



Education 2030

Following the approval of [Education 2030](#) by Academic Board we are now implementing a transformational programme of work in order to significantly enhance our academic offer, starting in the next academic year (2022/23). By reframing our academic offer now to be student-centred and future-proofed, we can best support their teaching and learning opportunities and deliver a high-quality student experience and positive outcomes.

We need your support and collaboration to make this happen so we've provided a detailed set of FAQs below to help answer any pressing questions you may have.

FAQs

What is Education 2030 trying to achieve?

Education 2030 is a transformational project at DMU, developed from the new 'Empowering University' strategy. Our current systems are incredibly complex, causing additional burden for staff across the university and for our students. They haven't been fundamentally reviewed for around 15 years and, in that time, the size and shape of the university has changed significantly.

Results from the latest National Student Survey (NSS), and from other consultations we have undertaken with current and prospective student groups, indicate a clear need for change. Falling recruitment means that we can't afford to delay decision-making and we need to be responsive to the sector and our student needs. Therefore, Education 2030 is all about developing a framework that is student-centred, to best support teaching and learning opportunities.

In order to do this, an institutional-wide curriculum review is taking place. Modules will be delivered in 30-credits and these will be run sequentially, with students studying one subject at a time. This approach will help with engagement, retention and student outcomes. Programme design should be as simple and standardised as possible to support the logistics of delivery, improve the student experience and have a positive impact on staff.

We know our staff take great pride in the learning support they offer so we want this to be celebrated and recognised as an innovative approach to delivery which is agile, creative and dynamic.

What are the benefits of teaching and studying one module at a time?

- It will allow students (and staff) the space to properly focus on and absorb the teaching for each module before moving on to the next.



- It will make it easier for us to identify those students who require additional academic and/or wellbeing support.
- This will increase the sense of a learning community and cohort identity that students value and thrive in. Research shows improved attendance where a block model has been implemented.
- Assessment marks and feedback will be returned to students following each block. This means that rather than having to retain knowledge of multiple modules and then revisit them for the summer assessments, students will be assessed more regularly and receive faster feedback.
- There is evidence that this model improves progression and outcomes – one example from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) saw an increase in retention from 79% to 96% for first year students.

Why is there the need to change the learning model now, and why so quickly?

The disappointing results from the latest National Student Survey and feedback from other student consultations we have undertaken clearly demonstrate that now is the time to change what we do in order for DMU to best serve the interests and needs of our students in the years to come. This is an opportunity for us to create an academic offer that is as attractive as possible to students who have to fit learning around their increasingly complex lives. We also need to address our low league table position and challenges around student recruitment.

Data extracted from the last Applicant Tracker (June 2021) evidenced that the prospective undergraduate domestic market favoured the 'Block' proposal, with 74% showing interest in the delivery model compared to 35% for the current approach. Research also shows an increased impact for students from diverse backgrounds or entering with lower tariffs.

We know the timelines are very tight, meaning a huge programme of work across academic and professional services teams, so we thank all colleagues for their support and collaboration. However, the issues we face mean that time is not on our side, and we must work rapidly to address some very fundamental challenges.

What are the benefits to staff?

This will allow staff to build a stronger cohort identity with one group of students at a time and help to get to know them better to support their learning. There is also greater flexibility and ability for staff to deliver deeper learning and more intensive education experiences. We also believe this new model could offer staff the flexibility to have, for example, a free block in the year and spend significant time on other activities, such as research, practice or scholarly activity. This new model also



alleviates NSS concerns related to organization and management/ timetables/ assessment deadlines, through eliminating timetable clashes.

What is changing?

Programme learning outcomes will largely stay the same. In some instances, modules that make up a programme will change. This will depend on what is currently delivered in 30-credit modules. Modules will be redesigned to allow for consecutive delivery, ensuring that students have an enriched educational experience and one that allows for their learning to be developed throughout their programme.

Are there quality controls in place?

Programmes will go through a process with focused activity on curriculum development, learning outcomes and bringing in core elements of the curriculum including decolonisation, employability and sustainability. As part of this, external examiners will be consulted, along with industry representatives and accrediting bodies. A lot of this activity will take place in 'Transformation Sprints', where programme teams will work together over a set block of time to complete the documentation. Other programme teams will be supported over a longer period with support available through drop-in sessions with stakeholders across the university. The processes have been streamlined and will end with a group validation event.

How does Education 2030 change the learning model?

From the 2022/23 academic year, where possible, the teaching on first-year undergraduate courses will focus on 30-credit modules in a semester structure delivered in sequential blocks of learning (i.e. students will study and complete assessments one module at a time rather than studying up to four modules). An additional summer period (Semester 3) will be available for postgraduate taught programmes or catch-up periods that are required. Modules for other year groups and postgraduate taught students will be phased for the subsequent years. There will also be a block break for enhancement activities. Note that the full benefits of moving to a semester structure won't be realised until the existing programmes have been phased out as we will have to run new and old programmes alongside each other for different year groups.

There will be some exceptions to this structure where there is demonstrable need. This may mean a year's delay in implementation if, for example, there is a need for additional PSRB validations, or if delivery patterns are different. It is anticipated that blocks will be delivered in seven weeks to include teaching and assessment (it is important to note that there will be no change to colleagues' contracted teaching hours in the new mode of delivery). Research from across the sector has shown that



this approach leads to improvements in student engagement, attainment and outcomes – particularly with students from the demographic groups which we are familiar with at DMU.

What is the evidence that we need to change the learning model and that ‘Block’ teaching will improve the learning and student experience and outcomes?

Clearly, the future of higher education is an ongoing, wide-ranging and vigorous debate as we respond to the challenges of the future and as we emerge from the pandemic. Our ‘Big Idea’ workshops held earlier this year with colleagues across the university looked into many different ideas of future directions for education and different ways we could deliver. JISC published their [report](#) on ‘Teaching and Learning Reimagined’ which included a number of different visions for the future. One presented is titled ‘Graphene’ where there is no formal curriculum and no schools. Instead there are ‘inquiry communities’ with students constructing problem-solving approaches with their peers and staff. Another is the ‘hyflex’, focusing on technology-enabled learning with different methods of course-delivery to suit the student. This could be an accelerated face-to-face, online only or a blended approach allowing the student to ‘earn while you learn’. These [visions](#) are interesting observations that challenge how we see the university but also can get us thinking about where we want to take our learning experiences. There are lots of research articles that have analysed the benefits of block teaching ([which you can access here](#)). The Times Higher Education also [published an article](#) on this approach, drawing on research that shows improvements in outcomes and retention from those students learning in this way. In one institution, students saw the average mark increase from 56 to 66 per cent.

Why 30 credits and not 20?

30 credits are proposed rather than 20 because more of our modules align with 15/30 than 20/40. 30 or 40 credits is also the minimum in the OfS’ pilot of the Life Long Learning Entitlement Challenge.

Why are we not moving all courses to the block model in the academic year 2022-23?

It’s not practical to move all students onto the new programmes at the same time, as it would take an enormous amount of new teaching preparation. It’s more practical to allow incoming first year students to start on the new programmes in 2022-23 with continuing students completing their current programme (for example, phased implementation which avoids consumer regulation issues). It will take three cycles for all year groups to be studying on the new programmes. We’ll also be able to take learning from the implementation of first-year modules in 2022-23 that will enhance



and expedite implementation of second year modules in 2023-24 etc. Students on the new three-year undergraduate programmes will complete the NSS in 2025.

How will staff be supported to deliver these changes?

We want to reassure you that resource will be provided to support programme teams in developing new materials and operational resources to ensure we are in the best possible position to deliver this critical piece of work. This includes a dedicated website, block teaching toolkit, regularly updated FAQs, explainer videos, case studies and much more. Each faculty will also have dedicated colleagues and experts that you can speak to directly (Christine White in ADH, Leanne de Main in BAL, James Russell in CEM and Kaushika Patel in HLS). Additional resource is being allocated to support staff with this work, whether it is administrative or academic. You should speak to your faculty lead if this is required to support the work.

Are we rushing if this is happening in 2030?

No. The strategy looks to 2030 but we will be rolling out the implementation of our new approach from 2022/2023. This is because results from the latest National Student Survey, and from other consultations we have undertaken with current and prospective student groups, indicate a clear need for change. Falling recruitment means that we can't afford to delay decision-making and we need to be responsive to the sector and our student needs.

Is this for Postgraduate taught programmes too?

Currently, Education 2030 is focusing on transforming all undergraduate programmes starting with the rollout of first-year studies in 2022. We will look to support students on postgraduate programmes with our new approach but this is not happening within this academic year. PGR is delivered in a very different way and not currently within the scope of this project.

What about PSRBs (Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies)?

Delivery in a block format or in 30-credit modules may not be barriers for our PSRB programmes. We will be liaising with our professional bodies as part of the processes. However, transforming the programmes may mean the need for additional accreditation and this may delay implementation until the year after. This will be managed within faculties.



What about apprenticeships and partners?

The changes made are treated as any changes to curriculum would be. Those leading in these areas have or are having conversations with partners and apprenticeship teams to inform of the project and also to discuss any impact that it may have on their areas.

What if I have no idea how to teach in a block?

Throughout the consultations, we've discovered many colleagues who have spoken about teaching in blocks with lots of lessons to share. A toolkit of resources will shortly be launched that will help colleagues think about delivering within seven-week blocks and what kind of assessment strategies work best. We will also be running a series of workshops to help you think about this form of delivery.

How will exceptions work?

Through consultations with colleagues, it is evident that one size does not always fit all and we want to empower colleagues to deliver best within this format. There may be some exceptions that need to be granted for delivery in 2x15-credit modules in one block in a year or 2 x 30-credit modules being taught in parallel. There may also be some delays to starting the programmes if additional PSRB validations are needed. These will all be treated as exceptions and will be managed in faculty with the faculty leads. Possible exceptions may be:

- Delay of implementation until 2023/2024. This will only be granted if the PSRB requires an additional validation that means the programme cannot be approved within this academic year.
- One 30-credit block in an academic year needing to be delivered as 2x15-credit modules.
- Two 30-credit modules being taught in parallel in one semester in an academic year.

How will this be coordinated in schools?

Each faculty has a lead (Christine White in ADH, Leanne de Main in BAL, James Russell in CEM and Kaushika Patel in HLS). They will be supported in faculty by ADAs and APQs. School leads are being identified to work with programme and module leaders to review all programmes. There is additional resource to support schools and administration within faculties.

How will this be coordinated in professional services?



This is a transformational project that will impact all aspects of the university. There are a number of different workstreams that cover these from Operations to Communications, and Staff Support and Experience to Student Experience.

How do I share my ideas and get involved in the project?

If you have any ideas or feedback, please contact the Education 2030 team. You can share your thoughts at education2030@dmu.ac.uk. [Further details can be found here](#) and we hope to update colleagues regularly on the work we are doing on Education 2030, so please look out for central and local communications in the coming months.