

CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1. Introduction

The University of Exeter Credit and Qualifications Framework is a University policy that provides a structure for all modules and programmes leading to taught awards and Professional Doctorates of the University of Exeter. Doctoral programmes that do not operate on a credit structure are also included for information. The CQF is owned by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience).

The CQF is effective from 2014/5. The regulations covering progression, award and other relevant factors are detailed in [the University's Calendar](#) and the Handbook for Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes.

Chapter 2 – Definitions

2. Definitions

Terms used in the Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQF) are defined as follows:

Academic credit	<p>Credit is awarded to a learner on successful completion of a module. The minimum academic credit allocated to a module is 5 credits. Subsequent credit allocations shall be in further multiples of 5, with 15, 30, 45, 60 and 90-credit modules being the norm. Also see notional study hours below.</p> <p>Where academic credit awarded by the University of Exeter is to be converted to European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits, this occurs on the basis of one CQF academic credit being the equivalent to 0.5 ECTS credits regardless of the academic level of the academic credit. The academic level and mark are not converted. Incoming ECTS credits are incorporated in accordance with the requirements for the programme, and where applicable, the collaboration. Further guidance on credit value and ECTS is found within the Approval and Revision of Taught Modules and Programmes Handbook.</p> <p>A student cannot take more than the credits required for a programme, stage or award. Any exceptions to this must be reviewed and approved by the Dean for Taught Students, in consultation with the Student Records Data Manager. Approved exceptions include: International Summer School, modules utilised in the MRes Health and Wellbeing programme which forms part of the Economic and Social Research Council South West Doctoral Training Partnership, and Professional Development Experience modules, which do not contribute towards degree progression or award.</p>
------------------------	--

	Credits gained during study are still awarded if a student fails, and are displayed on the transcript/Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).
Academic level	<p>Each module or programme has an associated academic level that reflects its depth, complexity, amount of pre-requisite knowledge, and the academic skills required to pass it. The academic level of a module is informed by the subject for that module and remains constant for all programmes within which it occurs.</p> <p>The academic levels used at the University of Exeter are the national levels as set in the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) for general and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual in England:</p> <p>Level 3: Foundation Certificate (FDCert)</p> <p>Level 4: Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)</p> <p>Level 5: Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)/Foundation Degree (FD)</p> <p>Level 6: Degree with Honours</p> <p>Level 7: Master's Degree, Integrated Master's Degree</p> <p>Level 8: Doctorate</p> <p>See Chapter 9 - Academic Credit Requirements for Award within the CQF Handbook for more information on the awards listed above.</p>
Accredited prior learning (APL)	Exemption from modules on the basis of certified learning (APCL) or on the basis of non-certified acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge, gained through relevant experience (APEL).

Assessment Criteria	<p>Descriptions of what the learner will have to demonstrate in order that learning outcomes specific to a module have been achieved. The purpose of assessment criteria is to establish clear and unambiguous standards of achievement in respect of each learning outcome. Each individual assessment point will have specific assessment criteria. See Chapter 4 - Generic University Assessment Criteria for Taught Programmes within the Learning and Teaching Support Handbook for more information.</p> <p>Level descriptors are used as a guide during this process. See Chapter 7 - Academic Level within the CQF Handbook for more information.</p>
Award	<p>Undergraduate and graduate certificates and diplomas, bachelors' honours and ordinary degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas, integrated undergraduate and postgraduate masters' degrees, and graduate research degrees. The awards offered by the University are detailed in the Calendar.</p>
Condonement	<p>The process that allows an Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee to award credit to a student, to permit progression or award, despite failure to achieve a pass mark. See Chapter 8 - Progression of the Assessment, Awarding and Progression Handbook for more information.</p>
Module	<p>A self-contained block of teaching and learning leading to the award of academic credit.</p>

Notional study hours	<p>The number of hours required to complete an academic credit point, module, or programme. One academic credit point is equivalent to 10 notional study hours, therefore a 15-credit module represents 150 notional study hours, comprising scheduled learning and teaching, guided independent study and placements. A year of undergraduate Bachelor's study equates to 1200 hours of full-time study (120 credits) and a year of taught postgraduate Master's study equates to 1800 hours of full-time study (180 credits).</p> <p>In accordance with the Office for Students definitions, all full-time programmes should normally:</p> <p>Require involvement in study* for at least 21 hours per week for at least 24 weeks per year, and</p> <p>Involve modules normally to a value of at least 120 credits per year.</p> <p>Programmes with a time and/ or credit threshold beneath that stipulated above for full-time study should be considered to be part time programmes.</p> <p>*This includes guided independent study.</p> <p>For Degree and Higher Apprenticeship programmes, please see the Special Provisions information for further guidance.</p>
Programme of study (programme)	<p>A grouping of modules approved by Senate or its delegated authority, and leading to an award of the University of Exeter. The approved curriculum is typically defined on the programme specification.</p>
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)	<p>An expression contained within a programme specification of what a typical learner will have achieved on successful completion of the programme. Programme outcomes are related to the qualification level and will relate to the sum of the experience of learners on a particular programme.</p>

Stage	The sub-division of a programme of study into major steps of progression; stages are commonly consistent with academic years. (please refer to the Annex for exceptions) Each stage provides a coherent learning experience and may be recognised with an interim exit award. Normally, modules within a stage will be at the same level, but modules at different levels may be taken within the same stage, as specified in the programme specification
Total credit value	The total amount of academic credit required for an award.

Chapter 3 - Scope

3. Scope

The Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQF) applies to all taught awards and the programmes and modules leading to those awards, and also to Professional Doctorates. Some postgraduate taught modules that contribute to graduate research degrees and research studies training may also be credit-rated in accordance with the CQF.

Chapter 4 - Relationship to the Calendar

4. Relationship to the Calendar

The Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQF) informs curriculum design and structure and the way in which the University understands and expresses its academic standards. The CQF reflects the University's Calendar and is expressed in the Handbook for Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes and in individual programme and module specifications.

Chapter 5 - Notional Study

5. Notional Study

Notional study hours represent the entirety of student effort required to undertake and complete a module; this includes all aspects of learning and teaching activity such as:

- a) Classroom-based activities
- b) Self-directed learning, coursework assessments
- c) Preparations for invigilated assessment
- d) Practical work
- e) Laboratory work
- f) Clinical skills practice.

Chapter 6 - Modules

6. Modules

Programme specifications and module descriptors describe those modules that students may or may not select as part of their programme.

Modules may have different designations, as described in the table below:

Compulsory module	A module that must be taken to meet requirements for progression or award. Compulsory modules can be condoned.
Non-condonable compulsory module	A module that must be taken and passed to meet requirements for progression or award or as a requirement of a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB). Non-condonable compulsory modules cannot be condoned. Additionally, individual module assessments may also be defined as non-condonable.
Optional module	A non-compulsory module that is identified in the programme specification and may be taken for a particular programme subject to specified minimum and maximum credit values. Optional modules can be condoned.
Elective module	A non-compulsory module that is not identified in the programme specification but may be taken to increase modularity , subject to specified maximum credit values. Elective modules can be condoned.
Pre-requisite module	A specified module that must be taken before a subsequent specified module can be taken.
Co-requisite module	A module that must be taken at the same time as another specified module.
Overlapping module	A module that has similar content to another module and cannot be taken if the other module is taken.

Chapter 7 - Academic Level

7. Academic Level

Each approved module has one academic level. Where modules share significant elements of content and teaching, each module is approved separately at the appropriate academic level. Each module should be distinguished by different learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment that reflect the academic level. Two modules can share the same teaching while being assessed at different levels. They will have different identifying codes and will differ in the learning outcomes that relate to the appropriate levels and there will be different assessment criteria.

Where it is academically desirable, programmes may be designed so that students are able to take modules at different academic levels in the same developmental year. Programme specifications should indicate clearly where such flexibility exists (see tables in Chapter 9 for information on minimum and maximum credit requirements).

In support of the approved academic levels, the University of Exeter has adopted qualification descriptors in line with the QAA guidelines as described in the tables below. These descriptors indicate the principal outcomes that a student should be able to demonstrate following the completion of an award at a designated level.

Level 3	
Students successfully completing programme requirements at Level 3 will have demonstrated:	
a.	That they have a knowledge and skills base of conceptual and factual knowledge with some appreciation of the field of study and of the terminology used.
b.	An ability to work with that knowledge and skills (analyse, synthesise, evaluate and apply) independently in a range of complex activities or with guidance when working with greater complexity.

Level 4	
Students successfully completing programme requirements at Level 4 will have demonstrated:	
a.	Knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their areas of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study.
b.	An ability to present, evaluate, and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.

Level 5	
Students successfully completing programme requirements at Level 5 will have demonstrated:	
a.	Knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed.
b.	An ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context.
c.	Knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s), and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study.
d.	An understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

Level 6	
Students successfully completing programme requirements at Level 6 will have demonstrated:	
a)	A systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including the acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline.
b)	An ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline.
c)	Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
	i) to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline;
	ii) to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline.
d)	An appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge.
e)	The ability to manage their own learning and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary resources (e.g. refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

Level 7	
Students successfully completing programme requirements at Level 7 will have demonstrated:	
a.	A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice.
b.	A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.
c.	Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.
d.	Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
	i) to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline;
	ii) to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Level 8	
Students successfully completing programme requirements at Level 8 will have demonstrated:	
a)	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.
b)	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice.
c)	The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
d)	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques and advanced academic enquiry.

Chapter 8 - Assessment and Award of Academic Credit

8. Assessment and Award of Academic Credit

All assessment for a programme is organised within modules and is designed to test the learning outcomes for the module in question.

The award of academic credit relates to achievement in individual modules. Academic credit is awarded to candidates who have passed the module in question. It is possible to award academic credit in the event of module failure where the Assessment Handbook provides for it. The outcome is known as 'Fail (Condoned), academic credit awarded'.

The academic credit awarded is that approved for the module; the amount of academic credit awarded does not vary in accordance with the level of achievement. The level of achievement is reflected by the module mark.

Where a student is required to repeat a module, the academic credit replaces the credit for the original attempt.

Chapter 9 - Academic Credit Requirements for Award

9. Academic Credit Requirements for Award

Each academic award has a total credit value. The total credit value includes a minimum amount of credit that is required at the academic level of the award and the maximum amount of credit permissible at the lowest academic level.

The University's Credit and Qualifications Framework summarises the amount and level of credit required to receive a University award; details for each award are outlined in the CQF Annex A: University of Exeter Higher Education Awards 2024-25.

The amount and level of credit specified in the tables in CQF Annex A: University of Exeter Higher Education Awards 2024-25 **should** be regarded as the minimum. If a Faculty wishes to diverge from these amounts, they must seek University level approval, through the Dean for Taught Students or the Dean of Postgraduate Research, as appropriate.

The tables in Annex A should be read in conjunction with [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Awarding Bodies](#). The University's Credit and Qualifications Framework will apply in cases where the credit requirement at the University is higher than that stated in the national credit framework.

Chapter 10 - Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**10. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**

The Assessment Handbook makes provision for admission with Accredited Prior Learning (APL). APL is the process whereby students are exempted from some parts of their chosen programme of academic study by recognition of their learning from previous experiences and achievements. APL is granted as either Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL) or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

Chapter 11 - Intercalated Programmes

11. Intercalated Programmes

Students who have successfully completed the second year of the Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery (BMBS) programme at the University of Exeter, or equivalent at another appropriate medical, veterinary or dental institution, may apply to undertake an undergraduate intercalated degree programme at the University of Exeter.

Students who have successfully completed at least the third year of the BMBS programme at the University of Exeter, or equivalent at another appropriate medical, veterinary or dental institution, may apply to undertake either an undergraduate or one-year postgraduate intercalated degree programme at the University of Exeter.

Undergraduate intercalated programmes allow for Accredited Prior 'Certified' Learning (APCL) for the first two years of the programme, i.e. 240 academic credit points. The curriculum for medical, veterinary or dental degrees is set out by the General Medical Council, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the General Dental Council and is, therefore, largely consistent across institutions.

Therefore, for undergraduate intercalated programmes the RQF level of applicants' previous medical, veterinary or dental studies need not be considered during APCL. APCL is not needed for postgraduate intercalation in a one-year course because the student takes the programme in its entirety. The intercalated year does not count towards the academic credit requirements for BMBS or other substantive award.

BSc (Hons) Intercalated/BA (Hons) Intercalated should be used as the distinct award titles for intercalated Bachelor's degree programmes.

Chapter 12 – Award of Undergraduate Degrees ‘With Proficiency in/ Advanced Proficiency in’

12. Award of Undergraduate Degrees 'with Proficiency in'

Modules taken for the ‘with Proficiency in [Named Subject]’ pathway must be taken at two different levels and must be passed*. Condoned modules will not count towards qualification for the ‘with Proficiency’ degree title.

Students satisfying these criteria must confirm with their Faculty in advance of final awarding, that they wish for their award title to include the ‘with Proficiency in [Named Subject]’ wording.

Proposals for new ‘with Proficiency in [Named Subject]’ streams should be made using the proposal form, accompanied by any relevant module descriptors.

For information on applying for the inclusion of any other variants or pathways, please refer to the Programme Approval Handbook.

*Please see below for specific requirements relating to ‘with proficiency in advanced language’

12.1 Proficiency in Language/Advanced Language

Undergraduate students successfully passing a minimum of 60 credits of spoken language modules taken in a single foreign language alongside their main degree subject may have the words ‘with Proficiency in [Named Foreign Language]’ added to their degree title on the recommendation of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies or the Modern Languages Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees. They may also have the words ‘with Proficiency in Advanced [Named Foreign Language]’ applied instead, if they pass a minimum of 60 credits of Foreign Language Centre modules at Academic Level 6 or 60 credits of advanced Modern Language modules at Academic Levels 4 or 5, following the language progression routes used in the Department of Modern Languages. This will be on the recommendation of the Modern Languages Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee.

12.2 Proficiency in Social Data Science

Undergraduate students successfully passing a minimum of 60 credits of modules taken from approved lists in the appropriate programme specifications may have the

words 'with Proficiency in Social Data Science' added to their degree title on the recommendation of the relevant Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee.

12.3 Proficiency in Entrepreneurship

Undergraduate students successfully passing a minimum of 60 credits of modules taken from approved lists in the appropriate programme specifications may have the words 'with Proficiency in Entrepreneurship' added to their degree title on the recommendation of the relevant Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee. Further clarification can be found on the [Centre for Entrepreneurship webpages](#).

12.4 Proficiency in Leadership

Undergraduate students successfully passing a minimum of 60 credits of modules taken from approved lists in the appropriate programme specifications may have the words 'with Proficiency in Leadership' added to their degree title on the recommendation of the relevant Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee. Further clarification can be found on the [Centre for Leadership webpages](#).

12.5 Proficiency in Law

Undergraduate students successfully passing a minimum of 60 credits of modules taken from approved lists in the appropriate programme specifications may have the words 'with Proficiency in Law' added to their degree title on the recommendation of the relevant Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee. Further clarification can be found on the [Exeter Law School Cornwall webpages](#).

12.6 With Proficiency in Data Science

Undergraduate students successfully passing a minimum of 60 credits of modules taken from approved lists in the appropriate programme specifications may have the words 'with Proficiency in Data Science' added to their degree title on the recommendation of the relevant Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee. Further clarification can be found on the Computer Science webpages.

Chapter 13 - Combined (Joint), Major/Minor and Triple Honours and Integrated Masters Undergraduate Degree Programmes

13. Combined (Joint), Major/Minor and Triple Honours and Integrated Masters Undergraduate Degree Programmes

Programmes may be developed that comprise more than one subject. The balance of subjects may be organised so that the overall programme is delivered on a major/minor, combined(joint) or triple basis. The maximum number of subjects that may be combined to achieve a given named programme is normally two; however, where the programme regulations permit, a student may take modules from a wider range of subject areas.

In developing undergraduate curricula, subjects are combined according to the following rules to provide for major/minor, combined(joint) and triple combinations (see tables below for more complete rules):

a. Combined (Joint) honours

A combination where there is an approximately equal balance between two subjects; each subject contributes at least 30 academic credit points at the level of the award.

b. Major/Minor honours

A combination where the minor subject accounts for at least a quarter of the programme and the major subject accounts for at most three-quarters of the programme; the major subject contributes at least 30 academic credits at the level of the award, and the minor subject area contributes at least 15 academic credit points at the level of the award (the subject ratio is between 2:1 and 3:1).

c. Triple (three subjects) honours

A combination where there is approximately an equal balance between three subjects; each subject contributes at least 15 academic credit points at the level of the award.

d. Single honours

Those programmes that are approved as a single entity. A single honours programme may comprise one subject or may reflect a combination of subjects presented as an integrated whole. The title of a single honours award reflects the nature of the programme's curriculum and outcomes; it does not need to follow the conventions identified above but should normally include some study at the level of the award in any named subject.

3-year Bachelors or 4-year Bachelors including year out (the year out does not contribute when calculating the credit weight of the component subjects)				
Credit requirement	Maximum credits per subject	Minimum credits per subject	Overall minimum credits required at level 6	Minimum credits per subject required at level 6
Single honours	360	360	90	n/a
Combined (Joint)	210	150	90	30
Major	270	240	90	30
Minor	120	90	90	15
Triple (1:1:1)	150	90	90	15

4-year integrated Masters				
Credit requirement	Maximum credits per subject	Minimum credits per subject	Overall minimum credits required at levels 6 and 7	Minimum credits per subject required at level 6
Single honours	480	480	210 at levels 6 and 7 with a minimum of 120 at level 7	n/a
Combined (Joint)	270	210	211 at levels 6 and 7 with a minimum of 120 at level 7	30
Major	360	315	212 at levels 6 and 7 with a minimum of 120 at level 7	30
Minor	175	120	213 at levels 6 and 7 with a minimum of 120 at level 7	15

Triple (1:1:1)	190	120	214 at levels 6 and 7 with a minimum of 120 at level 7	15
----------------	-----	-----	--	----

For joint programmes, the conjunction 'and' is used to join the two subjects, with the two subjects listed as approved in the programme specification.

For major/minor programmes the major subject is listed first in the name of the award and the conjunction 'with' is used to join the two subjects.

For triple (three-subject) programmes the subjects are listed as approved in the programme specification with a comma separating the first two subjects and the conjunction 'and' used before the listing of the third subject.

e. Flexible Combined Honours

Allows the combination of two or more subjects in a flexible manner which does not duplicate any existing 'established' Combined Honours programme. A single subject, known as a 'themed pathway', which is different from any existing Single Honours programme, can also be created. The titles of the award indicate the programme's content and use appropriate conjunction terms ('and', 'with' or commas) to reflect the proportions of the curriculum studied (see [FCH degree rules](#)).

3-year Bachelors or 4-year Bachelors including year out (the year out does not contribute when calculating the credit weight of the component subjects)	
Description	Credit required
Overall credits	360
Overall minimum credits at level 6	90
Overall maximum credits at level 4 (with the permission of the Director of Flexible Combined Honours, students are able to take up to 180 credits at level 4)	150
Minimum credits for a subject (non-language) to be mentioned in the degree title. Credits are accrued in the second and/ or final stage; Stage 1 credits do not normally influence the degree title. Credits do not have to achieve a particular level.	60

Minimum credits for a language to be mentioned in the degree title. Credits can be accrued in the first, second or final stage. Credits do not have to achieve a particular level, but the degree title may reflect the level passed.	60
Minimum credits overall in each subject of a two-subject programme in the second and/ or final stages for the conjunction 'and' to be used between the subjects. The subjects do not need to achieve credits at a particular level.	105
Number of credits overall in a subject in the second and/ or final stages for it to be preceded by the conjunction 'with' in the degree title. The subject does not need to achieve credits at a particular level.	between 60 and 90
For degrees that combine more than two subjects, the relative subject proportions in the second and final stages are used to determine the appropriate use of the conjunctions 'and' and 'with' or commas to separate subject names; Stage 1 may be relevant, e.g. if languages have been studied. The subjects do not need to achieve credits at particular levels, but the level passed may be reflected in the title. There are no set proportions of subject credits for such programmes.	variable
Minimum overall credits for a single subject pathway in the second and final stages.	180 and the remaining 60 credits are not in one subject; otherwise, the programme becomes a major/minor.

f. Liberal Arts

Students select one subject in which to specialise (the Major) and select modules from other disciplines within the "Arts" across Humanities and Social Sciences to create a flexible and bespoke field of study.

3-year Bachelors or 4-year Bachelors including year out (the year out does not contribute when calculating the credit weight of the component subjects)	
Description	Credit required
Overall credits	360
Overall minimum credits at level 6	90
Overall maximum credits at level 4 (with the permission of the Director of Liberal Arts, students are able to take up to 180 credits at level 4)	150
Minimum credits for a subject (non-language) to be mentioned in the degree title. Credits are accrued in the second and/ or final stage; Stage 1 credits do not normally influence the degree title. Credits do not have to achieve a particular level, however, the following credit requirements must be met: First stage: 30 credits taken from the Major subject pathway. Second stage: 60 credits taken from the Major subject pathway. Final stage: 90 credits taken from the Major subject pathway, which must include a 30-credit dissertation module from the Major subject pathway or a Liberal Arts dissertation.	180
Minimum credits for a language to be mentioned in the degree title as outlined in the guidance for the Proficiency/ Advanced Proficiency in Language. Credits can be accrued in the first, second or final stage. Credits do not have to achieve a particular level, but the degree title may reflect the level passed.	60