Reshaping the HE programme: equipping learners for life.

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Overview.

- Graduate attributes
- The challenge presented by modular education
- A framework to help the programme developer
- Some questions to help rethink your programme
- Programme-level and impact on NSS scores
- Conclusion
Graduate attributes from Russell Group universities.
Our degree programmes go well beyond the subject.

Graduate attributes are the

“qualities that prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future.”

The challenge.

Danger that academic programmes (and modules) can focus solely on the discipline/subject of study with attributes falling outside the requirements of the programme leaving it to the student to develop and grow the skills themselves.
Exacerbated through modules.

The modular system has led to a discipline of study focus for both learners and their teachers.

The programme may be forgotten.

May lead to over-assessment, overlap across modules, & fragmentation through lack of connectivity and integration.
Let’s get back to the big picture.

Move away from “my module” approach to teaching where often the broader skills (the graduate attributes) have been lost...

...to a joined-up approach to assessment and the design of teaching to support learners across the programme.
Break down silos & build connections.

Help learners to make connections with the skills and knowledge it is hoped (and we say in our graduate attributes statements) they will develop across the programme.
A framework to help the programme developer.

Adapted from Hilary Lindsay (2016), originally designed to help professional accountants think about their development as more than “going on a course”.

Framework for continuing professional development.

Adapted by Russell after Lindsay (2016)
Lindsay’s framework can be refocussed to take a holistic view of the programme.

Whilst learners and their teachers often see the programme as the taught ‘course’ component, there is so much more that learners gain from their studies as exemplified in Lindsay’s framework.
A degree in non-specific Engineering.

An undergraduate programme accredited by a professional body that is studied over four-years leading to an MEng degree.

Teaching focussed on lectures, laboratory classes, workshops developing design skills and research project.
A degree in *non-specific* Engineering.

A key aspect of engineering programmes is working with others. Learners work in small groups in the laboratory, workshops and tutorials. They work as part of a team in their Design Projects. They work with others from different disciplines in the Global Engineering Challenge (Horn & Murray (2012)).

A degree in *non-specific* Engineering.

As the degree progresses learners are increasingly engaged in activities that develop transferable skills:

- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Problem solving...
A degree in non-specific Engineering.

Whether it is in first-year teaching laboratories, group or individual design projects or their final year research project learners are encouraged to think about:

- what they have done,
- why they have done it,
- what it means,
- where and how it fits in with other ideas/activities, and
- what they could do differently in future.
Learning relating to developing competence.

The programme through its formal and informal teaching and learning opportunities helps learners develop competence in their disciplines of study.
Learning relating to developing adaptability.

Learners are encouraged beyond the formal curriculum:

• to **engage** with their learning, having *control* over what they do outside timetabled hours.
Learning relating to developing adaptability.

Learners are encouraged beyond the formal curriculum:

• to **explore** opportunities and possibilities to enhance their learning experiences using their *curiosity* and the joy of learning
Learning relating to developing adaptability.

Learners are encouraged beyond the formal curriculum:

• to *experiment* with new and different ways to enhance their learning experiences, showing their *commitment* to learning
Learning relating to developing adaptability.

Learners are encouraged beyond the formal curriculum:

- to develop a **positive attitude** to the future, taking *concern* to seek opportunities that will enhance career prospects
Learning relating to developing adaptability.

Learners are encouraged beyond the formal curriculum:

- to develop their self-belief in their ability to achieve and grow in confidence
Framework for programme development.

Adapted by Russell after Lindsay (2016)
Rethinking your programme?

Start with a blank sheet of paper

Don’t start with constraints!

• What will a graduate look like?
• What skills/attributes will they have?
Rethinking your programme?

• What are the learning outcomes for the programme (what do you want your learners to know/do)?

• How will you know if a learner has achieved them, and to what extent?

• What can you do to help your learners achieve the learning outcomes?

• How can you help your learners to develop outside the classroom?
Rethinking your programme?

- How will you structure and scaffold the learning as the learners progress through the programme?
Many of the questions you should ask in designing a new programme are the same you would consider for a new module, or even a teaching session.

The principles are the same.

“Constructive Alignment”
Can this help improve NSS scores?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good NSS scores are a result of:</th>
<th>Poor NSS are a result of:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Well organised, coherent Programme Teams with personal connections to learners</td>
<td>Poorly organised, inconsistent Programme Teams – scale and rapid expansion don’t help with this but scale <em>per se</em> is not a barrier</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Staff doing the ‘day job’ well</td>
<td>‘Under the radar’ poorly performing staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Simple, developmental assessment and feedback at programme-level</td>
<td>Modular-level coherence of assessment and feedback; programme-level inconsistency of the same</td>
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<td>4. Good organisation and management (including timetabling) of the programme – but this is partly a function of 1</td>
<td>Poor organisation and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Development of learner identity at programme-level – again this is often a function of 1 (at least 1 is a precondition for this)</td>
<td>Weakly developed learner identity at programme-level</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Key points for programme-level success:

We can improve our learners experiences by:

- Building programmes with coherent identities
- Developing effective and supportive programme teams
- Engaging learners at all levels of the programme
- Doing all the basics well

Our learners don’t register on modules; they register on programmes
Conclusions.

Lindsay’s Framework has been adapted for programme leaders, and all who teach or support learning, to help take a holistic approach to programme design such that graduate attributes which go beyond the discipline of study are inherent to the programme, developing a graduate’s skills for life-long learning in their chosen discipline and beyond.
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Slides available from:
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/lets/cpd/nvrussell

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