# Academic Regulations

HIGHER EDUCATION

# AWARD DESIGN, VALIDATION AND REVIEW REGULATIONS (HEAR1) V2.0

**For SDC Awards**

**For UoP Awards follow this link**

# Award Design, Validation and Review

Contents

**A1.1 Appropriate Content and Approval** ..... 2
**A1.2 Award Design** ..... 2
A 1.2.1 Principles ..... 2
A 1.2.2 Modules, Credits and Levels ..... 3
A1.2.3 Qualification Structures and Awards ..... 6
A1.2.4 Curriculum Design ..... 6
A1.2.5 Naming Of Awards ..... 7
**A1.3 Validation** ..... 13
**A1.4 Development and closure process** ..... 13
**A1.5 Certification of Awards and Supplementary Certification** ..... 14

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| Document Approved by: ADIB | Date of Approval: 1st September 2019 |
| Review by: HEARG / CHEBOS | Review Date: May 2020 |
| Date of Implementation: 1st September 2019 | CPD to support Implementation: July 19 – HE Conference |
| Version Number: 2.0 | Author: A Wilson |

The purpose of this academic regulation is to set out the requirements for programme design, validation and review.

These regulations apply to programmes and sites for delivery of South Devon College Degrees, unless an exception to regulations has been formally approved by the Academic Regulations Committee.

## A1.1 Appropriate Content and Approval

South Devon College awards and constituent modules may focus on any area of academic discourse or of vocational and / or social interest, including areas that may involve controversial views or beliefs, subject to the following constraints:

- Study of the area of discourse selected must reasonably be considered to contribute to the programme learning outcomes.
- Study must not expose students or staff to significant risks of physical, mental, moral or spiritual harm and must be legally acceptable.
- Curriculum design must allow for the testing, discussion and evaluation of any assertions made and of any implicit underlying assumptions, beliefs and values in the light of all available evidence.
- The right of staff and students to hold, express and promote personal views and/or beliefs must be protected, provided that any such expression is lawful and does not intrude unreasonably on others' rights to hold different views and/or beliefs.
- Curriculum approval is required to follow the Curriculum Development and Approval Procedure

## A1.2 Award Design

<u>A 1.2.1 Principles</u>

- All South Devon College awards are consistent with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- All South Devon College awards are consistent with the relevant and most up to date Benchmark statements relating to the general level of knowledge and skills required to register for the award, and the qualification, credit volume and study levels required to achieve the awards.
- All South Devon College awards that award Higher Education Credit are aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) 2014 and the Higher Education Credit Framework for England (2014).
- To the greatest extent possible within the requirements of the Quality Code, the requirements of any relevant professional and/or statutory body,

South Devon College programmes are designed to have non-discriminatory programme outcomes and core competences.

- Qualifications can only be conferred or recommended where a student has registered for and successfully completed a programme of study leading to an approved award.
- English is the primary language of learning and assessment for all awards except where the study area involves foreign languages.
- Where an award is recognised by and subject to the regulations of a professional regulatory or statutory body (PRSB) and there is a conflict between these regulations and those of the PRSB, then the regulations of the PRSB shall normally have precedence.

A 1.2.2 Modules, Credits and Levels

The College defines its taught provision in terms of programmes, modules, credits and levels.

**Modules:**

- Each module is self-contained with defined learning outcomes and a specified volume of credit at one level/intellectual standard only.
- Modules can also stand alone as coherent credit bearing learning experiences in their own right.
- Modules may have specified pre-requisites/precursors. Where these are stated, they may determine the order in which particular modules or combinations of modules are undertaken.
- Essential elements of learning within a named programme award may be indicated through the specification of core/mandatory modules at validation. Such modules must be passed for the named award to be conferred.
- Modules contributing to programmes leading to a professional qualification may integrate academic and professional components.
- South Devon College may, where academically sound, change the modules offered and/or the content of individual modules but in doing so will ensure that students who have legitimately registered for a named award will be able to follow an appropriate series of modules to qualify for the named award within the normal registration period.
- Where appropriate and where specified in the relevant programme validation document, students may be offered the opportunity to select from optional modules.
- The total credits of all modules studied at any level of a programme must always equate to the requirements of the programme.

## Credits

In determining the number of credits required to achieve an award, South Devon College recognises one credit as equivalent to ten hours of notional academic learning time. A standard academic year of full-time study equates to 120 credits (1200 notional hours).

## Qualification levels

### Level 4

Level 4 modules provide the opportunity to demonstrate:

- Knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with the area 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.

A Level 4 module should contribute substantially to the students' capacity 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
- Demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility
- Progress to L5 study.

### Level 5

Level 5 modules provide the opportunity to demonstrate:

- Knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of the area 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
- 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.

A Level 5 module should contribute substantially to the students' capacity 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
- Demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision making
- Progress to L6 study.

**Level 6**

- 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).
- 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.
- 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.

A1.2.3 Qualification Structures and Awards

The range of qualifications offered by South Devon College, and their structures in terms of their minimum content at various academic levels (based on a typical full-time academic year of 120 credits) are as listed in the following table:

| **Credits** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Award** | **Level 4** | **Level 5** | **Level 6** |
| South Devon College Certificate of Achievement (exit award) and Certificate of Higher Education | 120 | - | - |
| Foundation Degree and Diploma of Higher Education | 120 | 120 | - |
| Bachelor Degree without Honours | 120 | 120 | 80 |
| Bachelor Degree with Honours | 120 | 120 | 120 |

The levels shown in the table above are minimum and individual programme specifications may exceed the rigour indicated either by increasing the required number of credits at any level or by substituting credits at a higher level for credits at lower levels.

A Foundation Degree will be awarded to a student who has successfully completed a minimum of 240 credits, including at least 120 credits at Level 5 or above.
If the student's aggregate mark across all modules is 70% or above, the Foundation Degree will be awarded with Distinction.

If the student's aggregate mark across all modules is between 60% and 69%, the Foundation Degree will be awarded with Merit.

A1.2.4 Curriculum Design

- Each qualification is designed to be a valid, coherent whole and to produce a distinctive, relevant outcome for the student whether or not it also provides a stepping-stone to another award.
- Each programme is intended to address the QAA Benchmark Statements in the relevant subject area at a level consistent with the award. Honours

degrees are designed to comply fully with the Benchmarks unless a reasoned case can be made for departing from the standard. Lower awards are constructed so that they contribute in an appropriate manner to the academic progression towards an Honours degree.

- Foundation Degrees are designed to meet in full the expectations of the QAA Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement.
- All programme designs provide the opportunity to develop transferable skills. In some cases these are embedded within academic modules, in others they are taught separately.

A1.2.5 Naming Of Awards

**Subject title:**

Each award should bear a subject title reflecting its principal subject area, subject to the following criteria.

- Subject titles should reflect the subject area(s) of the majority of the material studied. The inclusion of material from another subject area, or from a narrower specialism within the principal subject area, amounting to 25% or less of the credits of an award should not be reflected in the subject title of the award.
- A South Devon College Certificate of Achievement awarded as contained awards of programmes leading to higher awards should normally be given a subject title appropriate to the study that an individual student has completed successfully. Where there is insufficient coherence to a

student's successful study for a named award to be made, these awards may be made without a subject title.

3. Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)

A Certificate of Higher Education may be awarded to:

• a student who is registered for the award of a Certificate of Higher Education and has successfully completed 120 credits at Level 4 or above; or

• a student who has successfully completed 120 credits at Level 4 or above in an undergraduate programme on which s/he is not continuing, provided the credits successfully completed fall within the programme specification for the award.

If the aggregate of the student's best 120 credits falling within the programme specification (subject to any core or co-requisite requirements) is 70% or above, the CertHE will be awarded with Distinction.

**4. Foundation Degree**

A Foundation Degree will be awarded to a student who has successfully completed a minimum of 240 credits, including at least 120 credits at Level 5 or above.

If the student's aggregate mark across all modules is 70% or above, the Foundation Degree will be awarded with Distinction.

If the student's aggregate mark across all modules is between 60% and 69%, the Foundation Degree will be awarded with Merit.

All modules at Levels 4 and 5 count towards the award of a Merit or Distinction.

**5. Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)**

A Diploma of Higher Education may be awarded to:

• a student who is registered for the award of a Diploma of Higher Education and has successfully completed 240 credits, including at least 120 credits at Level 5 or above; or

• a student who has successfully completed 240 credits, including at least 120 credits at Level 5 or above, in a Degree or Honours Degree programme on which s/he is not continuing.

If the aggregate of the student's best 120 credits at Level 5 or above falling within the programme specification (subject to any core/pre-requisite requirements) is 70% or above, the DipHE will be awarded with Distinction.

The above award criteria can also be used for the award of Diploma in Professional Studies, if that is the qualification approved in the definitive award documentation.

**6. Degree (without Honours)**

A student registered for a Degree is required successfully to complete 320 credits, including 80 credits at Level 6 and 120 further credits at Level 5 or above.

The degree is not classified but a Degree with Commendation will be awarded to a student who achieves an aggregate percentage mark of 60% or above and a Degree with Distinction will be awarded to a student who achieves an aggregate percentage mark of 70% or above.

The aggregate percentage mark will be calculated using the weightings:

Levels 4 : 5 : 6 will be weighted 1 : 3 : 6

The Level 4 aggregate mark is calculated using the highest module marks totalling 80 credits. Where modules are arranged in such a way that the 80 credits of 'highest module marks' cannot be identified unequivocally, the level 4 aggregate mark calculation should take into account as close to 80 credits as possible, depending on the module structure.

The Level 4 aggregate mark will contribute to the aggregate for the calculation of the classification of the degree only.

A student who is awarded a degree having followed an ordinary degree route may apply to 'top-up' to an Honours Degree

**7. Honours Degree**

An Honours Degree will be awarded to a student who has passed 360 credits (or 480 credits in some programmes, as specified in the definitive programme

documentation), including at least 120 credits at Level 6, and a further 120 credits at Level 5 or above, and met any subject specific requirements for the award.

Classification will be based initially on the aggregate percentage mark.

Honours degree: Levels 4 : 5 : 6 will be weighted 1 : 3 : 6.

The Level 4 aggregate mark is calculated using the highest module marks totalling 80 credits. Where modules are arranged in such a way that the 80 credits of 'highest module marks' cannot be identified unequivocally, the level 4 aggregate mark calculation should take into account as close to 80 credits as possible, depending on the module structure.

If the student's aggregate percentage mark falls within the boundaries of the classifications defined below, s/he is entitled to that award.
First Class Honours 70% or above
Second Class Honours, Upper Division 60%-69%
Second Class Honours, Lower Division 50%-59%
Third Class Honours 40%-49%

If the aggregate percentage achieved by a candidate is not more than 3.0 percentage points below a classification band, the Board must invoke the following alternative classification methods:

- Level 6 aggregate: The Award Assessment Board will award an Honours Degree with the higher classification to a student whose aggregate percentage is not more than 3.0 percentage points below the next classification band provided that the student's aggregate percentage at Level 6 is in the higher classification band.

- Module profile: The Award Assessment Board will award an Honours Degree with the higher classification to a student whose aggregate percentage is not more than 3.0 percentage points below the next classification band, provided that more than half of the student's Level 5 and 6 credits are in the higher classification band. Each Level 6 credit is double weighted (compared with a Level 5 credit) for this purpose.

Where the module profile is based on Level 6 performance only, a student whose aggregate percentage is not more than 3.0 percentage points below the next classification band will be required to have achieved more than half of the Level 6

credits in the higher classification band in order to be awarded an Honours Degree with the higher classification.

9. Where a student has gained credits from another approved institution of higher education, in the UK or overseas, or through other APEL routes, the degree calculation will follow the agreement made at the time at which those credits were accepted.

This agreement will be either to award actual marks from such credits, or to assign credit without marks.

Where marks are permitted on entry, they will be used to calculate the final aggregate percentage in the proportions shown in these regulations.

Where marks are not permitted on entry, then the proportion of the degree calculation assigned to the level of study for which marks are absent will be assigned to the next highest level of study.

**DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The size of modules at all academic levels will be 20 credits. The use of double modules for substantial pieces of project work, dissertations, etc. is permitted. Level 4 and level 5 modules should not normally exceed 40 credits. Care should be taken not to invite difficulties in meetings of the programme board of examiners by setting module sizes in such a way that minor failure in a single module would have an unduly profound impact on the student's final award.
The sequence of delivery of a part time programme requires lower level modules to be completed prior to higher level modules, or concurrently.

Variations from this general guidance is permitted if an exceptional to regulations has been approved

**Aegrotat Awards**

Every South Devon College award shall be available as an aegrotat award to be made at the discretion of the Award Board in cases where serious physical or mental illness or other compassionate circumstances have affected a student's attendance and/or attainment. Aegrotat awards are ungraded / unclassified.

**Posthumous Awards**

South Devon College may grant awards to deceased students, who had before they died, completed all the required modules and assessment (examinations and/or coursework) and had fully met the approved criteria for the award. South Devon College shall also have discretion, on the recommendation of the relevant board of examiners, to grant the award to deceased students who had not completed all the required modules and assessment (examinations and/or coursework) nor fully met the approved criteria for the award. The certificate in respect of the qualification awarded shall bear a date earlier than that of the candidate's death and shall be sent to the next of kin as soon as possible after the grant of the award.

**Honorary Awards**

South Devon College may award Honorary Awards up to the level of permission granted by the Privy Council or OfS. In addition, a Honoray Fellow of South Devon College may be awarded. Applications for Honorary Awards should be made Honorary Awards Process and will be considered by the Honorary Awards Committee.

## A1.3 Validation

### Planning and Development

Curriculum planning and development is reviewed annually within each curriculum area. Each curriculum area produces a Self-Evaluation Document that provides the College with a comprehensive and focused analysis that identifies areas of potential growth and reduction and also facilitates curriculum development and enhancement. It provides valid and reliable evidence to inform the College validation cycle and business planning schedule which in turn supports the strategic management of Higher Education.

- Higher Education Academic will receive an update on the progress made in curriculum development at each meeting.
- It is not expected that programmes will be added to the Business Planning Schedule prior to the grant of outline planning permission.
- In considering listings for new programme proposals, the HE Curriculum Development Group will ensure that proposals align with the College's HE strategic aims and ambitions.

## A1.4 Development and closure process

The development of HE Programmes and awards at South Devon College requires progression through three stages of development and approval.

All definitions and operational matters are contained in the College's 'Curriculum Development and Approval Procedure'.

Higher Education Academic Board will provide indicative content for all the above and will approve templates and guidance for completing the documentation. These documents can be found on the HE Moodle site. The guidelines will be reviewed regularly to ensure their currency and that they meet the expectations of all relevant external partners including the QAA Quality Code, the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), the foundation and honours degree benchmarks and the Framework for HE Qualifications (FHEQ).

### Withdrawal of validation/programme closure

The HE Strategy Group may decide the withdrawal of programme approval if it has evidence that the programme is no longer meeting recruitment levels.

Programme closures may be initiated by Higher Education Academic Board as a result of quality and standards issues.

Where a programme is closed to further recruitment for any reason, South Devon College will ensure that adequate standards and the learning experience are maintained for any students remaining on the programme or that students are enabled to transfer to a suitable alternative programme at South Devon College or elsewhere.

**Amendments**

Major and minor amendments are carried out as defined in the 'Curriculum Development and Approval Procedure' of South Devon College's Academic Policies and Procedures.

**Revalidations**

Quinquennial Programme re-validations are carried out:

- To consider the validity, currency and effectiveness of the programme
- To ascertain whether any action identified from external examiners' reports has been considered fully and appropriately implemented
- To consider proposals for changes in the validated programme
- To identify any areas of good practice for wider dissemination within South Devon College
- To identify any issues requiring wider consideration.

All validated programmes will be subject to revalidation during the academic year prior to the expiry of their validation. Revalidation may be required at other times if the content of a programme is to undergo such fundamental change that a Major Amendment process would be inappropriate.

## A1.5 Certification of Awards and Supplementary Certification

**Certificate of Award**

The Certificate of Award granted under the College's Regulations will record:

- the name of South Devon College
- the student's full name
- the award
- the title of the programme
- an approved endorsement, where appropriate.

The certificate will bear the signature of the Principal and the Academic Registrar and will be prepared by the HE Faculty Office.

A student who has lost a certificate of award should contact the HE Faculty Office for the appropriate form of application for a duplicate.

**Transcript**

A Transcript will be issued to all students registered on College HE programmes.

The Transcript will indicate:
- the student's full name
- the academic year of study to which the transcript refers and date of issue
- the elements of study, with details of level and mark/grade achieved together with the credit points awarded.

The Transcript should bear the official South Devon College name and watermark.

The Transcript will incorporate a brief explanation of the College's Credit system and may be used to negotiate admission with credit to another programme of study either within the College or at another institution.

Transcripts will be produced by the HE Faculty Office.

Official (historical) transcripts are produced by the HE Faculty Office for former students and bear the official office stamp and signature of the officer who produced the document.

**Prize certificates**

A certificate will be issued to any student who has been awarded an academic prize.

The certificate will indicate:
- the student's full name
- the name of the prize
- the title of the student's programme, if appropriate.

Prize certificates will be produced by the HE Faculty Office.

Portfolio of Awards

The Following Awards may be issued by South Devon College, and in some cases subject to approval by the Office for Students

- Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)

- Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma in cases where South Devon College has permission under a licencing agreement with Pearson
- Foundation Degree (FdA/FdSc/FdEng)
- Bachelor's Degree without Honours
- Bachelors' Degree with Honours

## REVISION HISTORY

| Ver | Date | Author | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | June 17 | A Wilson | Conception |
| 2.0 | May 19 | A Wilson | Updated to include L6 Awards and Honorary Awards |

## APPROVAL

| Ver | Committee | Date Approved | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | AIDB | June 17 | Approved |
| 2.0 | AIDB | July 19 | Approved |