



Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework

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Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework

Introduction

1. This document specifies the principles that guide Spurgeon's College's (College) activity in learning, teaching and assessment. It draws on the shared wisdom of learning, teaching and assessment strategies in the higher education sector.¹
2. The College has historically designed programmes for students from a broad Evangelical constituency and continues to have a confessional, Christian ethos and foundation as a higher education provider. The College welcomes students from a wide range of faith and non-faith backgrounds to its increasing portfolio of educational programmes. It believes that the supportive and diverse environment for learning, that is academically rigorous and challenging, is attractive to students nationally and internationally.
3. The College will ensure that:
 - i. the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks;
 - ii. students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonable comparable with those achieved in other UK providers;
 - iii. when it works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them;
 - iv. it uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent;
 - v. those training for Christian ministry, mission and leadership develop skills in various forms of Christian ministry and service;
 - vi. every student has learning opportunities which develop personal resilience and self-awareness.

Learning and teaching

4. The key principles regarding learning and teaching are:
 - i. an evidence-based strategic approach to learning and teaching, developed and delivered in partnership with staff, students and other stakeholders.² Each programme is tailored to the specific needs of the discipline, which may include relationships with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).
 - ii. that the College will design, deliver, monitor and evaluate learning and teaching with a

¹ This document has been written with reference to the UK Quality Code <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code> and its Advice and Guidance: Learning and Teaching <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/learning-and-teaching>

² For example, the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB).

focus on the outcomes to be achieved by the student and how effectively the chosen learning and teaching approaches enable this. The College will use a variety of evidence to assess student achievement and outcomes throughout their educational experience and will respond accordingly.

- iii. a recognition that the nature, content and context of students' learning experiences may vary but providers ensure parity of quality of learning opportunities by adopting inclusive learning and teaching practices. The College recognises that good practices take account of different ways of learning, modes of study, diverse educational, linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds, and abilities to provide a flexible and inclusive approach that enables and empowers every student to fulfil their potential and achieve a successful outcome.
- iv. that effective student learning is facilitated by interaction with appropriately qualified, supported and developed teaching and professional staff. To enable this, the College will ensure that staff demonstrate up-to-date knowledge and practice in both their subject and appropriate pedagogies. This will involve encouraging teaching staff to engage in self-reflection so that their learning, teaching and assessment design and practice is properly informed. To this end, College staff will be provided with access to continuing professional development (CPD) that is planned, monitored and evaluated. The College will offer opportunities for all those involved in learning and teaching to inform each other's practice and experience.
- v. the appropriate use a range of internal and external information and feedback to enable the College to keep its approach to learning and teaching under review, taking deliberate steps to facilitate the continuous improvement of the learning opportunities and support they provide. The College Senior Management Team will monitor and evaluate College processes for all learning and teaching activities.
- vi. that any learning environment created by the College is safe, accessible and suitable for the nature of the learning activities and planned in a systematic way in consultation with students. The learning environment may encompass:
 - a. physical environment (seating, lighting and acoustics, availability of technology)
 - b. virtual environment (technological facilities including virtual learning environments and library systems)
 - c. social learning environment (dialogue based on mutual dignity and respect and a safe environment for exploring new ideas and providing feedback).
- vii. that the College will give clarity on the responsibilities of staff, students and, where appropriate, other stakeholders (such as settings providing practical experience for students) for learning and teaching. Information provided by the College will be inclusive, transparent and accessible. The College will engage students to monitor, review and evaluate this information to ensure that it meets the needs of different groups of students.
- viii. that the College will enable students to engage in independent learning relevant to the level of study, working in partnership with individuals and teams to display appropriate academic behaviour and integrity. The College will assist students to transition and progress through their studies.
- ix. that the College will encourage students to evaluate their learning experiences and provide feedback in dialogue with individuals and teams through deliberate steps that inform the enhancement of learning and teaching.

Assessment³

5. Assessment is an important part of the College's educational process. The key principles relating to assessment are that:
- i. the College's *assessment methods and criteria are aligned to learning outcomes and teaching activities*. Assessment criteria and learning and teaching activities are developed in accordance with the academic level of study, using appropriate descriptors and consistent language. They reflect course and unit aims as well as other factors where appropriate, such as PSRB requirements.
 - ii. it is *reliable, consistent, fair and valid*. To ensure equity, academic standards for each award are rigorously set and maintained at the appropriate level (in accordance with the relevant national qualification frameworks). Awards at the same level are comparable in terms of qualification and level descriptors, assessment criteria, Subject Benchmark Statements, and, where applicable, PSRB requirements. Assessment criteria are sufficiently robust to ensure reasonable parity between the judgements of different assessors. Policies and procedures for marking assessments and moderating marks are clearly articulated, consistently operated and regularly reviewed. Where borderline marks are identified, policies for the consideration of grades to be awarded are consistent, fair and freely available to staff and students. The validity of an assessment is reviewed through annual and periodic review, supported by external subject specialists and external examiners.
 - iii. the College's *approach is holistic*. Assessment is designed 'top down' - beginning with the award, then going down into unit level (where appropriate). Assessment design considers all modes of course delivery and environment, including where employers may be involved in assessment of experience and knowledge gained in a practical setting (for example, a church or missional based placement). The College recognises the importance of variety in modes of assessment, based on academic judgement.
 - iv. the College's *assessment methods and criteria are inclusive and equitable*. Every student has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement through the assessment process, with no group or individual disadvantaged. The College keeps the needs of students to the forefront of its thinking when designing assessments, including those studying at different locations, from different cultural/ educational backgrounds, with additional learning needs, or with protected characteristics. Assessment procedures and methods are flexible enough to allow adjustments to overcome any substantial disadvantage that individual students could experience.
 - v. the College's *assessment is explicit and transparent*. Assessment policies, regulations and processes are explicit, transparent and accessible to all staff and students involved in the assessment process. Students are clearly informed of the purpose and requirements of each assessment task and the standards expected. Feedback on assessments explicitly relates to the stated learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the assessment of their work.
 - vi. the College's *assessment and feedback is designed to be purposeful and support student learning and academic development*. The College's approach to assessment relates directly to course aims and learning outcomes and ensures that students have the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and attributes. The College maintains an excellent system of Quality Assurance in marking and moderation, which is understandable and explained to students, transparent to any validating bodies, and produces results that are accurate and trustworthy.

³ This section has been written with reference to the UK Quality Code for Education: Advice and Guidance, Assessment <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment>

- vii. *assessment is timely*. Assessment tasks and feedback are timed by the College to promote student learning and facilitate improvement. Students are given sufficient time and opportunity to engage in learning and teaching activities that build their capacity for assessment.
- viii. the College ensures that *assessment is efficient and manageable*. The College's careful scheduling of assignments, and the amount of assessed work required, provides a reliable and valid profile of student achievement, without overloading students or staff involved in the assessment process. Unit assessment requirements take into account the notional learning hours for any given unit of study.
- ix. *academic tutors assist students to prepare for assessment*. Students are given opportunities to develop assessment literacy, practise subject-related skills and knowledge, engage with content and develop the competencies required to meet learning outcomes. At the College, this often involves formative assessment opportunities within units. Students who submit work for formative assessment are provided with appropriately timed feedback that is understandable, constructive and helps them meet their developmental needs.
- x. the College's approach to assessment *encourages academic integrity*. Students are given specifically designed tuition and guidance on the College's approach to academic integrity, so that students have a clear understanding that academic misconduct, including plagiarism, self-plagiarism and contract cheating is never acceptable. The College's policies and procedures relevant to academic integrity are clear, accessible and actively promoted rather than simply made available.