

# Outcomes-based Learning

## Learning from the OBE experience in the UK

9<sup>th</sup> April 2010

Tina Overton

University of Hull, UK




# The UK situation

- Moved to modules, credits, semesters and learning outcomes in mid 1990s.
- Lots of resistance.
- Move away from final year three hour examinations as major assessment.
- Define what we do, what we expect students to do, and achieve.

# Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

- Oversees quality of UK HE degrees.
  - Academic framework
  - Level descriptors
  - Subject benchmarks
- 

# Academic framework

- Certificate                      level 4              120 credits
  - Diploma                        level 5              240 credits
  - Bachelor                        level 6              360 credits
  - Master                          level 7              480 credits
  - Doctorate                       level 8
- 
- 1 credit = 10 student hours


# Level descriptors - Bachelor and **Master** levels

- describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research
- **evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline**
- apply the methods and techniques to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding
- **evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.**

# Subject benchmarks

- Describe what a graduate in that discipline should know, be able to do.
  - ▶ Knowledge and understanding
  - ▶ Intellectual skills
  - ▶ Discipline specific skills
  - ▶ Transferable skills
- Similar to HKUST programme LOs

# Programme specifications

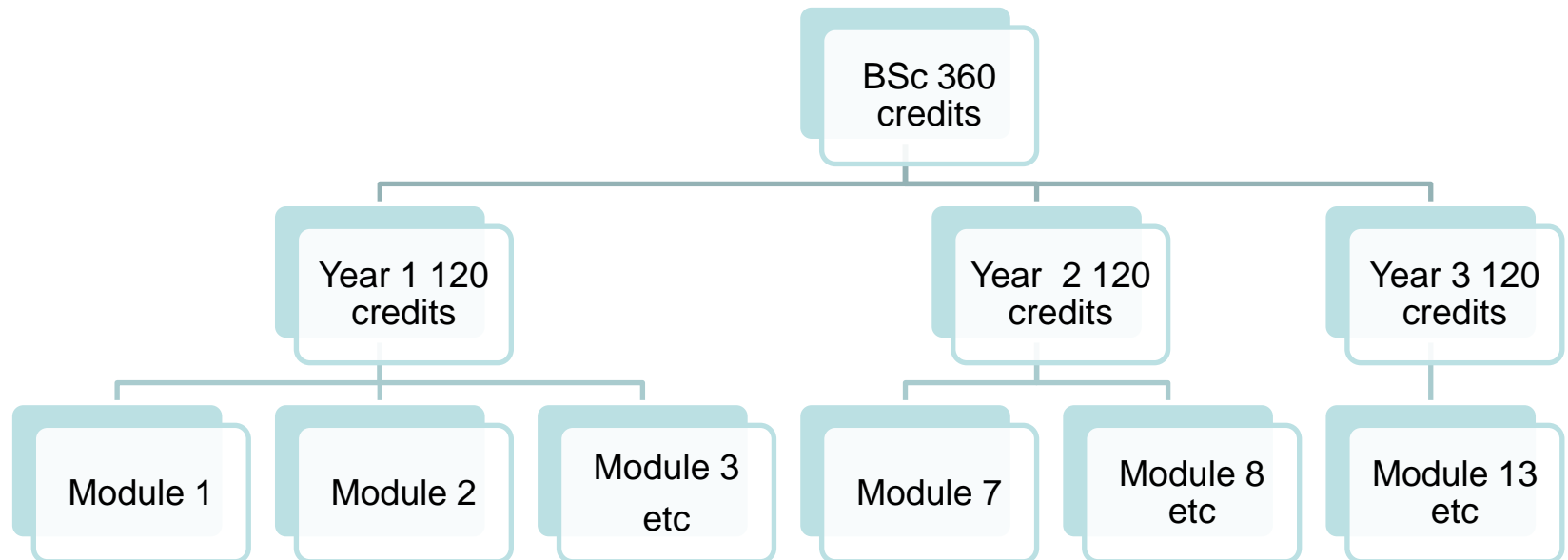
- Translate subject benchmark and local specialisms into description of programme specification.
  - Publicly available.
  - Describes graduates of specific courses.
- 

# Programme specifications

- awarding body/institution
- accreditation by a professional body
- programme title
- criteria for admission to the programme
- aims of the programme
- relevant subject benchmark statements and other external reference points
- programme outcomes: knowledge and understanding; skills and other attributes
- teaching, learning and assessment strategies
- programme structures and requirements, levels, modules, credits and awards
- mode of study
- what makes the programme distinctive



# Programme structure



# Implementing OBL

- Start from where you are.
- Start with modules, teaching courses.
- Articulate existing teaching and learning in terms of outcomes.
- What do you ask your students to DO?
- Not what you expect them to understand, appreciate, be aware of, etc.
- Map on to programme outcomes and look for the gaps.

## Now what?

- LOs provide a great opportunity to refresh your programmes.
- Traditional approaches do not consider skills and qualities of graduates.
- Build in missing opportunities to achieve outcomes.
- Change HOW you deliver, not necessarily WHAT you deliver.

# Engaging the sceptic...

- Path of least resistance.
- *Think about what you ask students to do on an examination question.*
- *Describe, discuss, evaluate, analyse, draw, critique, compare, contrast, derive, design, etc.*
- Be wary of defining too many LOs for a course.
- Decide whether LOs are 'desirable' or 'essential'. Only state essential ones.
- Decide whether your LOs are minimum, maximum or average attainment.

## The UK experience

- Initial resistance, now well embedded.
- Moving to LOs across rest of Europe – mobility.
- LOs published for all modules and programmes.
- Good check against neglecting generic skills development, but probably still not doing enough.
- Recent research showed that 60% of science students engaged with LOs ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’.
- They are here to stay!

# Making it work

- Institutional policy – top down and bottom up
- Written into regulations for new courses and programmes
- Engage ‘champions’ in departments
- Buy in from HoD
- Departmental responsibility for overview to ensure coverage of LOs and appropriate assessment
  - ▶ Departmental T&L committee or similar

# Good luck!

- [t.l.overton@hull.ac.uk](mailto:t.l.overton@hull.ac.uk)

- [www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci)