



FETAC

*Further Education and
Training Awards Council
Comhairle na nDámhachtainí
Breisoideachais agus Oiliúna*

Guidelines for Preparing Programme Descriptors

May 2010

Contents	Page
Section 1 Introduction	
1.1 Purpose of the guidelines	1
1.2 What is a programme?	1
1.3 Quality assurance and programme development	2
1.4 What is validation?	3
1.5 Types of programmes and validation	3
1.6 The validation process	5
Section 2 Programme Descriptor Templates	
2.1 The purpose of the programme descriptor	7
2.2 Two programme descriptor templates	8
Section 3 Programme Development	
3.1 Scoping the programme	10
3.2 Drafting the overall programme frame	10
3.2.1 Developing a rationale	10
3.2.2 Drafting a picture of the overall programme	11
3.2.3 Deciding on programme delivery	11
3.2.4 Embedding development within quality assurance	11
3.2.5 Using learning theories	11
3.2.6 Drafting the elements that make up the programme frame	12
3.3 Six steps for developing programme modules	23
Step 1 Preparing and gathering	24
Step 2 Examining award specifications	24
Step 3 Writing programme module aims and objectives	25
Step 4 Writing programme module learning outcomes	26
Step 5 Writing programme module content	26
Step 6 Devising programme module assessment	27
3.4 Drafting the elements that make up the programme modules	28
3.5 Ensuring coherence	33
3.6 Collating information and submitting an application	34
Section 4 Tools	
Tool 1 Scoper	36
Tool 2 Rationale Developer	37
Tool 3 Programme Framer	38
Tool 4 Delivery Framer	40
Tool 5 Programme Structure Deviser	41
Tool 6 Assessment Scheduler	42
Tool 7 Learner Support Identifier	43
Tool 8 Programme Module Objective Developer	44
Tool 9 Programme Module Content Developer	45
Tool 10 Learning Strand and Delivery Strategy Mapper	46
Tool 11 Outcome and Content Mapper	47
Tool 12 Assessment and Outcome Mapper	48
Tool 13 Strategies, Assessment and Outcome Mapper	49

Appendices

Appendix 1	Guideline Directed and Self-Directed Duration Ranges	50
Appendix 2	Major Programme Descriptor Template	51
Appendix 3	Express Programme Descriptor Template	56

Section 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of these Guidelines

This document is a guide for providers developing and submitting programmes for validation by FETAC. Providers are required to have their programmes validated by FETAC *prior* to commencing them.

At the core of this document is the concept of a **programme descriptor**. FETAC would like to encourage providers to use a single programme descriptor document to house all information pertaining to a programme.

The information required for FETAC validation is built in to the programme descriptor. When a provider uses the descriptor to frame the development of their programme they can be reassured that they will also meet the information requirements of programme validation. All programmes must be developed in the context of the providers own quality assured procedures and systems for programme development (section B5 of their Quality Assurance agreement).

This document divides the process for developing programmes and preparing the programme descriptor into five stages. While this document outlines a procedure for developing programmes, providers are encouraged to follow their own systems and procedures for programme development, delivery and review.

This document provides:

- a summary of the validation process
- details of the programme descriptor
- a 5-stage process for completing the descriptor
- tools to assist in completing the programme descriptor.

1.2 What is a programme?

A programme is the learning package designed, developed and delivered by the provider. The programme describes how the award standard will be reached. It provides an insight into the learning experiences on offer that will enable the learner profiled to reach the standards of knowledge, skill and competence required to achieve the award.

Programmes can be tailored to suit specific groups of learners or particular local needs. In practice a range of different programmes may lead to the same FETAC certificate.

It is important to distinguish between awards and programmes. In summary the award standard states what the learner should know and/or be able to do on attainment of the award i.e. it is the knowledge, skill and competence associated with the award. The programme is about the learning experience the learner will participate in, in order to gain that knowledge, skill and competence. In very simple terms the award is the destination while the programme is the journey.

Providers are asked to think broadly about the concept of a programme. It is important not to tie the definition of a programme to a funding stream, rather to concentrate on the relationship between the learner group and the award.

For each provider, one award (major; special purpose; supplemental) may have one or two validated programmes which will enable the delivery of many individual courses.

Where a certificate (major, special purpose or supplemental) has many optional components, programme developers can develop a single programme for validation, or perhaps two, if there are particular specialisms involved.

Programmes are made up of one or more programme module. Programme modules are the way in which providers divide up the delivery of an award into chunks/themes/segments/subjects. Once programme modules have been agreed through the programme validation process they can be combined in various ways for delivery. For some special purpose and supplemental awards it may be appropriate to have just one programme module.

1.3 Quality assurance and programme development

There are two core drivers at the centre of programmes and programme development. They are:

1. Standards
2. Quality assurance.

Award standards are the responsibility of the awarding body and are national. Each programme is a provider's response to the national standards.

Quality assurance procedures and systems are owned, developed and maintained by the provider. In the following sections of the quality assurance application, the provider has already outlined their approach to programme delivery and assessment:

- **B5.1 to B5.9 Programme Development, Delivery and Review**
- **B6.1 to B6.11 Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners.**

The policies, procedures and systems outlined by the provider in their quality assurance application should form the basis for programme development. When providers are preparing programmes for validation it is to these systems and procedures that they should return and which should form the basis for their approach.

Quality assurance is based on a model of self-improvement. Providers should be continually updating their policies, procedures and systems. The programme development process should help in identifying areas for improvement. Programmes should be reviewed at regular intervals (e.g. programme cycle, annually, biennially) to ensure their continued relevance. A review may be conducted more informally and on a smaller segment than a programme. The review should identify areas for improvement in the overarching programme development process as well as highlighting areas for improvement in the programme itself.

Each provider will have also set a schedule for self-evaluation of programmes. When a programme has been validated, the provider will set the schedule and process for self-evaluation in train. The self-evaluation by a provider of its programmes and services is a fundamental part of its quality assurance system. It is a way of developing the programme through constructive questioning leading to positive recommendations and improvement planning. It should be viewed as a process primarily for the benefit of the programme, its current and future learners and the staff working on it.

1.4 What is validation?

Validation is the process whereby FETAC ensures that programmes, offered by registered providers and leading to FETAC awards, allow learners appropriate opportunities to reach the standards for the awards.

To submit a programme to FETAC for validation, certain programme information will be required. A provider with a programme descriptor in place for each of their programmes will have all the information necessary for validation to hand.

Validation of programmes applies only to programmes leading to awards from the Common Awards System (CAS). Since January 2008, all new FETAC awards have been developed through the CAS. All existing awards will be migrated to the CAS by 2011.

Where an existing award is replaced by a new CAS award, the award is first published on the FETAC website. The provider will be given ample opportunity to:

- a) finish out existing programmes leading to the existing award
- b) prepare a new programme for validation
- c) apply to FETAC to validate the new programme.

The changeover will be managed carefully and providers are asked to consult the website on a regular basis. The awards plan available on www.fetac.ie gives a listing of all awards currently either being developed (new) or in the migration process (existing). The plan also gives a proposed release date for each award. When an award is released, a provider may commence the process of programme development and validation.

Applications for validation are made using the application form on the web site which can be accessed by contacting validation@fetac.ie. All applications are made by e-mail. When the FETAC Business System (IT) is implemented (from 2011) some of this information will be inputted directly through the FETAC website while other information will be submitted using templates provided by FETAC which the provider completes and then attaches to their application.

1.5 Types of programmes and validation

There are several types of programmes and related validation processes: programmes leading to a major award i.e. **major validation**; programmes leading to special purpose, supplemental and minor awards i.e. **express validation**; **mandatory programmes**; **shared programmes**.

1.5.1 Major Validation

Where a programme is devised to lead to a major award, providers should complete the **major programme descriptor** (Appendix 2).

The programme descriptor will provide details of the overall programme and each of the programme modules. These guidelines set out procedures for developing programmes and completing the detailed descriptor.

Providers will then make a validation application to FETAC via the **major validation application form** using the information compiled in the descriptor.

1.5.2 Express programme validation

Where a programme at levels 3-6 is devised to lead to special purpose, supplemental and minor awards, providers will complete an **express programme descriptor** (Appendix 3). Express validation does not apply for level 1 and 2 awards.

The outline descriptor contains selective elements of information about the programme. Sections of these guidelines will be helpful in devising the express programme descriptor but not all of the information set out in this document will be required.

There is a limit to the number of minor awards within an area that can be submitted before the provider must offer the full major award. See the table below for the maximum credit value permitted for express programme validation by level.

Table 1 Maximum Award Credit Values for Express Validation

Level	Maximum Credit Value
3	45
4	70
5	90
6	90

Providers will then make a validation application to FETAC via the **express validation application form** using the information compiled in the descriptor.

1.5.3 Mandatory programmes

The concept of a mandatory programme has been developed by FETAC to take into consideration a small number of instances where a provider has a statutory responsibility in relation to programmes of learning. In such cases a single programme of learning will be validated by FETAC leading to a specified named award.

When the statutory responsibility in relation to a programme of learning has been established, FETAC will enter into discussions with the provider regarding the development of programmes. If the statutory responsibility extends to the standardisation of delivery and/or assessment this may result in the development of a mandatory programme.

1.5.4 Shared programmes

There may be instances in which programmes can be developed by consortia for use (sharing) by registered providers.

To initiate and facilitate the sharing of a programme a group of relevant organisations come together to form a consortium with the purpose of developing a programme which will be designed from the outset to be shared.

The consortium decides the extent to which sharing will take place. There are three options. The programme once approved by FETAC can be used by

- a) the named members of consortium **or**
- b) a list of named providers (not necessarily members of the consortium) **or**
- c) any provider from a list of named provider types (all VEC providers, all special schools etc.)

The consortium develops the programme and extracts relevant programme information in accordance with the FETAC *Programme Validation Shared Programme Guidelines*. Consortia can also develop other programme related resources and materials and may act as a support mechanism to the providers who subsequently run the programme.

1.6 The Validation Process

There are **five** key points in the validation process; submission, evaluation, decision, appeal and review.

1.6.1 Submission

Registered providers (i.e. those with Quality Assurance Agreements in place) wishing to offer programmes leading to a FETAC award are required to submit programmes for validation prior to commencing delivery. Programmes must be submitted using an application form for programme validation. Providers are required to attend a briefing prior to applying for validation of their programme. Once the briefing has been attended an application form can be requested from validation@fetac.ie

On receipt of a completed application form for programme validation, from a provider, FETAC will perform an initial screening to ensure that all required information has been included in the application.

1.6.2 Evaluation

Following initial screening, submissions will be evaluated. Applications will be evaluated by experienced and trained programme evaluators. Evaluation involves comparing the application received with the published evaluation criteria. Programmes will be evaluated by programme evaluators who will recommend a decision to validate or not to validate to the FETAC Policies Committee. During this phase the provider may be contacted by FETAC with a Request for Further Information and given an opportunity to provide additional detail or clarify any issues arising.

1.6.3 Decision

The FETAC Policies Committee, on the basis of the evaluators' recommendations, will make the decision to validate a programme or to refuse validation. FETAC will endeavour to reach a decision in relation to the programme validation within 12 weeks of receiving the completed application.

Validated programmes:

Where a programme is validated the programme will be placed on the FETAC register of validated programmes. Formal notification of the validation will be sent to the provider along with terms and conditions attaching to validation. A programme code will be issued for use in all future communication. Summary details of the validated programme will be posted on the FETAC website.

Programmes that are refused validation:

Formal notification of the validation decision will be sent to the provider. In addition, providers will receive detailed feedback from the evaluation process and information in relation to appeal.

1.6.4 Appeal

Where a programme is refused validation the provider may appeal the decision of the Policies Committee. An appeal can be made in the first instance to the Council and subsequently to the Authority (NQAI). The appeals process will also operate for providers where a decision has been taken, following review, to withdraw validation.

1.6.5 Review (by FETAC)

FETAC may at any time review the validation of a programme. In practice, review of validation will be conducted through ongoing monitoring activity.

Section 2

Programme Descriptor Templates

2.1 The purpose of programme descriptors

The programme descriptor is a single document that describes all information pertaining to a programme developed by the provider. The programme descriptor is owned and maintained by the provider - it is their document. FETAC is committed to introducing and embedding this concept throughout the further education and training sector. By using a programme descriptor the provider can be reassured that they will meet all the information requirements for FETAC validation. The relevant information can be extracted from the descriptor and forwarded to FETAC in the application form for validation.

A programme descriptor documents the frame for a programme as well as the contents of each programme module, including programme module outcomes and assessment. The descriptor is a concise description of the intended outcomes of a programme and the means by which these outcomes are achieved, demonstrated and assessed.

The programme package devised by the provider may go beyond and above the information required by FETAC but it must, as a minimum, contain all the information required by the descriptor.

A programme descriptor can serve a number of purposes.

- a) **Validation**
It ensures that the provider has the information required for FETAC programme validation.
- b) **Information for learners:**
A programme descriptor can be used to communicate to the learner and intending learners what the programme is about, why the programme has been developed and what will be required of the learner for them to successfully participate in and complete the programme. In addition, it can contain information about learner entry requirements, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) arrangements, how the provider facilitates diversity etc.
- c) **Communication with staff, staff recruitment and development**
The programme descriptor can provide an invaluable resource to staff involved in delivery. It can also support staff induction activities and assist where changes of personnel occur. It provides a rich source of information relevant to programme and associated services. There is no set format for the programme descriptor and over time staff can add to and amend its content (while ensuring that it continues to meet the requirements of validation) to reflect changes in the programme content, assessment, resources etc.
- d) **Quality assuring assessment**
Assessment schedules, techniques and sample assessment instruments are required for all programmes and these can be detailed and included in the programme descriptor document.
- e) **Self-evaluation**
All providers must conduct regular scheduled self-evaluation of programmes. The programme descriptor will be an essential resource in terms of programme review

and for self-evaluation activity which the provider must undertake. Changes to the programme descriptor will be one of the key outcomes of self-evaluation.

2.2 Programme Descriptor Templates

There is no set format for programme descriptors. To assist providers in developing and framing their programme two programme descriptor templates are provided by FETAC in the Appendices.

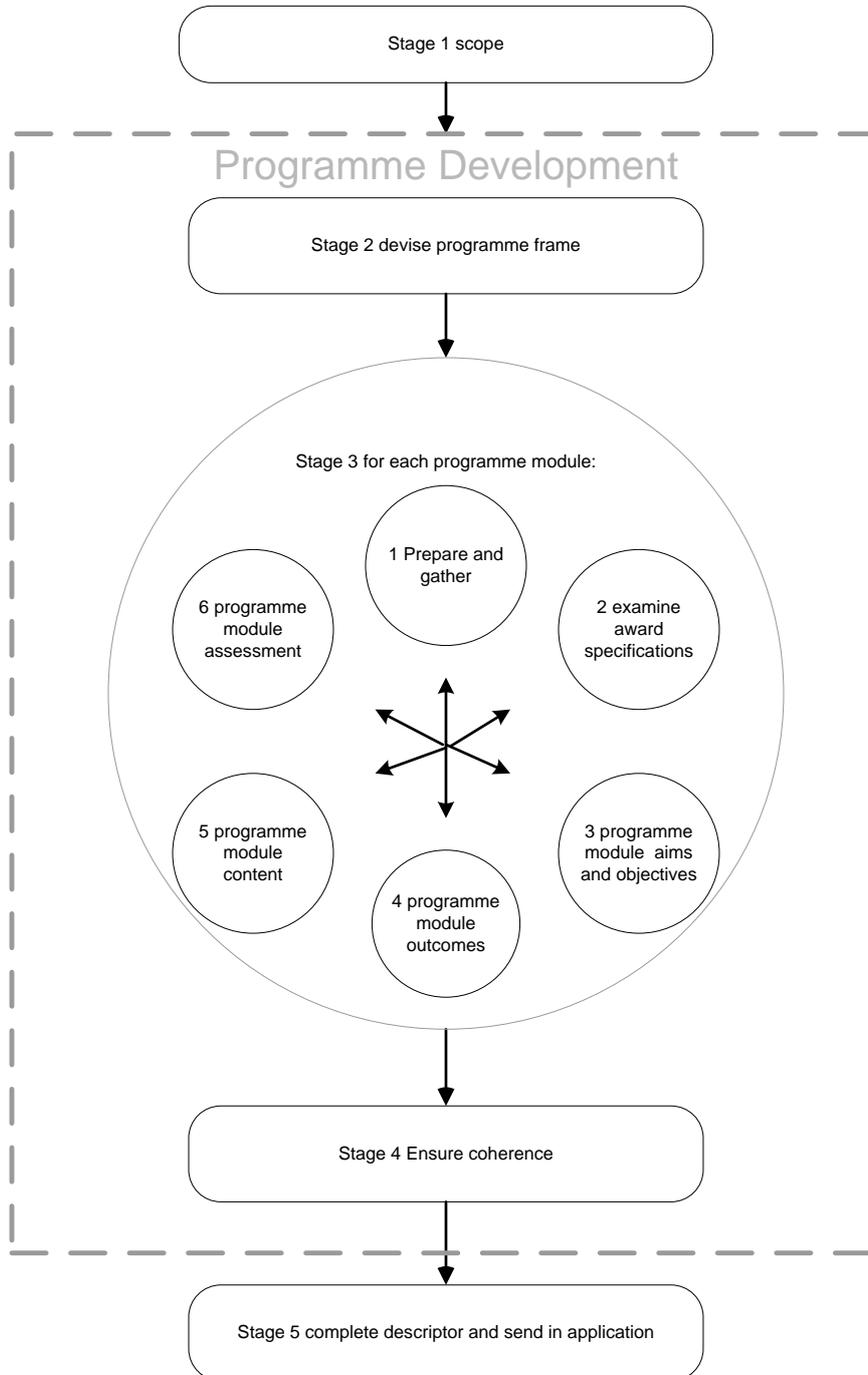
1. A **major descriptor template** is for programmes that lead to a full major certificate. This is set out in Appendix 2. All sections of the template are required when submitting a validation application. There may be additional programmatic elements (specific resources, assessment instruments etc.) which can be added to the descriptor for use by the provider.
2. An **express descriptor template** is for programmes that lead to special purpose, supplemental or minor awards only. This is set out in Appendix 3. It is a brief outline of the programme. It is anticipated that the provider will develop significant additional information in devising the programme.

Providers can amend and add to either template to suit their own context and the particular programme package that they have devised.

Section 3 Programme Development

Table 1 The 5-stage development process

This process is intended as an aid to providers in implementing their own procedures around programme development (Section B5 of their Quality Assurance Agreement).



3.1 Scoping the programme

Before commencing detailed programme development work the provider should first decide on the scope and purpose of the work to be undertaken.

By completing a scoping exercise the provider identifies a rationale for programme development or redevelopment and sets the broad parameters for the related activity.

A range of tools to assist in programme development can be found in Section 4 of these Guidelines. *Tool 1 Scoper* provides a series of questions which the provider might consider when deciding on the extent of the work to be undertaken. On completion of the scope stage the provider should have:

- identified a target audience/learner profile for the programme
- identified a specific programme area, field or discipline
- a clear rationale for programme development in this area
- an accurate picture of current provision (current programmes, courses run within its own remit)
- set the broad parameters for development (how many programmes, at what levels, leading to what awards).
- identified the relevant FETAC award to which a programme may lead (named award, award type and level)

If a major award is identified as the award to which the programme will lead, the provider must examine the certificate requirements for the major award to ensure that appropriate minor awards are selected. The selection of minor awards must ensure that:

- all mandatory minor awards will be offered
- the appropriate number of elective minor awards will be offered
- the selected elective minor awards reflect the title and objectives of the programme
- If there is a statement at the end of the certificate requirements that allows the provider to select a final 15 or 30 credits from a wide range of minor awards, only minor awards that reflect the purpose of the major award and the objectives of the programme should be selected

3.2 Drafting the overall programme frame

Before starting work on individual programme modules (subjects, units, courses) the programme developers should first make an attempt to draft a framework for the overall programme.

3.2.1 Developing a rationale

The scope has identified the purpose and boundaries for the programme development activity. It is also important to develop and state a rationale for the individual programme.

The purpose of having a written rationale for the programme is to serve as a driver for the approach to learning in the programme. It is important to give consideration to the underlying values, beliefs and approach to education or training. Equally the rationale should provide a justification for the programme; it should be built on professional knowledge, experience and/or primary or secondary research.

Tool 2 Rationale developer provides a list of questions to help formulate a coherent rationale statement for the programme.

3.2.2 Drafting a picture of the overall programme

It won't be possible to finalise many of the details for the overall programme until later in the development phase. However, it should be possible at an early stage to draft at least outline statements about most of the overall programme elements. These will all be revisited at a later stage when more of the detail has been worked out through the development of individual programme modules (subjects, units, courses).

3.2.3 Deciding on programme delivery

The programme developers need to consider from the outset how this programme will be delivered. Will there be different delivery arrangements for different learner groups? When considering delivery the developers should take into consideration the provider's policy on Programme Development, Delivery and Review (B5 QA Agreement) and sketch out the possible options which may apply. In doing so they must look at duration, full or part time options, modes and methodologies for delivery. *Tool 4 Delivery Framer* provides a table which may assist in exploring the various options and ensuring appropriate linkages between the various associated elements of each.

3.2.4 Embedding development within quality assurance

The approach taken by the provide to programme development should be in keeping with the policies and procedures for programme design, development and review agreed under section B5 of the Quality Assurance Agreement. How each provider approaches programme development may vary but in general it is recommended that programme development does not take place in isolation. Programme development should take place within an overall approach to programme structure and the process should be informed by external factors such as the requirement of the national awarding body and/or other relevant professional body requirements. Internal and external factors would be taken into account at the planning stage.

In terms of designing individual programme modules there is a need for a planned integrated approach to the process with a clear focus on the learner. Consideration of the learner profile, learner needs and the quality of learning that can be achieved through the programme will provide a sound foundation from which to begin programme development.

The tools in section 4 have been designed to aid in logical programme planning to highlight the important decisions to be made and the variety of possibilities available at the various stages. Planning a programme requires commitment and a thoughtful, systematic approach.

The material presented should be adapted and modified to suit each individual provider's context.

The key is to forge educationally sound and logical links between learner needs, aims, learning outcomes, resources, learning and teaching strategies, assessment criteria and evaluation.

3.2.5 Using learning theories

There is no universal way of learning. Different learners will use different strategies on different tasks. When designing programmes an awareness of concepts of learning theories is important. Incorporating them into programme design can encourage greater likelihood of fostering a thorough and consistent approach to learning:

It is important that the provider (or programme development team) identifies their own theory/theories of learning. By identifying a theory which underpins learning the group make explicit their assumptions about the nature of learning. Doing so will help the group to choose relevant strategies to enhance learning. There is extensive literature available on the theories of learning.

3.2.6 Drafting the elements that make up the programme frame

The following table contains criteria and tips for each section of the programme frame. It also points to the relevant tools for each section in the toolbox

Table 2 Programme Frame

Programme Title	<i>Tools</i> Tool 3	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i> Title criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reflect the content of the programme and the field of learning ▪ distinct from the certificate title ▪ learner focused and meaningful to the learners ▪ reflect the levels of the framework and the award type ▪ not specific to any one provider or institution 	<i>Tips</i> The title should reflect accurately the certificate and level of award to which the programme will lead. It should also reflect the content of the programme. The programme title must be clearly understood by prospective learners and other stakeholders such as employers, higher education institutions, and parents. The title should avoid references to particular settings, and titles that include provider or institutional names etc.
Programme Profile	<i>Tools</i> Tools 1,2 and 3	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i> Programme profile criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide a brief and concise overview of the content ▪ summarise the programme purpose, structure and the key features ▪ indicate the awards that the programme leads to ▪ summarise transfer and progression opportunities 	<i>Tips</i> This is a brief summary of the programme. It should make reference to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ programme purpose or aim ▪ whether the programme is part or full time (in the main) ▪ which certificate it is designed to lead to ▪ the overall number of programme modules offered ▪ the overall duration ▪ brief reference to transfer and/or progression opportunities
Learner Profile	<i>Tools</i> Tool 3	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i> Learner profile criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ specific and accurate ▪ provide a clear basis for the development and delivery of the programme ▪ consistent with the award level, programme content, programme duration and the delivery modes and learning methodologies for the 	<i>Tips</i> The provider should begin by drawing up the general picture of the type of learner likely to participate in the programme. The learner profile should indicate the different attributes, experiences and educational attainments etc. that are likely to be common to learners on the programme.

		programme	
Programme Objectives	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	<i>Tips</i>
	Tools 1, 2 and 3	<p>Programme objective criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ closely related to the purpose of the certificate and to the mix of components to which the programme is intended to lead ▪ reflect the knowledge, skill and competence to be developed in order to achieve the full range of learning outcomes in the award specifications ▪ reflect the aspirations and needs of the learner ▪ take cognisance of the provider's context and resources available ▪ sufficiently measurable to enable programme evaluation by the provider in the future ▪ consistent with the programme module objectives 	<p>Programme objectives are a long term, overarching set of direct statements about what the programme intends to achieve. Setting objectives for the programme will help to focus on the specifics to be achieved for the particular learner group, as part of the learning experience.</p> <p>Objectives should be as specific as possible, they should state clearly and unambiguously what is to be achieved by providing the programme.</p> <p>The objectives should be achievable, measurable and realistic. They will be reflected in the other elements of the programme, in particular the content and assessment of the programme modules.</p> <p>The objectives must be based on and reflect the standards for the relevant awards but shouldn't be a restatement of them.</p> <p>The provider should begin by sketching out 4 or 5 key objectives at the start. They can then be re-visited and re-worked at various stages during programme development.</p>

Entry Criteria	Tools	Evaluation Criteria	Tips
	Tool 3	<p>Particular attention should be paid to the provider's own policies and procedures for access, transfer and progression.</p> <p>Entry criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ comprehensive, clear and explicit ▪ reflect the level and content of the awards being offered in the programme ▪ justifiable and genuinely required for successful completion of the programme ▪ reflect the access, transfer and progression statements from the award specification(s) 	<p>Learners should access programmes appropriate to their learning need and ability. At the same time learners should have a realistic chance of achieving the learning outcomes of the award through participation in the programme.</p> <p>Entry criteria should list the minimum entry requirements for entry to the programme. These may reflect qualifications at the previous level of the framework and or may indicate particular skills, knowledge or competence needed for successful participation in the programme.</p> <p>The entry criteria should be in line with the statements about access in the award specifications. It is important that no unnecessary barriers to access are created.</p> <p>Providers should set out any knowledge, skill or competence that a learner should have, prior to beginning the programme. See the "FETAC Information fro Learners: Guidelines for Providers" which includes more 'equipped to succeed' statements and the FETAC policy on Access, Transfer and Progression.</p>

Programme Duration	Tools	Evaluation Criteria	Tips
	Tools 3 and 5 and appendix 1	<p>Programme duration criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ realistic for the learners to achieve the award outcomes in the specified duration without being excessive ▪ clear and easily calculable ▪ broadly in line with the credit value assigned to the awards ▪ ensure that content and assessment is deliverable within the overall duration 	<p>The duration is the average length of time it should take the typical learner (from the learner profile) to complete a programme leading to a FETAC award. It is the amount of time required to deliver all award learning outcomes.</p> <p>Programme duration should state: whether the programme is full or part-time; the number of hours per week the programme is delivered for; the overall duration of the programme e.g. 1 year, 3 months</p> <p>Overall programme duration is a combination of mandatory and optional programme modules including time allowed for assessment. It is an approximation of the real time involved in the delivery and assessment of the programme.</p> <p>Programme duration is a combination of directed and self-directed learning activity. While a certain amount of self-directed learning activity is desirable, it must be balanced by directed learning activity by the provider. Appendix 1 sets out ranges of directed and self-directed learning for programmes.</p> <p>Where there is a range of programme learner profiles and programme structures within a single programme, a range of programme durations may also be identified.</p> <p>All FETAC awards have a credit value. The provider must use this credit value as a guide when devising the overall programme duration. While it is acceptable that there may be variations in duration depending on learner profile and modes of delivery, the overall programme duration should not deviate significantly from the hours indicated by the credit value (see Appendix 1 on credit and durations). Where credit value is not reflected in programme duration because all outcomes are not delivered - for example, the programme is targeted at highly experienced learners - then formal recognition of experience through the RPL process must be built into the programme entry requirements.</p> <p>The programme consists of the elements that</p>

			are required to achieve the FETAC award. A programme is not a funding stream and the programme duration should not be based on funding duration.
Delivery Mode	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	<i>Tips</i>
	Tools 3 and 4	<p>Delivery mode criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ appropriate to the learner profile and provider context ▪ consistent with the standards of knowledge skill and competence set out in the certificate/s or component(s) to which the programme is designed to lead 	<p>Modes of delivery are concerned with how the programme will be delivered. Modes might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • centre based (class room/studio/workshop delivery) • blended learning • workplace learning • e-learning • distance learning <p>The mode of learning chosen will depend on the provider's own approach to learning, the standards of knowledge, skill and competence to be delivered, the level of the programme and the learner profile. The delivery mode may vary depending on the part- or full-time nature of the programme. The same programme may be delivered to different groups through different modes.</p>
Delivery Methodologies	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	<i>Tips</i>
	Tool 4	<p>Delivery methodology criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ appropriate for the needs of the learner as profiled ▪ aligned to the award level and the content of the award specifications and programme ▪ appropriate to mode of programme delivery ▪ promote equality of opportunity 	<p>The methodologies for delivery of this programme should be chosen using the procedures indicated in the provider's Quality Assurance Agreement.</p> <p>A range of methodologies may form part or all of the delivery strategy employed by the provider. Different methodologies may be employed for different modes of delivery. In many cases delivery will be through a combination of methodologies.</p> <p>Key methodologies might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ classroom-based ▪ one-to-one ▪ instructional ▪ group discussions/group interactions ▪ practical sessions/workshops/laboratories/studio ▪ simulated work environment/work

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experience ▪ tutorials/ one on one supported learning ▪ field trips ▪ on the job training <p>Directed delivery: Directed delivery is where the provider delivers the content of the programme directly to the learner. It includes class contact, direct online contact, assessment and laboratory time. It can include work-based direction, where there is a tutor or instructor on-site delivering content.</p> <p>Self-directed learning: Self-directed delivery means learning that is learner-lead. It includes practise time, work experience, preparation, study time and reflection time.</p> <p>Programme delivery may be a combination of directed and self-directed learning activity. While a certain amount of self-directed learning activity is desirable, it must be balanced by directed learning activity by the provider.</p>
Programme Structure	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	<i>Tips</i>
	Tool 5	<p>Programme structure criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide an overview of the delivery of the programme including programme modules and the order in which they are delivered ▪ set out different programme structure options where appropriate ▪ ensure that all award learning outcomes are covered by the programme ▪ ensure that where there are elective award requirements that the minor awards selected reflect the purpose of the major award and the objectives of the programme ▪ ensure that where there is a statement that one or two residual awards 	<p>The programme structure will be an invaluable guide to anyone looking for information about the programme and how it should be run.</p> <p>The programme structure summarises programme module titles, related awards, duration and status within the overall programme. Programme developers can also add many more columns to capture more of the structural programme information in the one place.</p> <p>The first step in structuring the programme is to gather together the award requirements, the programme rationale and background research. The programme structure will be initially sketched out and over time, as programme modules are developed, the structure will become more solid.</p> <p>The minor awards to be offered in the programme must be selected from the list of certificate requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all mandatory minor awards must be offered • the appropriate number of elective minor awards must be selected

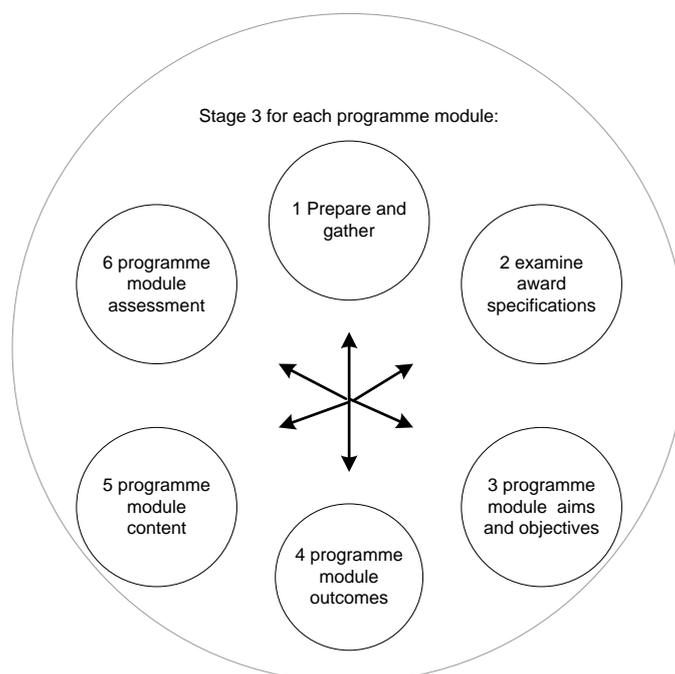
		<p>can be selected from a broad range of minor awards that the minor awards selected reflect the purpose of the major award and the objectives of the programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure that overall, all minor awards required for the overall award can be achieved by learners completing the programme ▪ ensure that all mandatory award requirements are part of the compulsory programme modules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elective minor awards selected should reflect the title and objectives of the programme • Where there is a statements in the certificate requirements that xxxxxx, minor awards that reflect the purpose of the major award and the objectives of the programme should be selected <p>In structuring the programme the provider can choose whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ each programme module can lead to all of the learning outcomes in one FETAC minor award ▪ each programme module can lead to part of the learning outcomes of a range of FETAC minor awards ▪ each programme module can lead to outcomes from more than one FETAC minor award <p>All of these options have implications for assessment, therefore it would be useful to consider this aspect early in the planning stages.</p> <p>The provider can set out compulsory and optional programme modules in the structure. Where a provider does this they must ensure that all mandatory minor awards are achieved in the compulsory programme modules. They must also ensure that where there are optional programme modules, learners will still be able to achieve the overall award requirements.</p> <p>Where the programme is designed to meet the needs of a range of different groups a range of programme structures may apply. Where this is the case the provider can sketch out the different pathways for each group – the elements that will change are most likely to be status and duration.</p>
<p>Assessment Schedule</p>	<p><i>Tools</i> Tool 6</p>	<p><i>Evaluation Criteria</i></p> <p>Assessment plan criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ set out a clear assessment schedule for the entire programme ▪ indicate when summative assessment will take place 	<p><i>Tips</i></p> <p>The assessment schedule should be devised in agreement with the policies and procedures outlined in sections B5 and B6 of the QA agreement</p> <p>Assessment for all programmes should be planned from the outset. The provider needs to</p>

		<p>throughout the programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure that the programme meets the sum of the assessment requirements in the award specifications ▪ meet the needs of learners ▪ indicate when internal verification and external authentication will take place 	<p>consider at what points in the programme learners will be assessed.</p> <p>The schedule for assessment should be based on learner needs and on the requirements of the relevant award(s).</p> <p>The provider may also consider assessment arrangements for learners who don't complete the entire programme.</p> <p>The assessment schedule shouldn't be finalised until the assessment for the individual programme modules has been developed.</p> <p>The provider must ensure that all assessment techniques set out in the minor awards have been scheduled in the assessment plan and that all outcomes will be assessed.</p> <p>Opportunities for integration of assessment instruments where appropriate should be identified.</p> <p>Internal verification and external authentication activities should be built into the assessment schedule.</p>
Programme Review Schedule	<p><i>Tools</i> Tool 3</p>	<p><i>Evaluation Criteria</i></p> <p>Programme review schedule criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clear and specific ▪ based on the programme duration ▪ based on the provider's own policy for review 	<p><i>Tips</i></p> <p>The programme review schedule should be set out using the provider's agreed policies and procedures for programme development, delivery and review.</p> <p>The provider may build in planning for programme evaluation and review in programme development activity.</p> <p>The schedule should be appropriate for the overall duration of the programme.</p>
Transfer and Progression	<p><i>Tools</i> Tool 3</p>	<p><i>Evaluation Criteria</i></p> <p>Transfer and progression criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ set out clearly the title of the programmes, the name of the provider and 	<p><i>Tips</i></p> <p>These should be developed in accordance with the provider's agreed policy and procedure on Access, Transfer and Progression.</p> <p>In designing the programme the provider should</p>

		the title of associated FETAC awards	<p>enable learners, who so wish, to transfer or progress to another programme offered by the provider or others leading to an award within the National Framework of Qualifications. Are there obvious arrangements for transfer and progression for this programme? Are these options within the range of programme offered by the provider or are they offered by another provider?</p> <p>Transfer and progression statements from the award specifications should be reflected in the arrangements.</p>
Learner Supports	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	<i>Tips</i>
	Tool 7 and Tool 3	<p>Learner support criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ list clearly any supports that will be made available in the programme ▪ appropriate for the learner profile and the programme objectives ▪ consistent with the content of the programme 	<p>Resource requirements for this programme should be examined using the procedure outlined in the provider's Quality Assurance Agreement.</p> <p>Learner supports should list any specific supports available to learners in this programme e.g. literacy, study skills, tutorials (individual and group), practice development groups, career guidance, counselling, IT development, English language support, aids for learners with disabilities, mentoring for recognition of prior learning, specific subject supports, for example mathematics etc.</p> <p>The provider should consider the learning groups identified in the learner profile and any specific supports that will need to be put in place to enable the learners during the programme delivery and assessment.</p>
Specific Validation Requirements	<i>Tools</i>	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	<i>Tips</i>
	Tool 3	<p>Specific validation requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ list the required resource and or personnel from the award specification ▪ state clearly that the provider has put in place the required resource and or personnel every time the programme is offered 	<p>The FETAC award specifications include a section on specific validation requirements. Where these requirements exist it's important to indicate what these requirements are and how the programme and related services will meet these requirements.</p> <p>Where the award specification requires specific named expertise for programme delivery and assessment, it may be useful from an early stage to include people with specified</p>

			<p>qualifications or experience in the development of the overall programme.</p> <p>Where the award specification requires a specific named resource for programme delivery and assessment, the provider must ensure that the resource will be in place every time the programme is offered.</p>
--	--	--	--

3.3 Six Steps for Programme Module Development

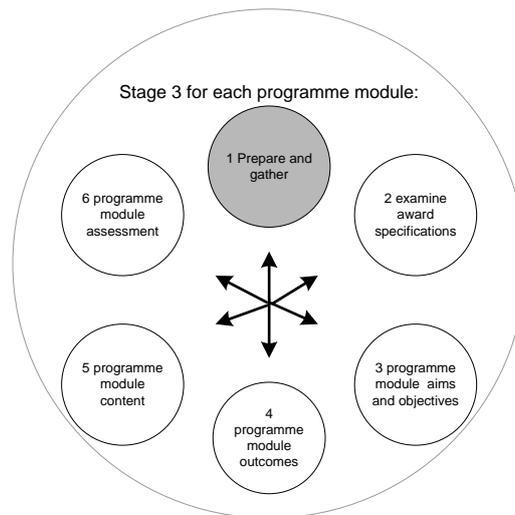


From the work carried out in drafting the overall programme frame, an overall structure for the programme will have been devised, indicating the number, title, status and perhaps duration of the programme modules which will facilitate the delivery and assessment of the programme. There will also be draft overall programme objectives and approaches to assessment.

Set out in the diagram above is a 6-step process for programme module development. As with overall programme development this process is cyclical. Checking back and forth at each stage will ensure the development of a coherent and consistent programme module. Equally there must be consideration of the structure and approach of the overall programme. The possibilities for integration of content and assessment across different programme modules should be considered during the development phase.

Some programme developers may prefer to work through the steps in a different sequence, perhaps building the programme modules first and then mapping and matching the content and assessment to the award requirements rather than starting with the award specifications.

Step 1 Preparing and gathering

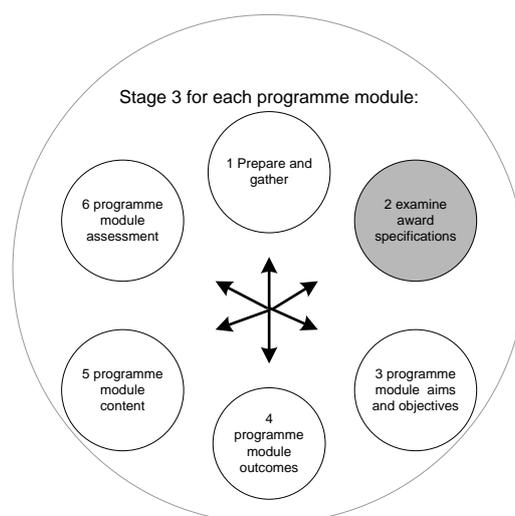


It is likely at this stage of the development activity that work on programme module development will be split between a number of subject matter experts. If this is the case it's important to ensure that each developer (writer) is familiar with

- the rationale for the programme
- the learner profile
- the overall programme objectives
- preferences in relation to delivery strategies or delivery methodologies
- the general approach to assessment and integration across programme modules
- the structure for the overall programme and the relationship with FETAC awards.

There should also be a mechanism in place for subject matter experts to work together during the process, to compare notes and exchange views. Ensuring coherence across programme modules is important.

Step 2 Examining award specifications

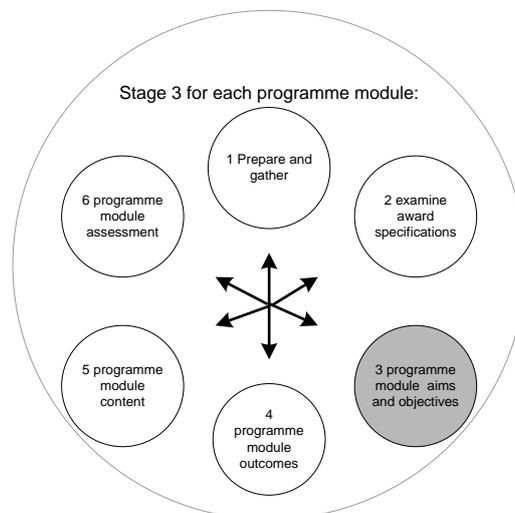


Familiarity with component awards in the design of programme modules is essential. This applies equally where a new programme module is being designed and where existing programmes are being reviewed and updated. The component specification will provide

essential information in relation to the purpose of the award, the learning outcomes which must be achieved and the assessment techniques through which achievement of the learning outcomes must be demonstrated. The certificate specification will provide information about the component's place within the overall certificate, for example whether it is mandatory or part of a pool.

The outline structure for the overall programme will provide a guide to the components to be achieved (fully or partially) through each programme module. It is the role of the programme module developer to ensure familiarity with the outline structure and to communicate early any problems with matching programme module objectives, content or assessment to the overall frame.

Step 3 Writing programme module aims and objectives



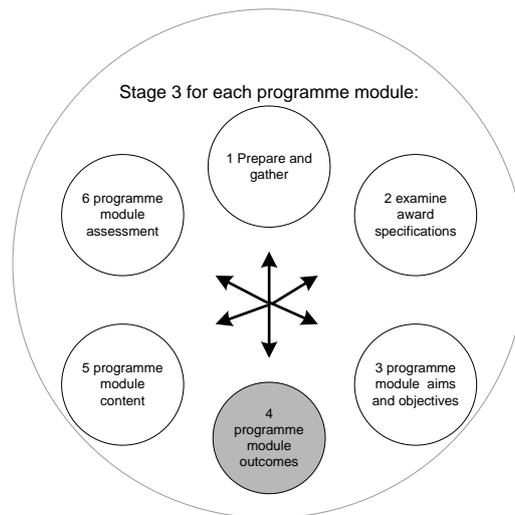
The aim of the programme module indicates the general direction or orientation of a programme module in terms of its content and sometimes its context within an overall programme. An aim tends to be written in terms of the intentions for delivery.

Setting objectives for the programme module helps to focus on what is to be achieved for the particular learner group, as part of the learning experience. The objectives must be based on and reflect the standards for the relevant awards but shouldn't be a restatement of them. Objectives should state clearly and unambiguously what is to be achieved in the programme module. Where possible the objectives should be measurable to enable programme evaluation in the future.

The programme module aims and objectives should provide strong guidance for the development of the programme module content and assessment.

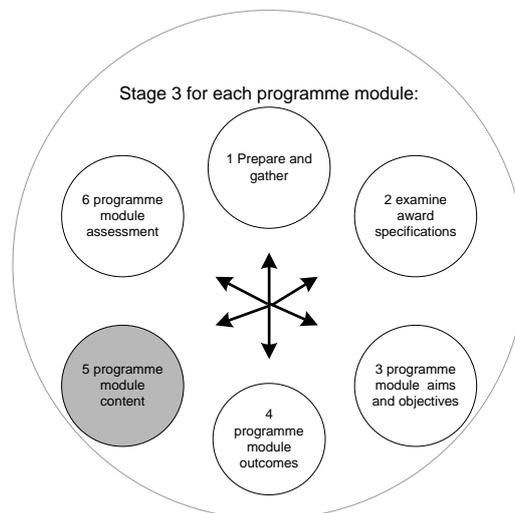
Tool 8 Programme Module Objective Developer provides some further guidance on formulating programme module objectives.

Step 4 Writing programme module learning outcomes



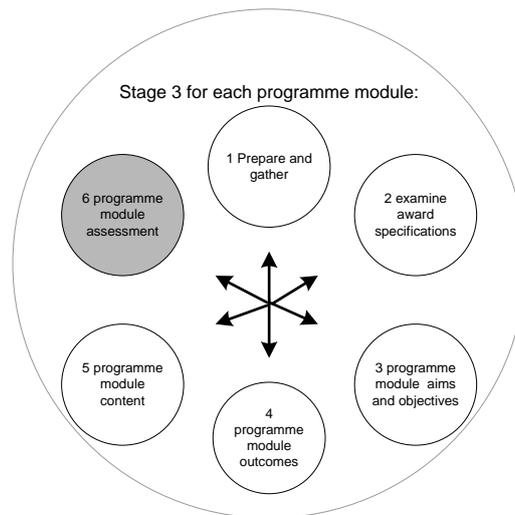
Programme module learning outcomes are the specific outcomes of programme module-related activities. They should be based on award outcomes. They are more specific statements of outcome than the award statements. Each award outcome may be broken down into 3-4 programme module outcomes (or more or less depending on the discipline). While not specifically evaluated through the validation process, programme module outcomes ensure that all award outcomes are delivered and interpreted consistently and assist in the development of assessment tasks and activities.

Step 5 Writing programme module content



Programme module content describes the activities, strategies, methodologies and resources that make up the programme module. Programme module content should be described in such a way that a new tutor or instructor of the programme can use the descriptor to deliver programme module content in the way that was intended in development.

Step 6 Devising programme module assessment



Information in relation to the assessment techniques required for each component award is clearly set out in the award specification. In most award specifications these techniques are fixed. In a small number of specifications there may be a range of options from which the provider will choose. The associated instruments for each programme module should be developed by the programme tutor/assessor in accordance with the award learning outcomes, the assessment techniques for the award, the provider's policies and procedures for quality assuring assessment and the approach to planning and scheduling adopted early in this programme development activity.

On completion of step 6 there should be a good outline of the programme module assessment tasks and activities. For each programme module, the provider is required to set out the following:

Technique

This is the named technique set out in the award specification.

Weighting

This is the weighting allocated for the technique in the award specification.

Time

This is the overall period of time in the programme allocated for completion of the assessment technique.

Format and Context

This is the format and context of the technique. It may be written, oral, practical, performance- or presentation-based. It may also be an event or an artefact.

Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme:

These are the broad assessment and marking scheme criteria that are devised as guidance for tutors and or assessors when setting their assessment instruments.

3.4 Drafting the elements that make up the programme module

The following table contains criteria and tips for completing each section of the programme module. It also points to the relevant tools for each section in the toolbox.

Table 3 Programme Module

<p>Programme Module Title</p>	<p><i>Tools</i></p>	<p><i>Evaluation Criteria</i></p> <p>Programme module title criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ learner focused and meaningful to the learners ▪ reflect the component award/s and level ▪ consistent with the programme module aims, objectives and content 	<p><i>Tips</i></p> <p>The title should reflect accurately the component(s) and level of award to which the programme will lead. It should also reflect the content of the programme module.</p> <p>The programme module title should be consistent with other programme module titles and the title of the overall programme.</p> <p>The programme module title must be clearly understood by prospective learners and other stakeholders such as employers, higher education institutions, parents.</p> <p>The programme module title should avoid references to particular settings or titles that include provider or institutional names etc.</p>
<p>Programme Module Aims and Objectives</p>	<p><i>Tools</i></p> <p>8</p>	<p><i>Evaluation Criteria</i></p> <p>Programme module objectives criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ unique for each programme module ▪ closely related to the overall programme aims and objectives ▪ closely related to the components to which the programme module is intended to lead ▪ reflect the knowledge, skill and competence to be developed ▪ reflect the aspirations and needs of the learner ▪ sufficiently measurable to enable programme 	<p><i>Tips</i></p> <p>Aims and objectives should be as specific and realistic as possible. They should state clearly and unambiguously why the programme module has been devised and what is to be achieved by providing the programme module.</p> <p>The objectives should be measurable, achievable and realistic. They will be reflected in the other elements of the programme module, in particular the content and assessment of the programme modules.</p> <p>Examples of aims: <i>The aim of the programme module is to provide an introduction to the application of statistical theory in general insurance</i></p> <p><i>The programme module aims to provide an effective and common grounding in written and interpersonal skills</i></p> <p>Examples of objectives: <i>To develop an understanding of the process of simple decision making</i></p>

		evaluation by the provider in the future	<p><i>To explore the consequences of non complex decisions</i></p> <p><i>To facilitate learners to reflect on personal approach/style of decision making, including their strengths and weakness in this area, and to develop their decision-making skills</i></p>
Programme Module Outcomes and Content	<i>Tools</i> 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13	<i>Evaluation Criteria</i> Programme module outcomes will not be evaluated in the validation process	<i>Tips</i> Programme Module Outcome Development: Programme module outcomes should derive from and be consistent with the learning outcomes from the component award specifications.
		Programme content criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ consistent with component award standards ▪ consistent with the programme module title, other programme modules and the overall programme frame ▪ appropriate for the duration of the programme module ▪ consistent with assessment tasks and activities 	<p><i>Step 1</i> <i>Use award standard outcomes to develop programme module outcomes</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The developer should begin by translating the component learning outcomes into programme learning outcomes specific to the chosen discipline area of the programme module 2. Focus on the learning outcomes of the award standard 3. Interpret and translate into learning outcomes specific to the chosen discipline area of the programme module <p><i>Step 2</i> <i>Add extra programme specific learning outcomes as appropriate</i></p> <p>Component learning outcomes vary in the level of specificity. Irrespective of which style the component outcomes are written in, the developer will need to drill down from high level learning outcomes and write more specific programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>There may be additional outcomes arising from programme activities that go beyond the award outcomes.</p> <p>Programme Module Content Development: <i>Step 1</i> <i>Consider appropriate learning and teaching strategies (content) and delivery methodologies and identify specific resources required to run or support the programme</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is helpful here to commence by looking at what kind of learning is being delivered. It may be useful

			<p>to identify the main type of learning (knowledge, skill or competence) for each of the learning outcomes identified in Step 4 i.e. learning outcomes from the award specification and additional programme-specific learning outcomes that have been devised by the developer.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Concentrate next on the content, the themes and topics around which the learning experience will be built. 3. Look at the range of learning activities and delivery strategies that can be organised to meet the learning outcomes. The delivery strategies employed to encourage and support learners towards meeting the desired learning outcomes are key to the success of the programme. <p><i>Step 2</i> <i>Map and match the programme module content to the learning outcomes from the relevant component/s</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When the programme module content (activities and themes) has been drafted, the developer must map and match it to the learning outcomes from the component awards to ensure that all outcomes have been covered in the content. 2. For some programme modules there will be a one to one relationship between the programme module and an individual component. For others a single programme module may lead to one or more components or to a combination of different learning outcomes from a range of components.
<p>Programme Module Assessment</p>	<p><i>Tools</i> 12 and 13</p>	<p><i>Evaluation Criteria</i> Programme module assessment criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure that all learning outcomes are assessed ▪ set out summative assessment techniques, weightings, contexts, criteria and marking schemes ▪ consistent with the 	<p><i>Tips</i> <i>Formative and Summative Assessment</i></p> <p>The provider must first decide which assessment instruments are formative and summative. For each piece of summative assessment evidence, assessment techniques are set out in the component specification. The provider must set out their own assessment briefs, instruments and criteria based on the techniques. Assessment for certification is always summative.</p> <p>See <i>FETAC Assessment Guidelines</i> for further information.</p>

programme assessment schedule

- consistent with the programme module content and outcomes
- reflect the assessment techniques in the component awards and identify clearly which award outcomes are assessed

Devising Summative Assessment Tasks and Activities

Assessment techniques and descriptions are included in every component specification. For competency-based awards these are very specific and the provider is required to follow exact criteria for assessing and grading. For most other component awards, the assessment description is general and gives the provider an opportunity to tailor make their own assessment instruments to complement their programme.

For some programme modules there will be a one to one relationship between the programme module and an individual component. For others a single programme module may lead to one or more components or to a combination of different learning outcomes from a range of components. The mapping and matching exercise will ensure that the assessment tasks and activities for the programme module match the outcomes from the appropriate components. It should also help to identify any gaps or missed opportunities for integration.

For each programme module, the following should be indicated in the descriptor:

1 Technique

This is the named technique set out in the award specification.

2 Weighting

This is the weighting allocated for the technique in the award specification. There may be more than one weighting here if the technique is being used to assess more than one component award.

3 Time

This is the overall period of time in the programme allocated for completion of the assessment technique.

The time allocated may depend on the technique and the weighting. This may be relatively short for some assessment techniques, e.g. examinations may take 2 to 3 hours, or it may be more extensive for other techniques, for example a project may be carried out over a period of not less than 3-6 weeks

4 Format and Context

This is the format of the technique. It may be written, oral, practical, performance- or presentation-based. It may also be an event or an artefact.

The format should also indicate if the assessment can be carried out by a group or if it has to be individual. Where

it is carried out by a group, the provider should indicate the procedures that will be in place to ensure that each individual's contributions can be clearly identified. Procedures for ensuring reliability of learner evidence should also be included. See *Assessment Guidelines 4.3*

Further guidelines on format can also be included. These will depend on the assessment technique. For example, a project may indicate the number of words required. A skills demonstration may set out the particular context and or situation in which it will take place.

6 Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme

These are the broad assessment and marking scheme criteria that are devised as guidance for tutors and or assessors when setting their assessment instruments. These should include an indication of total marks allocated and how they subdivide along broad categories of assessment criteria. They should also ensure consistency between the assessor's marking scheme and the weighting for the technique given in the award specification.

Where possible total marks allocated should be out of 100 or multiples of 100. For example: Total of 100 marks, 50 for creativity, 20 for mastering the topic, 20 for project management and administration skills, 10 for presentation.

3.5 Ensuring Coherence

In stage 4 the developer is required to step back from developing individual programme modules and revisit the overall programme frame and all programme modules to ensure that, together, they make up a coherent and good quality programme.

The developer is required to look at the programme title, programme objectives, the learner profile, the awards offered and the overall package of learning offered across the programme modules.

The developer should ask the following questions:

- Does the programme title summarise the content?
- Are the programme objectives and the programme content aligned?
- Are the delivery modes and methodologies appropriate for the content?
- Will there be different delivery options for different groups within the same programme? How are these reflected in the durations and contents?
- In what order will the programme modules be delivered?
- What is the overall programme duration? Is this aligned with the sum of programme module durations and overall credit values?
- When and how will assessment take place? Are all award outcomes assessed?
- What knowledge, skill and competence, qualifications and experience will learners need to commence and be successful in the programme?
- What resources will be made available? Handouts, work sheets, OHPs, visuals?
- What kind of learning supports will be provided?

3.5.1 Back to the big picture on assessment

It is important to avoid over-assessment across the overall programme. In designing or redesigning programme modules it is vital to identify which parameters of assessment need to be agreed as a group and which can be left to individual tutors.

An overall timetable or schedule of assessment should be planned thoroughly from the outset, at the level of the overall programme, to avoid over-assessment and to ensure that learners don't face the situation where all assessment activities are crowded into one particular segment of the programme (e.g. the end).

The timetable should be clear and practical. It should be aligned with the content of the programme modules and the assessment requirements in the minor awards.

3.5.2 Identifying supports that may be required

In developing programmes and individual programme modules the type of learner support likely to be required should be considered. Supports to be considered may include teaching rooms, laboratories, library facilities and equipment, technically subject-specific supports such as specialist equipment, audio-visual, information technology etc.

3.5.3 Plan the evaluation of the programme from the beginning

Evaluation shouldn't just be a retrospective process. It can be an integral part of programme development. Identifying the criteria and the information that will enable a judgement of the quality and effectiveness of the programme from the outset will enable the provider to elicit meaningful information to assist in reviewing and improving the programme module over time.

Some questions towards developing an evaluation strategy:

- What is the evaluation for? How is it going to be used?
- Will feedback and evaluative processes be used throughout the process and not just as part of annual monitoring and review?
- Have opportunities within the programme for feedback and evaluation been considered?
- What kind of information will be collected?
- What will happen to the information, once collected?

3.6 Collating information and submitting an application

When the programme development process is complete, the provider can apply to FETAC to submit a programme validation application for evaluation. The sections of the application form should be aligned with the programme descriptor template. All information from the descriptor can be inserted into the application form and submitted.

To submit a programme for validation to FETAC certain programme information will be required. With the implementation of the FETAC Business System (IT) some of this information will be inputted directly through the FETAC website while other information will be submitted using templates provided by FETAC which the provider completes and then attaches to their application. In the meantime applications for validation are made using the application form on the web site which can be activated by contacting validation@fetac.ie All applications are made via e-mail.

All programme validation applications are evaluated using the following criteria:

- **consistency** with the award being sought i.e. the structure of the proposed programme should meet the award requirements at the relevant level within the framework of qualifications. There should also be consistency between the programme and the provider's quality assurance policies and procedures as agreed at the time of provider registration
- **coherence** in respect of its stated objectives, content, learner profile and assessment activities
- **capacity** of the provider to deliver the programme to the proposed level
- **compliance** with the Qualifications Act in relation to access, transfer and progression and protection for learners as appropriate and compliance with any special conditions attached to the award specification e.g. legislation, specialist resources etc.

the programme's potential to **enable** the learner to meet the standards of knowledge, skill and competence for the awards based on the specified learner profile and the standards for the award

[A provider with a programme descriptor in place for each of their programmes will have all the information necessary for validation to hand.](#)

Section 4 Tools

Tool 1 Scoper

Topic	Key questions	Response
Field or discipline	<p>Which field of learning or discipline area is this programme going to be in? (see FETAC fields at www.fetac.ie)</p> <p>How broad a field/subfield/domain is this going to encompass?</p> <p>Has this development work been considered in light of the FETAC award plan? (see www.fetac.ie)</p> <p>Who is the target audience for the programme?</p>	
Current provision	<p>List the courses that are currently run by the provider in this discipline area and identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Title, learner type, part-time or full-time, duration, number of learners achieving major awards (per cycle), number of learners achieving minor awards (per cycle) and identify the awards by name and level <p>Compile a resource file with as much detail as possible about each current course or programme - content, assessment, materials, other resource requirements</p>	
External requirements	<p>Are any of the existing programmes linked to specific funding requirements?</p> <p>Are any of the existing programmes linked to professional body qualifications or licences to practice?</p> <p>If so, what effect do these requirements have on the current programme content or assessment?</p>	
Programme title and awards	<p>Draft a working title for the programme based on field/subfield/domain and target audience</p>	
Awards	<p>Identify the certificate and components (including level) to which it will be designed to lead.</p>	
Rationale	<p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target learner audience Learner needs Industry needs Organisational strategic plan or goals The influence of external agencies Policy on programme development 	
Approach to development	<p>List the people who should be involved in programme development</p> <p>Reference policy and process for the development of programmes agreed under B5 in provider quality assurance</p> <p>Will it be a team development activity? Who will act as team leader, secretariat etc? What resources are available?</p>	

Tool 2 Rationale Developer

Key Questions	Answer	Draft Rationale Statement
Why is this programme being developed?		
What are the broad educational goals of the programme?		
What is the target learner audience for the programme?		
Why is the subject matter important?		
What are the provider's beliefs and values about learning and teaching?		
Are there any external influences that should be considered?		

Tool 3 Programme Framer

SECTION	<i>Key Questions</i>
PROGRAMME TITLE	<p>Does it reflect the field/subfield/domain?</p> <p>Does it reflect the outline content?</p> <p>Is it appropriate for the level/s and type/s of awards it leads to?</p>
PROGRAMME PROFILE	<p>Does it reflect the programme purpose or aim?</p> <p>Does it indicate whether the programme is part- or full-time?</p> <p>Does it list the awards the programme leads to?</p> <p>Does it state the number of programme modules offered?</p> <p>Does it state the overall duration?</p> <p>Does it briefly summarise transfer and or progression opportunities?</p>
LEARNER PROFILE	<p>What type of learner is likely to participate in the programme?</p> <p>Are there key skills, knowledge or competence required of the learner in order to ensure successful participation in the programme?</p> <p>What are the different attributes, experiences and educational attainments etc. that are likely to be common to learners on the programme?</p> <p>What is the range of learners that the programme will be available to? Is this too broad or too specific?</p> <p>Will there be different sub-groups of learners within the same programme?</p>
PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES	<p>Are they based on long-term, broad concepts of the programme?</p> <p>Are they sufficiently specific, direct and clear?</p> <p>Are they realistic, achievable and measurable for future programme evaluation?</p> <p>Do they reflect the award standards without re-stating the award outcomes?</p>
ENTRY CRITERIA	<p>Do they reflect the provider's policies, especially those on access, transfer and progression?</p> <p>Do they list the minimum entry criteria for the programme?</p> <p>Are the criteria necessary and sufficient for successful completion of the programme?</p>

ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE	<p>Does the schedule comply with the provider's own policy on fair and consistent assessment of learners?</p> <p>At what points in the programme will learners be assessed?</p> <p>What arrangements are in place for assessment to allow for learners who do not complete the entire programme?</p>
PROGRAMME REVIEW SCHEDULE	<p>Does it comply with the provider's own policy on programme review?</p> <p>Is it appropriate for the overall programme duration?</p> <p>Can elements of review be incorporated into delivery?</p>
TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION	<p>Do they reflect the provider's policies, especially those on access, transfer and progression?</p> <p>Does it comply with the award specifications?</p> <p>Can programmes to which the learners on this programme under development can either transfer or progress be identified from the outset?</p> <p>Is it possible to state the title of the programmes, the name of the provider and the title of associated FETAC awards?</p>
LEARNER SUPPORTS	<p>Considering the learning groups identified in the learner profile, are there any specific supports that will need to be put in place to enable the learners during the programme delivery and assessment?</p>
SPECIFIC VALIDATION REQUIREMENTS AND SPECIFIC RESOURCES	<p>Are the specific validation requirements in the award specifications?</p> <p>Can the requirements be met by the provider?</p> <p>Will all learners on the programme have access to the necessary resources and or personnel?</p>

Tool 4 Delivery Framer

Full-time or Part-time	Duration total hours	Total award credit value	Mode of delivery	Delivery methodologies

Example:

Full-time or Part-time	Duration total hours	Total award credit value	Mode of delivery	Delivery methodologies
<i>Full-time</i>	<i>5 days per week, academic year (28 weeks)</i>	<i>120 credits</i>	<i>Centre/Classroom-based</i>	<i>Directed learning experiences Group discussions One to one supported learning</i>
<i>Part-time</i>	<i>3 evenings per week over 2 academic years (1 Saturday every 2 months)</i>	<i>120 credits</i>	<i>Centre/Classroom-based</i>	<i>Directed learning experiences Group discussions One to one supported learning</i>

Tool 5 Programme Structure Deviser

Programme may be designed to meet the needs of a range of different groups. Accordingly, a range of programme structures may apply. Where this is the case try to sketch out the different pathways for each group - the elements that will change are most likely to be status and duration.

Titles of Programme modules for delivery	Titles of FETAC minor awards (list of FETAC awards to be achieved/partially achieved through this programme module)	Credit value of FETAC minor awards	Status (whether the programme module is compulsory or optional for all learners)	Duration (average duration in number of hours for each programme module)

Tool 6 Assessment Scheduler

Some questions and statements to consider during the early stage of programme development which should help to establish and communicate the principles underpinning the provider's approach to assessment. The result of this thinking should influence and guide programme developers as they design the assessment for each of the programme modules.

Question	Response
How will work on assessment be co-ordinated across the overall programme?	
How and when will internal verification take place?	
How and when will external authentication take place?	
At what points in the programme will assessment be scheduled? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On completion of a number of learning outcomes ▪ On completion of a component award ▪ Time-bound within the programme schedule (e.g. at end of each term) 	
How will the design of assessment be managed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integration of assessment across the different programme modules? ▪ Avoiding assessment overload for the learner 	
What arrangements will be in place for learners who do not complete the entire programme but may have achieved the standards for one or more component awards?	
Who will be responsible for the design of assessment instruments (project and or assignment briefs, examination papers etc)?	
Will sample instruments be devised at the point of programme development for use by assessors etc.?	

Tool 7 Learner Support Identifier

Learner profile	[insert draft learner profile here]		
Type of support	Required (Y/N)	Provider's Policy Statement	Details How much support will be provided? What form will it take?
Literacy			
Study skills			
Tutorials (individual and group)			
Practice development groups			
Career guidance			
Counselling			
IT development			
English language support			
Aids for learners with disabilities			
Mentoring for recognition of prior learning			
Specific subject supports			

Tool 8 Programme Module Objective Developer

Criteria	Insert programme module title and key content	Insert 3-6 objective statements here
<p>Appropriate to the component(s) to which the programme module is intended to lead or to which it contributes</p> <p>Reflect the learning outcomes described in the relevant component specification/s</p> <p>Appropriate to the profile of the learner</p> <p>Well founded and clearly formulated.</p> <p>Clearly expressed in terms of the learning (knowledge, skill and or competence) to be gained by the learner on completion of the programme.</p> <p>Measurable to enable programme evaluation by the provider in the future.</p>	<p>[Insert programme module title]</p> <p>[Insert programme key content]</p>	<p>To enable...</p> <p>To identify...</p> <p>To explore....</p> <p>To learn about</p> <p>To develop skills....</p> <p>To develop attitudes....</p> <p>To introduce participants...</p> <p>To create an awareness of...</p> <p>To provide an introduction to...</p> <p>To gain an understanding of...</p> <p>To form effective working relationships with...</p> <p>To facilitate</p> <p>To familiarise....</p>
	<p>[Insert programme module title]</p> <p>[Insert programme key content]</p>	
	<p>[Insert programme module title]</p> <p>[Insert programme key content]</p>	
	<p>[Insert programme module title]</p> <p>[Insert programme key content]</p>	

Tool 9 Programme Module Content Developer

Aim	[Insert programme module aim]
Status	[State whether the programme module is compulsory or optional]
Awards	[Insert titles of component awards that the programme module leads to and whether they are fully or partially achieved in the module]
Learning Outcomes	[List learning outcomes that the programme module covers]
Summary of Content	[Summarise key programme module content]
Assessment	[If programme module is assessed, list assessment techniques and instruments]
Delivery Strategies	<p>[State how the content of the programme module will be delivered]</p> <p>Choose from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Classroom, directed learning experiences (classroom-based, face to face, instructional) ▪ group discussions/group interactions ▪ practical sessions/workshops/laboratories/studio ▪ simulated work environment/work experience ▪ tutorials/ one on one supported learning ▪ self-directed learning ▪ field trips ▪ on-the-job training ▪ online training ▪ other
Activities	<p>[List key activities that will take place during the programme module]</p> <p>These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ case studies ▪ field trips ▪ role play ▪ group discussions ▪ practical demonstrations ▪ video/television/other media ▪ interview/meetings
Resources	<p>[List key resources that will be available to the tutor and the learner]</p> <p>These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ facilities e.g. library, laboratory etc ▪ equipment ▪ handouts ▪ worksheets ▪ OHPs ▪ visuals ▪ assessment instruments

Tool 10 Learning Strand and Delivery Strategy Mapper

Strand of learning	Delivery strategy	Learning activities
Knowledge	Direct instruction Library/online research One-to-one/tutorial eDelivery Peer delivery Preparatory work	Listening, discussion Reviewing and revising notes Synthesis of information Expanding information Exploring ideas Expanding theory
Know-how and Skill	Practical demonstration Laboratory demonstration Inquiry-based learning Project-based learning Action research Field-trip On-line simulation/video	Synthesis of information Applying theory to practice Experiential Repetition, fine-tuning Practice
Competence	Conference/seminar On-the-job practice Reflection Self-directed learning	Synthesis of information Deepening learning Internalisation Multiple perspectives Transforming knowledge Appraising Insight into self

Tool 11 Outcome and Content Mapper

Programme Module Title	Programme Module Status	Summary of Content	Component Title/s	Component Learning Outcomes
[Insert programme module title here]	[State whether programme module is compulsory or optional]	[List key programme module content]	[Insert title/s of components that the programme module leads to]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]
[Insert programme module title here]	[State whether programme module is compulsory or optional]	[List key programme module content]	[Insert title/s of components that the programme module leads to]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]
[Insert programme module title here]	[State whether programme module is compulsory or optional]	[List key programme module content]	[Insert title/s of components that the programme module leads to]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Could some programme modules be amalgamated or divided to provide a coherent programme?
2. Are all learning outcomes are covered in programme module content?
3. Are all learning outcomes assessed?

Tool 12 Assessment and Outcome Mapper

Programme Module Title	Summary of content	Component Learning outcomes	Assessment Instruments	Assessment Instrument Status
[Insert programme module title here]	[List key programme module content]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]	[List assessment instruments used to assess programme module]	[State whether assessment instrument is formative or summative]
[Insert programme module title here]	[List key programme module content]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]	[List assessment instruments used to assess programme module]	[State whether assessment instrument is formative or summative]
[Insert programme module title here]	[List key programme module content]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]	[List assessment instruments used to assess programme module]	[State whether assessment instrument is formative or summative]

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Are all learning outcomes assessed?
2. Will the assessment instruments allow learners to demonstrate that they have achieved all the learning outcomes?
3. Are there opportunities to integrate assessment further within the programme module or between different programme modules?
4. Is the programme module being over-assessed? Are the same learning outcomes being assessed more than once? Can it be amended to ensure the learner is not repeating assessment for the same learning outcome?

Tool 13 Strategies, Assessment and Outcome Mapper

Programme Module Title	Delivery Strategies	Component Learning Outcomes	Assessment Instruments	Compatible? Y/N
[Insert programme module title here]	[List programme module delivery strategy/strategies]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]	[List programme module assessment instrument/s]	
[Insert programme module title here]	[List key programme module content]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]	[List programme module assessment instrument/s]	
[Insert programme module title here]	[List key programme module content]	[List component learning outcomes covered by the programme module]	[List programme module assessment instrument/s]	

Appendix 1 Guideline Directed and Self-Directed Duration Ranges

These tables are intended as a guide for providers in establishing programme durations. Providers can devise directed/self-directed ratios that fall outside the guidelines set out below. Where this is the case, the provider may be required to supply additional details that support a rationale for an exceptional duration.

Directed Hours:

Directed hours are the hours the provider spends directly delivering the content of the programme to the learner. They include class contact, direct online contact, assessment and laboratory time. They can include work-based direction, where there is a tutor and or instructor on-site delivering content.

Self-Directed Hours

Self-directed hours are the hours where the learning is learner-lead. They include practice time, work experience, preparation, study time and reflection time.

<i>Major Awards</i>				
Level	Major Award Credits	Typical Learner Effort in Hours	Programme Directed Hours Range	Programme Self-directed Hours Range
L 1	20	200	150-200	0-50hours
L 2	30	300	250-300	0-50 hours
L 3	60	600	300-550	50-300
L 4	90	900	400-800	100-500
L 5	120	1200	500-1000	200-700
L 6	120	1200	500-1000	200-700

<i>Special Purpose, Supplemental and Minor Awards</i>				
Levels 1-6	Credit Values	Typical Learner Effort in hours	Programme Directed Range	Programme Self-directed Range
	5	50	15-50	0-35
	10	100	30-100	0-70
	15	150	50-130	20-100
	20	200	80-160	40-120

Appendix 2 Major Programme Descriptor Template

Programme Title	
Certificate Code	Certificate Title
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
<i>Add rows if necessary</i>	
Programme Profile	
Learner Profile	
Programme Objectives	
Entry Criteria	
Programme Duration	
Full/Part Time	
Number of weeks	
Number of hours per week	
Delivery Mode	

Delivery Methodology
Programme Review Schedule
Transfer and Progression
Learner Supports
Specific Validation Requirements

Programme Structure and Assessment Plan

Number of programme modules to be completed by each learner

Additional explanation of structure

Programme Module Title	Compulsory or Optional	Duration in hours	FETAC Component Title/s	Assessment Techniques

Add rows if necessary

Programme Module

To be completed for each programme module

Title	
Status	
Duration in Hours	
Aims and Objectives	
Indicative Content and Programme Outcomes	
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
<i>Add rows if necessary</i>	

Programme Module Assessment

Technique	Weighting	Time Allocated	Format and Context	Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme Guide

Add rows if necessary

Appendix 3 Express Programme Descriptor Template

Programme Title	
Programme Profile	
Certificate Code	Certificate Title
Will this certificate be achieved on completion of the programme?	
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
Component Code	Component Title
<i>Add rows if necessary</i>	
Learner Profile	
Programme Objectives	
Programme Duration in Hours	
Delivery Mode	
Delivery Methodology	
Specific Validation Requirements	

Programme Assessment

Technique	Weighting	Time Allocated	Format and Context	Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme Guide

Add rows if necessary