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Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards

Recommendation

The Board/Committee is asked to consider the Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards.

Executive Summary

The attached paper presents the proposed Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards (PFNA), which seeks to ensure a consistent approach to design resulting in programmes which contribute directly to the Northumbria Corporate Strategy and which produce successful students exhibiting a set of recognisable Northumbria Graduate characteristics.

PFNA articulates the alignment of the design process to the Corporate Strategy and identifies key 'process' considerations for programme design, including research rich learning and employability, as well as establishing the common aim of the development of the Northumbria Graduate.

An initial draft of PFNA was circulated via the web in November 2015, and, following consultations across faculties has been revised as per the attached paper. Revisions have taken place in respect of semesterisation, option choices and design of top-up programmes and completion pathways. Further detail has been added to the section relating to the Modular framework to provide clarity re. structural and title considerations.

Corporate Strategy 2013-18 Strategic Outcomes, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Business Outcomes supported by the information or proposal in this item

Notes to aid completion:

As indicated above, the paper seeks to align the programme design process with the Corporate Strategy, particularly in the development of research rich learning within programmes and the alignment to the Northumbria Employment and Enterprise Plan.

Corporate Risk(s) and other core implications arising from the business

Northumbria will undergo QAA Institutional Review in 2016/17. PFNA has been produced to assure compliance with relevant sections of the UK Quality Code, specifically Chapter B1, Programme design, development and approval.

<p>Consultation with/information/data provided by:</p> <p>Since publication of the initial draft, consultation has taken place within faculties through the ADs Learning and Teaching, and through open faculty meetings with the PVC Learning and Teaching and the Academic Quality office.</p>	<p>Consultation with the Finance and Planning Directorate (where relevant):</p>
<p>Prior and Onward Consideration/Reporting Following consideration at SLE, PFNA will be taken to Academic Board.</p>	
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Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards (PFNA)

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Corporate Strategy and vision 2025 - “Through excellent research, teaching and innovation we transform lives”	2
3	The Northumbria Graduate	4
4	Research Rich Learning	5
5	Employability	6
6	External Considerations	7
	6.1 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)	7
	6.2 Regulatory Frameworks	7
7	Learning Outcomes	8
8	Design and Development Process	10
	8.1 Initial Concept	10
	8.2 Design Process	11
	8.3 Principles and Policies	11
9	Modular Framework	12
	9.1 Part Time and ‘Non-standard’ Delivery Patterns	18
10	Education Provision with Others (Collaborative Partnerships)	19
	10.1 Northumbria Programmes delivered in partnership (Franchise)	19
	10.2 Partner Programme leading to a Northumbria Award (Validated)	19
	10.3 Articulation / Advanced Entry	19
	10.4 Design of Top-Up Programmes	20
	10.5 Entry to Completion Pathways	21
11	Principles of Approval	22
12	Measurement and Review	23
13	PFNA Design Schematic	25

Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards (PFNA)

1 Introduction

This document sets out a framework within which Northumbria programme design will occur in order to ensure that all Northumbria Programmes align with, and hence directly contribute to, the outcomes of the **Northumbria Corporate Strategy 2013-18 and Vision 2025**. The overall framework seeks to incorporate these outcomes into the concept of the Northumbria Graduate, and sees the development of the latter to be the common aim of all programmes. Disciplines specificity will occur in programme design through 'how' the aim is achieved in applying relevant Northumbria principles and policies and conformance to relevant subject benchmarks. The Northumbria principles and policies have all been developed in light of the above strategies and plans.

Section 2 of the framework identifies outcomes of the **Northumbria Corporate Strategy 2013-18** and seeks to ensure that **Vision 2025**, the **Student Learning and Experience Strategic Plan 2013-18** and the **Business and Engagement Strategic Plan 2013-18** are integral considerations in the design and delivery of all Northumbria programmes.

Section 3 of the framework considers how these outcomes may be articulated in the concept of the Northumbria Graduate.

Section 4 describes how the concept of **Research Rich Learning** will seek to enjoin students as partners in knowledge creation and facilitate student transition from learner to scholar, the development of the latter being relative to their level of study and captured in the concept of critical scholarship.

Section 5 considers how programme design contributes directly to the achievement of the **Northumbria Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Plan** through the embedding of the Employability Framework and providing the student with the opportunity to apply their developing critical scholarship to discipline practice.

Section 6 addresses external considerations for Northumbria programme design, including professional body requirements and regulatory frameworks.

Section 7 re-emphasises the importance of Learning Outcomes in programme design, and the relationship between programme and module outcomes. It introduces the requirement for learning outcomes to be established at each level of an undergraduate programme and at each award stage at Masters level.

Section 8 discusses the **design and development process**, with the intention of re-establishing programme design as a critical stage in the programme life cycle, with an equal focus given to the content of the programme and the resultant student journey. Reference is made to the role of University Policies and Principles in the design process. The expectation that programme design will be carried out as a team activity involving students and other stakeholders is also introduced.

Section 9 focuses on structural and delivery considerations within which design must take place, and emphasises the design of learning opportunities in the context of agreed programme policies in order that programme and level outcomes may be demonstrably delivered along with those at module level.



Section 10 identifies considerations of PFNA for collaborative activity, and presents approaches to the design of top-up degrees and completion pathways.

Section 11 presents considerations to be taken at the approval stage, the composition of an approval panel and the documentation to be provided to aid the approval process. Finally, section 12 considers the relationship between the design, approval and review processes, in order to ensure that there is strategic alignment between these different but related stages throughout the programme life cycle.

2 Corporate Strategy and vision 2025 - “Through excellent research, teaching and innovation we transform lives”

The University Corporate Strategy articulates its mission as:

“Northumbria University creates and applies knowledge for the benefit of individuals, communities and the economy. Through excellent research, teaching and innovation we transform lives, making a powerful contribution to cultural and economic development and regeneration locally, nationally and globally, Northumbria University, Corporate Strategy 2013-18”

In addition, Vision 2025 captures the real opportunity that the University has to transform itself, bringing benefits for students, staff and other stakeholders. Bringing together “academic excellence and professional, business and real-world focus” in a distinctive offering, students will benefit from leading-edge teaching and research, a globalised student experience and outstanding graduate employment prospects.

The Corporate Strategy 2013-18 is the first phase of the implementation of Vision 2025, and is the “route map for the next five years”; associated with the strategy are a number of KPIs including average undergraduate entry points; number of leavers in graduate employment and further study; and proportion of students who express overall satisfaction in the National Student Survey (NSS).

The latter two KPIs above represent outcomes from the ‘transformation’ that we seek to achieve from a student journey, and as, arguably, the programme of study is the primary vehicle of that journey, the programme design process should be undertaken with a view to delivering the desired corporate strategy outcomes. The success of that transformation will, in turn, enable the achievement of the first of the KPIs above, namely to attract high calibre students into the University, thus enabling programme design to contribute directly to a range of University Corporate objectives.

Programme design falls within the remit of the PVC Learning and Teaching, and therefore has a direct impact upon the objectives associated with the Student Learning and Experience Strategic Plan 2013-18, including:

- Increase the proportion of good degrees
- Improve retention, progression and completion rates for students
- Improve module and programme student satisfaction scores
- Improve overall ranking as measured by the International Student Barometer, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, NSS and League Tables.

These are further articulated as Business Outcomes which include to:

- Improve student satisfaction, as measured by the NSS, by developing and embedding University, Faculty and Service satisfaction improvement plans
- Ensure all learning is informed by research
- Implement technology enhanced learning (TEL) solutions that enhance the on-campus student experience
- Improve support for student retention and progression
- Implement a plan to improve the proportion of students achieving good honours
- Develop Northumbria students into global graduates

Further, the **Business and Engagement Strategic Plan** has an aim to:

- increase the proportion of graduates in professional employment and graduate further study and
- produce and implement a plan to increase student employability and enterprise

All of the above are influenced by the student's programme of study, and it is the aim of this document to ensure that programme design is integral to the strategic success of the University by ensuring that all of the above are considered within the design process, primarily through the principles and policies developed to support the outcomes but also within the operation of the design process itself.

The above are all encapsulated below which reflect the **Student Learning and Experience plan** within the corporate strategy, and provide the overall context within which programme design and delivery occurs and which this framework seeks to support:

- To support the **Corporate Strategy and the Student Learning and Experience Plan**, Northumbria curricula will: reflect contemporary knowledge and practice; be informed by global perspectives; nurture intellectual curiosity and independence; enable and develop critical academic skills; and prepare students to contribute positively and responsibly in a global society. This will be demonstrated and delivered by:
 - Currency and relevance in relation to the subject and programme being studied, as measured by subject benchmarks, QA processes and audits, professional body standards and contemporary and international research and / or professional practice.
 - Development in students of the critical, practical, academic study and information literacy skills to enable the full achievement of learning outcomes at the module and programme levels.
 - Inspiring and encouraging intellectual independence and creative curiosity, by constructively challenging students to engage meaningfully with the dynamic process of knowledge generation, and thereby take greater ownership of their learning



- Preparation of students for life beyond the university through the development of graduate skills (including preparation for employment), lifelong learning skills, ethical behaviour, global citizenship and responsibility, opportunities to participate in placement, and to study abroad.

3 The Northumbria Graduate

In order to meet the objectives of the corporate strategy and other plans mentioned above through programme design, it is helpful to articulate what the characteristics of a successful Northumbria Graduate would be.

A Northumbria graduate will:

- Be able to think independently, understand and justify their opinions, will recognise the need to challenge their own thinking, and the thinking of others
- Be able to apply their discipline and inquiry knowledge to complex problems in their discipline and its professional and industrial practice in order to identify appropriate solutions which are sustainable and justifiable.
- Value curiosity and collaboration as keystones in the creation of new knowledge and practice
- Be able to communicate effectively to diverse audiences utilising a range of formats and media
- Have the attitudes and skills to work constructively and sensitively in multi-cultural environments and teams and have an awareness of ethical considerations

Through the designed combination of excellent discipline knowledge, academic skills developed through research rich learning, and embedded employability activities, the 'Northumbria Graduate' defines the characteristics that students will demonstrate at the successful completion of their programme of study. As such all Northumbria programmes will adopt these characteristics as their primary aim.

As currently articulated, a Northumbria Graduate will be:

- Equipped with contemporary knowledge of theory, research and professional practice related to their programme of study.
- Able to utilise their knowledge through critical analysis to create new knowledge and / or innovative approaches to practise proportionate to their level of study.
- Equipped for employment, enterprise or further study through transferrable, lifelong learning, employability and research skills
- Culturally and ethically aware and equipped to contribute positively to a diverse and global community

These will represent the overall aims of a Northumbria programme, with learning outcomes (see below) more specifically articulating how each programme will seek to develop their students to the Northumbria Graduate.

4 Research Rich Learning

Vision 2025 sees Northumbria as a:

“Research-rich, business focused professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence.”

It also states that:

“The ability to create new knowledge is an integral part of being a University.”

The Student Learning and Experience Plan 2013-18 highlights “Academic Excellence through symbiotic research and learning ...” and “Partnership in Learning between staff and students at all stages...”

The link between research and the student learning experience therefore becomes crucial to achieving synergy between the work of staff and students, and to avoid the danger of seeing research and teaching as two separate components of University life. Taking the view of partnership articulated above, and accepting that knowledge creation is integral to University work, enjoining students as partners in knowledge creation will create the desired synergy and will clearly define the expectations of the Northumbria Learning Process and its subsequent outcomes.

Research rich learning (RRL) is the Northumbria approach within which programme design takes place. Its aim is to overtly establish the research / learning relationship, thereby to increase student engagement with a consequent improvement in academic achievement and to develop real partnerships within an academic community and to contribute directly to the development of employability. (The latter is strengthened where business is involved in framing and/or facilitating the research process).

‘Criticality’ in its various representations is widely acknowledged as a required outcome of undergraduate and postgraduate study and for Northumbria this will be encapsulated internally in the concept of ‘critical scholarship’. Critical Scholarship will be a required outcome of all Northumbria programmes and the development and application of critical scholarship to the discipline and / or its practice will guide the design and delivery of the learning process for all of our students for all of their time with the University. Within this overall approach, it is anticipated that staff expertise and discipline expectations and benchmarks will allow programmes to maintain and develop their own unique identities.

Northumbria programmes will therefore seek to develop Critical Scholarship through Research Rich Learning approaches as outlined in the document “A Framework for Research Rich Learning for Critical Scholarship.”

There are a range of established pedagogical approaches through which learning can be seen as ‘research rich’, e.g. Enquiry Based Learning, which develop critical scholarship and deliver the desired synergy between research and teaching and which importantly engage students fully as partners in the learning process. This framework does not seek to impose a particular pedagogy on programmes, but does require that programmes are designed and delivered to introduce and expose students, from the start of their programme, to the theory and practice of critical scholarship and academic research as the foundations for the production and creation of knowledge. Moreover, dependent on the discipline, this should take place using work related learning, in order to develop ‘application to practice’ as a key



outcome for the Northumbria Graduate. Ideally, such work related learning would occur through a placement opportunity, but can also be developed using industry partners to provide 'live' case studies etc.

Critical scholarship thus is both a process and outcome of Northumbria learning and each level of the programme will have clearly articulated outcomes which mark the development of the student against this outcome.

The approach will be embedded actively and consciously across the whole of the student journey, and as such has implications for the design of programmes and their learning opportunities, and for the expression of learning outcomes. (See section 6)

The approach will contribute directly to the achievement of strategic objectives whilst clearly benefitting students and is a major component of the Northumbria Programme Framework.

5 Employability

Employability is a key strand of the University Corporate Strategy, reflected by the existence of a strategic performance indicator for employment and further study.

Within programme design, consideration should be given as to how the programme itself is developing employability in its students, over and above the generic support provided by the university.

In practice, in adopting the development of the Northumbria graduate as the primary aim of all Northumbria programmes, many of the attributes associated with employability will be developed through the student journey on their programme, both through content and the research rich, practice based process of delivery.

Embedding the Employability Framework in programme design will contribute towards the development of the Northumbria Graduate and is a central feature of the **Employability and Enterprise Plan**. Based on the **Higher Education Academy's own 'Framework for Employability' published in 2013**, this document outlines a process to enable programme teams to develop a defined, consistent and comprehensive approach to employability in their subject areas. Three core 'Employability Principles' have been highlighted which all programmes must take into account in their planning. However, it is also important that programme teams take ownership of this process and are therefore required to make explicit, additional areas beyond these three principles, which they will then seek to address in practice with their students. Ultimately, this work will very much align and contribute towards the development of the Northumbria Graduate and is not something that should be viewed as additional or separate.

Without producing an exhaustive list of the component features of employability, these will typically include independent learning, intellectual curiosity (and hence a commitment to lifelong / further learning), team-working, cultural awareness and sensitivity, communication skills, analytical skills, self-awareness / reflection and a commitment to maintaining strong moral, ethical and professional values.

The **Employability and Enterprise Plan also** makes significant reference to opportunities to engage in work related learning. The modular framework encourages programme design teams to build in placement and study abroad opportunities to enhance employability (and demonstrably enhance the academic achievement of students) and' where practical, expects



students to have the opportunity to develop their criticality skills through engagement in inquiry related to the practice of the programme discipline(s).

Programme designers should reference the abilities of the Northumbria Graduate and the Northumbria Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Plan and Framework documents when reflecting on how the programme develops employability in its students.

6 External Considerations

6.1 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

Northumbria is rightly proud of its relationship with PSRBs, and indeed is constantly looking to strengthen those relationships through accreditation of its programmes and PSRB involvement in Programme Design.

A clear aim of this framework is to support students in their employability, and clearly accreditation or meeting the expectations / requirements of PSRBs is vitally important for students aspiring to certain career paths.

Where programmes are being developed which are subject to PSRB requirements, and / or PSRB accreditation is being sought, variations to the framework will be allowed where it is necessary to meet such requirements. Programmes should indicate potential variations at the proposal stage, and present full variation requirements with supporting evidence to **Academic Registry** for consideration prior to the formal validation of the programme. This is to confirm that the variations can be accommodated within Northumbria's academic regulations. The programme development team should also seek confirmation that the proposal meets the requirements of the PSRB following the latter's procedures. Where PSRB attendance at the validation event can facilitate this, or is required, the programme development team should consult with **Academic Registry** to discuss the particular arrangements.

6.2 Regulatory Frameworks

The Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards exists within the extant **national frameworks governing Higher Education**. At the time of writing the latter are encapsulated within the **UK Quality Code for Higher Education** and therefore programme design and delivery will take place in full compliance with the regulatory requirements of that code. This is largely covered in **part A of the code, Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards**, and will include overt consideration of:

- **The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications**
- **Higher Education Credit Frameworks**
- **Relevant Subject Benchmarks.**

Compliance to these, and to other frameworks required by the **UK Quality Code** will be a necessary and fundamental consideration of any approval process for a programme leading to a Northumbria Award.

Further considerations for the design process are set out in **Parts B and C of the UK quality code**, most obviously in **Chapter B1, Programme design, development and approval**. All **chapters of the Quality Code** however have implications for programme design and delivery,

and whereas Northumbria policies and quality assurance procedures are developed in light of the code, programme designers should be aware of the impact of their design and delivery decisions on meeting the expectations of the various chapters of the code.

7 Learning Outcomes

“Once the purpose of the programme has been established, programme design considers which intended learning outcomes are necessary to achieve that purpose and how students are enabled to achieve these. This takes into account the knowledge, understanding and skills which students are intended to gain, and the level of knowledge, understanding and skills which they are expected to have on entry to the programme. The mechanisms by which students demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the learning outcomes are also planned, as well as any formative assessment elements.” (UK Quality Code)

Section 3 above has discussed the development of the Northumbria Graduate as a fundamental aim of all Northumbria programmes. Within this however, programme differentiation will occur reflecting the nature of both the discipline and its target student body. Each programme at the design stage will answer the questions relating to knowledge, understanding and skills in determining the characteristics that make the programme unique and attractive to staff, students and employers, meet appropriate benchmarks and deliver the aspirations of the Northumbria Graduate. In so doing, attention will turn to the development of the particular learning outcomes that students successfully graduating from the programme will be able to demonstrate and thereby recognise their transformation to a Northumbria Graduate.

Further consideration of Chapter B1 of the UK quality code, particularly when taken in the context of the Research Rich Learning discussed in section 4 identifies

- that programme outcomes are expected to have been demonstrably achieved by successful students, and by implication therefore assessed. (Reference Northumbria Assessment and Feedback principles / policy)
- the concept of ‘change’ between qualifications at each level. As this change is demonstrated via the changing language of outcomes, arguably it relates directly to the development of the student in their transformational journey taken on their programme of study.

In short, there is a development process where the outcomes at each level would act as measurable staging posts to assure readiness for the next stage of the process. The concept of development is referenced within EBL in the work of Healey and Jenkins (2009) where

“...students are introduced to enquiry based learning at the beginning of their programme in order to stimulate intellectual growth and curiosity, this is then consolidated in the subsequent year and culminates with a capstone experience in their final year.”

As part of Northumbria programme design, outcomes will therefore be expressed for each different level of study which the student undertakes.



In an undergraduate honours degree therefore there will be outcomes for level 4 study, level 5 study with the final programme outcomes articulated at level 6.

In order to further support the concept of the continuing scholarly development of students on their learning journeys, outcomes will be expressed at each level in both content (knowledge and understanding) and process (intellectual and transferrable skills) terms.

For example, it is particularly important at level 4 that programme design ensures that all students at completion of level 4 are fully and equally prepared to engage with both the knowledge content of level 5 and the research rich learning process adopted. Also that the process outcomes associated with the research rich approach are fully assessed. (Higher education providers promote inclusive practices in learning and teaching. The learning opportunities offered provide every student with an equal opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes. **UK Quality Code, Chapter B, p10**).

In a postgraduate Masters programme, whilst there is no differentiation of level to inform the development of learning outcomes, where the design intention is to make named postgraduate certificate and diploma awards, separate qualification outcomes will be required for each award. Where the certificate and diploma awards are to be given through credit accumulation, a generic rather than named award title will be used.

For Masters programmes, the expectation is that there will be a progression point between the 'taught' and 'dissertation' stages of the programme, and that there will be specific learning outcomes which the student will have demonstrated before progression occurs.

Northumbria will continue to adopt a modularised approach within its programme design, and therefore module learning outcomes will remain a vitally important aspect of programme design. The programme and level outcomes confirm what a student has demonstrably achieved at their level progression or award stage. As achievement is gauged through module assessment, the relevant module outcomes, taken as a whole, must directly assess the student achievement of the level and programme outcomes (if a separate set of programme assessments are not to be developed). **(See also section 8, Design and Development Process)**

The introduction to **Chapter B1 of the UK Quality Code, Programme design, development and approval, states**

"UK higher education is based on the principle of the autonomy and responsibility of the degree-awarding body for the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of the programmes it offers and the qualifications and credit it awards."

Higher Education Review will contain a judgement on an Institution's management of the learning opportunities offered to its students, guided by the expectation that the programmes offered to students make available learning opportunities that enable the intended learning outcomes to be achieved.

The Northumbria design process will therefore overtly recognise the programme outcomes and ethos as reflecting the purpose for which the programme is being developed. Module outcomes, and associated learning opportunities, will be designed in relation to that overall purpose to deliver a coherent and enabling student experience. (This means that programme ethos and outcomes and associated learning and assessment philosophies are

drivers of the design process, rather than being the result of individual module approaches.) This approach will recognise the primacy of the student experience at the programme level in influencing the subsequent design of modules.

8 Design and Development Process

“Programme design, development and approval depend on reflection and critical self-assessment by individuals, groups and higher education providers. Designing a programme is a creative activity, which leads to an iterative process of development, depending on feedback from a range of sources, which may include other staff, students, employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. Programme approval involves a number of steps, but there is clarity for all parties involved about the point at which the degree-awarding body definitively approves a programme for delivery” (UK Quality Code, Chapter B1, p3)

Throughout the UK Quality Code, and the guidance provided for Higher Education Review, the ‘programme’ is seen as the primary focus through which evidence is provided / gathered when making judgements. The above section from Chapter B1 of the code, Programme Design, Development and Approval reinforces this by emphasising the importance of programme design as a deliberate and systematic process involving critical review, creativity and feedback.

Section 10 below provides further details of the approval process, and these are given in the context of the Single Approvals Framework (SAF) approved by Academic Board in xxxxxx. This framework identifies the governance arrangements related to programme approval, and this section aims to build upon these and identify how programme design might be undertaken within Northumbria.

8.1 Initial Concept

The initial idea for a new programme may arise from any number of sources, ranging from an individual member of staff to a formally constituted group created specifically to identify new programme development. Whatever the source, stage 1 of the SAF requires strategic approval of the proposed development, and as a minimum this will require the Faculty Executive to consider and approve the proposal to go forward to the design stage. In so doing, the Faculty Executive are confirming their support for the proposal in so far as it:

- Offers a strategic ‘fit’ to the University Corporate Strategy and / or the agreed Faculty Annual Plan
- Establishes a sustainable demand for the proposed programme which will meet the financial requirements of the University
- Offers a reputational value to the University
- Can be delivered within existing human and physical resource, or where this is not the case such resource can be identified and costed as part of the proposal consideration
- Offers low risk to the academic standards and positioning of the University.

Where the proposal involves the introduction of a new subject discipline, it is expected that the proposal will be considered and approved by the University Executive / Academic Board.

8.2 Design Process

Once the proposal is approved, the detailed programme design can proceed. The Faculty will determine an appropriate 'team' to undertake the design, and it is expected that students will be represented on this team. The precise composition of the team will be dependent on the particular proposal, but either through the composition or through wider consultation, it is expected that all stakeholders, particularly employers and PSRBs where applicable, will have provided feedback on the design. This will include consideration of the fit between programme philosophies and outcomes and those of contributing modules, the cohesiveness of the student journey and the consideration of the application of relevant university principles and policies as outlined below.

At an appropriate point within this design stage, relevant documentation should be submitted to stage 2 of SAF to ensure consistency with Northumbria Academic Quality requirements and to refine the business case.

NB. Reference has been made in **section 7 to Learning Outcomes**, and the importance of the relationship between modules and programmes, and that learning outcomes should be demonstrably achieved, and therefore be capable of being assessed. Assessment takes place at the modular level, and therefore the design aspiration would be that in assessing module outcomes, programme outcomes are also assessed. Without this, demonstration of programme outcomes will require additional assessment, burdening both staff and students. Part of the 'design team' consideration will therefore involve a clear articulation of how the achievement of module outcomes provides evidence for the demonstrable achievement of programme outcomes, and therefore the language used to express these two levels of outcome.

Current practice involves the generation of an outcomes matrix to demonstrate the relationship between module and programme. Within this framework such a matrix will not provide the required level of detail, and the new programme specification requires a clear articulation of how programme outcomes are achieved, either through one or more module assessments and / or as a separate process of assessment.

8.3 Principles and Policies

The **Business Outcomes Map produced as part of the Corporate Strategy 2013-18** highlights key stages in the University's transformational journey. To support these, principles and policies have been, or will be developed relating to key aspects of the student journey. These principles and policies, developed through the offices of the **relevant PVCs and DVC** are therefore a prime consideration in developing programme proposals, and as part of the detailed design process teams will be expected to consider how the principles and policies will be adopted and evidenced within their programme.

Current principles and policies include:

- Assessment and Feedback
- Employability
- Internationalisation
- Research Rich Learning
- Student Engagement
- Technology **Enhanced** Learning
- Timetabling Principles and Policy



NB These principles and policies are presented as factors which need to be taken account of during the design process. As such, the approvals process will seek to explore how they have been incorporated within the overall programme and module design, and therefore the extent to which students can be assured of these aspects of their student journey and/or subsequent outcomes.

Technology **Enabled** Learning (TEL) challenges programme designers to explore alternative / additional delivery mechanisms to support learning opportunities and its adoption aims:

- to maximise the 'added value' of staff / student contact time
- to contribute to development of Digital Literacy skills in students
- to facilitate ongoing student engagement with learning
- to facilitate self-evaluation of progress against outcomes

The choice of which aspects of TEL to adopt will depend on individual programmes, however it is expected that all programmes will adopt Electronic Submission and Feedback (ESAF), or alternative method of e-submission & feedback, as standard, except where exceptions have been approved.

They are contributory to, but separate from, the quality assurance processes which govern various aspects of the student journey and which seek to assure academic standards and/or conform to expectations set by relevant bodies, e.g. QAA, accrediting PSRBs. The extant Northumbria quality assurance procedures will apply to all Northumbria programmes, and these will only be modified through an approved variation order.

9 Modular Framework

Northumbria adopted a modular structure for its programmes in xxxxxx. The approach to programme structures and titles is given in the Modular Framework for Northumbria Awards (MFNA). As a result of a review in yyyy MFNA included the requirement for there to be a maximum of four ten point modules in a 120 point level or programme, Apart from this change, the modular structure of programmes has not been significantly reviewed since its introduction. This section of the Northumbria Design and Delivery Framework will replace MFNA as the definitive source of information on programme structures and delivery with effect from xxxxxx

- The basic module building block in Northumbria will be 20 points for undergraduate programmes and other module sizes will be in multiples of 20 points. For postgraduate programmes, module sizes will be multiples of 20 and 30 points. There is no upper limit to the size of modules, other than the requirements of semester based delivery outlined below, and the due consideration of the consequence of failure on a large module in relation to the /assessment Regulations for Northumbria Awards.
- *The first year of an undergraduate honours degree will be designed to ensure that all students on completion of their first year of studies are fully enabled to achieve the learning outcomes of their level 5 studies. To achieve this, the content of level 4 will be divided between providing the underpinning knowledge required for level 5 modules and an introduction to the skills required in the practice of Research Rich Learning for applied critical scholarship. The expectation therefore is that the knowledge content to be delivered at level 5 and the delivery and assessment methods employed, informed as they are by RRL, will drive the content and delivery of level 4.*



- The second year of an honours degree programme (level 5) should provide the facility for students to undertake semester long industrial placement or study abroad. Level 5 modules which are semester based will, arguably, facilitate the transfer in and out of such students given that discrete learning outcomes will have been specified for each module which may be mapped against the study abroad programme. Where programmes do not wish to adopt semester based module delivery, the design must articulate how semester long study abroad or placement will be facilitated such that level outcomes are achieved. The framework does not seek to impose how programmes will achieve this, as there may be several alternative approaches to this. Some of these include:
 - Direct accreditation of learning from modules studied abroad where mapping identifies this is feasible. Distance learning provision for semester 2 of the Northumbria programme to be undertaken alongside study abroad
 - Creation of a module(s) which address the programme rather than module learning outcomes not already covered by semester 1 assessment, to be completed during study abroad.
 - A hybrid solution involving elements of more than one approach
 - A customised solution for a specific programme / student

Note, such approaches may require assurance of the mapping of the study abroad and of the work produced

- Four year Programmes which have a year-long industrial placement or study abroad incorporated into their design do not need to make the provision described above.
- Programmes which intend to offer the semester long placement / study abroad at other levels in the programme must conform to the semester based module design described above.

Programmes which intend to offer advanced entry to a programme within a level (e.g. at the beginning of semester 2 of a programme) must also ensure that modules are semester based to facilitate such entry or have alternative plans for transferring students in and out as per those above.

- All Northumbria honours degree programmes will contain a 40 point project / dissertation at level 6 and Masters programme will contain a 60 point project / dissertation, as a culmination of the development of Northumbria students as independent learners and critical scholars through research rich learning. (See also design of top-up programmes and completion pathways)
- An Integrated Masters degree is, typically, a four year programme comprising 120 credits at each of levels 4,5,6 and 7. An Integrated Masters degree will normally contain a 40 point project / dissertation at level 7. Where students can exit from the Integrated Masters degree at level 6 with an Honours Degree, the level 6 structure and content, *if it is not to include a 40 point UG project / dissertation*, must assure that students who exit with an honours degree have met the learning outcomes normally delivered by a project / dissertation at level 6.

NB: Different faculties / programmes may have specific views on the nature of the project / dissertation, and the framework does not seek to remove the option to adopt the different types that already exist within Northumbria, or which may be developed in the future through standard approval procedures. The framework does however require that the size of the project / dissertation is as defined above and that the investigation addressing the project / dissertation topic is carried out and presented in a form which meets the expectations of an academic inquiry within research rich learning.

- Option choice can be an important aspect of a student journey, allowing students to specialise and differentiate themselves from other graduates. The decision to offer and/or approve options within a programme however is subject to:
 - The option(s) contributing positively to the learning outcomes of the programme
 - The programme being viable in its own right, that is the programme should not only be viable as a result of economies achieved by sharing options
 - There should be no option choice at level 4, no more than 40 points at level 5 and 80 points at level 6, and in all cases options must contribute to the achievement of the level and /or programme learning outcomes and will normally fall within the discipline of the programme.
 - The number of options offered within the above being dependent on recruitment to the programme

NB **Section C of the UK Quality Code, "Information about higher education provision"**, contains the expectation that "higher education providers make available valid, reliable useful and accessible information about their provision,"

Given the growing importance of this aspect of the code, where options are included in the programme structure, programme documentation must make clear how option choice and delivery is to be managed. If a diet of options is publicised, the expectation is that all publicised options will run, and that if a student chooses an option they will be able to study it.

Equally, the programme must remain financially viable within Northumbria expectations if all options are running.

- Pathways. The development of programmes utilising a 'core' with named pathways is an alternative to offering a free option choice. It is clearly a consideration for such developments that there is clear alignment between the 'core' and 'pathway' module learning outcomes and those of the generic programme and specific pathway learning outcomes. The requirements for a pathway are defined in the table below
- Joint and Major / Minor Awards. Joint (non-collaborative) awards are made where the programme of study is made up of an equal proportion of study as defined in the table below from two main subject disciplines. The joint programme will normally consist of two separately validated 'half programmes' but may also be a customised combination.

In a major /minor award, the student will study the proportions from the 'major' and 'minor' subject as indicated in the table below.

- Use of 'and' and 'with' in award titles. 'and' and 'with' are used in award titles where discrete subjects have been combined, i.e. 'and' denotes a joint degree and 'with' major and minor part subject combinations.
- Bracketed Award Titles. Brackets may only be used in an award title to indicate a branch specialism within a generic award, e.g. BSc (Hons) Anthropology (Biological Anthropology). Such an award title would be based on the inclusion of 60 credits from subject specialist modules across levels 5 and 6, or around one **quarter** of subject specialist modules at level 7.



And / With Pathways & Frameworks

Award Type	Example Title	Nature of level 4	Distribution of Level 5 & 6 credits	Focus of Dissertation	Design Consideration
Joint Hons AND	BSc (Hons) Counselling and Childhood	Level 4 must be design to prep students for each half	60 credits/ 60 credits spilt at both level s 5 & 6	Specifically design requiring equal focus on both half's of the award	Each half approved as distinct programme elements with specific Programme learning outcomes
<i>Level 7</i>			<i>60 credits / 60 credits split across taught element</i>	<i>As above</i>	<i>As above</i>
Major / Minor WITH	BSc(Hon) Business with HR	Level 4 designed to prepare for major minor requirements of level 5 & 6	80 credits / 40 credits across levels 5 & 6	Require focus on major area of study but can draw on aspect of minor for context	Programme Learning outcomes should reflect distribution of major minor subjects
<i>Level 7</i>			<i>80 credits / 40 credits across 120 taught credits</i>	<i>As above</i>	<i>As above</i>
Pathways	BSc (Hons) Business (computing)	Level designed to enable progression into level 5 & 6	60 credits of the pathway subject across 5 & 6 with a minimum of 20 credits at level 6	Free Choice but NOT included as an element of the 60 credit pathway modules	
<i>Level 7</i>			<i>30 credits of pathway with 120 taught element</i>	<i>As above</i>	
Framework Generic Title only no specific sub titles as this would constitute and / with or pathway as designated above	BSc (Hons) Health Care practice developme nt	Designed to enable transition into level 5 & 6	Generic Programme design cluster of related modules	None Related to students area of practice	Only considered for specific markets e.g. CPD / closed programmes Northumberland water / NHS
<i>Level 7</i>			<i>As above</i>	<i>As above</i>	<i>As above</i>

- Where modules are shared between programmes, there will be a designated ‘owner’ programme for which the module is primarily designed, and it is critical that all ‘sharing programmes’ must assure the alignment to their own programme outcomes is not compromised for the sake of efficiency, and on-going review should actively monitor the continuing suitability of the shared module in light of the aims and outcomes of specific programmes.

In either case, module changes will only be instigated by the ‘owning’ programme and will require the consent of all programme leaders of the programmes affected, and in giving consent the programme leaders are confirming the alignment of the module to their programme aims and approaches.

- Where programmes are ‘made up’ from a free choice within a framework, or where a programme has been put together to allow a student to ‘recover’ a qualification, e.g. **CATS**, then the title of the award should be generic to reflect the variable nature of the content. Specific named awards will only be granted where programme structures and learning outcomes have been agreed in advance of programme commencement.

This approach is designed to:

- bring a higher degree of consistency to the structures adopted by Northumbria programmes and, as a consequence, to the equivalence of student workloads
- ensure that undergraduate students are enabled to fully engage in the learning process and therefore to achieve their learning outcomes.
- facilitate the opportunity for semester long placements / study abroad for all students on all programmes
- allow late differentiation for students in preparation for their journey beyond their current qualification
- facilitate the delivery of the programmes via timetables which maximise student and staff satisfaction
- provide a consistent thread of academic development culminating in the Northumbria graduate as a critical scholar

The guidelines above provide the framework within which a programme structure is determined, i.e. the number and size of modules in a given level / programme. There is still a range of possible structures which can be accommodated within this framework, examples of which are given at appendix **xxx**.

- The pattern of delivery of a module is a further variable where this framework will provide guidance to be considered at the design stage.
- The Notional Student Workload (NSW) for a 20 point module is 200 hours, each of which should represent a learning opportunity for the student. The NSW will be made up of a combination of taught hours and guided independent learning.

For taught hours, each faculty will determine a limited number of delivery patterns which will apply, covering lectures, seminars, workshops, laboratory sessions, tutorials, supervision etc. Module delivery will be expected to comply with one of the patterns approved by the faculty.



- For the purpose of this framework, a learning opportunity is any activity undertaken by staff and/or students, utilising other resources where appropriate, as part of their NSW. The **UK Quality Code**, as identified in **section 6** of this framework views learning opportunities as enabling the achievement of learning outcomes.

The expectation therefore is that the design of individual learning opportunities within a module will be cognisant of the overall Notional Student Workload, and will contribute to the achievement of module and programme learning outcomes.

Within NSW, the concept of guided independent learning normally comprises the majority of NSW. This may be undertaken as an activity directed by staff, (Tutor Guided Independent Learning (TGIL)) or may be an activity identified by the student themselves as contributing to their overall learning (Student Independent Learning (SIL))

As part of module delivery, module handbooks, learning and teaching plans etc. will be produced and uploaded on the eLP outlining the content of each contact session and any pre-activity to be undertaken by the student as directed by staff (TGIL). Faculties may develop their own versions of such documentation, but the minimum expectation is that there will be consistency in presentation for students on a particular programme.

When undertaking Tutor Guided Independent Learning, at all levels, it is important that students know what is expected of them in relation to study they will undertake in this aspect of the module, and this should include the amount of time the activity should take, the outcomes expected from the activity and how the students will receive feedback on the work undertaken.

As part of their higher education development, students are expected to take an increasing amount of responsibility for their own learning, therefore the proportion of time allocated to the TGIL proportion of guided independent learning should be of the order of:

- Level 4 – 80-85%
- Level 5 – 65 – 75%
- Level 6/7 – 50 – 60 %

9.1 Part Time and ‘Non-standard’ Delivery Patterns.

For reference purposes, the ‘standard’ delivery pattern for a Northumbria Award by full time study is 120 credits per academic year delivered as 60 credit equivalence (600 NSW hours) per semester over two semesters.

Adopting a ‘non-standard’ delivery pattern, i.e. one that varies from the above, e.g. students undertaking a Northumbria programme by part time study will normally take up to 60 or 80 credits in the academic year as 30 or 40 credit equivalence (300 – 400 NSW hours per semester) over two semesters. Such patterns may require a modification to the structure of the equivalent full time programme where one exists. For example, a full time programme delivering 3 x 20 credits per semester over two semesters, may in the part time version delivering 60 credits per year, require one of the semester based modules to become year-long to remain within the framework, or deliver a non-symmetrical semester pattern, e.g. a 20 – 40 split of modules by semester. .

It is expected that the maximum time period for completion of an award by part-time study will be the design length plus 2 semesters.

Under normal circumstances, it is not anticipated that programmes delivered via part time study will be expected to provide the facility for study abroad or placement

In all cases, the programme design will require the facilitation of progression by level as required by the Assessment Regulations for Northumbria Awards.

10 Education Provision with Others (Collaborative Partnerships)

10.1 Northumbria Programmes delivered in partnership (Franchise)

Where collaborative partnerships involve franchise of Northumbria programmes, the expectation is that delivery of the programme at the partner institution will follow within one academic year of the delivery of the relevant Northumbria programme approved under this framework.

Where the entire programme is franchised, this should be a relatively straightforward process to ensure that requisite staff and physical resources, or plans for staff development and / or resource procurement, are in place.

Where not all of the programme is franchised, e.g. the franchise consists of the final year of an undergraduate programme, the faculty will need to ensure that those students entering the final year of the programme are fully enabled to meet the expectations of study. Most obviously, this will require mapping of the 'qualifying' prior study against the stated learning outcomes of levels 4 and 5 of the equivalent Northumbria programme, as per the requirements for joining a completion pathway described below. Where such mapping does not produce an equivalence of content and/or the process of learning, alternative qualifying study must be sought or consideration given to the development of an alternative 'top-up' award.

10.2 Partner Programme leading to a Northumbria Award (Validated)

Whilst validated programmes are clearly owned by the collaborating partner, in approving the use of the Northumbria name in the final award, there is an expectation that validated programmes deliver an equivalence of standards and outcomes to the relevant Northumbria award.

It would not be appropriate to require a validated award to have exactly the same aims as a Northumbria programme, but the principles of developing Research Rich Learning and employability should be evident in the validated programme.

10.3 Articulation / Advanced Entry

Where advanced entry is allowed within a Northumbria programme, either through consideration of individual applications or via an articulation agreement, the same principles apply to those described above for franchise of a part of a Northumbria programme. That is to say, to maintain the principle that all students are equally enabled to achieve the programme learning outcomes, the expectation that the incoming student will have undergone a similar development journey, in terms of both content and learning process of the programme they have studied, to their Northumbria equivalent, as articulated through Northumbria programme level or stage learning outcomes, will be the paramount consideration.

Where programmes have developed augmented articulations, the approach would be similar to the franchise of full programmes above, i.e. discussions with the partner around the amendment of their articulating programme(s) to meet the level / stage outcomes of the equivalent Northumbria programmes.

10.4 Design of Top-Up Programmes.

Students who hold a recognised (national or international) level 5 qualification who wish to study for an honours degree may apply to enter a Northumbria 'top-up' programme. Top-up programmes at level 6 are specifically designed for students with an existing qualification at level 5 who wish to take additional study to 'top-up' their current achievements to a Northumbria honours degree).

Entry to a top up programme will involve having the necessary credits as defined by the **Framework for Higher Education awards**, **the National credit Framework** and Northumbria's own award regulations. It will also be dependent on the student's learning experience on their existing award sufficiently matching the subject and intellectual expectations of the final year of a Northumbria honours degree to enable them to successfully achieve the learning outcomes of the top-up award.

The learning outcomes of a Northumbria top-up award will be related to, but different from, those of a Northumbria ab initio programme. The top-up programmes will share the aim of developing the Northumbria Graduate, but differ in the structure and approach that they adopt to reflect the nature of the student entry characteristics. The learning outcomes of the top up award therefore, will be unique to that award (or cluster of awards) but will still ensure that students who successfully achieve the award will meet the expectations of the Northumbria Graduate.

Top-up programmes will typically be developed for a recognised market, and the task for Northumbria programme design is to design the programme such that the content and learning process meet internal and external expectations whilst recognising the entry characteristics of its anticipated student body. For example, a top up may be being designed for holders of international diplomas. Given the variation that can exist in such awards, however, the design team may choose to limit entry to named international diplomas which they know, or discover, produce students with the desired entry characteristics. In terms of approach, the top-up programmes will reflect the likelihood that their students will not necessarily have gone through the 'research rich learning' experience' as those who have already studied for two years at Northumbria. As such, the students will need to be 'developed' into critical thinking and research rich learning rather than building on a foundation which already exists. This inevitably has implications for the design and delivery of the programme, and to facilitate the enabling of students to achieve learning outcomes, the structure of top-up programmes may vary from the **NFPA** in that it:

- a) Typically may not require a 40 point project / dissertation to be included in the structure; students will however be expected to undertake a 20 point piece of work which is aimed at the development of independent and research rich learning skills.
- b) Will include a 20 point module, the content of which delivers, and the outcomes of which demonstrate Northumbria's concept of research Rich Learning, as a compulsory element of all top up programmes. It remains an expectation that all level 6 modules will utilise research rich learning approaches to deliver their discipline content.
- c) Will require students for whom English is not their first language, to undertake compulsory English for Academic Purposes (EAP) sessions. Satisfactory attendance

on the EAP module is required as part of the criteria for the award being made. A diagnostic test may be applied to all entrants to top-up programmes to determine the specific nature of their EAP programme.

Acknowledging that all students are different, there is no expectation one Northumbria Graduate will be a clone of another, but that within their individual differences the characteristics of the Northumbria Graduate will be seen. Similarly with top up programmes it may well be the case that entrants to the programmes share certain characteristics which may emphasise some of differences, e.g. international students may well demonstrate higher levels of cultural awareness and continue to do so throughout their programme. As a result of the differing entry characteristics of students, what emerges is not a single pattern that defines the Northumbria Graduate, but rather a myriad pattern within the overall concept of the Northumbria Graduate.

These patterns are not a reflection of achievement, but represent a celebration of the differences that can be accommodated within the Northumbria learning experience. The learning outcomes of individual programmes will more clearly articulate the expectations in relation to the various aspects of Northumbria Graduateness, and these will not always be the same, but taken as a whole, all Northumbria programmes will deliver a fit for purpose Northumbria Graduate.

10.5 Entry to Completion Pathways

In order to join a completion pathway, a student must be undertaking a programme of study at their own institution that leads to an award at the same level as the final award of the completion pathway they wish to join. A completion pathway is thus a pathway taken by students who join a Northumbria programme at a point other than the standard entry point, normally having started, but not completed an equivalent award in their own institution. In this way, a student ‘completes’ their academic journey to a Northumbria award, having started the journey elsewhere.

The process of joining a programme at a point other than the standard entry point is known as ‘advanced entry’, and a mapping exercise will be undertaken to establish the precise point at which a student, or group of students, may join the programme, e.g. level 5 or level 6. The mapping exercise will also determine whether, and to what extent, variation from the existing Northumbria programme will be required to ensure that advanced entry students will be enabled to achieve the learning outcomes whilst maintaining the integrity of the Northumbria award. Normally, advanced entry via a completion pathway will be formalised in an agreement with partner institutions via articulation or augmented articulation of the partner institution’s programmes with those of Northumbria.

In authorising advanced entry, the challenge for Northumbria is to assure that a student entering the programme at an advanced point has the pre-requisite knowledge and skills to successfully achieve the programme learning outcomes at a level of performance which meets Northumbria expectations. Augmented articulations, which represent a greater degree of engagement within a partnership, arguably offer a far greater alignment of a student’s prior experience with that of their Northumbria equivalent, thus reducing the risk associated with entry to later levels of the programme. Students entering from articulation agreements may benefit from joining the programme at earlier levels, and / or from a specific pathway designed to facilitate their achievement of outcomes at a level of performance which meets Northumbria expectations.



The completion pathway will be exactly the same as the standard Northumbria programme, except where changes are agreed via an approved variation order. In all circumstances the learning outcomes of the completion pathway will be the same as those for the standard Northumbria programme. In order, however, to facilitate the variation in programmes which may seek to articulate to a completion pathway, a minor variation in the structure of the Northumbria award may occur. This is, a 40 point project / dissertation will remain in the structure but the taught content of the project / dissertation module may be increased to deliver Northumbria's concept of research Rich Learning if this is not adequately covered in a student's prior learning.

NB: Where the 40 point dissertation / project is not included, the modules described in a) and b) above must deliver the learning outcomes associated with the former. Under no circumstances must the content of the approved level 6 modules be modified to suit the pathway. Similarly, no modules may be added to the award to suit the pathway alone, unless they are additional to the approved modules required to achieve the award, whether or not the additional modules are credit rated.

Where variation in structure or delivery occurs, the variation will need to be formally approved as a pathway of the existing Northumbria award which maintains the integrity of that award. Where this involves delivery only, this can be approved at Faculty level, where structural change is involved, this will be approved at University level via the Programme Approvals and Review sub-committee.

11 Principles of Approval

When designing and approving programmes, higher education providers will wish to ensure that a coherent learning experience is delivered and that due consideration is given to the Expectations and Indicators relating to programme design in *Chapter A3: The programme level* and *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval of the Quality Code*. In addition, higher education providers will wish to take account of the regulatory and other requirements of the PSRBs which accredit specific professional programmes.

Northumbria has a long tradition of rigorous programme approval processes. Nevertheless, within this new framework, an opportunity has been taken to review the approval process and, as a result, to place equal weighting to the content and process aspects of the programme design. This in turn has implications for the composition of the approval panel, and for the operation of the approval event which are outlined below.

Northumbria will retain a list of Approval Panel Chairs. The role of the Chair is to ensure that all of the requirements for approval are fully considered, either through presented documentation or at the event itself. The Chair does form part of the panel and can take an active role in the event, and will also provide the judgement of the panel to the proposing team.

The panel will comprise, in addition to the Chair:

- A subject expert drawn from the proposing faculty who is independent of the current proposal
- An External subject expert drawn from the higher education sector or the profession
- A Learning and Teaching Professor / Fellow / Champion drawn from outside the proposing faculty
- A student representative, normally an SU or faculty representative



- A Professional **Services** representative

Dependent on the proposal, the panel may wish to delegate aspects of the approval event to members, in which case the expectation would be that the subject experts focus on the academic cohesiveness of the proposal, i.e. how the modules combine to form a cohesive programme of study, whilst the Learning and Teaching experts and the student representative focus on the learning process cohesiveness and the student journey.

To facilitate the latter, it is expected that a student handbook is provided as part of the approval documentation which will include sections, written from a student perspective, such as:

- How will I learn on the programme
- How will I be assessed on the programme
- How will I be supported, pastorally and academically, on the programme
- How will my academic development be facilitated on the programme
- How will I be involved in the programme
- What opportunity will I have for placement/ study abroad
- How will I be prepared for employment / further study on the programme

Other documentation required for the approval event include

- The programme specification
- All module descriptors
- Sample Module handbooks / Learning and Teaching plans
- Sample assessment briefs, accompanied by associated assessment criteria which will be 'typical' of the expectations for the programme, for each type of assessment within each level of study

The aim of this approach to approval, as stated, is to ensure the integrity of the programme in its own right, and the integrity of the student journey in assuring a challenging and stimulating learning experience which leads to the opportunity for all of our students to maximise their potential in a safe and supportive environment resourced to support the learning journey. It also overtly aims to re-establish the approval event as a celebration of the design expertise of staff, and as such will be seen as a major event with which to begin the life cycle of a programme. Further details of approval will be found on the academic registry web pages.

12 Measurement and Review

Programme design, development and approval depend on reflection and critical self-assessment by individuals, groups and higher education providers

The review processes for Northumbria are well documented within the Academic Registry web pages, and have themselves been subject to recent review. **As a result the Annual Programme Review process has been aligned to provide information which itself will feed into the Periodic Review process.**

The key point of both of these internal review processes is that they provide the opportunity for the critical self-assessment **mentioned in the opening paragraph**, taken from **Chapter B1 of the UK Quality Code**. It is this self-assessment which should drive enhancements to a

programme, whether they be content or process driven, which themselves may or may not lead to fundamental revisions or re-design of the programme. As stated elsewhere, in order for the design – approval – review – enhancement cycle to operate virtuously, it is essential that review is carried out against the same criteria that are applied at the design stage, and that these are clearly defined and measured consistently at all stages. Inevitably, as the higher education environment develops, criteria will change, and the emphasis then will be to communicate these changes clearly and to incorporate them into the relevant processes in a transparent manner.

Approval of Northumbria programmes is currently given with no defining period of approval. Whilst it is not proposed to change this, more attention will be paid to internal review outcomes such that:

- Annual review may identify the need for a deeper review of a programme against the required design criteria. This may lead to a re-design and re-approval of the programme. The specific criteria for such a review will be identified but is likely to comprise of failure to meet performance indicators associated with the University Corporate Objectives
- Periodic Review will take a more overt role in identifying how programmes have responded to changes since the original approval. This is of course in addition to the Faculty's own scrutiny, but might include response to new university policies, changed performance criteria, University and Faculty enhancement plans etc.

The final part of the review process, the strategic review of academic programmes, differs from the above only in that it is likely to apply when there has been a somewhat catastrophic performance against design criteria. It is the role of annual and periodic review to give early and systematic warning of such a happening, and to allow programmes to take timely action. It is for this reason that review is such a vital part of the programme cycle, and why critical self-assessment is the fundamental component of success. As practitioners in higher education, it behoves us to bring the same criticality to our provision that we bring to our discipline, and Faculties will be expected to take an overt role in ensuring that this has occurred,

A full list of extant performance criteria will be provided at the beginning of each programme design process, and a list of extant criteria will be published on the academic registry web pages, updated annually.

13 PFNA Design Schematic

