

Academic Programme Specification

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What are Programme Specifications?

Programme specifications are principally used to help students to understand:

- The teaching and learning methods that enable their intended learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- The assessment methods that enable achievement to be demonstrated;**
- And the relationship of the programme and its study elements to the qualifications framework and to any subsequent professional qualification or career path.**

Why Write Programme Specifications?

The introduction of programme specifications was first mooted in the Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (the Dearing Report, 1997) because of their potential importance in providing clear information to students to enable them to make informed choices about their learning, both at the application stage and during a programme of study. Programme specifications can arguably help students to take responsibility for their learning: **“A good programme specification will improve student understanding of how and when learning occurs, and of what is being learned, and thereby inform reflection upon personal learning, performance and achievement, and subsequent planning for educational and career development”**.

Who Should Write Programme Specifications?

Producing a programme specification is **an academic, rather than an administrative activity** . Therefore, and in line with QAA guidance, it is advised that programme specifications should principally be written by the programme organiser or a member of the programme team.

The QAA Guidelines for preparing programme specifications

- As a source of information for students and prospective students seeking an understanding of a programme**
- By institutions and teaching teams, to promote discussion and reflection on new and existing programmes and to ensure that there is a common understanding about the aims and intended learning outcomes for the programme. Programme specifications enable institutions to satisfy themselves that the designers of programmes are clear about their intended outcomes, and that these outcomes can be achieved and demonstrated. Programme specifications serve as a reference point for internal review and monitoring of the performance of a programme. They can also provide the necessary core programme documentation as a source of information for internal and external reviewers and external examiners , who need to understand the aims and intended learning outcomes of programmes**

The QAA Guidelines For Preparing Programme Specifications

- As a source of information for employers , particularly about the skills and other transferable intellectual abilities developed by the programme**
- By professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), who accredit HE programmes that can lead to entry to a profession or other regulated occupation. Programme specifications should identify those aspects of the programme that are designed to meet the requirements of the relevant body**
- As a basis for gaining feedback from students or recent graduates on the extent to which they perceived that the opportunities for learning were successful in promoting the intended outcomes.**