Department of Academic Quality (DAQ)

DAQ guidance for drafting collaborative provision programme handbooks

Updated for 2022-23

This guide is intended to support authors of programme handbooks for DMU collaborative provision by providing the minimum expectations for content, presentation and format

Contents

Introduction

This guidance is intended to advise on the minimum expectations for DMU programme handbooks, ensuring that core information that students require is included. It is not intended to impose style or design but to encourage consistency of content and format, whilst recognising that some discretion is necessary across different disciplines, and that partners and faculties will, to some extent, tailor content to the specific needs of their student profiles.

A template handbook is available on the DAQ web pages; this is an optional tool to assist in the creation of handbooks for new programmes, and for partners who wish to update their existing programme handbooks.

The process of producing collaborative programme/module handbooks is undertaken by the partner but should be supported, endorsed and regularly monitored by the university. It is essential that **liaison takes place between the designated faculty [Link Tutor](#) or [External Subject Advisor (ESA)](#) and the appropriate contact at the collaborative partner institution to ensure information is current. A check of the accuracy of the handbook should be undertaken annually as part of collaborative provision '[annual quality monitoring](#)'[1] activity.**

When constructing the handbooks, consider the structure of information so that there is a logical flow of information.

Programme handbooks should be inserted as a key document on the associated Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Minimum guidance of what should be included in handbooks is necessary in order to:

- Guarantee a **shared minimum standard** of information provided for DMU students.

- Satisfy **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Guidance to the Higher Education**[2] sector on consumer rights legislation to ensure information to students is accurate and easy to access and does not contravene CMA obligations. The accuracy of the programme content within the handbook is paramount and regular checks should be undertaken to prevent information becoming obsolete. Uploading handbooks electronically and directing students to e-versions as the definitive source provides greater administrative efficiencies and ensures handbooks can be updated in a timely, cost-effective manner without the need to re-print hard copy handbooks. It is highly recommended that anyone involved in writing student handbooks, completes the online Consumer Rights training (Protecting Students' Consumer Rights) via Blackboard.

- Satisfy **requirements for validation**[3] and also **'delivery approvals'** where collaborative partners also deliver the programme owned by DMU faculties.

- Ensure handbooks for **collaborative partner students** mirror DMU expectations but are appropriately contextualised for the partnership.

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[1] Annual quality monitoring requires that collaborative partner student handbooks are regularly reviewed, checked, and updated so that information does not get obsolete and remains relevant to students.

[2] Consumer Rights legislation aims to protect students from receiving incorrect or misleading information about their programme.

[3] The student handbook is considered to be a key source of information at validation and delivery approval events, taken together with the approval document, it forms the basis on which the approval panel reaches a judgement about the nature and quality of the programme/student experience.

Section A: Guiding principles and presentation of handbooks

The guiding principles for handbooks are:

- To provide information that is **usable, practical, clear** and **easy to navigate.**

- To provide information that is **accurate, complete, unambiguous, succinct,** and easy to access in order to comply with UK Consumer Rights legislation.

- To provide **signposting** for support and other sources of information.

- To provide **links to the appropriate academic and general student regulations** but not to reproduce these within the handbook itself.

- To ensure **consistency** for students but not uniformity.

- To recognise that students may prefer to access (and search) the content of handbooks **electronically**, and in 'reference' mode (i.e., on a need-to-know basis) rather than reading the handbook sequentially from start to finish, and that much of the content is now available in searchable electronic form.

- To be consistent with **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)[4]** principles to enhance accessibility for all students irrespective of differences in learning styles. Also see: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/dmu-students/udl/universal-design-for-learning.aspx

Presentation and format of handbooks:

The handbook should be **available electronically** e.g. uploaded onto the programme Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). **Printed copies should be fully inclusive.** Partners can decide if hard copies will be provided to students.	• Uploading handbooks in **Microsoft Word format** (rather than PDF) is consistent with UDL principles and allows students to manage the content to suit their requirements (e.g. adjust text size, font, and background colour). • **To be fully inclusive,** printed, hard copy handbooks should use **pastel coloured paper** and should follow any guidance from the UDL principles; however, downloadable, editable, electronic handbooks should serve to provide such customisation to suit individual requirements.
Use diagrams, symbols or pictures	• Helps to break up text and make handbooks more visually engaging. Draws attention to certain topics and key points and/or to aid explanation of important structures/processes: e.g. when signposting students to electronic sources of further information, a symbol could be used e.g. 💻
Signpost to other useful sources of information	• Where URLs are inserted, these must be checked by handbook author annually (at the very least), to ensure there are no broken links
Apply indexing, **cross-referencing** and **links to appropriate web content**	• Maximises accessibility of information and protects accuracy as often online information will be more regularly updated than printed versions.
Presented professionally	• Represents the University and programme team well by having consistent structures, heading styles and making good use of line spacing.
Correct use of 'voice'	• Most handbooks directly address the student e.g. *"you will have a choice to select from the following modules"*. Other handbooks use second-person narrative e.g. *"students will have a choice to select from the following modules".* Whatever the preferred style, the context should be taken into account, and consistency in voice applied.

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[4] UDL aims to provide an equal learning experience for every DMU student.

Front page – example layout

Your front page should be helpful to both the student and the author by providing sufficient details that assist with version control (i.e. reference to the correct academic session) and easy reference to who the handbook audience is.

Collaborative partner handbooks should include both their logo and the DMU logo.

This should state the <u>intended award</u> (rather than the intermediary/ possible exit awards).

Please list all modes of delivery that apply to the programme.

This section is important if the programme is delivered in more than one location, as can be the case with programmes delivered with collaborative partners.

A covering statement should be included to ensure students always have access to the most up to date content.

Example text is shown here.

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY LEICESTER

PROGRAMME HANDBOOK
[INSERT ACADEMIC YEAR]

Programme title:	
Level:	UG/PG
Award:	3/4/5/6/7
Mode of study:	Full-time/Part-time/Distance learning
Location of delivery:	
Programme leader:	Name: Office location:

This handbook is correct at the time of writing and may be subject to change. Throughout your studies, to ensure you have the most up to date information, you should always consult the online version of this handbook held on the Virtual Learning Environment/Blackboard. For up to date information on University academic and student regulations always consult the DMU website.

Section B: The handbook template

Section 1: Welcome to DMU and the programme

This is an opportunity to explain the culture and ethos of the programme, and to provide a message of welcome that makes the student feel motivated to start their studies.

Include information such as:

- Broad aims of the award/qualification.

- Any expectations for students e.g. taking responsibility for their own learning and development and working independently, and to seek advice when needed.

- Useful terms (programme = course; Level 5= year 1 etc)

- Welcome from the Pro-Vice Chancellor/Dean (if applicable) and from the Programme Leader.

- The need for students to keep their ID card with them at all times (if required).

- Contact details for the equivalent of a Student Advice Centre.

Section 2: Overview of the Handbook

This section should explain what the purpose of the handbook is and how students can make the best use of it.

Section 3: University regulations

Collaborative partner handbooks should explicitly state the regulations that students will be studying under. As students are undergoing a DMU award, the DMU regulations will apply. Also include links to the partner's own regulations if these will also be used.

Include links to both relevant *academic* regulations (UG or PG) and *general* student regulations as follows:

- Taught Programmes Academic Regulations www.dmu.ac.uk/academic-regulations - this includes how students' progress through their programme and gain their award

- DMU General Regulations and Procedures Affecting Students:
  https://www.dmu.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/exams-deferrals-regulations-policies/student-regulations-and-policies/index.aspx

Some Collaborative Partners will also need to reference Level 3 Regulations (e.g. DMUIC). These can be found at: https://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/academic-regulations-assessment-boards/additional-academic-regs.aspx

Section 4: About the Programme

This section should mirror information specified within the **programme specification**. In particular, the outcomes for each qualification need to be clearly stated, and the **intended award**, and the **possible exit awards** and the **teaching and learning methodologies** need to be articulated.

<u>Important note:</u> any in-session updates to programme specifications must be applied to subsequent versions of the programme handbook and updated in Blackboard.

Welcome and introduction to the programme

This is a welcome from the programme leader and an opportunity to explain a little about the programme, what it might involve and what the students might look forward to. This is a snapshot, just designed to make the handbook a little friendlier.

Programme structure

This can be copied directly from the programme specification, or set out as a list, calendar chart or diagram. The structure must contain all modules, with detail on credit value and whether they are core or optional

Undergraduate example:

Level 4 (Study Year 1)			
Module Code	**Module Title**	**Credit value**	**Core/Optional**
ABCD1235	Introduction to University	15	Core

Postgraduate example:

Stage	Modules		
1 Sept-Jan	**ABCD7001** Module title (number of credits)	Choose ONE from the following: (Optional module info)	
	ABCD7002		
	ABCD7003		
2 Jan-May	ABCD7004	Choose ONE from the following:	
	ABCD7005		
	ABCD7006	(Optional module info)	
3 Jun-Sept	ABCD7007 ABCD7008		

Key programme information

• Explain the **different routes** possible through the programme of study, where a programme operates either different pathway and/or in different modes of study.

• Outline any **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body** (PSRB) and work–based learning requirements.

• If the programme specification contains any **Programme Specific Regulations**, **or reassessment** methods which differ from the standard university regulations, these must be clearly stated. These details can be copy and pasted from the programme specification document, if applicable.

   • Provide information and support about **options for progression and further study** on completion of the programme, where applicable. Highlight the likely industries and careers that graduates will be

prepared for by undertaking the programme. Include opportunities for further study, particularly any opportunities available within DMU.

- If the validation is for a foundation degree, the document must outline at least one suitable route for students to top-up to an honours degree at DMU.

- If applicable, include reference to how **learning technology** is utilised on the programme e.g. DMU Replay.

- Include **links to programme-specific reading lists** (both mandatory key texts and recommended reading).

Module information

Include **information about the modules:** students must have access to module specifications (module templates) for all modules. This may be achieved by providing module specifications as part of either the programme handbook, within module handbooks (See' module specification and [guidance')], and via the VLE.

Refer students to the module handbook, and provide a summary of the modules as contained in the module specifications such as

1. Module description (i.e. title, description); and

2. A brief description of assessment (i.e. type and weighting of each component of assessment).

Settling into your programme

Ensure students are aware of the support available to them as they progress through their levels of study. Outline all support activities you provide, such as preparation days, social events or reading lists.

Information about progression onto a DMU programme, where applicable, should be clearly articulated and checked annually with the university to ensure that information remains current and mirrors the programme composition.

All partners should outline their local recommended reading lists in full in the handbook, in the first instance. For faculty-based collaborative provision, the handbook author should liaise with their DMU counterpart to ensure a full list of required resources is identified.

DMU International College (DMUIC), as an embedded DMU pathways provider, should include information about progression onto DMU faculties, including useful information for students about transitions support, any pre-requisites, and the role of the Faculty Link Tutor in supporting students.

International opportunities

Outline any opportunities that incorporate overseas travel and mention if these are matched by alternative opportunities for students who are unable to travel overseas for valid reasons.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL is a university initiative that aims to provide an equal learning experience for all students studying DMU programmes. As programmes and modules are designed with UDL in mind, reference should be made to this in the handbook to highlight the benefits to students.

Section 5: Contact details of staff

Include contact details of all staff that students will need to be in contact with.

- Partner staff details should be included as they will be the first port of call for students. This may include the programme team and professional services staff such as the programme administrator or subject librarian. DMU staff may also be included if the students are likely to interact with them e.g. the DMU programme leader, the DMU link tutor, the DMU programme administrator. Include a brief role description if needed.

- Briefly explain how you will contact students, and your preference for ways to contact and communicate with staff. Aim for a welcoming tone to ensure new students are not dissuaded from making contact with staff for any reason.

Section 6: Student Charter

As a minimum, the student charter should be signposted: https://www.dmu.ac.uk/current-students/student-resources/student-charter.aspx .

Collaborative partners may have their own student charter (or student code of conduct): where this is the case, both the partner and DMU information can be included, but care must be taken to ensure it is clear that the DMU charter will supersede the partner's charter for any areas that may conflict.

Section 7: Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)

If applicable, explain the HEAR and its purpose. Information for inclusion in the handbook can be extracted from this link: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/dmu-students/your-dmu-experience/hear/higher-education-achievement-report-(hear).aspx

Section 8: Communication

In this section, refer to the below as a minimum:

The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
Outline details of the VLE that students will use during their studies, including the overall role of the VLE and how students may access these facilities. If the VLE is to be the principal means of communication with students, this should also be stated.

Personal tutoring (PT)
If applicable, provide details of the personal tutoring system in place at the partner institution. This could include the following:

- Name and contact details of the personal tutor.

- If personal tutors have not been allocated at the time of producing the student handbook, please include a statement such as "students will be assigned a personal tutor at the start of term. Students should familiarise themselves with who their personal tutor will be and ensure they have met with them".

- The methods of communication with the personal tutor e.g. initial induction and thereafter set contact time.

- The 'Statement of Personal Tutor and Student commitments' referenced here: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/study/undergraduate-study/student-support/academic-support/personal-tutor-scheme.aspx

MyDMU

Handbooks should inform students of MyDMU and how to access it. Some details of MyDMU may not be relevant to students studying off-campus, but the information in the following webpage can be adapted for inclusion in the handbook: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/professional-services/information-technology-and-media-services/prospective-students/mydmu.aspx

Attendance

For students studying at partner institutions the local attendance policy sets the minimum expectations for attendance. Inform students of their communication requirements/obligations, e.g. registering a change of address or getting in touch due to illness or other absences.

Section 9: Management of the programme

Programme Management Boards (or equivalent) and Assessment Boards

- Outline the **purpose and composition** of both programme assessment and management boards.
- An overview of assessment boards and roles associated with management of the programme (e.g., programme leader, module leader) can be found in the University academic regulations for UG and PG awards.
- An overview of the Programme Management Board (and other academic quality committees can be found in the Department of Academic Quality web pages**.**

External Examiners

- Outline **the role of the External Examiner**. For more information see: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/external-examining/external-examining-homepage.aspx

- Inform students where they can find the most recent **external examiner report** (typically this should be made available via the Programme shell on the VLE/Blackboard).

- Provide the **name** of each external examiner, and their **position** and **place of work**. A note, such as that provided below, should accompany this information.

> **Example text:**
>
> **Note for students:** The details provided relating to external examiners is for information only. You must not contact external examiner(s) directly, and particularly with respect to your individual performance in assessments. If you wish to make a complaint or an appeal regarding your assessment you should follow the University's procedures for Academic Appeals, guidance on which is available via the following link: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/dmu-students/the-student-gateway/academic-support-office/academic-appeals.aspx

The External Subject Adviser (ESA)

- Collaborative partners who have Validation Service provision should also include an overview of the role of the ESA who will work closely with the programme team to provide academic guidance and support and take an overview of the curriculum. The handbook should elaborate on these functions and some example text is provided below, but this should be contextualised to the specific partnership arrangements (for example, the frequency of meetings or the plan and method for formal communications). Authors of the handbook are strongly advised to consult with Educational Partnerships on details that they might want to include regarding the role of the ESA.

> **Example text:**
>
> ESAs contribute to initial programme development and curriculum design, where possible and once a programme is approved for delivery the ESA will advise on the relevance, appropriateness and currency of the curriculum and maintain ongoing oversight to ensure quality standards are maintained. They also review the resources available to students on the programme, including staff CVs, and take part in Annual Quality Monitoring (AQM). ESAs are invited to programme management boards and are required to attend at least one of these each academic session.

Section 10: Assignment submission, Assessment and anonymous marking

Assessment map/submission schedule

Provide students with details of a schedule of their assessments at the start of the academic year. This should be in the form of a calendar of the academic year, showing the types and due dates of all the module assessments. The schedule may also include details of the formative assessment that does not accrue marks.

The university's Assessment Policy requires that all students are provided with these details.

Protocols for submitting work

Outline the process for submitting work, whether electronically via Turnitin or in an alternative format if assessments cannot be submitted via Turnitin.

The DMU assessment and feedback policy outlines that students should submit work electronically via the VLE or another appropriate portal and that students should receive a receipt for submission.

How to submit via Turnitin

Include guidance for students on how to submit an assignment in Turnitin, how to view Turnitin assignment feedback and grades, and how to interpret the Turnitin originality report.

The DMU guide to Turnitin is available on the 'User Guide' tab in Blackboard. See: https://vle.dmu.ac.uk/dmu_common/HelpFiles/bb9TrainingStudents01/blackboard/refresh/turnitin/studentindex_turnitin.html

Anonymous marking

Indicate if assignments will be **anonymously marked.** Some modules may be formally exempt from anonymous marking – where this is the case, this should be explained. Refer students to the **University's Assessment and Feedback Policy** found here: https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/learning-teaching-assessment/assessment-feedback-policy.pdf.

Assessment criteria and mark descriptors

Refer students to assessment criteria and any mark descriptors, if applicable.

Assessment feedback

Manage expectations by referring to the **20 working days turnaround time for tutor marking and feedback** in accordance with current DMU Assessment and Feedback Policy.

Explain the various methods of feedback that students can expect to receive on their assignments and to aid progression (e.g. written, oral feedback), along with information about how students should apply the feedback to develop further.

Section 11: Seeking an assignment extension, deferral or re-submission

Explain how to seek a deferral/extension for a piece of assessed work, and the circumstances under which one may be granted. Mention that students should seek guidance on extensions, deferrals and re-submissions from the partner institution.

Outline what constitutes failed work and regulations for resubmission.

Refer students to the University's academic regulations and General Student Regulations as appropriate.

Section 12: The student complaints and appeals process

Students should be signposted to information to support them in the event that they have a complaint, with details of the procedure to be followed. Collaborative partners should clearly state that a student's first port of call for advice and support is their local programme/module leader or senior member of the management team, and if they are not satisfied with the response, to follow the DMU student complaints procedure, as detailed below.

- **Student complaints procedure:** http://www.dmu.ac.uk/dmu-students/the-student-gateway/academic-support-office/student-complaints/student-complaints-procedure.aspx

- **Academic appeals:** http://www.dmu.ac.uk/dmu-students/the-student-gateway/academic-support-office/academic-appeals.aspx

- **Chapter 8 of the 'General Regulations and Procedures Affecting Students':** https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/dmu-students/academic-support-office/2021-22-student-regs/12-chapter-8.pdf

Section 13: The Student Voice

Student Representation

- Include an overview of the student representative system in place. This could include details such as
    - The nomination process.
    - The ideal minimum numbers and makeup (part time, full time, levels of study, etc.) of representatives needed for a programme.
    - The training that will be provided.
- Signpost students to the role of De Montfort Students' Union (DSU): https://www.demontfortsu.com/

Student satisfaction surveys

Students may be invited to participate in a number of surveys during their studies, and these should be listed in the handbook. See: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/student-voice/student-satisfaction-surveys.aspx

These surveys could include the following:

- Module and programme level feedback (interim and/or final as per faculty practice).
- National Student Survey (NSS) – final year UG students only.
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey – PGT students only.
- Feedback via De Montfort Students' Union (DSU). See https://www.demontfortsu.com/

Inform students how their feedback will be used:

This helps demonstrate to students the value of providing feedback. It is good practice to give examples of how feedback from former students has helped shape enhancements to the provision (i.e. via "You Said, We Did" examples).

Section 14: Library and Learning Services (LLS) for Collaborative Partners

Collaborative partners are entitled to access the majority of DMU Library services and resources (where licences permit) but the expectation is that partner handbooks should **firstly provide details of the partner's local, on-site library services** (e.g. key reading lists, location of study spaces and details of computer facilities etc).

Collaborative partner handbooks can then refer to DMU Library services but should tailor the information to ensure it is relevant to their students e.g. overseas partner students are unlikely to need details of the various buildings and opening hours if they are unlikely to visit DMU.

Some example text for handbooks that refer to DMU Library and Learning Services is provided in the programme handbook template.

Section 15: Harvard Referencing, Good v Bad Academic Practice

Citation, Referencing and References

- Explain the **correct referencing system**. DMU's default style is "Cite the Right Harvard" but this should be adapted if a different system is to be used. See: https://libguides.library.dmu.ac.uk/refguide

- Include sources **of support** such as:

    – RefWorks Guide: https://libguides.library.dmu.ac.uk/newref

    – Academic writing support: https://libguides.library.dmu.ac.uk/class

    – Good academic writing: https://library.dmu.ac.uk/class/academicwriting

- Explain **the need for correct referencing in order to avoid bad academic practices.** Useful resources are:

    – Bad academic practice and the importance of referencing: http://www.dmu.ac.uk/dmu-students/the-student-gateway/academic-support-office/bad-academic-practice.aspx

- Provide **examples of academic offences** with reference to the definitions provided in **Chapter 4** of the General Regulations and Procedures Affecting Students . (Many handbooks provide a brief explanation of the key academic offences, and then refer students to more detailed online information found with the relevant University regulations).

Academic Practice Officer

- Refer students to the named Academic Practice Officer (APO), with a brief explanation of their responsibilities (see **Chapter 4** of the General Regulations and Procedures Affecting Students).

Section 16: Student support and resources

Collaborative partner handbooks should refer students to the **facilities and support services available at their local site and should clearly advise that a student's first port of call will be the support services available at the partner institution**, for example disability support. Whilst collaborative partner students are entitled to access some DMU facilities and resources, there may be some limitations i.e. restricted access to faculty-specific resources e.g. laboratories. Handbooks must be clear about any limitations with access to DMU support services to manage student expectations.

Section 17: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

It has often been identified as good practice for programme handbooks to provide a list of frequently occurring and/or important questions, with answers, to help students during their studies. Some aspects that may be covered include:

- What happens if the student is ill or absent from the University?

- How should students inform the University of any changes to their personal details such as their term time address?

- What should students do if they lose their student ID card or forget their single sign on login and/or password?

- What students should do if they need advice regarding personal issues or on academic progress?

- What should students do when they are thinking of leaving the Programme or interrupting their studies?

Appendix: List of Principal Abbreviations

A list of principal abbreviations is a helpful addition to the handbook and if included, is best inserted as an Appendix.