Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk

Chapter 3 - Flexible frameworks and building blocks

Barbara Workman and Darryll Bravenboer

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:
- Be introduced to the key components central to designing a work-based curriculum framework
- Consider what a framework could offer to your learners, your Institution and your employer partners
- Consider how work-based frameworks incorporate flexible approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in response to a variety of professional contexts for higher-level learning
- See how flexible work-based frameworks can construct awards from short courses to full degrees, incorporating accreditation of in-company training, prior experiential and certificated learning, work-based projects and other learning activities
- Become familiar with the differences between programme approval and academic accreditation for organisations and individuals and how these contribute to the operation of a work-based framework
- Understand the academic infrastructure that is required to support a validated work-based curriculum framework, including QAA and Professional Body standards, the use of work-based level descriptors, institutional quality policies and procedures

Frameworks to support a flexible response

Designing a flexible and responsive work-based programme that meets the needs of the learner, employers and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), can present a number of challenges to the design and development team. The use of a curriculum model within higher education (HE) is, surprisingly, unusual as traditional academic programmes tend to emerge from a subject specialism located within an HEI rather than a curriculum philosophy. Work-based learning is predicated on the notion that people learn as they work and that this learning can be equivalent to that which takes place in HE. The study of this learning that emerges from work typically crosses traditional academic disciplinary boundaries; for example, 'management' is relevant to most areas of practice. This means that the starting place for thinking about how this learning can be recognised is not necessarily in terms of its academic subject content but rather those aspects of higher-level learning that are 'transdisciplinary' (McGregor and Volckmann 2011, Bravenboer and Workman, 2015). Consequently, a work-based curriculum 'framework' is a means to construct a learning pathway that can be recognised by HEIs and lead to the award of HE qualifications. This chapter discusses the key components of a work-based curriculum framework, its benefits, and how you can create a framework that is adaptable and responsive to learning in the workplace.

Curriculum philosophy

A work-based curriculum philosophy informs the teaching, learning and assessment strategies that are used to deliver the programme. The curriculum may be located within a process model (Sheehan 1986) that promotes personal and professional development and learning, with a focus on evidence and outcomes of the learning process. Many HEIs offering work-based studies style programmes build upon the ideas behind Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle to create modules appropriate for working students (Workman and Garnett 2009, Workman and White, 2015, Bravenboer and Workman, 2015). A humanistic and andragogical learning and teaching approach is used to engage with adult work-based learners, enabling recognition and accreditation of prior knowledge and experience, responsive to your learners' own learning needs and personal motivations (see Chapter 2 and Workman 2009). It builds upon your learners' own learning and working experience, enabling them to develop their understanding of knowledge that they have created in the workplace, thereby being socially constructed (Brown and Duguid 2001) and promoting autonomous

learning. It enhances and capitalises on experience from the workplace, peers, colleagues, tutors and other learners, thus introducing the concepts of professional networking (Uzzi & Dunlap 2005) and communities of practice (Wenger 2006). This promotes skills for lifelong learning and development which will continue after the qualification has been completed.

The work-based curriculum framework therefore needs to:
- Specialise and localise your learner's own work-based learning as the subject of study through the development of reflective practice.
- Situate your learner's work-based learning within wider practice contexts through negotiated engagement with communities of practitioners, employers, co-workers, collaborators, stakeholders, clients, academic tutors and others implicated in a specific area of work/practice.
- Develop trans-disciplinary approaches to work-based learning that support and promote innovation and enhancement of work/practice.

Designing a curriculum framework

An HE curriculum framework can be designed to lead to HE qualifications ranging from small awards such as a University Certificate, to larger awards such as Bachelors or Master's degrees. A curriculum framework also provides the guiding principles, academic architecture and rules of combination that set the parameters within which programmes of study can be constructed. For work-based learning, ensuring academic coherence is an essential component as programmes are usually designed around the needs of work-based learners who are working within a specific organisational, professional or industry sector. A curriculum framework must, therefore, be sufficiently flexible to reflect these diverse work contexts but also provide a means to establish coherent programmes of higher-level learning (Table 3.1).

A flexible curriculum framework can be used to:
- promote and foster skills of learning to learn, such as information search and retrieval and critical reading, study skills and literature search
- create opportunities for your students to review and reflect on previous experience and create claims for the accreditation of prior learning (RPL, APEL) (see chapter 5)
- facilitate the excavation of personal and professional learning through reflective models and exercises, leading to identification of future learning and development needs and enable the discovery and critique of new information
- foster creative approaches to generating innovative solutions and enhancing work practices; through problem solving, critical thinking, project work, inquiry skills and networking

Table 3.1 Characteristics of work-based frameworks

Framework Characteristic	Purpose
Customisation, negotiation and approval of programmes (and award titles without repeated validation - see also Chapter 7)	- Responsiveness to organisational/ individual learning needs - Efficiency of programme approval process - Enables a 'roll-on/roll-off approach to programme development

Work-based Level Descriptors, such as SEEC (2010), FEHQ (QAA 2008), Institutional Level Descriptors	• Provides benchmarking against work-based learning characteristics and FHEQ descriptors • Provides reference point for learning outcomes and assessment criteria • Locates work-based study within the programme
'**Negotiated', 'open' or 'shell' modules** of a variety of sizes, adaptable for a range of work-based contexts.	• Negotiated modules can be customised to reflect a specific area of work/practice • Can be used as benchmarking for APEL/RPL claims in terms of the volume and level of credit sought • Enables flexible adaptation to work-based contexts and professional development needs
Mechanisms to facilitate and incorporate Accreditation of Prior Learning from experience, certification, or recognition of in-company training as equivalent to HE level learning (See Chapter 5).	• Facilitates incorporation of prior learning through a process and/or modules to make an APEL/RPL claim. • Organisations gain accreditation of in-company training through HEI procedures that are incorporated into an HE qualification. • Specific amounts of accredited learning are recognised within awards by institutional regulations (normally between a half to two thirds of the award)
Work-based modules at varying levels and credit sizes, ready validated, minimal barred combinations, providing a variety of work-based learning skills and topics.	• Enables entry points at all academic levels 4-7) to work towards small and large awards, through a 'mix and match' approach to module combinations. • Promotes learning from a starting point of reflection upon self /personal learning progressing towards professional learning and development. • Facilitates investigation, critical analysis and evaluation skills within a work-based context reflecting appropriate academic levels.

Approval process for individual programme learning agreements/ contracts (see Chapter 7) and organisational learning agreement pathways.	• Demonstrates coherence of individual or organisation focused programme pathways through a formal quality process. • Ensures qualification titles appropriately reflect the relevant area of work/practice, do not conflict with professional award titles or other HE programmes.
Incorporation of subject-based modules from other HE programmes or disciplines, within specific credit and time constraints (see Chapter 5).	• Facilitates learners to pursue appropriate topics of specialist interest within their programme. • Reduces duplication of learning time and effort if learning is still current (usually within 5 years), or still used in current role.
Incorporates relevant content Reflective learning 'Learning to learn' techniques, Negotiated learning and personal/ professional development Ethics of being a worker-learner Critical analysis and research skills Creative, problem-solving and project management skills Professional networking skills Authentic work-based assessment	• Topics are trans-disciplinary, and therefore transferable to a wide range of work contexts. • Subject knowledge is located within the workplace, enabling learners to maximise their learning opportunities, through work-based activities/ projects/ inquiry and research. • Develops key work-based learning skills, which support employment and progression.
Quality processes and Infrastructure Identify student learning support systems Tutor and work-based mentor roles Staff development requirements Organisational links through tutors Liaison with records department Finance department and quality processes Easy and distance access to learning resources	• Develops effective networks to support work-based learners who study (mainly) off campus. • Ensures administration systems in place support the 'non-traditional' work-based learner and keep key personnel updated with programme developments. • Ensures effective working and supportive relationships for learning between the HEI, the employer and student. • On-going staff development for example in use of APEL/RPL, Facilitation skills, distance and open learning resources.

Source: Adapted from Willis (2008)

Initial considerations for creating a framework

When creating a new framework you need to check for flexibility, coherence and validity, as well as the ethical implications of the proposed programme of study (see Appendix i for further details). Answering the following key questions will provide a good starting point:

ACTIVITY In your role as tutor try to consciously adopt reflective learning methods yourself; this will maximise reciprocal learning and help you to better understand your WBL students. Go through the stages outlined below:	
How much academic credit will the HE qualification carry?	
What level will the credit be at?	
How much credit gained from external sources and/ or from prior learning can be recognised?	
How many modules or units of study are required to construct the proposed programme?	
What do your institution's regulations and level descriptors state regarding the use and combination of modules and academic credit?	
Similarly, what do external reference points state, for example; QFQUAL, QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ); SEEC Level Descriptors; QAA Subject Benchmarking Statements?	
What appropriate reference points have you used to inform taught components, for a given academic level and qualification and area of professional practice?	

Key Components of a WBL framework

Many facets need to be considered when devising a framework; as well as the above characteristics, a WBL framework needs to include certain key components.

When designing a work-based curriculum framework, an essential component is 'Building Blocks', the inclusion of modules with different credit values (10, 15, 20, 30 and so on), at each academic level that can be combined to create various qualifications. This use of variable amounts of credit from different sources builds learning pathways, which then lead to the qualifications available within the framework. Traditional degree programmes do not tend to build in the recognition of external learning (although the majority of HEIs are able to do this, via RPL processes). Table 3.2 (below) summarises the amount and levels of credit for

qualifications used by most HEIs and includes the standard awards described within the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

Work-based learners bring their current and previous learning from work to their programme; this influences how programmes are planned and constructed, including the syllabus approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Additionally, your work-based learners may or may not meet traditional HE entry requirements but will usually be able to demonstrate their potential to successfully complete a programme through other forms of evidence, such as:

- the level of responsibility within their work role, for example leading or supervising others;
- professional or vocational qualifications;
- continuing professional development activity;
- the number of years of experience in relevant work;
- reports or data from significant work projects.

Design philosophy
- A focus on the development and recognition of the learning that emerges from work
- Personal and professional development
- Social construction of knowledge and skills,
- Humanist and andragogical learning theories

Architecture
- Common academic level descriptors (eg SEEC, HEI descriptors)
- Common metric for the volume of learning (eg 1 credit = 10 learning hours)
- Academic and professional standards benchmarks (QAA FHEQ, PSRBs)
- HEI qualification regulations, policies and procedures

Building Blocks
- A variety of module sizes and types at each academic level
- Rules of combination for modules to meet qualification requirements
- Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning
- Accreditation of external learning activity
- Approval of negotiated learning pathways and choice of options

Learning Strategies
- Reflection on practice and self review of learning development
- Programme learning agreements / contracts
- Inquiry and research skills
- Critical engagement wirh professional networks
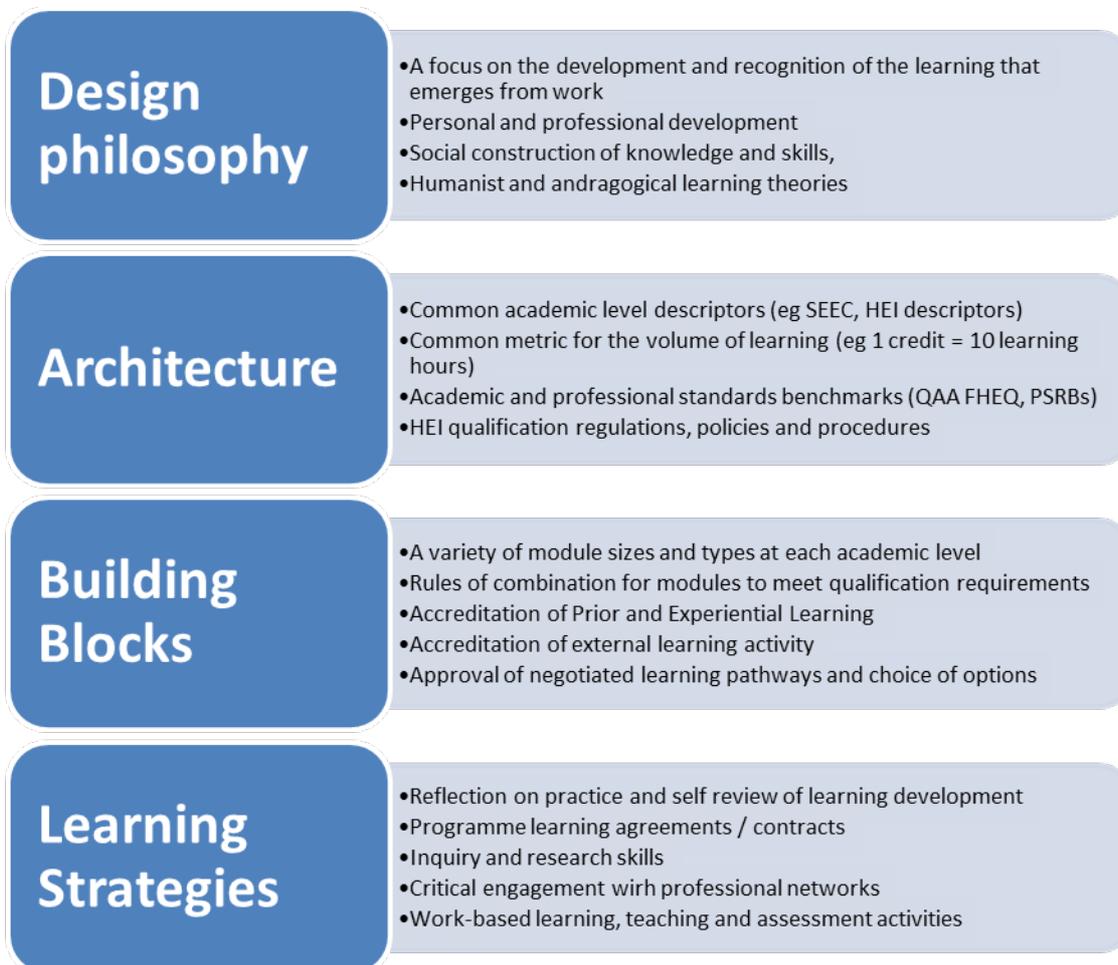- Work-based learning, teaching and assessment activities
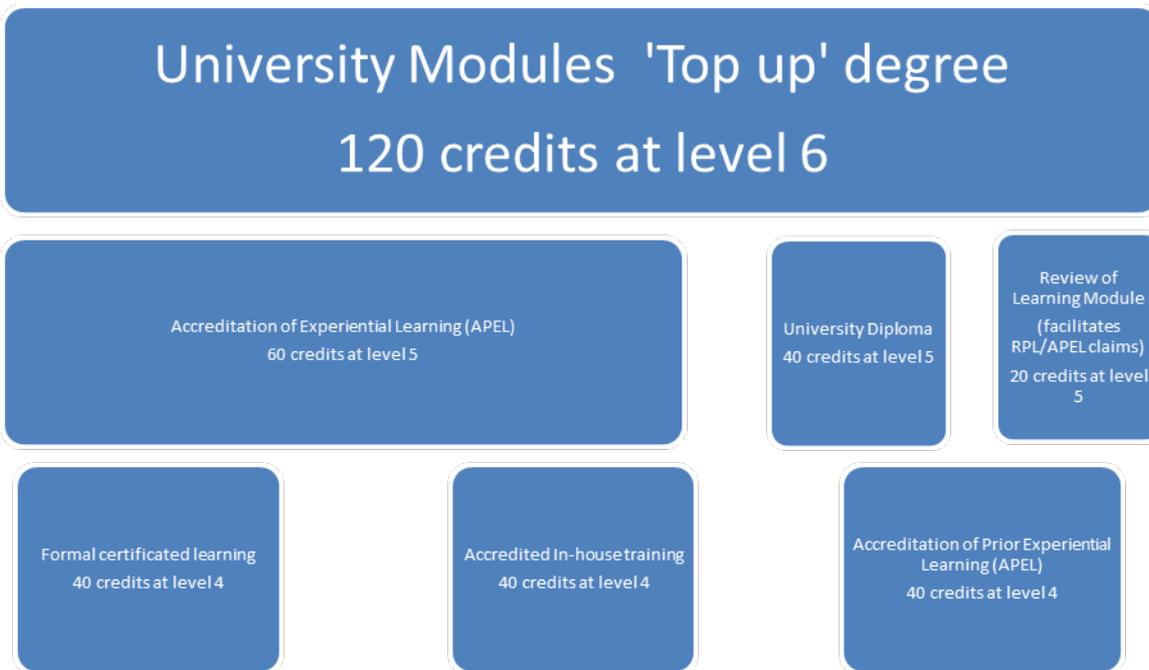
Figure 3.1: Key Components of a Work-based Curriculum

Table 3.2: Credit distribution leading to HE Qualifications

HE Qualification	Academic Level	Total credits required for award
University Certificate	4	40
Certificate of Higher Education (Cert HE) Higher National Certificate (HNC)	4	120
University Diploma	5	40
Professional Diploma	5	120
Diploma of Higher Education (Dip HE) Foundation Degree (Fd) Higher National Diploma (HND)	4 & 5	120 @ L4, 120 @ L5 =240
Graduate Certificate (Grad Cert)	6	60
Graduate Diploma (Grad Dip)	6	120
Ordinary Bachelors degree (BA, BSc)	4, 5 & 6	120 @ L 4 120 @ L5 60 @ L6 = 300
Bachelors degree with Honours (BA (Hons), BSc (Hons)	4, 5 & 6	120 @ L4 120 @ L5 120 @ L6 = 360
Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert)	7	60
Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip)	7	120
Taught Master's Degrees (MA, MSc, MEng)	7	180
Professional Doctorates (credit based) (DProf, DPych)	7 & 8	180 @ L 7 360 @ L 8 = 540

This kind of evidence can highlight a significant degree of higher-level learning, so far not formally recognised. Work-based programmes are designed with entry criteria that recognises such prior learning, to avoid duplication of learning. Figure 3.2 shows a work-based framework incorporating a combination of study from work, through accreditation of prior experiential and certificated learning (APEL/RPL), and accreditation of in-company training as small HE awards. This individual learner accessed a final year 'top up' programme to achieve an Honours degree.

The components of a work-based framework need to incorporate appropriate structures and processes to enable customisation of a learner's or organisation's work-based pathway, using the framework to combine modules and credits in variable sizes, transferable through the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS). Transfer of academic credit is calculated using a common metric for establishing both academic

level and volume of learning. The number of credits that form a module is based on notional hours of learning (10 learning hours per 1 credit) with achievement of the stated learning outcomes for each specific academic level of study. These learning outcomes may be subject-specific or 'trans-disciplinary'.

University Modules 'Top up' degree
120 credits at level 6

Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL)
60 credits at level 5

University Diploma
40 credits at level 5

Review of Learning Module
(facilitates RPL/APEL claims)
20 credits at level 5

Formal certificated learning
40 credits at level 4

Accredited In-house training
40 credits at level 4

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
40 credits at level 4

Figure 3.2 – Using a framework to construct a personalised work-based degree programme

Recognising learning from outside of the classroom, in a credit-based approach, means that work-based programmes are designed to reflect your learner's needs and prior learning achievements rather than being predetermined by the academic subject curriculum. Workforce development programmes for organisations can also be created focusing on identified specific learning aims (Willis 2008, Bravenboer 2011). The learning is located in the workplace, supported by a curriculum framework process to customise, negotiate and approve the specific programme's content, without involving an HE validation event for every new employer or learner. Specialist content is negotiated with your learner and/or organisation and/or professional body and integrated into the programme. The use of validated 'negotiated', 'open' or 'shell' modules also allows customisation so that, for example, the learning outcomes, which may be 'trans-disciplinary' or 'generic', can be specialised to reflect the work or practice context of an organisation or professional sector. Identified proportions of prior learning from experience and certificates (APEL/RPL) or in-company training can be included (Chapter 5).

When planning the supporting infrastructure for a work-based framework it is key to include the means by which to approve and record the customised programme. Coordination with institutional quality processes (Chapter 8) and academic records will ensure that programmes and approval processes are recorded appropriately on the HEI's data capture systems; wherever possible use the conventional HEI procedures.

The following three case studies 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 offer some good illustrations of innovative use of a framework approach.

Case Study 3.1 Using a framework approach (A): Developing an honours degree in combined sciences for Collision Investigation Officers (CIOs)

The Institute of Traffic Accident Investigators (ITAI) contacted the University to enquire about developing a work-based learning Honours degree in Combined Sciences for Collision Investigation Officers (CIOs). CIO's analyse the causes of traffic accidents using scientific and mathematical skills and knowledge. Significant market demand for such a course was established in consultation across the UK.

- There are approximately 600 CIOs based in Collision Investigation Units (CIUs) throughout the UK.
- CIOs have a wide range of higher-level skills, experience and learning presenting significant opportunities for claiming University credits through both Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) (see Chapter 5).
- The role of a CIO is 'project based' around individual collision investigation cases, therefore utilising Work-based Projects in the award.
- Most COIs do not have degrees and many employers are unwilling to sponsor them to undertake degree level courses

The course cost was a major issue, but the University's Work-based Studies (WBS) framework offered a way of approving a suitable course quickly and cost effectively (due to the use of APL). Although the new title required University approval, the WBS framework was already approved, and the requirements for adding a new title within the framework are not onerous, and indeed much faster than approving a new, non-WBS course.

The WBS framework therefore supported the development of a new WBS title (Combined Sciences) to enable CIOs to gain:

- 260 credits through experiential and/or certificated prior learning
- 60 credits through taught modules delivered in 4 regions across the UK
- 40 credits through a distance-supervised work-based project

The development timescale for the course was compressed into six months from enquiry to delivery of the first workshop. It involved:

- Consultation with CIOs and ITAI to establish market demand (January-March)
- Business case documentation completed and approved by University (March)
- Development of approval documentation for new title within the framework (programme specification and handbook) (March-April)
- Site visits to approve 4 proposed new delivery centres across the UK (March-April)
- Approval event (April)
- Response to panel's recommendations (May)
- New title final approval (June)
- Enrolment of 60 students (June)
- Course commenced June, first graduates November

| Learning Recognition and Development Module (10 credits @ L 6) | RPL and/ or APEL (120 credits @ L 4, 120 credits @ L5, and 20 credits @ L 6) | Professional and Organisational Development Module (30 credits @ L 6) | Research Proposal Module (20 credits @ L 6) | Work-based Project Module (40 credits @ L 6) |

BSc (Hons) Work-based Studies (Combined Sciences) Route

Kevin Ions: Programme Leader, Teesside University

Case Study 3.2 Using a framework approach (B): University of West England (UWE) Shell Award Framework

The Shell Award Framework enables Professional Development awards, (for example BSc Professional Development), to be cross faculty and cross discipline, and are available from foundation degree to Masters, offering learners a bespoke, flexible and work-based pathway. Supported by a programme leader from the relevant faculty, and often a workplace mentor, learners can use HE credit 'gathered' throughout their career and build this into an individual programme of study. Previous experience and learning that can count towards an award may comprise:

- Work-based learning, for example; project work, reports, development of policy, presentations, initiatives, service evaluation, in-house study.
- Accredited Experiential Learning (AEL), for example; study days, role development, project work, evidence of experience.
- HE Accredited learning, that is, modules from the University of the West of England (UWE) or other Universities.

All learners must complete a current, supervised 'Evidencing WBL' module, normally taken towards the end of their programme as a compulsory element for all levels of the Professional Development programme, the size of which depends on the final award. This is part of ensuring that graduates' pathways meet the institution's regulations for obtaining a named UWE award.
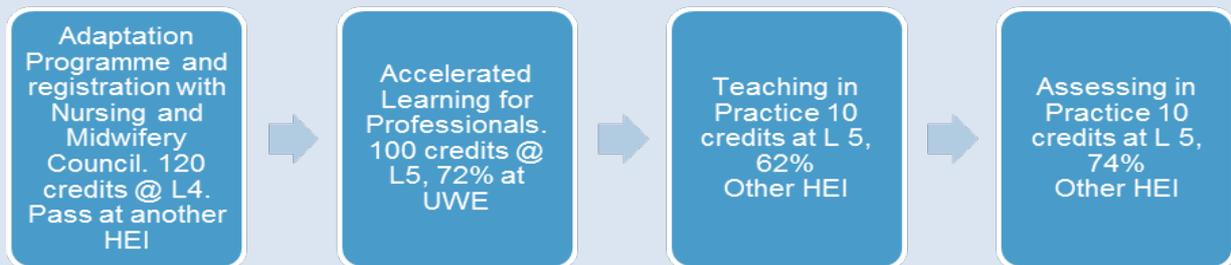
The use of a Negotiated Learning Plan provides the opportunity to formally recognise experience and learning as part of the learner's final award and to design the focus of their award. It identifies their target

award and outlines a personal statement outlining aspirations and experiences. Of particular interest is that RPL claims are facilitated by an electronic AEL (Accreditation of Experiential Learning) tool to help turn experience into credit using evidence and critical narrative, and previous marks can be transferred from previous HE accredited learning, including other HEI's or UWE modules to count towards the final classification of the Work-Based award.
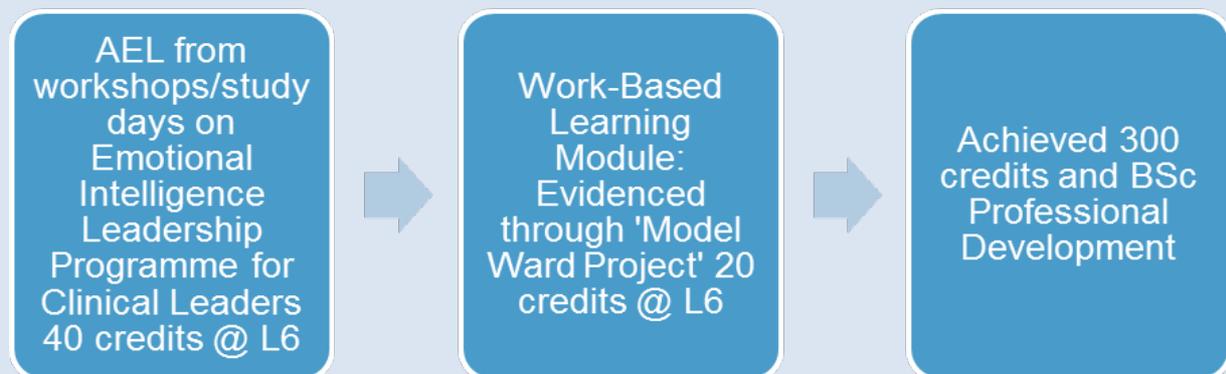
Example

Omar is a ward manager working in general medicine. Following registration as a nurse in the UK, he has previously gained credit alongside work experience and promotion. He wishes to consolidate his learning and gain a degree to enhance his career.

Omar enters the programme with 240 credits:

| Adaptation Programme and registration with Nursing and Midwifery Council. 120 credits @ L4. Pass at another HEI | → | Accelerated Learning for Professionals. 100 credits @ L5, 72% at UWE | → | Teaching in Practice 10 credits at L 5, 62% Other HEI | → | Assessing in Practice 10 credits at L 5, 74% Other HEI |

To complete his programme he undertakes:

| AEL from workshops/study days on Emotional Intelligence Leadership Programme for Clinical Leaders 40 credits @ L6 | → | Work-Based Learning Module: Evidenced through 'Model Ward Project' 20 credits @ L6 | → | Achieved 300 credits and BSc Professional Development |

Clive Warn, Senior Lecturer in Nursing, Programme Lead Professional Development Awards

---

**Case Study 3.3: Using a framework approach (C): Thomas's individually negotiated master's Programme**

Thomas was self-employed as a project manager working as a consultant in large engineering organisations. To promote his professional profile and develop his skills, he decided to undertake a work-based Master's programme, which recognised his previous learning from experience and enabled him to investigate a project located in his practice.

He took a module that facilitated reflection on, and review of, his prior learning in order to make an Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL) claim for 70 credits at Master's level. This claim focused on his

knowledge of Commercial and Financial Planning and Risk Management that contributed towards the overall Masters credits (180 credits).

Thomas then negotiated the focus of the rest of his programme by undertaking a Planning module, where he identified topics for further professional learning and argued for his award to be entitled 'MSc Work-based Learning Studies (Project Management)'. He concurrently studied a practitioner research module, which introduced research and development methods to design his final research project that investigated new models of project management appropriate for his work context.

| Review of Learning module 10 credits @L 7 resulting in APEL claim (70 credits), total 80 credits | → | Planning module 10 credits @ L 7 | → | Practitioner Research module 30 credits @ L7 | → | Negotiated Work-based Project module 60 credits @ L7 | → | MSc Work Based Learning Studies (Project Management) 180 credits at Level 7 |
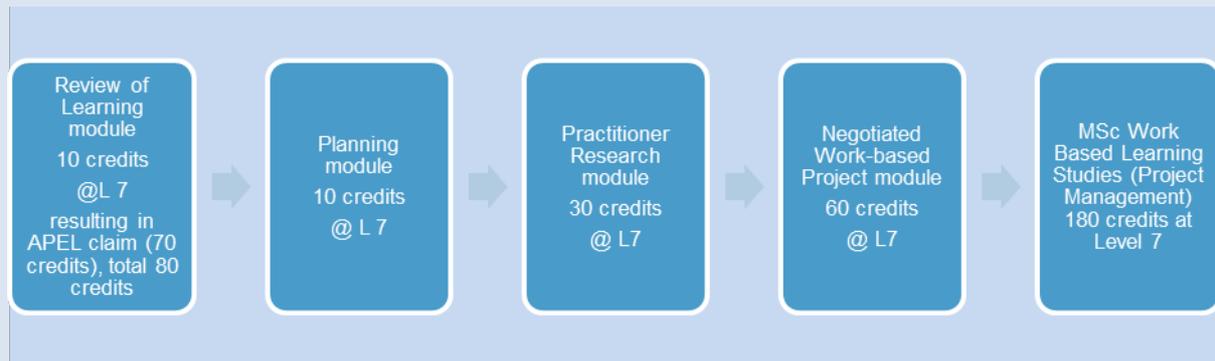
Thomas's Pathway to an MSc Work-based Learning Studies (Project Management)

Academic level descriptors

In level descriptors the level and type of learning is described in a way that can be benchmarked against national (and possibly international) standards. Most HEIs have their own level descriptors to standardise the academic level of HE programmes and relate to the QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ) (Quality Assurance Agency, 2011) and/or the SEEC *Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education* (2010).

Work-based learning differs from traditional subject disciplines as the learning that emerges from work itself is the 'subject' of study. At undergraduate and increasingly at postgraduate level, the expectations for what people will know, understand and are able to do on successful completion of a degree programme, are described in QAA Subject Benchmarking Statements (Quality Assurance Agency, 2014). Certain professions, such as nursing, have a strong practice focus and are required to fulfil specific professional standards, including a license to practice, which is reflected in HE programmes. However, work-based curriculum frameworks are not necessarily guided by professional regulations and can be used to construct HE programmes in a wide range of sectors that may or may not be aligned with traditional academic subject disciplines. For this reason, the academic standards of WBL frameworks are usually aligned to Level Descriptors, such as those produced by SEEC (2010).

The learning from work/practice is often reflected in the qualification title of awards from WBL framework programmes, such as: 'Professional Practice'; 'Integrated Professional Studies'; 'Work-Based Learning'; 'Work-Based Studies; 'Professional Development Studies'; Applied Professional Studies' or similar. Sometimes the specific area of work or professional practice is referenced, for example, 'Applied Professional Studies (Executive Coaching)' or 'Professional Practice in Arts Management'.

It is important with work-based learning to make sure that the level descriptors describe the type of learning at work, and the types of knowledge, understanding and skills required to demonstrate professional levels of practice.

Table 3.3: SEEC (2010) work-based level descriptor characteristics

Level descriptors	
Setting	Operational context
	Autonomy and responsibility for actions
Knowledge and understanding	The factual and/or conceptual base of the subject or field of study
Cognitive skills	Conceptualisation and critical thinking
	Problem solving, research and enquire
	Synthesis and creativity
	Analysis and evaluation
Performance and practice	Adaptation to context
	Performance
	Team and organisational working
	Ethical awareness and application
Personal and enabling skills	Personal evaluation and development
	Interpersonal and communication skills

These characteristics of learning are equivalent to those used in traditional academic subjects, in terms of difficulty and amount of study; because they align fully with UK HE requirements (see QAA, 2011 for FHEQ). The FHEQ also aligns to the Qualification and Curriculum Framework (QCF) (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk) demonstrating equivalence against other UK qualifications. The SEEC Level Descriptors have been mapped against European Standards to demonstrate parity and equivalence with European qualifications. If learning has been acquired outside the UK it may be possible to use it towards a UK qualification, if it carries currency and evidence of credit rating. The relationship between the FHEQ and European qualifications is provided by the QAA at http://www.qaa.ac.uk. Alternatively, programmes studied in the UK can be recognised abroad provided they meet the European guidelines. The QAA academic skills are summarised on the website: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx. At the time of writing they are under consultation for review so check for any updated versions.

Professional bodies often use accredited programmes to maintain standards, and offer prestige, across their membership. These accredited academic courses can include work-based programmes so it is worth tailoring any WBL framework to reflect identified professional competences. Although specific to particular areas of professional practice, the ways that professional standards are described can be similar to the learning outcomes of HE programmes, particularly those that are work or practice based, making it easier to map across the two sets of benchmarks.

Using accreditation within a framework

HE programmes comprise of validated modules; with some modules being used by more than one programme. Usually a WBL framework facilitates the use of validated modules from other programmes, individually or in multiples, within the framework. The flexibility of work-based learning frameworks means that they can encompass external employer based training or in-company learning, which has been 'accredited' (leading to the award of academic credit), along with the more usual learning from routes which have been 'validated' (leading to the award of an academic qualification). Formal recognition of expertise from within employer organisations offers further potential for future collaborative working between HEIs and employers (Wilson 2012, Bravenboer 2011).

The following case studies (3.5 and 3.6) illustrate using a framework for accreditation and developing new qualifications.

Case Study 3.4 Using a framework for accreditation: MSc Professional Practice in Leading Sales Transformation

Consalia Ltd, a training company, specialising in training sales management executives, has significant experience of delivering professional sales education and training and wished to develop a validated MSc Programme. As an established university partner, Consalia presented a suite of modules in an accreditation proposal to the University's Accreditation Board. The proposal was approved after being assessed by the Accreditation Board and conditions had been met. Following scrutiny of assessed work by a University Accreditation Link Tutor and External Assessor, individuals could be awarded a Certificate of Credit to count towards a University qualification. Accrediting the programme confirmed it was at HE level and quality and allowed Consalia to test the market and see whether it attracted an appropriate audience.

The second stage built on this accreditation to enable progression to a full Masters programme. The maximum credit that can be brought into a Middlesex qualification is two thirds of the total credit of the target qualification, so a Masters programme allows up to 120 credits out of 180 credits at level 7 to be recognised. To ensure that individuals progressing to the Masters would be appropriately prepared, the programme also included a Practitioner Researcher module to design the compulsory final 60 credit Negotiated Work Based Learning Project module. Consequently, the programme was constructed from two elements; 90 credits of accredited Consalia modules and 90 credits from University Work Based Learning Framework modules.

The programme has proved popular with some international companies who are using the programme to develop their business. Additionally, the success of the programme encouraged Consalia to progress to a fully validated programme, working in partnership with the HEI, thereby changing the business model with the HEI, but allowing for a sustainable collaboration.
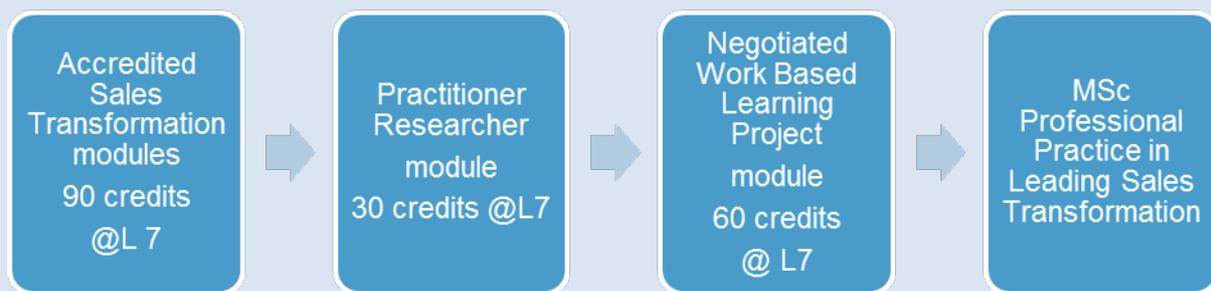
The Consalia pathway to an MSc Professional Practice in Leading Sales Transformation

Case Study 3.5 Using a framework to develop new qualifications: Higher Apprenticeship for care sector managers

Skills for Care, the Sector Skills Council for the care sector, identified that care sector managers needed professional development to meet the changing needs of their employers in the sector. An 80 credit level 5, QCF Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services was core to the programme as part of a new Higher Apprenticeship. Skills for Care identified that Care Sector Managers should develop specialisms, and that furthermore, both individuals and employers would value a university qualification..

The University worked with Skills for Care to develop a suite of accredited external courses in professional specialisms. Using its Work-based Learning Framework a 120-credit level 5 Higher Diploma University qualification was constructed. Building on the learning from the QCF Diploma and after consulting their employer, learners can chose module specialisms such as Dementia Care, Quality and Service Improvement, Mental Health or End of Life Care. These topics were determined by the Sector Skills council in conjunction with the care sector managers as they reflected the needs of the care industry. Learners' progress to a final negotiated Work-based Project module which applies their specialism to a specific leadership and management context, aiming to enhance practice.
Skills for Care (2013)

Higher Diploma Professional Practice in Leading and Managing Care Services

Teaching tips: Using accreditation in your HEI

Academic accreditation is formal recognition of learning achievements gained outside the HEI's main academic programme and is normally delivered by a partner or organisation outside the HEI who retain content and intellectual property of the accredited programme. Accreditation processes are designed to incorporate the HEI's quality processes by ensuring consistency with the Institution's level descriptors, teaching, learning and assessment standards. Academic accreditation differs from accreditation by a professional body, in that it reflects HE level credit for a learning activity, whereas professional accreditation involves meeting standards of a specific profession or sector. Academic accreditation offers the potential for higher level learning occurring outside the HEI to be brought into an HE award, by using credit accumulation and transfer (CATS). Having an institutional flexible framework will help you to be responsive to external accreditation requests.

The activity below will help you to analyse your institution's readiness to develop an academic framework.

ACTIVITY

Discuss these questions with key colleagues.

- Does your Institution have a process by which organisational learning can be accredited? For example - a formal accreditation process and practice?
- What is the current provision for recognising prior learning from individuals? For example: processes for inclusion in programmes, teaching and assessor skills, design of programmes to enable claims?
- What modules and/ or programmes would need to be created and what are already available to be adapted to the needs of work-based learners? How might current modules be adapted to work-based learners' needs and employer requirements?
- How might your institution's regulations, procedures and policies respond to a flexible framework? What are the 'given' assumptions within the Institution in regard to programme design and construction, and how adaptable could these be?
- Who might need to be consulted and involved in developing the appropriate infrastructure to support work-based learners? Particularly consider administrative and registry staff who have to interpret policies, processes and regulations to encompass HEI standard procedures

Learning, teaching and assessment in a WBL Framework

These topics are discussed in detail in chapter 2, but it is worth signposting here that the aims of a WBL programme should align with authentic learning and assessment opportunities within the workplace. For example, creative thought and planning to maximise higher level learning opportunities through usual work activities, with assessment activities that reflect realistic work will promote deep learning. Discussions with your learners about their work environment will highlight creative problem solving opportunities and develop skills of critical analysis. Collaboration with employers and workplace mentors when identifying real learning opportunities can lead to productive partnerships between employers and the HEI, offering professional development opportunities for you and your work-based learners alike. Delivery mechanisms that are flexible in time and location, including distance and blended modes of programme delivery, will maximise your students' learning and responsive tutor and peer support.

SUMMARY

- Key approaches to supporting learning, such as reflection on practice, research skills and critical engagement with professional networks are trans-disciplinary in nature and because of this such work-based frameworks are extremely flexible and useable.
- Negotiation is built into the construction stages of WBL programmes, including using existing HEI mechanisms to recognise higher-level learning.
- There is a need for clarity and coherence in relation to the national academic infrastructure within which HE is understood, practiced and approved.
- A common understanding of academic credit is a powerful building block.
- The need for a clear curriculum philosophy has been outlined, including traditional subject disciplines within HEI faculties, but mostly the real world contexts for learning that most people encounter, namely work.

References

Bravenboer D. W. (2011) 'Maximising employer-responsive progression through organisational development', in Tallantyre, F. and Kettle, J. (2011) *Learning from Experience in Employer Engagement*, York: Higher Education Academy

Bravenboer, D. W. and Workman, B. (2015) Developing a Transdisciplinary Work Based Learning Curriculum: a model for recognising learning from work, in Keppell, M., Reushle, S., and Antonio, A. (2015) *Open Learning and Formal Credentialing in Higher Education: Curriculum Models and Institutional Policies*, Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global

Brown, J. S. and Duguid, P. (2001) Knowledge organization: a social-practice perspective. *Organization Science,* 12 (2), pp. 198 - 213.

Graham, S., Helyer, R. & Workman, B. (2008) Accreditation of in-company training provision: an overview of models and issues, in HEA (2008) Frameworks for work-based Learning, *Work-based Learning: Workforce development: Connections, frameworks and processes*, York: HEA.

Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of Learning and Development*, London: Prentice Hall.

McGregor, S.L.T. and Volckmann, R. (2011) *Transdisciplinarity in Higher Education, Part 7: Conclusion*, available at http://integralleadershipreview.com/2630-transdisciplinarity-in-higher-education-part-7/, date accessed 18th August 2014.

The Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation (Ofqual) (2013) Comparing qualification levels. Available at http://ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/, date accessed 18th August 2014

Quality Assurance Agency (2011) UK Quality Code for Higher Education (incorporates the QAA (2008) *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Scotland and the framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS), published by QAA in 2001). Available at http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationandGuidance/Documents/Quality-code-Chapter-A1.pdf
Accessed 19th May 2014

Quality Assurance Agency (2014) *The UK Quality Code for Higher Education*. Available at http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements.

SEEC (2010) *Credit Level Descriptors. Available at* http://www.seec.org.uk/

Sheehan, J, (1986) Curriculum Models: Product versus process *Journal of Advanced Nursing,* 11, pp. 671-678

Skills for Care (2013) *New Routes into university for people working in adult social care,* Leeds: Skills for Care available online at http://www.skilssforcare.org.uk/Document-library/Qualifications-and--Apprenticeships/Apprenticeships/Newrouteintouniversitye-version(3).pdf)

Uzzi, B. & Dunlap, S., (2005) How to Build your Network. *Harvard Business Review,* available at http://hbr.org/2005/12/how-to-build-your-network/ar/1, date accessed 8th August 2014

Wenger, E. (2006) *Communities of Practice; a brief introduction*. Available at http://www.noetikos.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/copandsituatedlearning.pdf   accessed 8th August 2014

Willis, K. (2008) Frameworks for work-based Learning, in HEA (2008) *Work-based Learning: Workforce development: Connections, frameworks and processes*. York: HEA.

Workman, B. and Garnett, J. (2009) The Development and Implementation of Work Based Learning at Middlesex University in Costley, C., Garnett, J. and Workman, B. Eds (2009) *Work Based Learning: Journeys to the Core of Higher Education*. London: Middlesex University Press.

Workman, B., (2009) The Core Components: Teaching, Learning and Assessing in Costley, C., Garnett, J. and Workman, B. Eds. (2009) *Work Based Learning: Journeys to the Core of Higher Education*, London: Middlesex University Press.

Workman, B. and White, T. (2015) Build your degree in Helyer, R. *The Work-Based Learning Student Handbook Second Edition,* London: Palgrave.

Wilson, T. (2012), A Review of Business-University Collaboration, BIS, London.

Recommended further reading

Durrant, A., Rhodes, G. & Young, D. (2009) *Getting Started with University-level Work Based Learning*. London: Middlesex University Press.

Gordon, N. (2014) *Flexible Pedagogies: Technology-enhanced learning:* Higher Education Academy. Available at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/flexible-learning/flexiblepedagogies/tech_enhanced_learning/main_report

Kettle, J. (2013) *Flexible Pedagogies: employer engagement and work-based learning:* Higher Education Academy. Available at: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/details/flexible-learning/flexiblepedagogies/employerengagement/report

Raelin, J. A. (2008) *Work-based Learning: Bridging Knowledge and Action in the Workplace, new and rev. Ed*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Quality Assurance Agency (2012) UK Quality Code for Higher Education; Part C Information about Higher Education Provision. Available at http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-C.aspx)

Skinner, H., Blackey, H. & Green, P.J. (2011), Accrediting informal learning: drivers challenges and HE responses. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning*, 1(1), pp. 52-62