

# Sussex Curriculum Framework

*This is our working Curriculum Framework.*

*It is in a consultation phase to allow courses to contextualise it in their disciplines.*

*We welcome feedback to improve clarity and support you using it in practice.*

*Please provide feedback to [curriculumreimagined@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:curriculumreimagined@sussex.ac.uk)*

## Statement of Intent

The Sussex Curriculum Framework bridges the gap between high level strategic direction and operational implementation across the institution in a period of transition. This framework gives an overview of our guiding principles for our curriculum shape, and architecture, linking to the operational mechanisms that enable the delivery of education.

The Sussex Curriculum Framework aligns practices across the university with the institutional strategy, academic regulations, operational systems, and in relation to the external regulatory landscape.

This is a placeholder, communicating where we are now, and the direction of Curriculum Reimagined. As the Institution develops a new strategy, and Curriculum Reimagined continues this document will develop.

The Curriculum Framework is distinct from the current Academic Framework which gives us the operational detail. Currently, both frameworks work in tandem, with the Curriculum Framework laying out our approach to education at Sussex, while the Academic Framework, Exams and Assessment Regulations and Educational policies establish how we implement our approach (Figure 1).

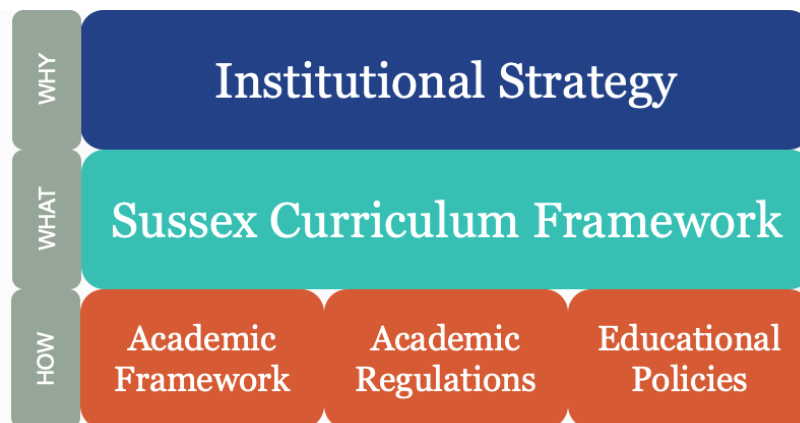


Figure 1. A schematic of the distinct purposes of our strategic, framework and regulatory documents.

Why do we need a Curriculum Framework now?

In a period of transition, it is important to provide a clear articulation, and a shared language for; overarching pedagogical principles, curriculum design and delivery. The

Curriculum Framework will act as a reference point for Curriculum Reimagined and for ongoing institutional development to:

- Communicate the structure of courses, modes of teaching and assessment, and principles for designing and delivering curriculum at Sussex.
- Support and inform course and module design, validation, annual portfolio and course review and associated change implementation.
- Support clarity and streamlining of underlying curriculum architecture (size and type of modules and courses).

The Curriculum Framework is expected to be implemented at module, course and institutional level.

## Introduction

The University of Sussex was founded in the 1960s, and the architect Sir Basil Spence designed the first seven buildings on campus in a town shape around a grassy plain. This created a new community based on knowledge generation and sharing, internationalisation and interdisciplinarity within the South Downs landscape. Much has changed in the intervening years, particularly through the expansion of our teaching and learning spaces, and the increasing heterogeneity of our student population.

Curriculum Reimagined, draws on the University's unique heritage, to rethink interdisciplinarity, and address the issues of today. The core mission is to refresh and repair our underpinning curriculum structures and processes; revise Sussex choice to provide a distinctive, interdisciplinary offer, and to complement our core disciplines; and to develop inclusive, rigorous and meaningful modes of assessment, together with a fairer and more workable assessment and feedback cycle.

This Curriculum Framework articulates our current priorities, and indicates future ambitions. The framework guides the implementation of our new education strategy, while retaining institutional memory and continuity, and supports transformative, high-quality education for our students.

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## Overall Taught Educational offer

Sussex offers; apprenticeship, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes (referred to as courses). The majority of courses are delivered via a campus-based and in-person approach, over two academic semesters (autumn and spring). Online Distant Learning (ODL) programmes are offered with our partner Boundless.

### Undergraduate Degree Programmes/Courses

Our undergraduate courses are campus-based and in-person. These are 360 credit courses offered over three years or stages, with 120 credits in year or stage in units of 15 credits.

Single Honours degrees are based in a home department and offer a specific disciplinary focus.

Joint degrees combine two disciplines, either in the same group of close cognate departments or cross faculty. These are typically represented in degree titles as X ‘and’ Y.

Minors and Majors can exist for undergraduate courses and represent two distinct components of a degree. A ‘minor programme’ or ‘minor’ is a series of cohesive modules that allow students to study subjects outside their main discipline as a minor pathway (90 credits see [Academic Framework](#)). The ‘major’ reflects the main focus of the course (270) credits. These are typically reflected in degree titles as X ‘with’ Y.

Undergraduate course cohorts, operate at the Senate threshold of a minimum of 30 students. With modules at a minimum of 10 students. Joints are clustered in terms of threshold numbers such all joints in one subject are counted together.

Undergraduate degrees are arranged into modules that depending on the course are taught as core and optional modules in the autumn and spring semester.

All undergraduate single honours students at Sussex will have elective provision in their syllabus (i.e., one 15 credit module per semester may be outside of the student’s main discipline).<sup>1</sup> Electives can be connected through a pathway following the same or cognate path through two years of study.

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<sup>1</sup> Professional Strategy and Regulatory Bodies and entry requirements permitting. Where students do not have elective or minor provision in their syllabus, interdisciplinary learning will be emphasised-in core modules and course options where applicable.

Electives are arranged in a thematic manner e.g. sustainability to help students select modules. Elective themes are interdisciplinary, both in terms of subjects covered between different modules and the teaching within individual modules. Electives are cross faculty in their nature (this is distinct from any main course optionality). A small number of elective themes are comprised of modules from a single discipline, for example languages and where popular minor programmes already exist (e.g., Psychology, Business and Management).

Table 1. Diagram of the elective offer in the context of the undergraduate degrees.

Year	Core modules Semester 1	Elective module Semester 1	Core modules Semester 2	Elective module Semester 2
Level 4/ Stage 1	15 or 30 credit course modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually core</li> <li>45 credits total</li> </ul>	15 credits- elective module	15 or 30 credit course modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually core</li> <li>45 credits total</li> </ul>	15 credits- elective module
Level 5/ Stage 2 DETSY <sup>2</sup> / V&E <sup>3</sup>	15 or 30 credit course modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>core and options</li> <li>45 credits total</li> </ul>	15 credits- elective module	15 or 30 credit course modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>core and options</li> <li>45 credits total</li> </ul>	15 credits- elective module
Level 6/ Stage 3/ returners from Year abroad	15 or 30 credit course modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually with a final project or dissertation element</li> <li>60 credits total</li> </ul>		15 or 30 credit course modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually with a final project or dissertation element</li> <li>60 credits total</li> </ul>	

The table above shows the elective offer where either electives or elective pathway can be part of the curriculum. This enables electives to be timetabled separately from the core offer, which provides capacity to offer choice across faculties.

Note: some courses have long thin or 45 credit combination. Three modules per semester is the recommended pattern.

<sup>2</sup> Direct Entry to Second Year (DETSY)

<sup>3</sup> Visiting and Exchange (V&E)

## Postgraduate Degree Programmes/Courses

In-person post graduate taught courses are typically taught over one year or stage, with a part time option. They are comprised of 120 credits in total, often taught over core and optional modules in the autumn and spring semester with a project or dissertation. The project or dissertation is ideally supported over the whole of the period of registration, with workshops (e.g. ethics) to support development in autumn and spring, and are written up after the other modules are complete. Postgraduate courses are typically focused towards specific career or academic specialisms, and/or curriculum innovation.

Postgraduate taught in-person courses have a Senate threshold of a minimum of 15 students.

Online Distance Learning post graduate taught courses are currently delivered in partnership with Boundless Learning. These have a different credit and timetabling structure, and this mode of learning is distinct from in-person modes. They enable us to build on our on-campus strengths and deliver to different students, with a different modality.

The new strategy will enable a review and articulation of our online, remote and off campus portfolio, and underpin a clear, select range of diverse and non-standard provision.

## Teaching and Learning

On campus learning combines in-person contact time and digitally supported educational resources, library texts and collections, and independent study to meet student needs and ensure an inclusive education. These are enabled through a virtual learning environment (Canvas). Sussex works with several transnational education partnerships to provide a cohesive educational offer.

**In-person teaching:** Sussex continues to offer a campus-based, in-person educational offer as our primary mode. This includes and is supplemented by work placements, field trips, study abroad and internationalisation experiences.

In-person teaching and contact time is supported through the Canvas learning environment, module templates, reading lists, and recorded module materials. Clear expectations are provided for staff and to students for attendance at in-person sessions, and for the adoption of our [Recording of Teaching policy](#).

**Online remote or distance teaching** Sussex has approved a small but growing portfolio of online distance learning and remote education. This will continue where it enhances and builds on the campus offer, there is good evidence for its delivery, and where academic staff demonstrate proficiency in online teaching, have access to appropriate technology and if their course material is suitable for online delivery.

The university is investing in the tools required to enable further hybrid modes in future and deliver Blended Learning at scale as well as an evidence-based process to evaluate new tools.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sussex will align with Office of Students definitions for Blended Learning and Hybrid Learning:

**Blended learning** is teaching and learning that combines in-person delivery and delivery in a digital environment. **Hybrid learning** is teaching and learning activities which involve two modalities at the

Institutional features of the core offer

Study abroad and placements are central to our provision and most undergraduate degrees are offered with a year abroad or placement year option, that extends study over four years.

All taught provision is supported by [Careers service](#) and the [World Readiness Strategy](#) whether this is through embedded elements in their core degree, a placement year, or as an additional activity.

All taught provision is supported by our [Internationalisation at Home](#) and [Study Abroad services](#), whether this is embedded in the core degree or additional.

All taught provision is underpinned by the [Spirit of Sussex Award](#)

Nonstandard provision

We have diversity of provision including [Online Distance Learning \(ODL\)](#), TransNational Education (TNE), Continuing Professional Development (CPD), apprenticeships, open courses, summer schools, English language pre-sessionals and English Language for Academic Study (ELAS).

The new strategy will identify future delivery models, strategic direction and clarity about our approach to this provision.

## Principles and Approaches to our curriculum:

### Curriculum Design

Three guiding principles will be adopted in the design, delivery, and evaluation of degree programmes at Sussex.

Principle 1. Inclusive and Student Centered.

Principle 2. Cohesive and Connected

Principle 3. Applied and Relevant

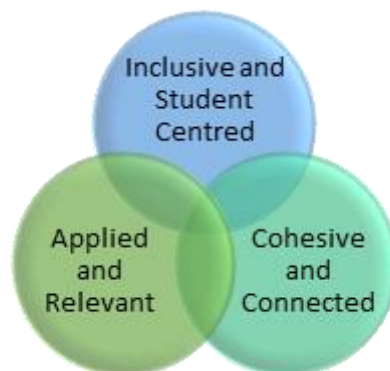


Figure 2. The Three Sussex Curriculum Principles

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same time. For example, when a lecture is delivered live in a room on campus and simultaneously live-streamed for students off-campus.

## Principle 1. Inclusive and student-centered.

The University of Sussex aims to achieve equality of access, opportunity and outcomes for all our applicants and students. Our Inclusive Sussex Strategy sets out our approach to achieving these aims across all aspects of university life. Key to this is ensuring all our curricula and assessments are inclusive and student-centred by design, and that students are given accessible opportunities to explore their ideas, interests and preferences within their learning.

Inclusive and student-centered curricula will be achieved by:

1.1 Providing a learning experience that reflects a diversity of knowledges, ideas and backgrounds, helping students to connect with, and see themselves reflected in, their field of study.

1.2 Ensuring material that supports learning and assessment is offered in accessible formats.

1.3 Providing (where practicable) supported flexibility and optionality in assessment modes and formats to enable students to take ownership of their learning.

1.4 Facilitating a smooth and supportive journey for students as they transition into, progress through, and graduate from university.

1.5 Providing clear and accessible feedback mechanisms on curricula, fostering a culture of critical reflection for staff and students with regards to the ways in which we teach and learn.

1.6 Aligning our inclusive and student-centered curricula to the University's [Access and Participation Plan \(APP\)](#).

1.7 Ensuring students are supported to engage with curriculum development and evaluation, e.g. via our [Connector Programme](#).

## Principle 2. Cohesive and connected.

The University of Sussex will provide cohesive and connected curricula, where students feel in control of their learning development, continually building upon previous academic experiences. At the point of graduation, students will have acquired expertise in their field of study and a solid skillset to support them in life beyond the course.

Cohesive and connected curricula will be achieved by:

2.1 Ensuring a whole curriculum approach to course design so that learning and assessment is scaffolded and appropriately paced, allowing students to develop, build on and apply knowledge and skills.

2.2 Mapping assessments across a course and explaining to students the requirements of, and rationale for, assessments throughout their learning journey.

2.3 Ensuring that learning and assessment requirements are clearly and consistently communicated via our Canvas learning platform. This includes the use of module templates and embedded reading lists.

2.4 Engaging students in reflecting on their feedback, both within and between modules, so that they develop self-regulatory practices.

2.5 Creating a sense of belonging within modules, courses and departments, and by the selection of shared interests through elective themes and extra-curricular activities.

2.6 Designing curricula that promote connections across and outside the campus, locally and globally.

[Case Study: Digital Practice Within Curriculum Design](#)

[Case study: Centering the Student Voice in Module Content and Design](#)

[Case study: Teaching Maths Through High-Interest Problems](#)

Principle 3. Applied and relevant.

Aligned with the University's [World Readiness and Employability Strategy](#) and Sustainability Strategy, students at Sussex will study curricula that is pertinent to global developments, issues and events. Students will establish connections with communities and organizations beyond the university, recognize the significance of their university learning in post-graduation life, and be well-equipped to make informed career decisions.

Applied and relevant curricula will be achieved by:

3.1 Designing curricula that are informed by up-to-date research and with new and emerging ideas and concepts.

3.2 Developing curricula that prioritise assessment for learning and promote, where possible, opportunities for applied, practice-based learning.

3.3 Using authentic assessments to develop knowledge and skills which students can connect to the real world.

3.4 Embedding employability skills across the curriculum, supporting students to identify skills and career goals that will help them to navigate the job market and develop world-readiness.

3.5 Building students' core academic skills and digital literacy so that they become confident, engaged, and proactive learners.

3.6 Providing international experiences in ways that are accessible, flexible, inclusive, and sustainable. For example, through global mobility initiatives, such as [Junior Year Abroad programmes](#) and [Summer School](#), Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and [Sussex Writes](#).

3.7 Providing all students with the opportunity to take modules with a sustainability focus and engage in enhanced opportunities that foster creativity, innovation, and critical thinking, in alignment with our [Sustainable Sussex Strategy](#), to solve social, cultural, scientific and sustainability issues in the world.

3.8 Ensuring, through annual course review processes, that the curriculum is agile and reflects the needs of students and employers.

[Case Study: Collaborative Online International Learning \(COIL\)](#)



## [Sustainability Curriculum by Schools](#)

Academic Framework (information below in concertina)

The [Academic Framework](#) sets out the criteria and rules for programmes leading to awards at the University of Sussex. The processes for validation, including criteria for approval, are set out in documents published by [Academic Quality and Partnerships](#) (AQP). Information about progressing through courses can currently be found in the handbook for the [Examination and Assessments Regulation](#) (EAR) Committee. Full details on credits, module types, and programme structures are explained in our [Academic Framework](#).

Quality Assurance (Information below in concertina)

Processes are designed to assure the educational offer at Sussex complies with the expected quality and standards from the Office for Students conditions. This involves ensuring through the course lifecycle a series of robust measures. These include validation, through annual review, periodic review and external examiner schemes. They ensure provision for students is that of quality, with reliable standards, and positive outcomes for all students ([Office for Students](#)). These processes ensure the sustainability of courses within the Higher Education market, up-to-date alignment with the sector regulatory landscape, compliance with regulatory frameworks, and the enablement of compliant yet responsive and effective course change and review led by a balanced input of data, student voice and pedagogical innovation.

Quality assurance is further informed by and informs quality enhancement through the close working relationship between Academic Quality and Partnerships (AQP) and Educational Enhancement (EE). We will develop a structured programme of curriculum design through workshops led by Sussex's Academic Developers. Both EE and AQP provide collaborative support for Schools proposing new provision through Portfolio Approvals Committee (PAC) process by supporting validation, the annual course review process and the implementation of changes from course action planning, periodic review and revalidation.