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Student Communication and Public Information Procedure

Academic Year 2022/2024

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1 Introduction and scope

This document sets out the requirements of information publishing as well as the division of responsibilities for the development, approval, publication and review of information relating to Newham College Higher Education Programmes. These are courses that are described at level 4 and above of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

The following documents are of relevance to this procedure:

- a) The Course Specification of any course of study. This is also known as, the Course Specifications or Validated Documents, and includes course conditions and/or recommendations, as well as modifications that are put in place following validation;
- b) Course Handbooks and Module/Unit Handbooks;
- c) ALL marketing material and web-based content;
- d) HE Assessment calendars/schedules;
- e) Student timetables;
- f) Communications to students in relation to their engagement with any of the college academic processes;
- g) Terms and conditions of studying at the College;
- h) Communications relating to minor or major disruption to services;
- i) Diploma Supplements, Transcripts of Results and Award Certification.

1.1 Why do we need this procedure?

The College is legally bound to give stakeholders accurate, full and timely information. Moreover, the provision of information on publicly accessible websites, course handbooks and unit guides will, in many instances, obviate the need for specific requests, thus reducing the workload of staff. There is a significant challenge to balance the fullness of information with the need to make it engaging and accessible: therefore, contained within this document are the minimum requirements of information publishing as described by our regulators.

1.2 How was this procedure developed?

1.2.1 Student Engagement

Existing students at the College were involved in the development of this process over the years 2019 to 2021. Students' views were sought on matters relating to the presentation of information, accessibility of the website, timing of key information as well as matters relating to email pollution, surveys and the means of communication.

1.2.2 External reference points

UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law which is available at the link below

[HE providers - advice on consumer protection law \(1\).pdf](#)

Student information and data – The Office for Students available at the link below

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/>

Undergraduate students: your rights under consumer law (publishing.service.gov.uk)

2 General Information and Communication

2.1 Communication Protocols

The preferred means of communication between staff and students and potential students will be, where possible, through the VLE in the first instance and thereafter through email. This means that it is important that students check the VLE for announcements and for emails. In all cases staff and students will communicate through the College email account system or through College mobile phones in the case of emergency. Staff should avoid using their own mobile phones if at all possible and should not give students access to their personal contact information. All communications will take place in standard English that is succinct, clear and unambiguous: complex language, unfamiliar expressions and the use of acronyms or jargon should be avoided. In most circumstances staff will respond to students within 4 working days of receipt of an email.

2.2 Communication and Email Pollution

Student feedback indicates that too many emails can be received and that this obscures important messages. As such, the College will limit its use of email communication to include those matters that relate to the students' course and other relevant academic matters.

2.3 Dealing with Individual Student Queries

Where students raise queries in relation to academic regulations and/or other matters that impact on their continuing study staff will refer these to the appropriate designated body. Only where staff are appropriately designated with specific responsibilities, e.g. Chair of the Assessment Board, course leader or received delegated responsibilities from the designate will they respond to the query. All responses will be clear, unambiguous and will refer to the appropriate regulations/procedures as appropriate and will refer students to the appropriate support services.

2.4 Group Information/Queries

Where staff are communicating with groups of students in relation to specific queries that have been raised a response will be sent to the representative of the group only, unless individual students within the group seek an individual reply. Groups can be either formal, for example within a teaching set, or a wider group for example a year group, or a disciplinary area, or indeed a group who were impacted by a specific matter.

3 Student Information

3.1 Student Research and Application Information

3.1.1 Outline of requirements

Prospectuses, marketing material and web content is known as pre-contract 'material information', and an 'invitation to purchases' as defined by the CMA and is seen in law as forming the basis of what the student 'relies' on to inform their decisions. 'Material information' is considered as anything given in writing, visually and verbally which the student relies on to form their view of the course and the College. This means that the 'material information' we provide for students at a pre-contract stage is binding and as such will be full and accurate. We need to ensure that we do not omit important information that could impact students'

decisions; information will be given in a clear, unambiguous way that takes account of the needs of our likely student groups and it will be available to prospective students 'up-front'.

Where specific groups of students are targeted, for example students in employment, then our information will be specifically tailored to these students, as they may have different needs to other students. An example of this could be a commitment to deliver the course on a certain day or at a certain time. This would be considered 'material information' upon which a student had relied to inform their decision and any changes from these times and days could be seen as a breach of that contract.

3.1.2 The Higher Education Prospectus – Hard Copy and Web Content

3.1.2.1 Information source

All information that is included within the HE Prospectus in relation to the course content, assessment, teaching strategies and regulation e.g. Professional and Regulatory Body information will be taken directly from the Course Specification¹ of the course. This ensures the accuracy and currency of the information. All other information relating to data will be taken directly from that source with hyperlinks to the original source.

3.1.2.2 Responsibilities

The course leader will be responsible for providing information for marketing purposes. When this information is published all staff, including marketing staff and academic staff, need to refer to this when guiding students. Copies of all marketing material will be sent to the marketing department for a period of seven years from the date of publication.

3.1.2.3 Content

Information will be easily accessible and written in plain English with the target audience in mind. The information should draw prospective students' attention to important and surprising rules and regulations and these should be made accessible. The pre-contract information includes:

3.1.2.4 General

- a. terms and conditions/student contract;
- b. full course title/s;
- c. a list of all units/units including a list of any optional units;
- d. entry requirements, exclusions and the need to meet conditions of offer;
- e. English language requirements;
- f. title of award to be conferred i.e. Higher National Diploma in Computing
- g. title of the awarding body;
- h. professional accreditation i.e. IET
- i. standard length of the course;
- j. location of study, including location of placements i.e. within Newham, London;
- k. the current institutional and course type regulator, i.e. QAA/OfS/Pearson.

3.1.2.5 Costs

1. Fees per year AND total cost of the course; *This should include, if applicable, clear and intelligible criteria for how fees may change for future years and how any*

¹ This is the validated document resulting from the College internal verification processes.

changes will be calculated, so the student can foresee possible changes and how they could affect them;

2. Extra costs for field trips, and what happens if the student cannot attend.

3.1.2.6 Information about how the course will be delivered

1. the levels at which the course operates and makes awards, e.g., HNC, HND, Cert HE, FdA, BA, etc.
2. on course progression requirements i.e. minimum amount of academic credit for progression throughout the levels;
3. details about the general level of experience or status of the staff;
4. involved in delivering different elements of the course;
5. assessment methods, e.g., 20% work-based projects, 10% exams, 20% timed assessments, 50% essays etc;
6. teaching methods, e.g., lectures, seminars, work placements, independent study;
7. contact hours; this needs to be specific and related to the definitive record of the course;
8. expectations of independent study in terms of hours and autonomy; and
9. expectations of student commitment to in-class attendance, learning engagement and independent study.

3.1.2.7 Other marketing or promotional material

In the first instance the information relating to marketing material will be drawn from the HE prospectus, this will form the basis of further distribution material e.g. posters or leaflet drops.

4 Student Offer and Admissions Stage

4.1 Outline of information requirements

When the offer of a place at the College is made, both the College and the student enter into a contract, and this will be made clear to the student in our communication with them. Where any pre-contract material information changes then this will be communicated to the student, for example, if it is unlikely that an optional unit were to run, this needs to be stated to the student in durable format. Where we anticipate changes to material information, these too must be communicated, this could include, for example, changes to key members of staff whom the students had good reason to believe would be involved in the delivery of the courseⁱⁱ.

All offers of a place on a course of study need to be made in a durable medium for example a PDF attached to an email. An email in itself is not considered to be a durable medium. Offers will be made to students through the Admissions Team and not through emails sent by individual members of staff. Students' attention will be drawn to the complaints process as it relates to admissions processes.

4.2 Student Enrolment Stage

4.2.1 Outline of requirements

In most circumstances the pre-contract information that was offered to the students will not have changed and will continue to be accurate at the point of enrolment. Where there are changes, or where we intend to make changes, to material information, students will be informed of this at the earliest possible opportunity. These may seem to be small matters but where a student relies upon information to inform their choice and this changes, this could be considered to be a 'misleading omission' as defined under CPRs. At this point students' attention will be drawn to the College's terms and conditions in order that they may fully

understand the contract that they are entering into. Where there are unusual or surprising terms and conditions or course requirements e.g. mandatory residential or foreign travel we will draw students' attention to these in order that they are not missed.

5 Student On-Course Communication and Information

As with publicly available information the provision of accessible and sound on-course information should obviate the need for specific requests.

5.1 Course Information

All students will receive a detailed course handbook on their first day of term. This must be provided in a durable format e.g. hardcopy or PDF and a copy should be retained by registry. The provision of a well-constructed course handbook is vital to ensuring that students know and understand their learning environment and how their course is managed; it can reduce unnecessary email traffic and student enquiries and empowers both staff and students. As a minimum each Course Handbook will contain:

- a) Contact details of the Course Team, key staff and their roles;
- b) Resources and support available with staff contact details, including learning support;
- c) Details of learning resources and how to access them;
- d) Course Structure and link to the timetable
 - a. Key details from the Course Specification of the course including:
 - i. Broad description of each Module;
 - ii. Reference to information contained in Module Handbooks; and
 - iii. Details on the course structure and what units will be studied when for both FT and PT students.
 - b. Learning and Teaching methods with links to the Learning and Teaching Strategy;
 - c. Student Engagement with the Programme.
- e) HE Calendar and Assessment Schedule, including dates of
 - a. Submission of work for assessment,
 - b. Re-sit/Re-submission date,
 - c. Assessment Board,
 - d. Notification of results,
 - e. Academic appeals,
 - f. Course Committees,
 - g. Assessment and feedback including links to the Assessment Strategy, indicative assessment map for all years of study how to submit work.
- f) Links that direct students to:
 - a. required/expected referencing methods;
 - b. Validating University or Awarding Body website, as appropriate,
 - c. Academic Regulations
 - d. Public Information
 - e. Complaints and Appeals Procedure
 - f. Mitigation Circumstances
- g) How the course is quality assured;
- h) Links to College Policies that students need to be aware of
 - a. Attendance and engagement Policy,
 - b. Academic and/or Course Regulations,
 - c. Assessment Regulations e.g., submission of work, plagiarism and academic misconduct,
 - d. External Examiner details with links to the External Examiners reports and responses,
 - e. Complains Procedure,

- f. Academic Appeals Procedure
- g. Deferrals extenuating circumstances.
- i) Certificate, Transcript and Diploma information.

Providing a sound working knowledge of the course handbook will form a key part of students' induction into the college.

5.2 Unit Handbook

The Course Specification of the course will be the primary source of information for 5.2.1.1. & 5.2.1.2 below.

5.2.1.1 Module details

- a) Title of the unit;
- b) Module code;
- c) Number of credits;
- d) Level of the unit;
- e) Name of unit leader;
- f) Pre and co-requisites;
- g) Number of learning hours and a description of student learning time; and
- h) Learning outcomes.

5.2.1.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- a) Content synopsis of teaching and learning methods;
- b) Assessment methods, schedule and weighting;
- c) Professional accreditation issues;
- d) A statement on, or link to, referencing methods;
- e) A clear statement relating to plagiarism together with a link to the Academic Misconduct Policy;
- f) Assessment submission dates, times and location;
- g) Full list of reference material which is updated each year;
- h) How feedback on the unit is to be gathered from the students; and
- i) Link to published lists of external examiners and their reports.

5.2.1.3 General Information

- a) Contact details for the unit leader and any other relevant members of the teaching team, with clear guidance on who to go for, and for what, and where relevant office hours and availability;
- b) Contact details of any relevant support staff, with clear guidance on who to go for, and for what;
- c) Where students should check for key information - VLE, notice boards etc; and
- d) If applicable, any costs that the students will incur which are not covered by their tuition fees (for example, materials costs or field courses).

5.3 Timetables

In addition to their course handbook all students will receive an annual timetable of taught and learning support sessions. This should include the delivery staff of the course as well as the campus of delivery. Where the College has created the impression through its pre-contract information that a particular individual will be delivering certain units or involved in teaching and this is not the case it is likely to be considered a 'misleading' action on behalf of the College. This could be of particular interest to students who are seeking to progress from level three provision. Similarly, where the campus changes significantly this too is likely to be

considered to be misleading information. As such where there are any changes to the pre-contract information this needs to be communicated to the students clearly.

5.4 Access to in-course Summative Assessment Results

Students will receive formal assessment of their results directly through the College Examination Team once the College Assessment Board has met to formally confirm these. The College Assessment Board, which has a remit of verifying students assessment results and overall outcomes, will receive the external examiner reports and decisions for HNC/Ds via Pearson to confirm formally the College decisions. As such any information relating to assessment outcome remains 'provisional' until such time as the Assessment Board has sat, and therefore students will be informed by formal communication. Students should be informed of their results within 5 working days of the Board being convened.

5.5 Access to External Examiner Reports

As the primary stakeholder of the provision and in-keeping with the requirements of the QAA all external examiner reports together with the College's responses will be published on the course webpages within 10 days of their receipt.

5.6 Communicating changes

5.6.1 Minor changes

Minor changes to the course and its delivery can be published on the College VLE and it is preferable that students are given at least 48 hours' notice. Where this is not possible a notice will still be put on the VLE and where possible, the students will be informed verbally.

5.6.2 Major changes – medium/long term and indeterminate

Very occasionally there may be major events that impact the delivery of the College's courses, and the College sets out its plans on how these will be managed through its Business Continuity Plan. Sometimes change events are predictable for example a new building, or refurbishment project might well create a situation where there was less car parking available. Where this is the case, we will inform students at the earliest possible opportunity and seek their feedback on how these events might be impacting them. Our key objective in this is to find ways that disruption to students' experiences is minimised.

Other events might give the college less time to respond and to seek students' feedback. Examples of this could be Industrial Action or the restrictions put in place by government in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Where this is the case the college will convene a staff and student panel who will support the College to find the best way to minimise disruption, this panel will be chaired by the HE Lead. Depending on the anticipated length of the disruption the panel will meet as is necessary but at least each fortnight. Where there are individual circumstances that impact some students more than others these can be considered individually and confidentially by the staff of the panel.

Students will also be referred to the College Student Protection Plan where appropriate.

6 Post Course Information and Communication

6.1 Outline of requirements

All students are entitled to receive a Diploma Supplement, (where they have completed their full qualification) and a Transcript of Results as well as their Certificate. Students are entitled

to request duplicate documents Ad Infinitum; the College will clearly indicate on its website where, how and what cost there is to request a duplicate.

6.2 Communication of final results

Only the Assessment Board can award academic credit, therefore only this Board can inform students of their results. Where the award is externally validated by an awarding body such as Pearson, the role of the Assessment Board will be to note and confirm the awarding body's judgements within the parameters of the QAA Quality Code – External Expertise. All students will be informed of their results within a week of the Assessment Board sitting,

6.3 Certification timeframes

The College will endeavour to provide certification as soon as is possible, for Pearson Education awarded course the college will seek certification within three working days of the Assessment Board, thereafter Pearson Education will print the certificates within the timeframe that is described on their website.

6.4 Transcript of Results and Diploma Supplements

Transcripts of Results and Diploma Supplements will be dispatched with student's award Certificate.

6.5 Duplicate Certificates, Transcripts and Diploma Supplements

Duplicate Certificates Transcripts of Results and Diploma Supplements will be produced within 4 weeks of request and on receipt of payment of the required fee. They will be dispatched by first class mail to the last known address unless directed to an alternative address in writing by the student.

ⁱ Please be aware that if the impression is given by any means that a specific teacher will be involved in the delivery of a course or unit this is often seen as contractually binding; this is particularly important for students progressing from level 3 onto undergraduate programmes.

ⁱⁱ Where the changes are permanent or where they have changed for a long-term or an indefinite period of time changes need to be made to the 'material information' that is published on the website.