

Programme Development and Review

Request support to create or revise academic courses and modules from the Programme Design Unit.

“Curriculum design in higher education is not a formal activity and there is little support, formal or informal, provided at most higher education institutions to help academics become better at designing learning activities, modules, and courses.”

David Nichol, 2012

Nicol, D. (2012). Transformational change in teaching and learning: Recasting the educational discourse (Viewpoints evaluation report).

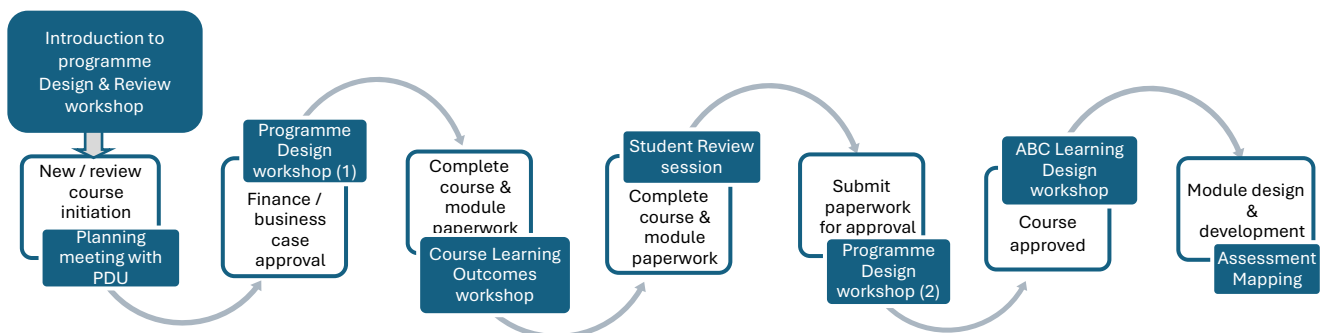
To address Nichol’s observation, the Programme Development Unit (PDU) was established in the [Higher Education Development and Support \(HEDS\) Institute](#) to provide "inception to (re)launch" support for new and existing courses (programmes). Helping colleagues think through the many factors influencing the performance of their courses against a raft of metrics and empowering programme teams to work collaboratively to design relevant and exciting programmes that deliver world-class student learning experiences.

Programme Development Support Portfolio

Overview

The Programme Development Unit has a portfolio of sessions and workshops designed for course (programme) leads and/or teams developing new, or completing a significant review of existing, taught courses (at undergraduate or postgraduate level).

The sequence of workshops or interventions depicted below is only a suggested workstream for PDU support in new course (programme) development/revision. Following discussion, a programme team may opt for one or more interventions, in any order deemed useful to them. Each session can be run independently without reference to the others, but the flexibility of the ‘initiation-to-launch’ principle means each one can feed information and insights into any of the others. The PDU often adapts a session to provide a bespoke workshop.



PDU Workshops & Sessions

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These workshops and sessions seek to establish a dialogic, participative and consultative relationship among academic colleagues. Previous participant feedback highlights that the effectiveness of our approach links to:

- Engaging with academic teams early, before formal documentation had been completed and submitted for approval.
- Providing a diagnostic service via pre-meeting conversations to understand the thinking of the programme initiators and recommend support options.
- Facilitating forums in which key new (or existing) course stakeholders convene to discuss critical aspects of their proposed programme from different perspectives.
- Focussing discussions on largely non-discipline specific topics that can influence a course's performance against numerable metrics.
- Helping with the documentation required for approval and/or review processes.

Please contact the Programme Development Unit at ucl.arena-programmedesign@ucl.ac.uk to learn more and request an initial meeting to discuss your (new) course design needs and support we can provide.

The Programme Development Unit (PDU) will also be offering to run Faculty versions of our **Introduction to Course Design & Review workshop** to help colleagues consider good programme design and how to begin a review (*available as full two-hour version or shortened 1 hour version focussing on review elements*). These will be organised between the Faculty Education team and PDU Faculty Lead and advertised within the Faculty once planned.

There is potential to also run faculty versions of the PDU workshops on:

- [**Programme Design Workshop \(1 & 2\)**](#)
- [**Crafting effective \(Intended\) Learning Outcomes at course and module level**](#)
- [**ABC Learning Design workshop**](#)
- [**Assessment Mapping**](#)

Introduction to Programme Design and Review

This workshop, offered by UCL Arena Centre's Programme Development Unit, will consider what is good programme design and how this impacts the students' experience. The workshop is for programme leads who are considering reviewing their programmes, and department education leads who support (or will be supporting) colleagues in reviewing programmes. For example, "I have things I would like to change, update or 'fix' on my programme, but am not sure where to start".

In this workshop we will:

- Consider what is good programme design and how this impacts the students' experience.
- Reflect on how the interaction between programme-level learning outcomes and assessment can influence learning design to enhance student and staff experience.
- Explore issues and approaches to reviewing a programme, from initial ideas to wider engagement.
- Identify opportunities and challenges in existing programmes and consider timelines for review and enhancement.
- Signpost the guidance and support available for programme leads and programme teams.

Who should attend:

Programme (course) leaders and colleagues who support programme/course reviews.

Duration:

1-2 hours

Availability:

This workshop is offered regularly centrally through the Arena Events catalogue. Check the [Arena Events page \(filter for "Programme and Modules"\)](#) to see when future sessions are running and for sign up details. New dates are being added across term 3 and the summer 2025.

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- There is potential to also run faculty versions of the PDU workshops on:
 - [Programme Design Workshop \(1 & 2\)](#)
 - [Crafting effective \(Intended\) Learning Outcomes at course and module level](#)
 - [ABC Learning Design workshop](#)
 - [Assessment Mapping](#)

Programme Design Workshop (1 & 2)

This tailored workshop, offered by UCL Arena Centre's Programme Development Unit, was created to support course (programme) teams in the (re)design of coherent, integrated courses. It facilitates early discussion between members of a course team and other stakeholders, comprising a set of discursive activities that draw participants into deep discussions about an agreed subset of the topics below. It is one of several activities that can enable writing programme approval/review documentation.

Pre-workshop prep:

The format and composition of a Programme Design Workshop depends on various factors including the number of participants, whether it's run online or in-person, how much ground the course team wish to cover, etc. Consequently, Programme Design Workshops are usually preceded by an informal pre-workshop meeting to discuss which topics it would be most productive to cover.

In these workshops we will discuss a subset of the following:

1. The vision the course team has of their programme.
2. The course's unique selling point/proposition (USP). The impact of the Curriculum Design Principles.
3. The students the course wishes to recruit. For example, what knowledge, experience, and qualifications might they have or need.
4. The course structure. The make-up of core, optional and elective modules. Is there sufficient coherence between the modules, especially those from other courses?
5. The course level ILOs (or CLOs). What evidence of student learning will students be expected to demonstrate?
6. The pedagogic approaches the course team will adopt throughout.
7. The assessment strategy. What CLOs will certain assessments be designed to evidence and to what level? (An **Assessment Mapping** session, below, may be helpful to deepen the discussion).
8. Embedding employability. (An 'employability matrix' may be used to help map each instance of a "pillar" across a programme).
9. The significant digital skills students will have an opportunity to develop.
10. Identifying significant areas of sustainability.

Typically, **Programme Design Workshop 1** will explore topics 1-5 above. Participants may then proceed draft their CLOs as 'homework' and if more support is sought, they can request a **Crafting Effective (Intended) Learning Outcomes** session. Then **Programme Design Workshop 2** may be requested that may commence with a team discussion about the drafted CLOs, followed by topics 6-10.

Who should attend:

Programme (course) leaders, module leads, and other course stakeholders involved in, or contributing to, the development, review and/or implementation of a new or existing course.

Duration:

2-3 hours (each)

Availability:

This workshop is not offered regularly centrally through the Arena Events catalogue but can be requested by emailing ucl.arena-programmedesign@ucl.ac.uk.

Crafting effective (Intended) Learning Outcomes at course and module level

It is important that students understand what they can expect to achieve at various stages throughout their learning journey on a course, rather than simply knowing what they will be taught. Hence, all UCL courses (programmes) and modules articulate a vision of what features of the discipline, or subject students will study, and what level of capabilities they should achieve by its completion.

Learning outcomes encapsulate that vision at course and module levels as a short list of clear statements focused on student activity. They should bring transparency and precision to the design of teaching and learning activities and assessment.

Learning outcomes:

On the successful completion of this workshop, participants will be able to identify and draft effective (Intended) Learning Outcomes (LOs) and ensure their course is constructively aligned. I.e., core module's learning outcomes (MLOs) align with course learning outcomes (PLOs), and assessment criteria. Which should also be underpinned by a constructivist approach to teaching.

In this workshop we will:

Explore:

- The purpose of learning outcomes.
- The difference between learning aims, objectives and outcomes.
- The relationship between course and module learning outcomes.
- How to construct learning outcomes and make them SMART.
- The distinctive qualities and importance of course learning outcomes.
- Why to choose active verbs and avoid passive terms.
- What to do about hard to assess 'outcomes'?
- How to "reverse engineer" learning outcomes from assessment criteria.

Who should attend:

Those who have little, or no experience in writing course and/or module level learning outcomes but need to. Or who have written or are writing course and/or module learning outcomes and want reassurance that they are functionally sound.

Duration:

1-1.5 hours

Availability:

This workshop is not offered regularly centrally through the Arena Events catalogue but can be requested by emailing ucl.arena-programmedesign@ucl.ac.uk. It may also be offered to those who have done the **Programme Design workshop** and would like additional support for writing learning outcomes.

Student Review session

The intention of a Student Review session is to contribute to the course leader's thinking about their course (programme) design by providing students with an opportunity to give feedback on and make suggestions regarding the design of their new course prior to submission to the final approval stage. This is a way for students to work with and support staff in the design process with a view to enhancing the quality of courses.

Course leads or teams preparing their submissions for approval can submit drafts to a small group of students, recruited and trained by the PDU, for review and feedback. The students may not be familiar with the subject matter of the course. Their remit is to analyse and critique the proposals purely from a student's perspective. Their input can be remarkably perceptive, often leading to an enhanced proposal.

Student reviewers may also participate in UCL's formal course and module approval panels where they provide the 'student voice' regarding new courses as part of UCL's quality assurance processes.

Pre-workshop prep:

If a course team decided to run this workshop, staff must provide an almost complete set of course documents to the PDU and student reviewers prior to submitting them for final approval. Allowing several days for the reviewers to read through the documentation and prepare for the session.

In this session:

A PDU member will facilitate a discussion between the course lead and/or team and the student reviewers about their observations. Both parties may ask questions to further explore the course design and both positive and negative impacts aspects may have on students' experience and/or applicants. Workarounds or solutions to potential challenges may thus be discussed.

Who should attend:

Primarily staff working on the course documentation.

Duration:

1 hour

Availability:

This workshop is not offered regularly centrally through the Arena Events catalogue but can be requested by emailing ucl.arena-programmedesign@ucl.ac.uk.

ABC Learning Design workshop

A fast-paced workshop that brings module and course teams together to storyboard modules, discussing activities and assessment and other themes. It allows for a rich and innovative 'whole course' design or review of the student experience.

The ABC-LD workshop can be used to embed the various strategies, initiatives, themes and practices that have been prioritised into the learning journeys of students.

ABC-LD transitions neatly from and into other workshops in UCL's Programme Development support portfolio by providing a practical collaborative opportunity to map out the constructive alignment of a programme on a storyboard of student-focused activity.

Pre-workshop prep:

Staff need have agreed their course and module level learning outcomes. A pre-workshop meeting with facilitators is suggested, as it is important to discuss the module/course development stage so that the workshop can be tailored to focus on your needs.

In this session you will:

- Be introduced to ABC Learning Design method, and how it uses Professor Diana Laurillard's [six learning types](#) from her Conversational Framework, to storyboard students learning journeys.
- Write a pithy (in 50 words or less) description of your module and share it with the other module teams.
- Draw the 'shape' of your module as it is presently.
- Storyboard your students learning journey with your colleagues' assistance using the six learning types.
- Add star stickers to indicate formative and summative assessment activities.
- Add stickers or marks to map the occurrence of any strategies, initiatives, themes and practices prioritised throughout the learning journey.
- Redraw the 'shape' of your module to reflect the learning journey you just created.
- Promenade your module design.

The result will be a plan you can take away for the development your course, to remind you of key decisions made during the learning design process.

If the PDU is working with an existing programme, ABC-LD may well be the first workshop they do and is used to plot the student journey through modules and the course to initiate discussion on the effectiveness of the learning journey and possible improvements. Indeed, an ABC-LD workshop can include a form that participants complete after they've placed their formative and summative assessments on their storyboard with the information needed to generate assessment visualisations using the **Assessment Mapping** session or alternative provision.

Who should attend:

Course and/or module team members and leads as well as other colleagues who may contribute to the success of the course delivery. E.g., FLTLs, Learning Technologists, Programme/Course administrators, PGTAs, student representatives, etc.

Duration:

1.5-3 hours

Availability:

This workshop is not offered regularly centrally through the Arena Events catalogue but can be requested completing this form [Book an ABC Workshop](#). Or for more information email: ucl.arena-programmedesign@ucl.ac.uk.

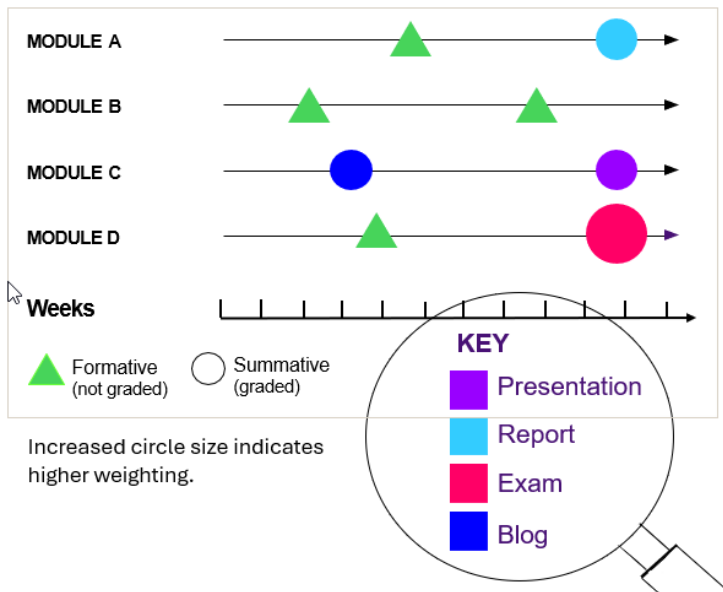
Resources:

[ABC Learning Design @ UCL](#)

[ABC Learning Design](#)

Assessment Mapping

This session, offered by UCL Arena Centre’s Programme Development Unit, provides a way to visualise the distribution of formative and summative assessments in and across individual modules, years of study, and courses.



The charts created display the types, weighting and time distribution of assessments across the modules making up a programme, highlighting the students’ ‘assessment load’ across their programme. It was also designed to pinpoint exactly where course learning outcomes (CLOs) were being assessed. The implications of the assessment distribution and evidence of CLOs attainment across sets of modules could then be discussed with course teams and/or module leads and ideally students, who may have helped generate the charts.

In implementation it draws heavily from the principles of TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment), a team-based dialogic framework aiming to enhance assessment and feedback practices (Gibbs and Dunbat-Goddet, 2007, Walker et al., 2019). TESTA was developed to address issues of over-assessment, fragmented learning, and ineffective feedback, ensuring that assessments contribute meaningfully to student learning.

Pre-workshop prep:

To plot the visualisations details about each formative and summative assessment for all the modules to be mapped must be submitted in advance of the workshop. In so far as possible this information should include:

- Module code
- Module title
- Module level
- Module credit
- Module leader
- Assessment name/title
- Assessment type
- Due date
- Feedback type
- Feedback release date
- Academic week
- Weight
- More info
- Module base site/campus
- Achievement CLOs evidenced

In this workshop we will:

- Discuss the impact of the distribution of assessments over time and on students’ learning and experience of their programme.
- Explore ways to resolve any perceived difficulties with the current assessment schedule and assessment characteristics within and across modules.
- Signpost the guidance and support regarding assessment more broadly available for programme (course) leads and module tutors.

Who should attend:

Programme (course) leaders and module tutors who design assessments and/or are concerned with their students' experience of assessment across modules. And where possible students who may be involved in generating the visualisations.

Duration:

1-2 hours

Availability:

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- There is potential to also run faculty versions of the PDU workshops on Learning Outcomes, Assessment Strategies/mapping, and **ABC Learning Design**.