

D EQUIVALENCE POLICY

Introduction

- D.1 The university's mission is to extend opportunities for higher education to people across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and beyond. This policy describes the arrangements in place to assure quality and standards of programmes, wherever and however they are delivered. The university recognises that students studying a programme at different locations and by different modes may be supported and taught in different ways. The policy defines how students' learning opportunities are equivalent and explains how this aspect of the university's Learning Teaching and Enhancement Strategy is achieved.
- D.2 Definitions:
1. A **programme** in this policy includes any course, module or unit on which students are registered
 2. **Mode of delivery** refers to whether a programme is delivered part-time or full-time
 3. **Mode of study** refers to the ways in which teaching, learning and assessment are supported on the programme, which might include physical attendance, video conferences, virtual learning environments, email, telephone and mail.

Policy of equivalence

- D.3 The learning outcomes of a programme are identical, regardless of location, mode of delivery or mode of study. Students are supported to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme that they are registered for, wherever and however they are studying. These procedures only allow programmes to be offered by different modes of delivery and modes of study if a judgement has been made by an appropriate body that sufficient support can be offered to students to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes.
- D.4 Academic credit is awarded following a judgement that the assessed work demonstrates achievement of the learning outcomes by the student. Judgements on assessment are benchmarked across the university and against national standards. These processes involve decisions by external examiners or external moderators. They are made on the same basis regardless of the location, mode of delivery or mode of study of the student.

Policy requirements

- D.5 All programmes are approved for delivery only following a formal approval process. This examines the learning resource requirements of the programme and the resources that will be available to students. It includes looking at the appropriateness of the staffing, learning materials, assessments, library, electronic and equipment resources. It also looks at how the course will be managed and the communication and feedback channels for staff and students. The approval determines where and in what modes the programme may be offered. The university's approval and SQA approval procedures are described in the *Academic Standards and Quality Regulations*.
- D.6 All programmes are monitored annually, and undergo a rigorous periodic review at least every six years. These procedures include reviewing the modes of study and delivery and locations where the programme may be offered. Annual quality monitoring and periodic review procedures are described in the *Academic Standards and Quality Regulations*.
- D.7 The learning outcomes of a programme are the same, and are those confirmed at approval, wherever the programme is offered and whatever the mode of study and delivery.

Academic Standards and Quality Regulations 2024-25
Equivalence policy

- D.8 All assessments are equivalent and subject to prior moderation. Coursework assessments are not required to be identical for all student groups. All formal examinations and re-examinations are the same for all students each semester. Exceptions to this must have the formal approval of the Faculty and will be reviewed at the progression or examination board. Assessment procedures are described in the *Academic Standards and Quality Regulations*.
- D.9 Every academic partner has a nominated examinations officer and examinations are carried out in accordance with the guidelines in the *Academic Standards and Quality Regulations*.
- D.10 In programmes leading to degree awards, a sample of assessments will be double-marked to ensure that assessment decisions are made fairly and to the same standards. Where the same module is offered to students at different academic partners, this sample will include second-marking across academic partners.
- D.11 A sample of all student work will be examined by external examiners (or moderators for SQA work) to judge comparability across student groups and to benchmark across UK institutions.

Student support

- D.12 Information on student support is available at www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/support.
- D.13 Support for students, wherever they are located, will meet the requirements of the UK Quality Code, and be in line with the university's policies, published in the *Academic Standards and Quality Regulations* and on the website at www.uhi.ac.uk/policies.
- D.14 Library and learning resource access meet guidelines described on the library website (www.uhi.ac.uk/en/libraries).
- D.15 All students are assigned to a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), who will carry out the responsibilities in accordance with current guidance (www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/support).
- D.16 Students who are based in a learning centre, or at home, or on a programme that is managed by another academic partner, will be provided with clear written guidance on how support may be accessed and who to contact if they have problems.
- D.17 All students have access to the web-based resources at www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students. Where possible, the university will facilitate social contact for students and staff through web-based communication, as well as learning support.
- D.18 All students are automatically members of HISA, the Highlands and Islands Students' Association (www.hisa.uhi.ac.uk).

Ensuring students are informed

- D.19 All students, full-time and part-time, receive outline information about their programme when they enrol, either in paper format or electronically. This allows them to verify that the programme is equivalent to others offered in the university. The information made available to the student includes the title, aims, learning outcomes, any pre- or co-requisites, indicative content, assessment activities and core learning resources.
- D.20 Additionally, contact details for the module lecturer, assessment timetable and dates and any attendance requirements for the student are given.

Consistent evaluation

D.21 All modules and a sample of SQA units are evaluated each time they are offered, in accordance with the university's student survey policy. The scores from this evaluation form part of the annual evaluation of the module or unit, together with the statistics on enrolment and progression. Students are informed of the outcomes of evaluations, and of actions taken as a result of issues raised. Programme teams are encouraged to seek feedback using other means in addition to the end of module survey.

Monitoring and responsibilities

D.22 Ensuring the information made available to students is up to date is the responsibility of the module leader for degree programmes or internal moderator for SQA units.

D.23 Approval of new programme and periodic review of programmes, including where programmes can be offered and approved modes of delivery, is carried out by faculties and overseen by Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

D.24 Monitoring of programmes is the responsibility of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and is carried out through annual quality monitoring processes conducted by academic partners and faculties. Monitoring of the learning infrastructure provided by academic partners is also undertaken by Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee through subject review and student support service review.