

**Course Leader Handbook 2019**



**Course Leader Handbook**

# **Why are Course Leaders important?**

At USW, we believe that the course has primacy in the student experience. That is why we have re-geared many of our processes (e.g. course level evaluation through Loop) around the course. The Academic Blueprint and Student Experience Plan also work to the principle that students identify primarily with their course and less so with Schools or Faculties. Our aim is to have a smaller portfolio of larger courses where we can build learner identity and engagement and build capacity, quality and leadership. Through the course, social relationships and networks are established, and the relationship between academic staff and students that is so important to success is realised.

As the course is so important to students, then it stands to reason that the Course Leader is a critical role in the ecology of USW. In that sense the Course Leader has a vital and principal function together with your managers in the Faculty; working to create a culture, level of ambition, learning environment and sense of aspiration and joy that help make the course a vibrant community of scholars, engaging in partnership outside as well as inside the University.

The Course Leader has a key role in setting expectation levels for staff and students, modelling behaviours and demonstrating a passion for improving the course to the benefit of learners. Setting high standards is a key trait of an effective course leader. As is an ability to listen and show empathy. Students often turn to the Course Leader as a first port of call in solving issues, so it is important that Course Leaders are accessible and display kindness and consideration, and are well connected internally in order to refer students to sources of additional support.

External partners also connect into the course through the Course Leader, so they need to be professional and have a desire to build an external reputation. Building a supporters club of external partners and stakeholders who add value to the course offer is key; making sure that the boundaries between the course and the wider industry and sector players are porous.

# **What does a Course Leader do?**

The ‘leadership’ aspect of being a Course Leader is often marginalised by a focus on its administrative functions. However, at USW a core requirement of Course Leadership is around culture building, as well as running an effective and well-organised course.

We know that students value:

* Staff that are aspirational for them, and set high expectations
* Staff that are friendly and approachable and have good skills of human interaction
* Staff that are well organised and deliver to expectations, on courses that run smoothly with minimal unplanned changes to delivery
* A sense of being a part of a team that includes academic staff who are going in the same direction, who work closely together and role-model effective team working
* People who value working in partnership with them, and are student centred and responsive
* People who respond to and solve their problems

Consequently, some of the key competencies of a course leader include:

* Emotional intelligence and a desire to interact with students
* An ability to lead a team of peers and build a common culture and a shared understanding of success
* Strong organisational skills
* Positivity and an ability to motivate
* A desire to improve outcomes for learners
* An interest in learning and teaching and pedagogy
* An aspiration for the course to be the very best it can be, building a sense of pride
* A collaborative instinct
* Trust, honesty and an ability to win hearts and minds
* An ability to have honest, high quality, non-defensive and sometimes difficult conversations with staff (including managers) and students

However, we also know from our NSS scores that students also value – and are very quick to tell us when it does not happen – well-organised and smooth running courses that are well planned and not subject to unnecessary change. Of course, the Course Leader is not the only person who plays a role in that. Academic Managers and Heads of School are responsible, for example, for staffing and resourcing and for effective timetabling. Our Timetabling team work in partnership to ensure timely production of timetables that are suitable for the planned learning. Our Employability team works in partnership to service placements and wider opportunities. Our Student Services team to provide support to students on a range of issues, including progression. Our team in CELT works with faculties and course teams to develop staff expertise in impactful learning and teaching. We are all there to help.

Nevertheless, Course Leaders do have administrative duties as well that revolve around key points of the student journey:

1. Involvement in effective curriculum design informed by sound pedagogic principles, including course validation and review processes
2. Working with Course Representatives to ensure the student voice is heard, including effective Staff Student Course Liaison Groups (SSCLGs) to note, discuss and respond to student feedback
3. Effective induction, including provision of an induction timetable that meets USW principles
4. Coordinating the setting of assignments with module tutors, and convening Assessment Dialogue Events and, with Academic Managers leading, approval of assessments at the start of the year
5. Working with Academic Managers to provide an effective timetable that is best matched to student learning outcomes
6. Collating the Course Handbook
7. Coordinating module tutors to ensure effective Course and Module Evaluation through Loop, with high response rates, and acting upon the data in a deliberate and focused way and providing a response to students
8. Working with Heads of School and Academic Managers throughout the quality cycle including Continuous Monitoring, responses to the National Student Survey, and monitoring and action planning using data and business intelligence
9. Ensuring high response rates to the NSS at course level, including providing course level briefings
10. Building effective partnerships with students, particularly Course Representatives
11. Aspects of risk assessment and health and safety that are devolved to courses
12. Ensuring compliance with PSRB requirements where relevant.
13. Ensuring compliance with Tier 4 sponsorship duties, where there are international non-EU students studying on the course

Consequently, there are some key requirements that we have at USW to make sure that the course environment is as healthy as it can be. You will work on these in partnership with many others in your School, Faculty or across the University. Boundaries of responsibility are not always sharp, and need to be negotiated in practice, on the ground and within subject communities where delivery patterns can be different.

# **Showing Leadership and Building Teams**

It is vital that the course delivery team works *as a team*. Research shows that building a shared understanding of the course, of its outcomes and ensuring that all parties hold a holistic view of the programme, is vital in building student confidence in marking, assessment and standards. They want to feel that everyone is, as far as possible, on the same page.

Consequently, there is a ‘curatorial’ function to being a course leader. Ensuring that the course as validated in the Course Specification is delivered coherently, simply and in a way that is understandable and clear to the learner.

There is also a social dimension to this; a shared sense of standards and aspiration only come about if people meet and talk about them. Some of that is a formal requirement of the University, for example through Assessment Dialogue Events for the course team. Others less formal. A good course leader:

* Convenes team meetings regularly
* Operates informally as well as formally with staff
* Drops in and talks to staff
* Makes effort to ensure that HPLs feel a part of the culture
* Is available for people to talk to
* Walks the floor
* Provides opportunities for reflection and deep conversations – for example, through course team away days/development days
* With Academic Managers and Heads of School, involves staff in discussion about University policy and strategy that impacts on course delivery, inviting consultation where required or agreeing implementation when drafts have become approved policy
* Builds understanding of how the course operates in that wider USW context

Recognising that time is always tight, course leaders should work with their teams to identify at the start of the year spaces to protect time for such discussions. Where possible, timetables should be set to allow regular space for discussion, such as Wednesday afternoons, and for the course team to meet.

# **Managing Upwards**

The Course Leader has a key role to play in managing upwards, and being part of the wider School management conversation. It is vitally important to build a strong working relationship with your Academic Manager and Head of School and to be on the same team. Course Leaders do not have line management responsibility, but do have leadership responsibility and that does require open and honest conversations not just with peers but also with the management team.

That starts with working collectively to ensure that the development environment for staff is a fertile one, and that people are enabled to succeed. Therefore, it is important to meet with the Academic Manager and Head of School formally and informally, and often. In those meetings, the Course Leader might:

* Share student views coming up through formal and informal feedback, and agree responses. It is not a case of waiting for formal SSCLG’s if issues need addressing, but do make sure that they are logged there.
* Identify excellent practice emerging from the course that needs wider dissemination, or where people need a ‘thank you’. We are all accountable for what goes well, as well as what needs improving. Building pride in the course is vital.
* Review data as closely to real time as possible, including module marks/success rates, Loop data. This will give the best opportunity to act quickly to change things on the ground, where required.
* Identify areas where the course team requires developmental support from managers to improve or succeed.
* Discuss issues of resource, building a shared understanding of what is possible and what is not.
* Building a shared understanding of where compliance is required around University policy, or where local variation is possible.
* Draw to the attention of managers issues of behaviour and/or performance that require their intervention.
* Seek guidance on changes to University policy or procedure that impact on the course.
* Draw attention to concerns around international non-EU student attendance and ensure that these are reported through the appropriate channels.

(Please do not be afraid to ask for help with these issues).

We therefore have an important and sometimes-complex set of relationships in which there is a shared understanding of role and who does what. Broadly, we can describe these roles in the following way:

**Head of School – Strategic.** Responsible for the vision, future direction and priorities of the School overall, including its performance against University key indicators and requirements and establishing key external partnerships. Aligns the School to Faculty and University strategies and requirements. The Head of School sets the overall agenda, allocates resources, determines and monitors the culture/performance requirements of the School, including staff management.

**Academic manager – Planning and Effective Delivery.** Ensuring that courses are able to succeed through effective resource planning, people management, staff development, implementation of University and School/Faculty policies. A key to this should be implementing procedures that allow Course Leaders as much freedom to act as possible within University requirements (e.g. devolving course budgets where possible) and ensuring that management issues for which they are not responsible are expedited professionally and quickly, to the service of the student experience.

**Course Leader –** **Operationalising.** Effectively running the validated programme in practice. Ensuring that the validated course runs smoothly, to University requirements, is well coordinated and works effectively with a strong culture and team commitment. Engages students and works in partnership with them.

Both the Head of School and Academic Manager roles should, in many respects, be in service to the course. That is, creating an environment in which courses can flourish, in which they are well developed and where staff are confident about their roles, where resourcing is well planned and transparent and in which there is trust and integrity around (and respect for) management decisions.

An analogy might be made here with team sports. The Course Leader is the team captain, responsible for performance when the ball is in play, making sure the players in the team are well organised and operating collectively to maximum effect as the course is running.

The Academic Manager is the coach and is responsible for ensuring that the team are well trained, that they play to the same ethos and that performance is regularly reviewed and improved and development provided.

The Head of School is the team manager responsible for setting the team ethos, for bringing people into the team, for making strategic decisions about strategy and approach and ultimately for performance. Collective activity and energy should be on making sure that the overall performance is good, and problems are solved collaboratively. Boundaries around these roles will be fluid and will need some local negotiation, focusing on collective problem solving and continuous improvement.

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| --- |
| **Scenario:**  ***As a part of its approach to retention, Schools reviews student performance on modules by taking a monthly ‘stock take’ of marks-to-date on each module on the course to identify patterns, trends and areas for action. How do the Course Leader (CL), Academic Manager (AM) and Head of School (HoS) work collaboratively to ensure issues are identified and addressed?***  ***Who should do what?***  **Course Leader (CL):** *should be fully aware of what is happening on the ground and report it upwards.* They should work with module tutors to ensure that mark profiles are available on Quercus for each module where appropriate. They might conduct an initial analysis/discussion of mark patterns identifying trends (percentages of fails, mean marks etc.) and bring those as a headline steer to a discussion with the AM and HoS. Knowing what is going on, and escalating when they need to do so.  **Academic Manager (AM):** *should evaluate and agree actions to be delivered quickly, including any development requirements.* The AM identifies that in several modules there are high levels of fails. In most cases, this is for the first assessment point in a 20-credit module, with an opportunity for recovery in the second point. Therefore, there is an opportunity for students to recover.  The AM arranges to meet with the module tutors, with the CL present, to discuss the mark patterns and agree any additional support required either through additional academic delivery/tutorial support or study skills support to ensure that the taught course is robust and increases chances for success in the second assessment point.  The AM draws attention to particular students with a fail profile to the Module Tutor for subject specific tutorial support. The CL and AM correlate the data with Activity Monitoring reports showing that in some cases students who are failing are also being flagged for non-engagement. They refer this to the students’ Personal Academic Coach and to the Progression Team as there may be a risk of withdrawal.  **Head of School (HoS):** *Should agree resources and future approaches and actions to deal with the issue systematically.* In the meeting, the HoS notes that in several of these cases failure relates to particular assessment types, particularly student performance on modules that require specific technical skills. They note that student feedback data from these modules on Loop also shows that students are struggling. It is also noted that this is particularly true for modules in the first year and there is a pattern emerging around technical skills tuition for new starters.  The HoS might request assistance from the Head of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (HoLTSE) and the Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching (CELT) to explore with the course team how curriculum design and assessment is working. This could include ensuring outcomes are set at the right level; the nature and extent of delivery and whether it needs to adjust; additional support required for learners and any additional professional development and resources needed to support staff.  **Outcomes:**  The consequence of this conversation about data is:  **Short Term**  Additional technical skills support is provided to students, and some adjustments to delivery are made. Success improves in the second assignment. Individual students meet with their module tutors to identify subject support needs, and with their Personal Academic Coaches to review their engagement. As a consequence, they are provided with a PASS mentor from their subject, and are offered study skills advice. This pattern of reflection, action and impact is logged as a part of continuous monitoring by the CL.  **Medium term**  The courses are posted for review through minor modifications to change the pattern and timing of assessment. The CL works with the team on the minor modifications which are passed over the Summer after the Assessment Dialogue event. A School development programme on ‘teaching technical skills for new starters’ is agreed with the HoLTSE and implemented for the team.  The review has also led to development for individual staff where the application of technical skills in the classroom required improvement. Staff have had observations of classroom practice by the HoLTSE and relevant development put in place to help them succeed in delivering in different ways.  **Learning**  This positive outcome could only be achieved by:   1. People being open and honest about the issue 2. People having routine and well planned patterns of working that are organised around review of key business priorities and the student experience 3. Using available data to build an understanding of the issues 4. People joining the dots between different data to build a rich picture, and owning the data 5. Applying local-level judgement to understand the issues 6. Working collaboratively to solve the issues, based on a co-generated understanding of how roles work together 7. Creating a culture of transparency, honesty and accountability – for what goes well as well as what requires improvement 8. A ‘development first’ approach is taken by all in their distinctive roles 9. The collective focus is on solving the problems, not seeking sources of blame |

# **Leading Learning and Teaching (L&T) Enhancements**

Course Leaders are likely to have major input into the design and development of the course: a vision for the course and how it enables learners to develop into USW Distinctive Graduates/Postgraduates will probably have been a core steer when the course was validated and revisited each year through your annual review/reflections.

Enabling the course team to share and enhance the vision into their contact and non-contact time learning interactions with students is a core focus of the Course Leader’s role. This section helps the Course Leader think about how to create coherent and empowering teaching and learning opportunities for the team and students. By having a shared vision and understanding about individual and collective roles and responsibilities (students included) in its achievement, an environment will be created where everyone can learn with and from each other: learning and teaching enhancement in action.

The faculty HoLTSE and CELT can help with thinking about how this focus on a shared understanding can be enabled in practice. A good place to start is to set up an infrastructure within the course team that enables regular conversations about teaching and student learning - planning for some of these to be discussions with students and others just for the team (remember to include the ‘gears’). Such sessions could be used for a variety of reasons:

* Exploring a teaching /learning support topic and thinking about its relevance in the course
* Looking at emerging data about individual and collective impacts on the students’ learning and their development into the graduates/postgraduates to which USW aspires
* Setting up small enquiry projects around core themes\*. These could be very good opportunities for staff and students to look at an issue together.
* Equally, these enquiry projects may be used as the focus for peer observation/ review. The team might experiment with the ideas they are exploring and create triads between staff with similar/different interests. Observing each other testing an innovation, critiquing new resources that support non-contact time learning etc. offers powerful opportunities for individual and collective reflection.
* Thinking about what ‘success’ looks like, and how the team can evidence it, and the core Teaching Excellence Framework requirements of: learning impact, learning gain, rigour and stretch for all students.

(\*Contact CELT and the HoLTSE for help with setting up such projects with strong evaluative and ethical foundations. In addition, they can help prepare the team for peer review, offer resources to help people look at some of the theory behind their ideas etc.)

Collectively, these activities will enable ownership of the vision into practice, spark good conversations between staff, and staff and students, enable the ‘gears’ to be embedded into your curricula, help the collection of data to evidence practice impact and surface practice that can be shared internally and externally at conferences etc. Each of these will have a direct impact on the success of the course, and collectively will provide strong evidence to support a personal claim for Senior Fellowship of Advance HE. Contact [CELT@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:CELT@southwales.ac.uk) for more information.

# **Building relationships/partnerships and communicating with students**

An integral part of being a Course Leader is communicating effectively with students. Course Leaders will invariably become the first point of contact and it is important that their expectations in terms of communication be appropriately managed. It is recommended that clear ground rules with students are set from the outset, so they will know when and how to communicate with the course team. The Course Leader will decide what these are, and what will work best for the students, however it is strongly recommended that any personal details (such as mobile phone number) are not shared with them.

Using social media can be an effective way of keeping in touch with students; however care needs to be taken on how this is used. Setting up a Course Facebook page can be a good way of creating a community for the course, but ensure that the staff course team is given administrative responsibilities for this. This will ensure that the Course Leader is not solely responsible for dealing with queries, and will give oversight to all staff over what is being discussed. If this does rest with the Course Leader, it must be emphasized that this is an informal communication tool, and should not be used as a means of replacing Blackboard and students’ university email.

**Formal Student Representation Mechanisms**

Course Representatives are an essential part of quality assurance processes at USW and a valuable source of information. They provide a wealth of feedback on students’ experiences and can contribute in new and innovative ways to the development of the course. The Course Leader will promote the role to the students, hold elections and then pass on the details to the Students’ Union (SU). The Student Voice Team at the SU will train and support the Course Representatives. The Course Leader can help the Student Voice Team in running the Course Representative scheme, and in return, they can be of help with support, feedback and advice for the Course Leader.

SSCLG meetings will be held termly with all the Course Reps. on the course and the Course Management Team. Reps. should talk to their cohorts and gather positive and negative feedback to bring to these meetings. Together, Reps. and staff should develop and record actions in response to the feedback. Reps. should be encouraged to report back to their cohorts to ensure the feedback loop is closed. The actions from this meeting should be used as part of the evidence base for continuous monitoring, alongside Course and Module Evaluations from Loop. Course Leaders should work with the Principal Quality Officer for their Faculty to become familiar with the formal records that are required for each SSCLG. See section 7 below for their contact details.

**Career Development**

Being a Course Leader comes with a set of wide ranging responsibilities. It does however enable the academic to gain valuable experience in terms of becoming familiar with and trying out new approaches towards teaching and learning. The experience gained from understanding the role is helpful in terms of professional development as an educationalist, and can make an important contribution to an application to Professor or Reader in Learning and Teaching.

# **The Course Leader in the Quality Cycle**

**What is ‘Quality’ in an academic environment?**

In section 2 of this handbook we referenced administrative duties that revolve around key points of the student journey, relating to curriculum design and approval, dialogue with students, and provision (and use) of pertinent information. These activities form part of the University’s mechanisms for assuring the standards and quality of the awards (qualifications) we give to students when they successfully complete their studies.

The following phrases are regularly used in academic life but their impact on course leadership may not be fully understood. The definitions are provided below along with some examples from section 2 that illustrate the Course Leaders’ contribution to them on behalf of the University.

| **Term** | **Definition** | **Example of Course Leader Activity from Section 2** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Academic Standards** | The standards that we set and maintain for the award of our qualifications. | Effectively designing courses and assessment using sound pedagogic principles, informed by, for example:   * [Quality Manual](https://academicregistry.southwales.ac.uk/qae/) * [Academic Regulations](https://registry.southwales.ac.uk/student-regulations/regulations-taught-courses/) * [Academic Blueprint](https://celt.southwales.ac.uk/policy/#blue) * [Assessment & Feedback Policies](https://celt.southwales.ac.uk/policy/)   All of these documents are built upon principles from national frameworks and benchmarks, including your professional body guidelines, [credit and qualifications frameworks and the UK Quality Code for HE.](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks) |
| **Academic Quality** | How (and how well) we support our students to enable them to achieve their awards.  This covers learning, teaching and assessment, and all the different resources and processes we put in place to admit students and to help them progress and fulfil their potential. | * Collating an informative course handbook * Providing an effective induction programme * Coordinating the setting of assignments (avoiding bunching) * Working with others to provide a suitable timetable * Building effective partnerships with students * Providing mechanisms for feedback (from students to you and vice versa) |
| **Quality Enhancement** | The process by which we systematically improve the quality of what we offer and the ways in which we support our students | * Using feedback from NSS, LOOP, SSCLGs and Continuous Monitoring and to improve the student experience * Monitoring and acting upon performance data to evaluate and improve the student experience on your course |

**What is involved in the Quality Cycle?**

Our **formal** quality processes, and your role in them, are as follows.

| **Process Name** | **Process Description** | **Course Leader Responsibility** | **Process Timeframe** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Proposal and Validation** | The process by which new courses are developed and approved, using key reference points (as described in the table above) | * Consulting and engaging course team * Writing course proposal and validation document * Leading on sections of the discussions at validation event * Responding to any conditions | As and when required |
| **Continuous Monitoring** | The process by which regular health checks of the course are carried out to assure quality and enhance the student experience | * Producing a course level action plan, including evaluation of course data | Throughout the year with review points in July, Oct, Jan and April |
| **External Examiner Processes** | The process by which external assurance is given to our modules and courses (qualifications) to show comparability outside and within the University | * Consider and respond to course external examiner reports * Liaise with the external examiner through the year (consultation on changes to course content; assessment dialogues etc) | Annually |
| **Course Review and**  **Re-validation** | The process by which existing courses are reviewed and re-approved, using key reference points (as described in the table above) and metrics | * Consulting and engaging the course team * Writing the course review document and the re-validation document * Leading on sections of the discussions at review and re-validation event * Responding to any conditions | Every six years |

The annual calendar in Section 9 outlines in more detail what is expected, and when with regard to the activities that underpin these processes.

**With whom should I speak about Quality?**

Within your Faculty, the Deputy Dean has delegated responsibility for standards and quality supported by your Faculty Quality Assurance Committee. They are supported by a Principal Quality Officer. Their details are in the following table:

| **Faculty** | **Deputy Dean** | **Principal Quality Officer** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Business and Society | Karen Jones (acting Dean) | [Tara](mailto:david.jacob@southwales.ac.uk) Smith |
| Creative Industries | Julie King | [Gareth Beach](mailto:gareth.beach@southwales.ac.uk) |
| Computing, Engineering and Science | --- | [Cerys Jones](mailto:cerys.jones@southwales.ac.uk) |
| Life Sciences and Education | --- | [Rachael Farmer](mailto:rachael.farmer@southwales.ac.uk) |

# **Having Difficult Conversations**

Learning, development, and continuous professional development aim to enhance workforce capabilities, skills and competencies to create a sustainable and successful organisation. A culture of learning is vital to the success of any organization, and recognizing the importance of the Course Leader role, a development programme is now available at least once each academic year.

Throughout the programme the different skills associated with the role are looked at and the learning and development tailored to support and enhance it. The programme is practical and is run by experienced academic staff who have been Course Leaders in their time. The skills learnt and developed enhance the depth of knowledge, confidence and influence of the Course Leader at USW.

Please contact the faculty HoLTSE for further details.

# **The Annual Calendar**

| **Requirement** | **By Whom** | **By When** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Completion of Course Handbook, both as a PDF and in paper for Level 4 students | Course Leader (CL), to be signed off by the AM | July |
| Agree module staffing for next year, staff timetables and plan staff assessment loads | AM | July |
| Complete induction plan for all courses, according to induction guidelines – to include course approach to immersive learning | CL and HOLTSE | April-July |
| Assessment dialogue and approval: approval of assessment, completion of assessment calendar, approval of assessment schedule to avoid bunching of assignments | AM with CL | July-Sept |
| Schedule and timetable SSLGs and Course Boards | AM with student administration | July |
| Allocate PACs to students | AMs and Student Administration | July |
| Schedule PAC sessions | AM and CL | August |
| Oversee delivery of the induction plan | AM with CL | September |
| Scheduling of course team meetings to bring together module tutors and take a course perspective – to be chaired by AM’s | CL with AM | September |
| Population of Course Blackboard Site with key course documents and course handbook | CL to be signed off by AM | September |
| Schedule Course Evaluation (Loop) into modules | AM with CL support | September (evaluation to be conducted in December, in class with group) |
| Agree slots for CRs to meet students for feedback prior to SSCLGs | AM and CL | September |
| Agree office hours for 1:1 tutorials with staff to ensure coverage through the week – to be published via Blackboard | CL with course teams | September |
| Recruitment of student reps | CL in liaison with Students Union | September-October |
| Complete all DPR’s for the course team, according to appraisal guidelines, with clear objectives and targets for individuals aligned to faculty and University CPIs | Manager, appraisal completion rates to be monitored by Head of School | 1st October |
| Agree monitoring points for assessment feedback (the 20 day return rule) and process to do so | AM with student administration | October |
| Undertake Loop briefings | CL with course rep | November |
| Ensure a schedule, timetabled briefing session with SVRs for the NSS, with immediate opportunity for completion | AM with CL | December |
| Collate and publish Loop feedback and discuss with students | CL with AM with input from professional services | December |
| Conduct mid-year review of assessment results to date and identify follow up actions | AM with CL | January/Feb |
| Schedule and conduct NSS briefings | CL | Feb-March |
| Engage students with module level Loop survey in term 2 | Module tutors and CL | March-April |

# **Course Leader Indicative Responsibilities**

The activities outlined below are intended to give staff who have course leadership as part of their role an indication as to the type and level of associated responsibilities. It is recognised that being a Course Leader is not a post in itself – staff undertaking the role remain in their substantive post as Senior Lecturer or Lecturer etc.

The indicative responsibilities outlined are not a role descriptor but an outline of the responsibilities that are expected of a Course Leader and therefore will not detail all the activities that may be carried out. These key responsibilities will be operationalised within the faculties according to the specific course needs.

The Course Leader working with the course team will develop the course to its full potential so that it provides a professional, employment-focused learning experience for students. The Course Leader oversees academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement. In doing so, the Course Leader:

1. Provides course leadership and co-ordination of the course delivery team, including convening course team meetings.
2. Liaises with the Academic Manager and highlights course related issues.
3. Works with Module Leaders to ensure that the academic delivery is effective and provides for a positive student experience including good course content, and use of the most appropriate learning, teaching and assessment methodologies.
4. Has a critical role in ensuring the quality of the student experience. As such, they are to be the key point of contact for students, providing first line arrangements for pastoral care and referrals to other support services as appropriate.
5. Is responsible for effective engagement with and feedback from students, which will include chairing course representative consultative meetings and course evaluation.
6. Encourages and supports course cohort participation in the NSS, preparing and implementing action plans as required in response to outcomes.
7. Is responsible for monitoring and reporting requirements for the course in relation to recruitment, progression, retention and National Student Survey criteria. For example, monitoring against performance indicators and preparing annual reports.
8. Liaises with the Award External Examiner; including responding to Award External Examiners report.
9. Monitors and raises any issues with the organisation of modules to include timetabling arrangements, the course annual assessment schedule, and attendance.
10. Plans and implements an effective induction programme for students.
11. Is responsible for maintaining and providing accurate course related information, which will inform effective marketing and promotion of the course.
12. Monitors course design and implementation, proposing incremental change if required, and leads course validation / revalidation process including writing and collating course documentation.
13. Provides course leadership and co-ordination of course related activities in relation to recruitment, retention, progression, achievement and student experience.
14. Provides input to the planning process for student numbers.
15. Liaises with partner colleges and professional bodies, where required, ensuring any requirements for the course, including work placements and experience, are in place.
16. Liaises with external stakeholders to ensure the course meets the needs of employers and other stakeholders.
17. Liaises with others as required, within the Faculty and with corporate departments to ensure the course meets University requirements, including in relation to quality assurance and enhancement.
18. Undertakes general administrative duties as required to support the course, including the organisation of course boards.
19. Ensures risk assessments are undertaken for relevant course-wide activities, such as student trips.

# **Responsibilities in relation to International non-EU students**

The Course Leader is responsible for ensuring that the course team are monitoring the attendance and engagement of students who are sponsored under the University’s Tier 4 licence. To note, some of these students may also be financially sponsored by an embassy, multinational company or university in their home country.

Students studying with a Tier 4 visa are required to attend classes, submit assessments and scan their fingerprint every 7 days. Where there are concerns regarding a student’s attendance and engagement the Progression team should be notified as soon as these concerns arise to ensure that the University can work with the student to resolve any issues. This will enable USW to meet its attendance monitoring obligation and confirm to the Home Office that the student is actively engaged in their studies. No exemptions will be made on the basis of required academic contact points (e.g. students in dissertation stage) or geographical location. Further information on attendance requirements can be found [here](https://registry.southwales.ac.uk/student-regulations/attendance-monitoring/).

Where a student is also sponsored, for example by an embassy from their home country, reports should be provided to the International Recruitment Office in a timely manner when requested. These are passed to the relevant sponsor. This is vitally important as, in addition to preserving our sponsor license, official financial sponsors such as embassies can remove institutions from their “approved lists” if relevant updates regarding a student’s progress/status is not sent when requested.

If a student notifies anyone within the course team that they need to request an absence during the academic year the student should be referred to the Advice Zone to submit a request for Leave of Absence. Any request for Leave of Absence will require support from the Course Leader to ensure that the impact of the absence will not prevent the student from completing the course by the date on their visa. Any concerns about a student’s request for Leave of Absence should be raised with the Tier 4 Administration team ([HOEnquiries@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:HOEnquiries@southwales.ac.uk)). Further information can be found [here](https://registry.southwales.ac.uk/student-regulations/leave-absence/).

If Tier 4 students on the course are going to be undertaking a work placement, the Course Leader should take one of the following actions:

* If placements are usually sourced through the Careers team, continue following the current process in place, or
* If the course team or the student are sourcing the placement independently of the Careers Team, the placement information should be input into the work placement reporting tool to determine whether the Tier 4 Administration team need to be notified.

This will ensure that the appropriate actions are taken, if appropriate, in relation to informing the UKVI that the student’s place of study has changed temporarily. In order to ensure that we are complying with the terms of our Tier 4 sponsor license, these actions need to occur *before* the work placement begins.

For further information on any aspect of being a Course Leader, please contact the faculty Head of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (HoLTSE) in the first instance