6 Programme / course teams will be required to decide whether they will engage mentors or supervisors. Essentially the different is that a supervisor plays a formal role in the assessment process. However, both roles should provide the following support:

- Help learners to identify opportunities within the organisation to address Learning Outcomes;
- Where appropriate, be the internal link between the University and the employer with regard to pastoral welfare within the workplace;
- Offer professional and organisation-related guidance and support:
- Focal point for identifying, approval and implementation of projects and associated development of skills and knowledge;
- Offer support to candidates and staff regarding work-related issues (e.g. ethical, commercial and confidentiality issues);
- Liaise with the Unit tutor(s) on the progress of the student and/or investigation related study;
- Support the assessment process by providing feedback on learner achievement to tutors and where agreed, attend relevant assessment events, e.g. presentations.

6.3 Course teams must ensure that resources are in place in order that learners have access to: pastoral, welfare and learning support guidance and material that appropriately reflects the level, context and extent of study.

6.4 Learners must be offered the following methods of support:

- Induction to the university;
- Introduction to their Unit and / or course;
- Student Handbook;
- Face to face and / or online tutor support;
- Support from the workplace.

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- Support the assessment process by providing feedback on learner achievement to tutors and where agreed, attend relevant assessment events, e.g. presentations.
7.1 The Unit Scheme facilitates the development of free-standing Units of varying sizes that meet the needs of students. Students will gain a Certificate of Achievement for successful completion of Learning Outcomes and associated assessment criteria.
• Have a defined level of study at semester(s) or year(s).
7.2 Units will be drawn from one or more of the following two categories.

Faculty-based Flexible Framework Units
Faculties may develop faculty-based Units, which may be utilised within Programmes of study. Faculties, in negotiation with the ‘home’ Faculty.

Subject-Specific Units
These may be existing or new Units developed to provide learners with the underpinning skills, knowledge and understanding they need to meet the educational requirements of their chosen field. Such Units may be developed from within the ‘home’ Faculty or may be bespoke to a particular commissioner.

7.3 A credit value, specified in terms of the number of credits and the level, is ascribed to each Unit. The level of a Unit is an indicator of the complexity and depth of learning and learner autonomy and is demonstrated by the Learning Outcomes and the assessment. The credit value of Units will be of a minimum of 5 credits and normally exists as multiples of 5 credits. Additional credits may be permitted, using whole numbers of credits, provided there is a clear justification from the commissioner or international partner of MMU.

7.4 Each Unit of 15 credits or less will have a maximum of 2 learning outcomes and those with over 15 credits will have a maximum of 4 learning outcomes. Each Unit will:
• Have a Unit Specification which will define the structure, content and resources required of the Unit, and the assessment for each learning outcome.
• Have a draft level of study at semester(s) or year(s).
• Have specified learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria.
• Have a defined learning hours calculated at 10 hours per credit; Have a specific code and title.

7.5 Units of the Flexible Curriculum Framework will also adhere to the principles of assessment as studied within the Institutional Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students and within the Assessment Regulations. Each Unit shall include a summative assessment strategy which is aligned with the intended Learning Outcomes, learning activities and level of study. All stated learning outcomes for a Unit will be summatively assessed at their designated level.

7.6 The distribution of student learning hours within a Unit is a matter for the professional judgement of the Unit Coordinator. However, consideration must be given in the Unit Specification to the indicative distribution of student effort, which may include formally scheduled teaching and other activities they will be expected to complete to ensure the Learning Outcomes, such as directed study, independent study and work-based learning. The levels of direct study to student contact learning may vary according to the level of study, where there is an emphasis on practical skills or where there is a greater need for students to read independently around a topic. There will be clear indication in the Unit Specification regarding student workload to ensure the appropriate time is allocated to the summative assessment activities and that independent study work always includes the time set aside for summative assessment, which should be at least a minimum of 25% of the time allocated to the Unit.

7.7 Students successfully completing whole Units of study within the Unit Scheme will be recognised with a bespoke University Certificate of Achievement in order to enable progression to appropriate awards of the University.

The Award Scheme

8.1 The Award Scheme provides the opportunity for the development and delivery of courses towards a commissioner, international partner of MMU and learner requirements. Courses of study are constructed to enable students to progress through the academic levels and, on achievement of the underpinning educational requirements to gain the highest award of which they are capable. Opportunities to gain the University’s Awards shall be made available to students without any form of discrimination on non-academic grounds.

8.2 The Academic Board will approve all courses leading to an academic award of the University. Where the title of a course is to appear on the award certificate conferred by the University, it must be approved by the Academic Board and may not be changed without the approval of the Academic Board. Courses must satisfy any requirements for particular awards as set out in the Regulations for the Academic Awards of the University, the Related Matters and the University Framework.

8.3 Course titles that appear on certificates shall be simple, accurate single-subject titles. They must accurately reflect the content of the Unit, with the DAA’s Framework for HE Qualifications, with the normal expectations of Higher Education bodies and relevant Professional Statutory or Regulatory Bodies about the level of knowledge and skills to be expected from a person holding such a qualification.

8.4 All courses of the Flexible Curriculum Framework leading to awards of Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) will be recognised with either an award of MMU and learner requirements detailed within this Curriculum Framework. In very exceptional cases, Programme teams have a strong case for agreed variation from some aspect of the award structure. The Flexible Curriculum Framework, particularly on the grounds of meeting professional requirements, must be made clear in the proposal put forward for approval and such variations must be approved through the committee structure of the University.
8.5 The Award Scheme provides flexible means of accessing awards of the University. Three types of provision are available within this scheme:

Generic Awards
Generic awards provide opportunities for students to study stand-alone Units to gain the required credit at the required FHEQ level for an award of the University. Typically generic awards offered in this area would be Faculty-specific and core requirements will be detailed within Programme Specifications. Generic Awards will usually be titled BA / BSc (Hons) Professional Studies in (TITLE).

Named Awards
Named awards are specifically developed and designed for commissioners and international partners of MMU using the flexibility of credit size and options offered within the Flexible Curriculum Framework. Named award titles must be approved by the Academic Board and must be approved under the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Curriculum Frameworks.

Progression to awards regulated by the Flexible Curriculum Framework or Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Framework
Access to a higher award, admitting Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate Programmes of Study using the Academic Awards, Certificated Learning scheme to convert and recognise stand-alone Units of study identified in section 5. Where students transfer into other courses of the University using the Recognition of Prior Learning Scheme they must comply with the requirements of the relevant Faculty and Curriculum Framework on admission to that course. Students will adhere to the structure and delivery methods of the programmes of study.

Note: Whilst Master’s degrees can be approved within the Flexible Curriculum Framework, there can be no flexibility on the final 60 credits required for that award. This must be achieved through a piece of work or an independent research project.

8.6 In designing courses within the Flexible Curriculum Framework, teams will ensure that appropriate progression options to promote learners to establish and clearly articulated within the Programme Specifications. Programme teams must consider the academic coherence of cognate Units for progression and ensure that students are able to achieve the appropriate Learning Outcomes for progression onto generic or named awards.

8.7 The planned length of each course must be specified and must relate to the normal duration in the delivery of the course. The duration of a course designed for students who are not studying full-time will in general be expected to be longer than the minimum full-time duration specified for the award.

8.8 Each course will have arrangements for the Accreditation of Prior Learning and also have achieved the outcomes of a particular Unit via less formal means, and courses may include arrangements for recognising and rewarding such achievement. Such a process will be clearly documented in the Programme Specifications.

8.9 Whilst awards of the Flexible Curriculum Framework may consist of Units from across the institution, one ‘Home Faculty’ will own particular Units and control the name of the Faculty in which the majority of Units reside and this Faculty would be responsible for the quality assurance and support arrangements for learners and employers / organisations. Where two courses share the same title there will be one Unit Specification and one code. If students are to be awarded two awards the same time then the Student Record System will permit different instances of the Unit to be recorded to the same extent. The Flexible Curriculum Framework includes the use of existing MMU Units from Undergraduate or Postgraduate courses, a maximum of 50% of that course may be used in order to ensure the distinctiveness of each award of the University.

8.10 Each course leading to an award is comprised of a set of Units approved at validation and detailed within a Programme Specification. The Programmes Specifications represent a single course or multiple courses and defines the courses accumulated in order to achieve the title of the award, award(s) and level of study. The modes and structure of the course(s) must be specified in the Programme Specification. Programme teams must demonstrate how the DAA Honours degree Benchmark Statements and, where they exist, postgraduate level, subject benchmark statements are addressed which are relevant to their Programme Specifications. Programme teams may also wish to consider how other professional benchmarks have been addressed within their own Unit Specification. Programme teams may also wish to consider how other professional benchmarks have been addressed within their own Unit Specification.

8.11 Each Programme Specification will detail the stated course(s) and Learning Outcomes which the students are expected to achieve. The learning methods and assessment methods are designed to fulfil. Programmes / courses will ensure that the Flexible Curriculum Framework will meet the MMU Graduate Outcomes.

8.12 The Programme-specific aims will include the development of a range of academic skills appropriate to the field of study and reflecting academic developments in that field to the level required for the award.

8.13 The aims must also include the University’s Professional, educational aims provided below:

“On successful completion of their programme of study, MMU graduates will be able to: apply skills of critical and creative thinking in a defined range of contexts’.

• Demonstrate a high degree of professionalism characterised by initiative, creativity, motivation and commitment;
• Express ideas effectively and communicate information appropriately and accurately using a range of media including ICT;
• Develop working relationships using teamwork and leadership skills, recognising and respecting differences and working towards a common aim;
• Manage their professional development reflecting on progress and taking appropriate action;
• Find, evaluate, synthesise and use information from a variety of sources; articulate an awareness of the social and community contexts within their disciplinary field.

8.14 The course must aim to stimulate students’ interest, originality and creative approach, encouraging independent judgement and critical self-awareness. Learners will assimilate and present information in any appropriate medium and from a range of sources.
8.15 The statement of Programme-specific Learning Outcomes must show how the course will fulfill its aims. It will specify the knowledge and skills appropriate to the field of study and identify the ways in which these will be developed and evaluated in students. The statement of general educational outcomes will identify the ways in which students’ transferable intellectual skills will be developed and evaluated, in particular their ability to:

- Communicate clearly in speech, writing and other appropriate modes of expression;
- Argue rationally and draw independent conclusions based on a rigorous, analytical and critical approach to data, demonstration and argument;
- Apply what has been learned;
- Demonstrate an awareness of the programme of study in a wider context.

8.16 The rules for the development of Units, as detailed within the Unit Scheme, apply within the Award Scheme. Generic and named awards offer flexibility of credit size of Units but care must be taken during course development to ensure the academic coherence of the award.

8.17 Within a course, Core or Optional Units, pre-requisites and co-requisites must be specified and included within the Programme Specification Curriculum Map. The use of pre-requisites must be educationally justified and specific to the Unit in which they are included, i.e. the pre-requisite is a requirement for the Unit. Careful consideration should be given to the use of pre-requisites in relation to progression through a course and from one level to the next. Co-requisites must also be educationally justified and specific to the Unit(s) in which they are included. Careful consideration should be given to the use of co-requisites in relation to progression through a course and may have specific implications for part-time students.

8.18 Within the Award Scheme, courses may contain negotiated learning Units in which learners discuss and agree assignment tasks and learning outcomes with the Unit Leader. The parameters for this negotiation will be clearly indicated in the Unit Specification.

8.19 Personal Development Planning (PDP) plays an integral role in study and in the final award, in order that all students have the opportunity to reflect, plan and review their learning and make clear connections between their study and the skills and personal development required for the workplace. Unless similar schemes are addressed through the workplace, commissioners should accept the requirements of PDP, which will be outlined in the Programme Specification.

8.20 A student must be registered in accordance with the University’s Recruitment and Admissions Policy and any other regulations applicable thereto, subject always to the University’s absolute right to refuse for good reason the registration and any subsequent registration of an applicant. To continue to study, a student must maintain current registration with the University.

8.21 The achievement of awards within the Flexible Curriculum Framework is based on the principles of credit accumulation where credit is gained through the successful achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level. Academic credit given in respect of successful fulfilment of the requirements of a Unit can be awarded only once and cannot be double-counted for an award. (Table 1, below)

8.22 All Programmes of Study leading to awards of the University shall comply with the appropriate Assessment Regulations, which cover:

- The assessment of students;
- The accumulation of credit by students;
- The reassessment of students;
- Awards and classifications;
- Student engagement with the programme.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Award Title</th>
<th>Credit Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>University Certificate</td>
<td>60 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certificate of Higher Education</td>
<td>120 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>University Diploma</td>
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<td>Diploma of Higher Education</td>
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