

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION – MSc Physician Associate

This document applies to Academic Year 2018/19 onwards

1.	Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching institution	University of Worcester
3.	Programme accredited by	N/A
4.	Final award	MSc
5.	Programme title	MSc Physician Associate
6.	Pathways available	N/A
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Taught programme - University of Worcester Practice placement – Local NHS
8.	Mode of attendance and duration	Full and Part time programme lasting 2 years for full time students and 3-4 years for part time students. Both routes utilise an extended academic year (46/49 weeks). Practice element may include working some unsocial hours (evenings, nights, weekends, public holidays)
9.	UCAS Code	N/A
10.	Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement	QAA (2010) Master's Degree Characteristics. Department of Health (2006, revised 2012) Competence & Curriculum Framework for the Physician Assistant. Available online at: http://www.fparcp.co.uk/
11.	Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision	June 2014 (approval of full time course) May 2015 (amendment to duration of course and assessments) April 2016 (approval of part time route) August 2016 (Regulations amended - Section 20) September 2016 (amendment to module titles MSPA4001 and 4004) August 2017 (removal of national exam from module MSPA4007) August 2017 (AQU amendments) August 2018 (AQU amendments)

12. Educational aims of the programme

The MSc Physician Associate programme is an innovative programme contributing to the educational training for a new clinical role in the United Kingdom. The University of Worcester is located in a community where the Physician Associate will be equipped to manage patients in a range of clinical environments including at home or working in partnership with the NHS. The programme aims to equip individuals to be able to function in a multi-disciplinary team, under the supervision and direction of a registered medical practitioner (doctor). On completion of the programme, the successful student will be able to exercise skill in patient assessment, diagnosis, clinical management and clinical reasoning similar to that of a registered medical practitioner. Unlike many other roles driven by specialisation, the Physician Associate (PA) is a generalist able to function in many areas of clinical practice, and is increasingly referred to as being a generic clinician capable of adapting to function in different clinical areas.

The programme is constructed around nationally agreed competencies which cover the breadth of clinical topics in primary and secondary care and reflect an evolving primary care agenda.

The role of the PA is demanding and it therefore follows that the programme to prepare individuals for this role will also be demanding. In order for graduates of the programme to be adaptable generalists, able to provide safe, high quality care to their patients, they will require a sophisticated knowledge base and skill set beyond that of the conventional direct entry or postgraduate health care student.

To achieve this, students will pursue a programme of study that adheres to the University's standards and principles, but it has a number of unique features not previously seen in health care programmes outside undergraduate medical education, including intensive class contact over an extended period, advanced levels of scientific and clinical content, extensive and frequent assessment, clinical placement and evaluation of clinical skills.

The programme firmly embraces the concept of student-centred approach to learning, with an understanding that students have ownership of their own learning, supported by a robust pedagogical framework.

Students will participate in an intensive and demanding programme of study over 2 extended academic years (full-time route) or 3-4 extended academic years (part-time route), amounting to 46 weeks of study in years 1 and 2 and 46 weeks of study in year 3 and 4 (or 49 if completing clinical phase full-time). Both the duration of the programme and the requisite high levels of knowledge and skill required to ensure patient safety means that this is a highly assessed academic and clinical programme. The approach to assessment is comprehensive and demanding, but not unrealistic, given that it is driven by patient safety requirements.

The programme aims to:

- Enable graduates to provide patients with safe, high quality, compassionate clinical care within their scope of practice and field of delegated autonomy.
- Provide graduates with sound scientific knowledge to inform their clinical skills and decision-making.
- Equip graduates to safely assess patients, demonstrate clinical reasoning and diagnostic skills, formulate a management plan, and execute the management plan.
- Enable graduates to work effectively within an integrated multidisciplinary team and with delegated autonomy.
- Equip graduates with transferrable skills and an understanding of first principles to provide them with the ability to adapt practice in order to function safely and effectively in a range of situations, many of which will be new or novel.
- Prepare graduates to become leaders of their profession through self-management, role modelling, and education, and by contributing to the evolution of the Physician Associate in the UK.

Enables graduates to:

- Demonstrate a systematic understanding and critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their professional practice.
- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.
- Demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.

- Demonstrate conceptual understanding that enables students to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship, and to evaluate methodologies, develop critiques of them, proposing, where appropriate, new hypotheses.
- Be able to deal with complex issues, making sound judgements in the absence of complete data and communicate this effectively.
- Demonstrate self-direction and originality in problem solving, planning and execution of plans at a professional level.
- Continue to advance knowledge and understanding at a high level.
- Demonstrate the qualities and skills for employment.

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods, based on DH Competence and Curriculum Framework (2006, revised 2012)

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding			
LO no.		Module Code/s	Award <i>State if PG Cert, PG Dip or MA, MSc, etc.</i>
1.	Utilise a broad knowledge base, demonstrating conceptual understanding of clinical and medical sciences, including pharmacology, therapeutics, public health and epidemiology, to underpin patient assessment, clinical decision-making and clinical management of patients across the age spectrum.	MSPA 4001	PG Cert

Cognitive and Intellectual skills			
2.	Conduct safe, appropriate and effective history taking, clinical examination, and consultation with patients across the age spectrum and in a range of clinical settings.	MSPA 4001 MSPA 4004	PG Cert
3.	Identify, request and, where appropriate, conduct clinical investigations, in a range of clinical presentations across the age spectrum and in a range of clinical settings.	MSPA 4007	PG Dip
4.	Exercise a systematic approach and critical awareness in problem solving using skills to interpret information, informing differential diagnoses and clinical management.	MSPA 4001	PG Cert
5.	Critically appraise and utilise the evidence base and exemplars of best practice to underpin clinical practice, for advanced scholarship.	MSPA 4002	PG Cert

Skills and capabilities related to employability			
6.	Practice in a legal, ethical and compassionate manner within their scope of professional practice.	MSPA 4007	PG Dip

7.	Develop professional relationships across the scope of professional practice.	MSPA 4007	PG Dip
8.	Formulate safe, rational and coherent plans, including referral and review, for the care and management of patients across the age spectrum and in a range of clinical settings, with originality in the application of that knowledge.	MSPA 4004	PG Cert
9.	Produce coherent and accurate clinical and professional records.	MSPA 4007	PG Dip

Transferable/key skills			
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10.	Demonstrate effective and appropriate verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills, where appropriate receiving, eliciting and transmitting information, in all professional situations.	MSPA 4007	PG Dip
11.	Critically assess and manage risk in all aspects of professional practice.	MSPA 4005 MSPA 4006	PG Dip
12.	Work effectively in a team, with both direct and indirect supervision, where appropriate teaching and supervising others.	MSPA 4007	PG Dip
13.	Demonstrate leadership skills and advanced scholarship for innovative practice development to adopt and disseminate NHS service improvement.	MSPA 4010	MSc

Intended learning outcomes mapped to DH Competence and Curriculum Framework

	UKBPAAE		Common core skills/knowledge child, History taking/consultation	Examination	Interpreting evidence	Clinical judgement	Therapeutics/prescribing	Clinical planning/procedures	Documentation/information	Risk Management	Teamwork	Time/resource management	Maintain good practice	Ethical & legal	Equality & diversity	Guiding principles of NHS	Public health	Moving & handling
	Prof behaviour/probity	Patient relationship																
UW																		
Practice in a legal, ethical and compassionate manner within their own scope of professional practice.	✓	✓											✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Demonstrate effective and appropriate verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills, where appropriate receiving, eliciting and transmitting information, in all professional situations.	✓	✓	✓										✓		✓			
Develop professional relationships across the scope of professional practice.	✓	✓	✓										✓		✓			
Utilize abroad knowledge base, demonstrating conceptual understanding of clinical and			✓		✓		✓						✓					

medical sciences, including pharmacology, therapeutics, public health and epidemiology, to underpin patient assessment, clinical decision making and clinical management of patients across the age spectrum																			
Conduct safe, appropriate and effective history taking and consultation with patients across the age spectrum and in a range of clinical settings.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓									✓				✓
Conduct safe, appropriate and effective clinical examination of patients across the age spectrum and in a range of clinical settings.		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓						✓				
Identify, request, and where appropriate, conduct clinical investigations, in a range of clinical presentations across the age spectrum and in a range of clinical settings.				✓		✓			✓						✓				

<p>Exercise a systematic approach and critical awareness in problem solving using skills to interpret information, informing differential diagnoses and clinical management</p>			✓			✓	✓							✓				✓
<p>Formulate safe, rational and coherent plans, including referral and review, for the care and management of patients across the age spectrum and in a range of clinical settings, with originality in the application of that knowledge.</p>			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓					✓				
<p>Critically appraise and utilise the evidence base and exemplars of best practice to underpin clinical practice, for advanced scholarship, demonstrating originality in the application of knowledge.</p>						✓	✓							✓				

student will participate in a number of structured testing stations where they may be asked, for example, to interpret a 12 lead ECG recording (OSCE) or to demonstrate taking a venous blood sample (OSPE). Typically assessment sessions will include the student undertaking a number of OSCE/OSPEs on a circuit.

Unseen examinations and OSCE/OSPEs are assessed on a pass/fail basis, with essays, critiques, oral presentations and dissertation awarded a percentage mark with a pass at D- or above.

Clinicians and the clinical supervisor teach clinical practice, with the student embedded within the clinical team. Teaching will be both formal and informal using planned and opportunistic learning opportunities.

Practice is assessed by the clinical supervisor using the skills passport and the practice assessment document. The passport is skills focused whilst the practice assessment document addresses the key domains of professional behaviour, interaction with patients, team working, professional judgement, history taking, clinical examination, clinical conditions, diagnosis, clinical investigations, management planning and implementation, pharmacology and communication.

14. Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategy is designed to enable students to demonstrate competence in individual, discrete skills, and the integration of those skills in the safe assessment and management of patients. The assessment strategy is broadly divided into 3 aspects: the assessment of knowledge, critical analysis and integrating theory into practice.

The assessment strategy offers a robust approach to assure student competence. To that end the student will hold a skills passport for the duration of the programme, enabling them to demonstrate their ability in a range of competencies, initially through simulation and then in clinical practice. The skills passport documents compliance with the mandated practice hours. It also allows students to demonstrate the breadth of their experience and to evaluate their own performance. Supervisor assessment at the conclusion of each placement provides a developmental formative assessment of their practice as a whole.

Assessment will take the form of regular examinations, Objective Structured Clinical Examinations, Objective Structured Practical Examinations, written project work and group presentations. Formative and summative assessment runs throughout each module and where possible formative assessments are integrated into study days at the university. Although final assessment is in preparation for the national exam, passing the national exam is not a requisite to achieving the MSc Physician Associate. Students who complete 140 credits at level 7, plus the Clinical Practice module (MSPA4007) and 1600 hours of clinical practice are eligible to sit the national exam. There is a fee to sit the national exam that students must meet themselves. Graduates should not work clinically as Physician Associates if they have not passed the national exam.

The clinical assessments are graded as pass/fail as these are predominantly OSCEs and multiple-choice questions and the reflective case scenario/assessments will be graded in order that students can see the level of critical analysis achieved. The overall award is an unclassified Masters.

15. Programme structures and requirements

Award map for MSc Physician Associate:

Module Code	Module	Credits	Status	Pre requisite
MSPA4001	Clinical Science & Pharmacology	20	M	-
MSPA4002	Evidence Based Practice and Research Methods	20	M	-
MSPA4003	Emergency Medicine and Critical Care	20	M	-
MSPA4004	General Internal Medicine	40	M	-
MSPA4005	Maternal & Paediatric Medicine	20	M	-
MSPA4006	Behavioural Medicine	20	M	-
MSPA4007	Clinical skills and Clinical practice	0	M	Completion of MSPA4001 to MSPA4006
MSPA4010	Dissertation (Healthcare Improvement Project)	40	M	-

To be awarded the MSc Physician Associate, students must complete all modules. The MSc Physician Associate can be studied as either a 2 year full-time course or as a 3-4 year part-time course. Both routes require students to complete a preclinical phase, followed by a clinical phase of placements.

Full Time Route

Year 1 (preclinical phase) is delivered 5 days per week, over 46 weeks per year, providing 1,500 hours of theory through completion of the taught modules: 140 credits in total.

Year 2 (clinical phase) consists of 5 days per week in clinical placement over an extended academic year of 49 weeks (1,600 hours), which includes completion of the National Physician Associate Examination. Students also complete the Dissertation (Healthcare Improvement Project) during this year.

In order to progress into the clinical placement module, students must have successfully completed modules MSPA4001 to MSPA4006

Part Time Route

Preclinical phase: Years 1 and 2 are each delivered over 2-3 days per week, over 46 weeks per year, providing 1,500 hours of theory through completion of the taught modules: 140 credits in total.

There are two options for completing the Clinical Phase (clinical practice and the Dissertation module):

Option One:

Years 3 and 4 each consist of 3 days per week in clinical placement, over 46 weeks (1,600 hours), which includes completion of the National Physician Associate Examination. Students also complete the Dissertation (Healthcare Improvement Project) during this period.

Option Two:

Year 3 consists of 5 days per week in clinical placement over an extended academic year of 49 weeks (1,610 hours). This mirrors the second year of the full-time MSc Physician Associate, and includes completion of the National Physician Associate Examination. Students also complete the Dissertation (Healthcare Improvement Project) during this year.

In order to progress into the clinical placement module, students must have successfully completed modules MSPA4001 to MSPA4006.

Transfer of Route

Part-time students wishing to transfer to the full-time option may be able to do so, but this must be completed at the end of a semester. The full details of the transfer process can be found on the course Blackboard pages.

16. QAA, Professional Academic Standards and Quality

This award is located at level 7 of the FHEQ and reflects the QAA guidance on Master's Degree Characteristics. The design of the curriculum has been informed by:

QAA (2008) The Framework for Higher Education, Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Framework-Higher-Education-Qualifications-08.pdf>

QAA (2002) Benchmark Statement – Medicine

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Subject-benchmark-statement-Medicine.pdf>

Department of Health (2006, revised 2012) Competence & Curriculum Framework for the Physician *Assistant* <http://www.fparcp.co.uk/>

Department of Health National Practitioner Programme (2006) Matrix Specification of Core Clinical Conditions for the Physician *Assistant* by Category of Level of Competence <http://www.ukapa.co.uk/files/CCF-27-03-12-for-PAMVR.pdf>

Accreditation Review Commission on Education-Physician Assistant, American Academy of Physician Assistants and National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. (2012); Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession

<http://www.nccpa.net/App/PDFs/Definition%20of%20PA%20Competencies%203.5%20for%20Publication.pdf>

The MSc Physician Associate curriculum reflects the broad principles of Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies in anticipation of future regulation.

17. Support for students

The University offers a full range of pastoral and academic support services are available for students that can be accessed via the [Student Homepage](#). Support for a wide range of student issues from accommodation to welfare through a single point of access, Firstpoint, located in the Pierson Centre.

Students are supported throughout the programme by both the programme leaders and by individual course advisors. Students will have access to additional support, in the form of professional mentoring and role modelling from practising PAs on a sessional basis.

The Course Handbook contains information that is provided to all students. The handbook is reviewed, updated and reissued annually. Subject guides, and 'Libguides' are widely available both in hardcopy and on the university website.

An induction programme is provided for all new entrants. The subject team provide study skills with input from learning support services (Library, IT, and Media and Print).

The programme has a course presence on the virtual learning environment (Blackboard) in addition to individual web pages for each module.

Module leaders provide individual academic support through formative assessment, group and individual tutorials and feedback.

When in practice, students are supported, coached, supervised and assessed by a named clinical supervisor. The named supervisor will co-ordinate clinical experience supervised by a range of appropriately qualified clinical staff within the healthcare team and clinical firm. Experience is verified in the final sign off by the Clinical Supervisor.

Prior to commencing the course, students are invited to attend an induction day that will familiarise them with the University, the IHS and the course. They can meet representatives from Student Services, Registry and ILS and hear more about their services as well as meeting the programme team.

Students with disabilities will be supported by the specialist services such as Student Services and the Disability and Dyslexia Service, in conjunction with the programme team:

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/index.htm>

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/disability-and-dyslexia.htm>

18. Admissions

Admissions Policy

The programme seeks to recruit graduates with a strong science or healthcare background as well as experienced clinicians in other healthcare disciplines.

The University of Worcester is committed to widening participation, equality and diversity, and inclusion. Candidates will be selected on ability, potential, commitment to become a Physician Associate and demonstrating values and attitudes compatible with professional healthcare practice.

Entry requirements

Applicants should normally have: GCSE (or equivalent) grade A-C in Maths and English and

EITHER

A lower second class Honours degree (2:2) or above in a relevant subject, such as medical, biological or life sciences or other health related subject from a UK university, the CNAA **or** an overseas equivalent.

OR

Alternative professional qualifications may be considered. Applicants may be required to submit supplementary details, such as course transcripts, and asked to complete a short essay.

See [Admissions Policy](#) for other acceptable qualifications.

When assessing a non-standard entrant's suitability for entry onto the programme, candidates will need to demonstrate their potential to achieve the aims and outcomes of the programme. The candidate will also need to demonstrate that their experiences are equivalent to having achieved a minimum 2.2 in a science or healthcare at undergraduate level. The following criteria may be taken in to consideration:

- Level of current qualifications
- Evidence of adoption of the principles of lifelong learning
- Ability to be an effective learner in a fast paced Masters programme
- Ability to recognise and adopt professional standards and values
- Ability to work with others in a team
- Ability to write in a clear, coherent and critical manner
- Motivation for undertaking the programme
- Experience of working in a public-facing environment

International students will be expected to demonstrate their proficiency in English and would normally be expected to have an IELTS score of 7.5 with a minimum of 7.5 in each element, or equivalent. Students can check their qualification with the International Recruitment Team at: international@worc.ac.uk

Recognition of Prior Learning

Students with relevant previous study at postgraduate level or with extensive experience may be considered eligible for recognition of prior learning. Please contact the Registry Admissions Office for further information or guidance on 01905 855111.

Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning can be found at <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/941.htm>

Admissions procedures

All applications will be processed by the Admissions office and, following initial screening, reviewed by the programme team.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to participate in a selection day to include;

- Values based interview (via a number of interview/assessment stations)
- A team exercise
- A literacy assessment
- A numeracy assessment

Admissions/selection criteria

Students are offered a place based upon their performance in the selection elements, provided they meet the entry criteria. Any offer of a place is conditional upon the applicant providing a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and receiving Occupational Health clearance.

19. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

- Students evaluate modules at the midpoint and end of each module.

- Collated evaluations are placed online with the module leaders' response and action plan and uploaded onto Blackboard. Evaluations are reviewed by the programme leader and, in programme management meetings, by the whole team.
- Evaluation of practice is collated and made available to the education leads at the local NHS Trusts and placement providers.
- Annual Evaluation Reports.
- Engagement with the external examiner throughout the planning, assessment and programme monitoring, including responding to the External Examiners Report.
- Programme Management Committee.
- Post exam board review.
- Staff appraisals and CPD activity.

20. Regulation of assessment

The course operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in the module specifications.
- The pass mark for assessments is D-. Examinations, OSCE and OSPEs are assessed on a pass/fail basis.
- All modules, with the exception of MSPA4002 and MSPA4010, are assessed on a pass/fail basis.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 5 days of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 5 days but within 14 days of the due date will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- Students are entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D-.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module; the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student who fails a placement in relation to MSPA4007 will have one reassessment opportunity only for that placement.
- A student who fails 60 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessments.

Requirements for progression to Clinical Phase

- Students must successfully complete modules MSPA4001 to MSPA4006 prior to progression to MSPA4007 Clinical Practice.

Requirements for Awards

- In order to be awarded the MSc Physician Associate, students must pass all modules for the award 180 level 7 credits from the mandatory modules and the Clinical Practice module.
- Students who have passed MSPA4001 to MSPA4006 plus MSPA4010, but have not passed MSPA4007, will be eligible for an award of MSc Clinical Studies.
- Students who have passed 140 credits from the mandatory modules, plus the Clinical Practice module (MSPA4007) will be eligible for the award of PGDip Physician Associate.
- Students who have passed 120 credits from the mandatory modules, will be eligible for an award of PGDip Clinical Studies.
- Students who have passed 60 credits at level 7 will be eligible for an award of PG Cert Clinical Studies.
- The awards of PG Cert, PG Dip or MSc in this programme are unclassified.

Award	Title	Requirement
PG Cert	Clinical Studies	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7 including mandatory modules: from MSPA4001 to MSPA4006
PG Dip	Clinical Studies	Passed a minimum of 120 credits at level 7 including mandatory modules: from MSPA4001 to MSPA4006
PG Dip	Physician Associate	Passed a minimum of 140 credits at level 7, plus the Clinical Practice module (MSPA4007)
MSc	Clinical Studies	Passed MSPA4001 to MSPA4006, plus MSPA4010
MSc	Physician Associate	Passed a minimum of 180 credits at level 7, plus the Clinical Practice module (MSPA4007)

21. Indicators of quality and standards

The University underwent a QAA Institutional Audit in March 2011. The audit confirmed that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the learning opportunities available to students. The audit team highlighted several aspects of good practice, including the student academic representative (StARs) initiative, the proactive approach which supports the student experience for disabled students, the comprehensiveness of the student online environment (SOLE), the wide range of opportunities afforded to students to enhance their employability, the institution's commitment to enhancement, and the inclusive approach to working in collaboration with its partners.

22. Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

Graduate Destinations

This is a relatively new role, but graduates from existing programmes in the UK are practising as PAs in a diverse range of clinical settings including general practice, urgent care, emergency care, medical specialities and surgical specialities.

Student Employability

Students undertake placements in a diverse range of clinical settings, providing them with exposure to clinical environments in which they are likely to seek, or be offered, employment as a PA.

As this is a new role and a new provision there is no historical data of student destination, however local intelligence suggests that current employment opportunities outstrip the supply of graduates.

Links with Employers

Practice partners are engaged in the writing, development and delivery of the programme. They provide clinical placements and are closely involved in the on-going monitoring of the programme.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in associated course documentation e.g. course handbooks, module outlines and module specifications.