

# AWARDS FRAMEWORK

## Table of Contents

1.	<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
2.	<b>Background</b> .....	3
3.	<b>Programmes</b> .....	3
4.	<b>Credit and level</b> .....	4
5.	<b>Awards</b> .....	5
6.	<b>Exit awards</b> .....	6
7.	<b>Transfer of credit, recognition of prior learning</b> .....	7
8.	<b>Professional Development programmes</b> .....	8
	 Appendix 1: Requirements for University of Law Awards.....	9
	Appendix 2: Award Types .....	11
	Appendix 3: Level Descriptors for ULaw awards.....	..14

## 1. Introduction

The University of Law's Awards Framework Policy has been informed by the Office for Students Sector-Recognized Standards and the General Ongoing Conditions of Registration and has regard to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. These definitive reference points for all English higher education institutions set out how academic standards are established and maintained and how excellence in the quality of learning opportunities is assured.

This policy sits within The University of Law's Quality and Standards Code, which provides a suite of policies designed to safeguard the academic standards of The University of Law and to assure the quality of learning opportunities offered; this policy should therefore be read in conjunction with other relevant policies within the code.

## 2. Background

The intention of this Awards Framework is to ensure that the University meets the expectations set out in the Quality Code, and in particular to equip the University with a coherent, flexible and credible Awards Framework in alignment with the [FHEQ](#) and [Credit Framework](#). All future programme approvals must meet the requirements of this Awards Framework. Existing programmes that sit outside the requirements of this Framework should be realigned at the next scheduled periodic review or revalidation.

Responsibility for approving the modification of this Framework and reviewing and evaluating its effectiveness lies with the Academic Board which will review it formally alongside any review of the Policy: Setting and maintaining academic standards.

The Academic Board must approve all programmes of study, whether or not they lead to a qualification, and the award(s), including exit awards, to be made for each programme; such approval will be in accordance with the appropriate University policy.

## 3. Programmes

A programme is an approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

The structure of a programme leading to an award will meet the requirements set out in Appendix 1, unless varied by approval of the Academic Board.

The University may make Single, Joint, Dual, or other degree awards, following defined types of awards set out in Appendix 2.

Qualifications and awards will be located within the *FHEQ* which defines the overall level of intellectual achievement, generic outcomes, characteristics and attributes which holders of qualifications possess in terms of what they know, understand and are able to do. Students are expected to have demonstrated achievement of the relevant outcomes. The *FHEQ* outcomes are extracted in Appendix 3.

Programme Specifications, which are published statements about the intended learning outcomes of programmes of study, will set out the requirements for completion of whole programmes and the modules or range of modules, the credit from which may contribute to a programme; they will also set out the requirements for any exit awards.

The Programme Specification will set out the learning outcomes for the programme and how these are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptors and hence level of the qualification in the *FHEQ*. Where appropriate, the Programme Specification will also show how any appropriate subject benchmark statement outcomes will be met and demonstrated. The Programme Specification will be formally approved at programme approval; subsequent modification must be approved by the Academic Board, normally through its Programme Approval Committee. Programme Specifications will be reviewed annually to ensure accuracy.

## 4. Credit and level

Credit is used in Higher Education to summarise and describe an amount of learning (the number of credits). It also describes the depth, complexity and intellectual demand of that learning (the credit level). All modules within an approved programme of study carry a specific credit value. Credit is awarded on successful completion of a module's learning outcomes and provides a way of measuring, using numbers, the amount and intellectual demand of learning attached to that module.

The number of credits assigned to each module is based upon the approximate number of hours a typical student is expected to spend in order to achieve the learning outcomes for that module. The University follows the nationally agreed guideline that one credit equates to a minimum of 10 notional hours of learning<sup>1</sup>.

The University's awards are normally divided into multiples of 10 credits, but other values may be deemed appropriate for the proper delivery of the curriculum. The maximum module size is 60 credits so as to allow for the inclusion of dissertations, projects and reports.

Nationally agreed credit level descriptors describe the level of the credit assigned to individual modules recognising the relative complexity, intellectual challenge and depth of learning expected. These are statements of what the student is expected to

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<sup>1</sup> Comprising not only formal contact hours and assessments, but also preparation, private reading and study, revision and any work-related learning

know, understand and be able to do as a result of the learning activity and which should be demonstrated through valid assessment.

The proposed credit rating for a University module, including the detailed learning outcomes, will be set out in a module descriptor. A module descriptor is a formal record of a module’s indicative content and structure, assessed learning outcomes, developmental learning outcomes, its assessment scheme and credit rating, reviewed through the programme approval process and confirmed by the Academic Board, normally through its Programme Approval Committee.

The *FHEQ* Level descriptors and expected programme outcomes are set out in Appendix [3].

While the University does not formally award European Credits (ECTS) under the European Credit and Transfer Accumulation Scheme it will provide confirmation of the equivalent ECTS credit value of its modules and may indicate the relevant conversion number of ECTS credits on transcripts, as appropriate.

## 5. Awards

Students must have demonstrated that they met the entry criteria for a programme to be considered for a University award.

### Pre-Undergraduate Awards

The University delivers standalone foundation programmes equivalent to Level 3 in the National Qualifications and Credit Framework, to students who are preparing for admission to degree level study. This kind of programme typically consists of 120 credits and lead to the award of a University of Law Foundation Certificate. The University of Law Foundation Certificate should not be confused with a ‘Foundation Year’ which is a one-year level three programme that is attached to a standard 3-year undergraduate degree to form a 4 year programme.

Awards at level 4, 5, 6 and 7 are made under the authority of the University’s Taught Degree Awarding Powers. Awards at level 3 are made by the University but are not authorised by external accreditation; it is therefore the responsibility of institutions whether they recognise credit and qualifications awarded on this basis.

The summary table below details the number of credits students must achieve to be considered for a University award. Students must also meet any specified programme outcomes.

	<b>Qualification level</b>	<b>Minimum overall credits</b>	<b>Minimum number of credits at</b>

			<b>qualification level<sup>2</sup></b>
University of Law Foundation Certificate	3	120	120 credits at Level 3
Certificate of Higher Education	4	120	90 at or above Level 4
Diploma of Higher Education	5	240	90 at or above Level 5
Advanced Diploma of Higher Education	6	240	90 at Level 6
Bachelor's degree	6	300	90 at Level 6 <sup>3</sup>
Bachelor's degree with Honours	6	360	90 at or above Level 6
Graduate Certificate	6	40	40 at Level 6
Graduate Diploma	6	80	80 at Level 6
Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	40 at Level 7
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	90 at Level 7
Taught Master's degree	7	180	150 at Level 7

Bachelor's Degrees (sometimes known as undergraduate degrees) with honours are normally awarded on completion of 360 credits, with progressive study at Levels 4, 5 and 6 as defined by the [FHEQ](#).

Additional credit may be required for completion of a particular degree programme, for example where a dual award is being made. Any additional credit requirement should be appropriate in scale to ensure students may successfully complete the programme.

Master's degrees are normally awarded on completion of 180 credits. Additional credit may be required for completion of a particular degree programme, for example where Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements for vocational qualifications must be met.

Unless with the explicit approval of the Academic Board, credits are not normally double-counted, ie used to contribute towards more than one award. Where credit is

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<sup>2</sup> QAA credit framework does not specify 'at level or above' but 'minimum credits at the level of the qualification'.

<sup>3</sup> QAA credit framework specifies minimum 60 at Level 6

used to contribute towards more than one award this must be made clear on any transcript of achievement.

Credit retains a limited currency (normally 5 years) unless the learning is updated through further, relevant study and/or continuing professional development.

A certificate or diploma of higher education, and a postgraduate certificate or diploma may also be offered as standalone awards. Further requirements for University degrees are set out in paragraph 7, and Appendix 1

## 6. Awards made through Partnership Arrangements

Where the University engages in collaborative provision which leads to the awarding of academic credit, these partnership arrangements shall align with the partnership models defined in its Partnership Policy. Typically, these are classified as Type A partnership arrangements and includes:

- Off Campus Delivery: some of a programme leading to a University of Law award may be delivered by staff of a partner organisation, normally another Higher Education Institution, at a location that does not constitute a University of Law campus (e.g., a University of Law satellite campus). The programme is solely owned by the University and the provision is subject to its academic regulations and policies under all circumstances.
- Shared Delivery/Award: one or more partner organisations share with the University the responsibility for the delivery of a programme leading to a University of Law award. The programme may be owned solely by the University or jointly with the partner organisation(s) and may lead to a single award of The University of Law or a joint/dual award(s) offered with the partner organisation. Joint or Dual awards will normally operate under bespoke regulations (please see Appendix 2) approved jointly by the University and the partner.
- Franchise: some or all of a programme leading to an award of the University is delivered by the staff at a partner organisation. The programme may be solely owned by the University or developed jointly with the partner; students would normally enrol with the University and the University's academic regulations and policies apply under all circumstances unless exceptions are approved by the relevant University of Law authority.
- Validation: most of the programme leading to an award of the University is delivered by staff of a partner organisation. Programmes are normally developed by the partner organisation and validated by the University as meeting the criteria for its awards. Students are normally enrolled with the partner organisation. Academic regulations and policies for this model may be developed by the partner but must always align appropriately with the University's Quality and

Standard Code; these will be subject to approval by the Programme Approval Committee on behalf of Academic Board.

## 7. Exit awards

A student registered for an honours degree but who does not complete the entire programme will become eligible for an exit award as specified for each programme.

## 8. Staged masters' programmes

Where approved, the University may offer a postgraduate taught (Level 7) award in three stages:

Stage	Award	Total credits
1	Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)	60
2	Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)	120, incorporating a PGCert
3	Masters	180, incorporating a PGCert and PGDip

A student may enrol on Stage 1 of an award, and then elect to continue ' onto stages 2, and then stage 3 at a later point within the defined time limit. Students may also directly enrol onto a Postgraduate Diploma , and undertake 120 credits as one programme.

Upon enrolment and completion of a subsequent stage, the certificate relating to the previous stage's award will be rescinded.

Stages 1,2 and 3 of an award, a PG Cert, PGDip and Masters, will be awarded with an overall classification, as described in the programme's assessment regulations.

### Entry requirements and progression

Students will be required to satisfy entry requirements of each stage as described in the programme's specification.

			Masters award – Top up
Postgraduate Diploma			
Postgraduate Certificate	Postgraduate Diploma – top up		
30 credits	30 credits	30 credits	30 credits
			60credits



## **Progression on staged masters**

Students will not be allowed to enrol on the next stage of a staged masters without satisfying the requirements of the previous stage. Students will be permitted re-assessment in the current stage of their programme as per the assessment regulations but will not be able to trail credit onto the next stage.

## **Time limit for completion of programmes**

A staged masters programme must be completed within five years of registration on an initial stage, irrespective of mode of study (part time or online) or if the student has transferred between modes of study.

- Students enrolled on a part time programme may enrol on a full-time programme at the next stage.
- Students enrolled on a full-time programme may enrol on a part time programme at the next stage.

## **9. Transfer of credit, recognition of prior learning**

The University has a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL).

RPL formally acknowledges, through a careful process of scrutiny and mapping of the learning outcomes achieved, an individual student's prior learning in order to gain advanced standing, normally towards a specific University award. Credit may be granted towards a specific programme of study, as set out in the Programme Specification, where a student has satisfactorily pursued a previous programme of relevant study and of appropriate standard either at or outside of the University.

The University may enter into articulation arrangements with another education provider, under which students who satisfy specific academic criteria on a programme, demonstrated through assessment, may transfer agreed credit to a University programme.

Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) may allow the University to recognise credit which also grants students exemption from study of particular subjects which are mandatory for qualification purposes. Such exemptions will be granted only after the University has undertaken a careful process of scrutiny and mapping of the learning outcomes achieved.

The marks used to calculate the grade, classification or division of any University award shall be derived only from modules studied on that programme of study,

assessed by the University with the basis for that calculation set down in the relevant Programme Specification. At least 50% of the credit for any award must be accumulated as a result of learning undertaken on the programme of study leading to the award, unless specified otherwise in the Programme Specification and regulations.

In all cases, where prior learning has been recognised and/or credit has been transferred, student transcripts will make clear which credit has or may have been used towards more than one award.

## **10. Recognition of external assessment**

The University has a Recognition of External Assessment Policy (Q6.10).

For the purposes of this policy, an external assessment defined as an assessment conducted by an external body, independent of the University.

Students may be awarded credit towards specified University modules through the recognition of an external assessment, which may then contribute to an academic award of the University of Law.

The University will not limit the number of modules passed through recognition of external assessment; however, the University will not typically award degrees or intermediate awards where the percentage of credits achieved through recognition of external assessment exceeds 50% of the overall programme but may recognise up to 75% of the overall programme where this is considered appropriate.

Marks achieved in external assessments, in particular those relating to the Solicitors Qualifying Examinations (SQE) will normally be recognised by a degree classification algorithm and will therefore contribute to the student's final grade classification. Where appropriate, marks for assessments with different pass thresholds will be scaled to align with the University's grade classification criteria for that particular programme and award.

## **11. Professional Development programmes**

The University offers a range of programmes for courses in continuing professional development. Many of these courses are of short duration. Where possible, all new continuing professional development courses will be rated for credit and level. If courses are assessed at an appropriate credit and level, they may form part of an award.

Some programmes may also include work based learning, or placement opportunities as part of the programme's curriculum. These placement opportunities may be offered as credit or non credit bearing modules. Both credit and non-credit bearing

placement opportunities offer the same level of knowledge and skill acquisition, and both represent the same opportunity for students to meet and excel in their programme's learning outcomes. Credit bearing placement modules will be reflected on academic transcripts as per the usual conventions for credit bearing modules. Non credit bearing modules may be reflected on academic transcripts through inclusion of the module without a pass/fail or credit bearing weighting. Where it is not possible to include non credit bearing modules within a transcript, the University will explore other options of providing documentation to students which confirms, and reflects, the work placement year or modules undertaken.

## Appendix 1 - Requirements for University of Law awards

Degrees of the University are typically practice-focused in nature. They are designed to enable students to gain essential practical skills to enhance their employability. Programmes offer academically robust and practical learning that can be applied directly into a career in the subject discipline or be transferred to other professional disciplines.

Unless with the explicit approval of the Academic Board, credits are not normally double-counted, i.e., used to contribute towards more than one award at a comparable or higher level. Where credit is used to contribute towards more than one award this must be made clear on any transcript of achievement.

A programme may include modules designed and delivered by partners, where these are delivered to the appropriate quality and standards, confirmed through appropriate standards and quality assurance processes. Such modules must be approved by the Academic Board during the programme approval process, which itself will follow approval of any partnership arrangement under the University's Partnerships Policy.

### Level 6 (Bachelor) Degrees with Honours

#### *General*

Bachelor's Degrees (sometimes known as undergraduate degrees) with honours are normally awarded on completion of 360 credits, with progressive study at Levels 4, 5 and 6 as defined by the [FHEQ](#) and set out in Appendix [3]. Additional credit may be required for completion of a particular degree programme, for example where a dual award is being made or where there is a Foundation Year (Year 0) within a four year programme. Any additional credit requirement should be appropriate in scale to ensure students have the potential to complete the programme successfully.

#### *Qualifying Law Degrees*

Bachelor of Laws Degrees with Honours using the 'LL.B' designation must meet the requirements for a Qualifying Law Degree set out in the Joint Statement issued in 1999 by the Law Society and the General Council of the Bar, as supplemented.

The programme must:

- Enable students to acquire the required knowledge and transferable skills, including study of Legal Research
- Require study equivalent to no less than 180 credits in the seven subjects known as the Foundations of Legal Knowledge (Contract Law, Public Law (including Constitutional Law, Administrative Law and Human Rights), Tort,

- , Criminal Law, Land Law, Equity and Trusts)
- Be structured so that there are no fewer than 240 credits in the study of legal subjects
- Be structured so that there is study of legal subjects in each year of the programme including the final year

In addition, any law degree awarded with honours must meet the requirements set out in the QAA Benchmark Statement for Law.

## Other undergraduate degrees

Honours degrees awarded by the University shall comprise 360 credits of which 90 will be at or above Level 6. All undergraduate programmes must align to the FHEQ and meet the relevant subject benchmark statement, if published.

The BA award designation is used for programmes which typically develop critical thinking, qualitative research and analysis skills, and provide an opportunity for students to engage in and develop their theoretical understanding of, typically, subjects in arts, humanities and social sciences. They provide a basis and platform for students to engage in research practices and prepare students for further scholarly research.

The BSc award designation is used for programmes which typically involve the development of current practical technical knowledge and often, industry relevant skills. They are structured in a way that prepares students for a specific career, role or industry, and can involve a focus on quantitative research and analysis. Students will typically undertake study which will develop their numerical, scientific or technological skills. A BSc award may be focussed in areas of business, technology, science.

## Other undergraduate awards

### Certificates and Diplomas

A Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) may be awarded on successful completion of 120 credits, of which 90 must be at FHEQ Level 4.

A Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) may be awarded on successful completion of 240 credits, of which at least 90 must be at FHEQ Level 5.

Both the CertHE and the DipHE may be awarded as an exit, or interim award or as a discrete award in its own right.

Students pursuing a full undergraduate (Bachelors) degree are not entitled to receive a CertHE and/or DipHE as they progress through the programme and may only be awarded these qualifications on exiting the programme at the appropriate point for a Certificate or Diploma

## Level 7 (Master’s) Degrees

Master’s Degrees are normally awarded on completion of 180 credits, at least 150 of which must be delivered and assessed at Level 7 as defined by the [FHEQ](#), set out in Appendix 3. Additional credit may be required for completion of a particular degree programme, for example where PSRB requirements for vocational qualifications must be met. Master’s Degrees of the University have a professional focus and this is reflected in the professional and practice-focused nature of the curriculum and any Dissertation module(s).

The LL.M award designation is used for programmes with a significant proportion of modules that relate to the study of law, and typically require a student to hold an academic undergraduate law degree, a professional law degree, or an undergraduate degree in a related discipline. This designation may have an award title which reflects the content of the specific programme, for example LL.M Mental Health Law. The title LL.M (JD) may be used where the programme has a focus on legal practice. It must be clear on the relevant transcript and certificate and all marketing literature that the programme is awarded at Masters level (FHEQ Level 7) and the use of ‘JD’ is not intended to imply study or award at doctoral level (FHEQ Level 8).

The MSc award designation is used for programmes based heavily on subject matter that is technical and regulatory in nature, has a direct practical application in employment, and includes some element of cross-disciplinary study, often in business-related aspects. MSc programmes may or may not require a Dissertation module.

Master’s programmes must align with one of the following framework models:

<<	<<	Credit total 120 >>	>>	Dissertation 60	Total 180
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Or:

<<	<<	Credit total 150 >>	>>	>>	Case-study <sup>a</sup> 30	Total 180
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Or:

<<	<<	<< Minimum credit total 140 >>	>>	>>	Dissertation 40	Total 180 <sup>a</sup>
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It does not matter if the proposed programme has too many credits, within reason, but it must not have too few.

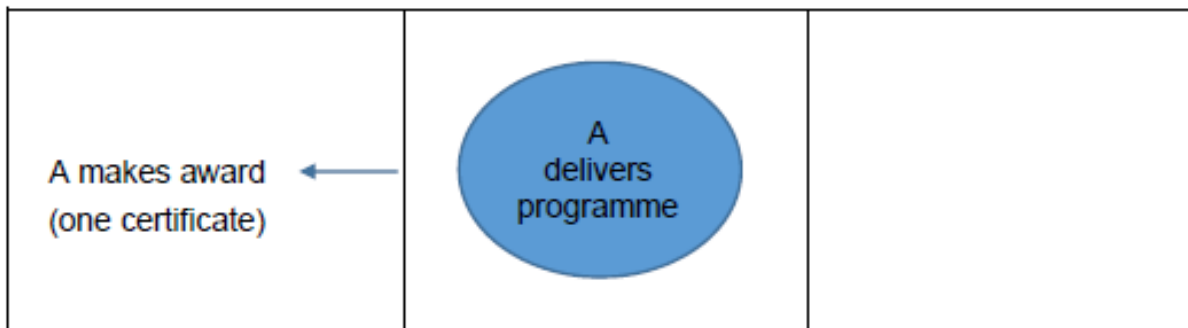
## Recognition of credit for individual modules

The University operates a unit-based credit rated curriculum framework for taught awards. Academic credit provides the means of quantifying learning at a given level. It is attached to units and is normally quantified on the basis of notional learning hours (e.g. 20 credits involve 200 hours of student study time). Academic credit is achieved by learners who have demonstrated attainment of specified learning outcomes for a module of study.

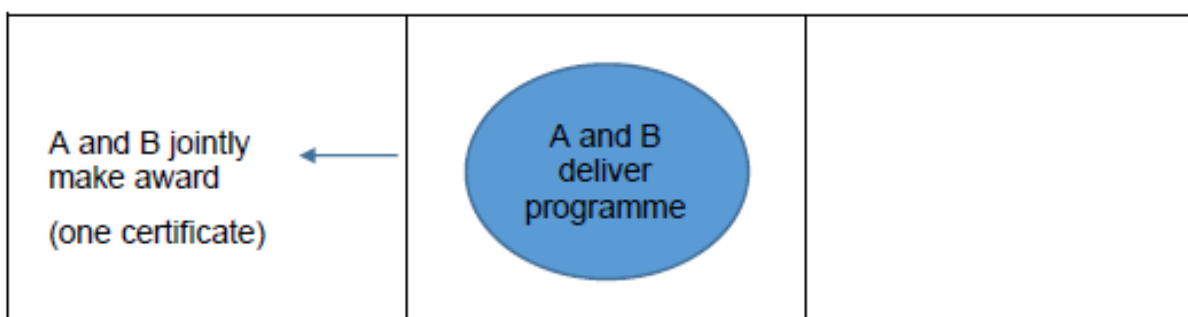
All academic programmes leading to an academic award are determined by units of credit. Module specifications record its credit value; Programme Specifications record the credit value for an academic award and the terms and conditions by which they are achieved.

**Appendix 2 – Award Types**

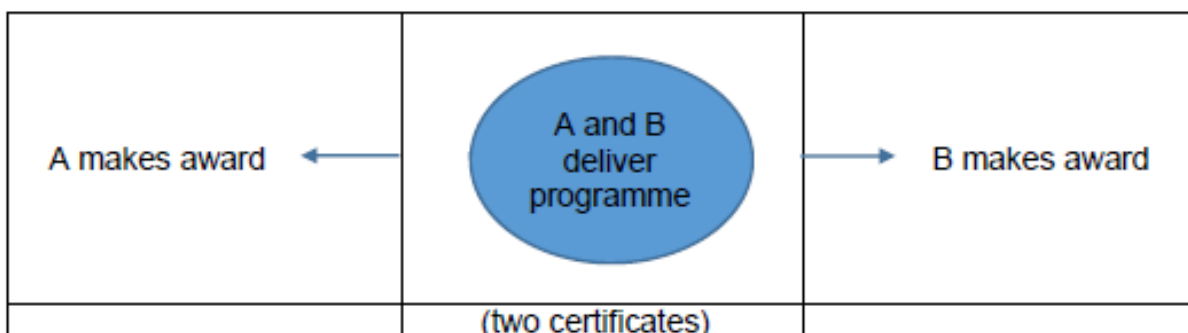
**Single award:** An award made by one degree-awarding body.



**Joint award:** An arrangement under which two or more degree-awarding bodies together provide a programme leading to a single award made jointly by both, or all, participants. A single certificate or document (signed by the competent authorities) attests to successful completion of this jointly delivered programme, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications<sup>11</sup>.



**Double award:** The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same programme by two degree-awarding bodies who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them<sup>12</sup>. All transcripts must make clear which credit has been used towards more than one award.

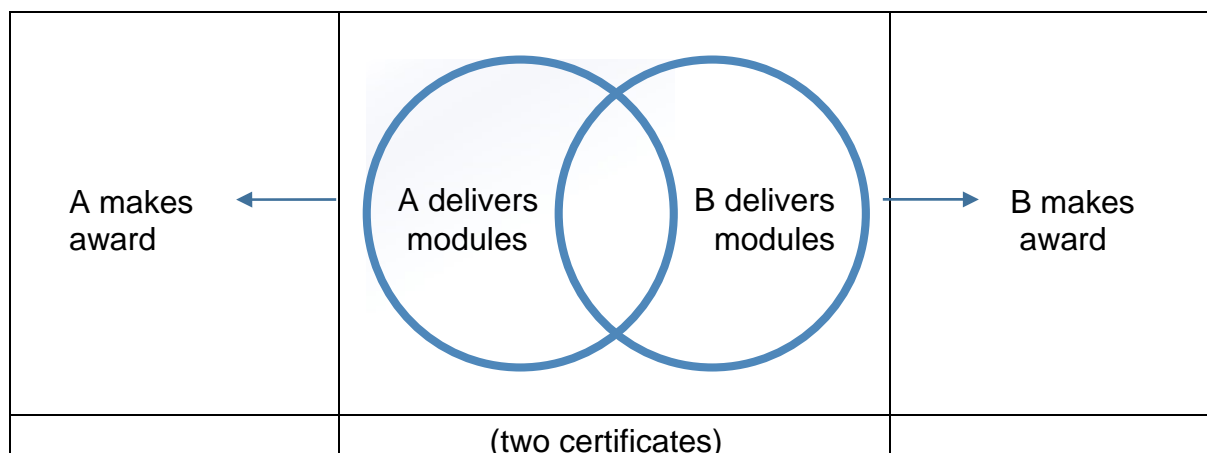


**Dual award:** A dual award may follow the format of a double award (above). Alternatively, it may be the granting of separate awards (and certificates) for programmes offered by two degree-awarding bodies which have both delivered the

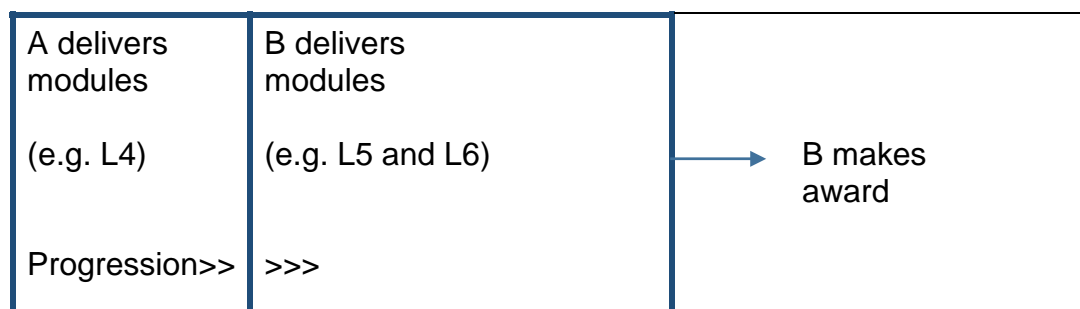


programmes of study leading to them. Some or all of the content will be common to both programmes and awards.

All transcripts must make clear which credit has been used towards more than one award.



**Articulation:** A process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent part or year of a programme of a degree-awarding body. Arrangements, which are subject to formal agreements between the parties, normally involve credit transfer schemes<sup>14</sup>.

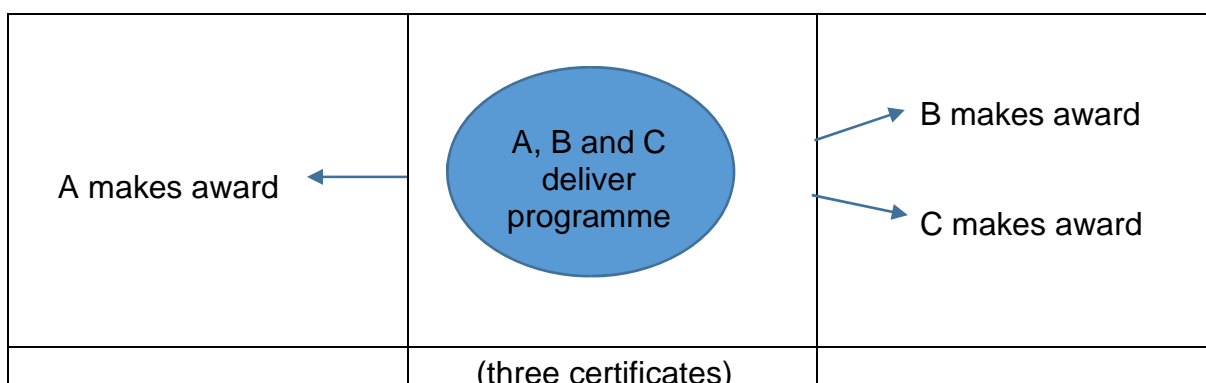


The credit that is recognised must be properly benchmarked and mapped in order for the University to recognise it towards its own award. The University will generally recognise up to 50% of the total credit for an award. All transcripts must make clear which credit has been awarded on this basis.

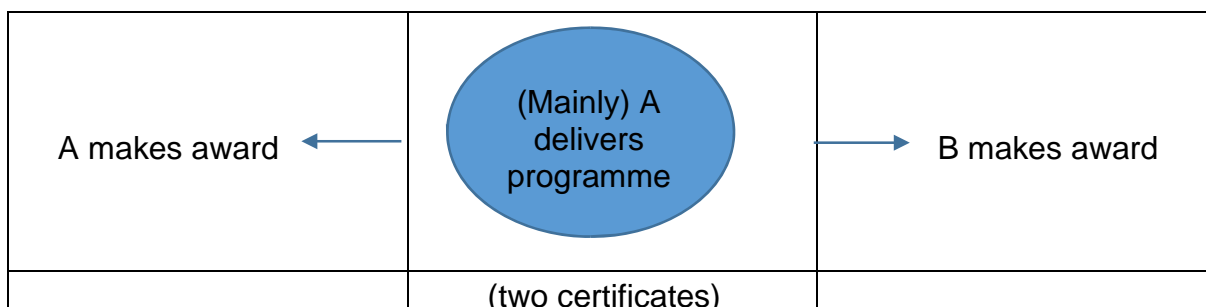
**For information:**

**Awards not currently available within the University’s awards framework:**

**Multiple award:** An arrangement where three or more degree-awarding bodies together provide a single jointly delivered programme (or programmes) leading to a separate award (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for dual/double awards, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.



**Concurrent:** The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for a programme by two degree-awarding bodies which has mainly or entirely been delivered by one of the degree-awarding bodies.



**Appendix 3 – Level Descriptors for ULaw awards**

The following should be taken into account when considering the appropriate level for a qualification:

- the relationship between the intended outcomes of the programme and the expectations set out in the qualification descriptors
- whether there is a sufficient volume of assessed study that will demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved
- whether the design of the curriculum and assessments is such that all students following the programme have the opportunity to achieve and demonstrate the intended outcomes, through a coherent learning experience

The following level descriptors should be used as a reference point:

## **Level 3**

Level 3 qualifications benchmarks have been adapted from the SEEC Descriptors. The South Eastern Educational Consortium (SEEC) has published Credit Level Descriptors that are derived from a number of sources including the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies.

Holders of a Level 3 qualification will have knowledge of defined areas of a subject and will have an ability to apply the skills of analysis and evaluation in familiar contexts. They will be able to apply basic conceptual frameworks to well defined problems and communicate results effectively in a structured context.

### **Students should have demonstrated:**

Knowledge of a standard range of concepts, theories and issues within their subject and the ability to assess a choice of solutions to standard problems within defined frameworks.

An ability to apply knowledge and skills to their subject demonstrating comprehension of relevant facts, theories and opinions, making reasoned judgements in relatively simple and well-defined contexts.

### **Typically, holders of a Level 3 qualification will be able to:**

- evaluate the appropriateness of a limited range of approaches to solving standard problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work using pre-defined principles and criteria
- communicate the results of their study/work confidently, and with structured and coherent arguments
- undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment

### **Holders of a Level 3 qualification will have:**

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

## Level 4<sup>4</sup>

Holders of a Level 4 qualification will have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject, and will have learned how to take different approaches to solving problems. They will be able to communicate accurately and will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

### **Students should have demonstrated:**

- knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study
- an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.

### **Typically, holders of a Level 4 qualification will be able to:**

- evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work
- communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments
- undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment.

### **Holders of a Level 4 qualification will have:**

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

## Level 5

Holders of qualifications at Level 5 will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study, and will have learned to apply those principles more widely. Through this, they will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation, enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field. Holders of qualifications at this level will have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

### **Students should have demonstrated:**

- knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed
- ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context

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<sup>4</sup> Descriptions for Level 4 - 7 are extracts from the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), published by QAA 2014

- knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study
- an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

**Typically, holders of a Level 5 qualification will be able to:**

- use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis
- effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively
- undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations.

**Holders of a Level 5 qualification will have:**

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

## Level 6

Holders of qualifications at Level 6, for example a bachelor's degree with honours, will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, they will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. They will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively.

Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.

**Students should have demonstrated:**

- a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline
  - to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
- an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge

- the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

### **Typically, holders of a Level 6 qualification will be able to:**

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

### **Holders of a Level 6 qualification will have:**

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
  - the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

### **Level 7<sup>5</sup>**

Much of the study undertaken for master's degrees will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems. They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.

### **Students should have demonstrated:**

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship

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<sup>5</sup> Extract from the Master's Degree Characteristics, February 2020  
V1.4

- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

### **Typically, holders of a Level 7 qualification will be able to:**

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

### **Holders of a Level 7 qualification will have:**

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
  - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

Because of the practice-focused nature of many of the University's programmes, it is useful also to consider the Professional Master's degree characteristics.

### **Professional / Practice Master's<sup>6</sup>**

**Examples:** MBA, MEd, MTL, LLM and some integrated Master's e.g. LLM (JD).

### **Programme characteristics**

Degree programmes in this category often have the following characteristics:

- Learning tends to be structured, and programme structure may be developed in collaboration with the relevant PSRB or employer, and may include practical elements, such as fieldwork, placements or other opportunities for work-based learning, as well as a project undertaken through independent study.
- They include research methods training, which may be provided in a range of different ways (for example, through content modules).

- In the case of integrated master's degrees that fall within this type, master's level study is integrated with study at honours degree level within a single programme. The second characteristic above applies to the master's level part of the overall award.
- They may be a prerequisite for registration or entry to a profession in accordance with the requirements of the PSRB that recognises or accredits the award.
- Related awards, such as postgraduate certificate and postgraduate diploma, are often offered as stages in the progression to a professional/practice master's award to facilitate continuing professional development at different stages of a professional career.

## **Programme purposes**

Programmes in this category may have the following aims:

- to enable graduates to qualify for entry into a profession, subject to any further conditions required by the PSRB
- to provide continuing professional development opportunities related to particular professions or employment settings.

## **Intended entrants**

Programmes in this category often attract entrants with a bachelor's degree with honours or equivalent, or experience that may or may not be directly relevant to the particular profession. Entrants may have acquired experience through work or other means that enables staff responsible for admissions to be confident of the candidate's ability to succeed in the programme. Some professional/practice master's will require entrants to be engaged in particular professions as a condition of entry to the programme.

## **Relationship to further study or employment**

- graduates of professional/practice master's programmes will normally be equipped to enter a variety of types of employment and in particular will possess the skills and experience necessary for the particular profession or area of practice
- graduates of a full Masters award will also normally be equipped to continue academic study at a higher level, for example for a PhD/Phil or a professional doctorate.

## **Characteristics of graduates**

Graduates of professional/practice master's degrees typically have:



- i) subject-specific attributes
  - an in-depth knowledge and understanding of their profession, informed by current practice, scholarship and research, including a critical awareness of current issues and developments in the subject and the profession
  - the ability to apply research to professional situations, both practical and theoretical
  - the ability to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to their professional activities.
- ii) generic attributes (including skills relevant to an employment-setting)

A range of generic abilities and skills that include the ability to:

- use initiative and take responsibility
- solve problems in creative and innovative ways
- make decisions in challenging situations
- continue to learn independently and to develop professionally
- communicate effectively, with colleagues and a wider audience, in a variety of media.

## Version history

Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
1.1		Amendments approved by Academic Board	14/02/19
1.2	Senior Quality Officer	Change to the document coding convention	30/03/20
1.3	Head of Quality Assurance and Deputy Academic Registrar	Updated to include articulation of staged Level 7 awards.	
1.4	Director -Academic Registry	Amended to clarify mechanisms and expectations for awarding of credits, interim awards; and the recognition of external awards.	December 2021