Guidance for Staff in the Development of Exit Awards

Introduction

1   The _Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study_ expects teams to make provision for exit awards when designing their programmes. An exit award, as defined in the glossary, is:

A qualification which may, where provided for, be awarded on successful completion of an intermediate point in the studies in a longer programme of study (when a student leaves the programme) but for which the student has not registered at the outset.

2   This guidance provides support for programme teams that are considering exit awards within existing programmes or in the development of new programmes. It also provides guidance to committees as part of the modifications and programme approval process.

Defining exit awards

3   Exit awards are recognised qualifications in their own right, and must follow the conventions articulated in the _Sector Recognised Standards_[1], _Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies_[2] _(FHEQ),_ and the university's academic regulations regarding the minimum credits, in number and academic level. These are articulated in Part 3: Curriculum Framework.

4   As they are formal qualifications, the programme specification will need to articulate the learning outcomes that will be met for the exit award to be granted. Programme teams should map the learning outcomes of the modules to be studied to each award available under the programme structure. This would identify where specific modules may need to be passed as a requirement of an exit award, or where it would be more appropriate to amend the learning outcomes prior to seeking final approval.

5   The title of the exit award will normally mirror the target[3] award, except where a different title has been approved at the point the programme was approved. This would normally be a broader subject title and might reflect that the student had not completed more specialist elements of the programme.

6   Within undergraduate programmes, exit awards may include:

   a.   Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE), 60 credits, normally at level 4.

   b.   Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE), 120 credits, of which at least 45 must be at level 5.

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[1] Office for Students (OfS), published March 2002
[2] Second Edition February 2024, published by Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
[3] Target award is the programme that the student is registered for

    c.   Ordinary Bachelor's degree (BSc or BEng (Ord))*,* 150 credits, of which at least 30 must be at level 6.

    d.   Bachelor's degree with honours (BSc or BEng (Hons)), 180 credits, of which at least 45 must be at level 6.

7   Within postgraduate taught programmes, exit awards may include:

    a.   Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert), 30 credits, of which at least 20 must be at level 7.

    b.   Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip), 60 credits, of which at least 45 must be at level 7.

8   For all programmes, exit awards may only be granted where the minimum number of credits that have been taken at Imperial has met the requirements in the *[Regulations for Taught Programmes Study](#)*. For example, it is not permissible to award a PGCert if the student joins the programme with APL or credit transfer from another institution.

Development of exit awards

9   Undergraduate exit awards are largely based on achievement in consecutive years of the programme (Year 1= CertHE, Year 2 DipHE etc) and progression through academic levels. The exit awards usually map onto a year or academic level of study as set out in paragraph 5 above.

10   In some postgraduate programmes, there may be specified modules that have to be passed for an individual exit award to be conferred. For example, where the study in term 1 is built upon through term 2 and culminating in the final major project, the exit awards would likely be achieved through successful completion of modules in term 1 (PGCert) and then term 2 (PGDip).

11   Within other postgraduate programmes, the nature of the subject matter and programme structure could mean that if the minimum credit requirements have been met (as in paragraph 6 above), the relevant exit award could be granted.

12   Programme teams must ensure that where specific modules are required for an exit award that this is explicitly stated within the programme specification (for formal approval) and within student-facing documentation. Where no module requirements are stated, exit awards must be granted if the credit requirements are met.

13   Where the target award carries accreditation or leads to full or partial professional registration, it should be clearly articulated within the description of any exit award if it is an accredited programme, or that the professional registration requirements would still be met.

14   When deciding on the requirements for an exit award, programme teams should consider:

    a)   How the programme structure either supports or limits the offer of exit awards. For example, a large project module will probably restrict the offer of a PGDip but allow for a PGCert.

    b)   Which modules contribute towards a student demonstrating they have met the learning outcomes of the exit award – are they specific modules which then need to be included in a 'must pass' or can they be any of the core/compulsory or elective modules.

    c)   Are there specific parts of the programme that are **not** expected or appropriate to be included within a particular exit award, for example, a project module within the PGCert or PGDip?

d) Are the requirements that are being considered fair and reasonable? For example, are the credits that are required for an exit award unnecessarily high when considering the requirements in the regulations?

e) Is the title of the target programme appropriate for the exit award?

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