



# Subject Benchmark Statement

## Policing

In partnership with



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# Contents

<b>About this Statement</b> .....	<b>1</b>
How can I use this document? .....	1
Relationship to legislation .....	1
Additional sector reference points .....	2
<b>1 Context and purposes of a Policing degree</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Context.....	3
Purposes of a Policing degree.....	4
Characteristics of a Policing degree .....	4
Equality, diversity and inclusion.....	5
Accessibility.....	6
Sustainability and horizon scanning .....	7
<b>2 Distinctive features of a Policing degree</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Design .....	8
Employer involvement.....	8
Progression .....	9
Flexibility.....	10
Partnership .....	10
Monitoring and review .....	11
<b>3 Content, structure and delivery</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Content.....	12
Teaching and learning .....	12
Assessment.....	14
Assessment strategy.....	14
<b>4 Benchmark standards</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Introduction .....	16
Threshold level.....	16
<b>5 List of references</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>6 Membership of the Advisory Group</b> .....	<b>20</b>

## About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Policing that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

- a revised structure for the Statement which includes the introduction of cross-cutting themes of:
  - equality, diversity and inclusion
  - education for sustainable development
  - employability
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes of Policing, including course design and content in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards.

## How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are often used by higher education providers in the design and development of new courses in the relevant subject, as they provide a framework for specifying intended learning outcomes in an academic or vocational discipline. They are also used as a reference point when reviewing or revalidating degree courses. They may be used by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with other higher education providers. They also provide professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with the academic standards expected of students.

Subject Benchmark Statements provide general guidance for understanding the learning outcomes associated with a course but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in course design within a framework agreed by the subject community.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in Policing
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in Policing
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of Policing graduates.

## Relationship to legislation

The responsibility for academic standards lies with the higher education provider which awards the degree. Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them by their relevant funding and regulatory bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.

The regulatory status of the Statement will differ with regard to the educational jurisdictions of the UK. In England, Subject Benchmark Statements are not sector-recognised standards

as set out under the Office for Students' [regulatory framework](#). However, they are specified as a key reference point, as appropriate, for academic standards in Wales under the [Quality Assessment Framework for Wales](#) and in Scotland as part of the [Quality Enhancement Framework](#). Subject Benchmark Statements are part of the current quality requirements in Northern Ireland. Because the Statement describes outcomes and attributes expected at the threshold standard of achievement in a UK-wide context, many higher education providers will use them as an enhancement tool for course design and approval, and for subsequent monitoring and review, in addition to helping demonstrate the security of academic standards.

## **Additional sector reference points**

Higher education providers are likely to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. QAA has also published [Advice and Guidance](#) to support the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), which will be helpful when using this Statement - for example, in [course design and development](#), [learning and teaching](#), [external expertise](#), and [monitoring and evaluation](#).

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in [QAA's Glossary](#). Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Statement where appropriate.

This Statement has been reviewed by the [College of Policing](#) in line with relevant legislation, guidance and best practice.

# 1 Context and purposes of a Policing degree

## Context

1.1 The core mission and purpose of twenty-first century policing in the UK is 'to make communities safer by upholding the law fairly and firmly; preventing crime and antisocial behaviour; keeping the peace; protecting and reassuring communities; investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice' (Association of Police and Crime Commissioners/National Police Chiefs' Council, 2015).

1.2 Underpinning this is a national agenda to recognise the profession of policing. This includes the education of those aspiring to work within policing along with the professional development of those already serving, in order to meet the current and future needs of the service and the wide range of diverse communities served. Core capabilities required within the policing profession include greater understanding of the needs of local and diverse communities, enhanced engagement with digital technology, and the application of evidence-based policing, alongside the development of specialist capabilities utilising a problem-solving approach to support areas of public protection, vulnerability and risk.

## England and Wales

1.3 The professional body for the police service across England and Wales - The College of Policing - underpins and supports professionally-focused police education. Established in 2012 as an independent arm's-length body of the Home Office, the College's role is to connect everyone working in policing and law enforcement, enabling an understanding of their challenges, while setting standards, skills and capabilities for professional policing education and practice. The College uses evidence-based knowledge to help police officers, staff and volunteers; researchers, academics and learning providers; the international policing community; and the public.

1.4 The Policing Education and Qualification Framework (PEQF) was developed by the College to support a standardised approach to the initial education of those in, or aspiring to join, policing as a constable in England and Wales. There are three initial entry routes - the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP) and the Professional Policing Degree (PPD). These College of Policing licensed programmes follow the National Policing Curriculum (NPC) and are regularly reviewed and updated to meet the needs of policing. The educational programmes develop knowledge and skills of policing to Level 6 (FHEQ) and Level 10 (FQHEIS), while influencing behavioural change. The programmes afford routes that are either work-based - being co-created, designed and delivered in a partnership between higher education and a police force - or are knowledge-focused only - designed and delivered solely by a higher education provider.

1.5 It is also important to note that not all degrees in Policing are College of Policing licensed initial programmes but, for many reasons, those degrees may still be of value to a range of responsibilities and roles across policing.

## Scotland

1.6 There is currently no higher education route into professional policing in Scotland and the PEQF is not applicable. Since the 1960s, the Police Scotland College at Tulliallan has been the primary site of police recruit training and has continued to fulfil this role beyond the amalgamation in 2013 of regional services to Police Scotland. The first 11 weeks of Police Scotland's current two-year probationer programme are in-house at the Scottish

Police College, after which training falls to individual operational divisions. The Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) and a number of higher education institutions in Scotland work with Police Scotland to provide educational support beyond the probationary period, develop research partnerships, and pursue knowledge exchange activities to support evidence-informed policing. Although higher education providers in Scotland do not currently contribute directly to the learning of new constables, the Police Scotland College offers a range of higher education accredited programmes or credit-rated awards based on the [Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#).

1.7 Without a higher education route to policing or a work-based degree programme, there are some important differences to acknowledge in the Scottish context. Some academically designed and criminology-focused programmes have been designed in dialogue with Police Scotland, who routinely support or contribute to delivery. For students on these degrees, the primary vehicle for accruing policing experience is via the 'Special Constables' programme.

## **Northern Ireland**

1.8 The PEQF is not applicable in Northern Ireland (NI). The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has developed a degree-level qualification for all new entrants to PSNI. The BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology (Applied Practice) is for entrants who do not hold a degree and a Graduate Certificate in Policing and Criminology is for those who already hold an honours degree.

1.9 Key elements of the educational provision are the importance of theoretical concepts and approaches underpinning the applied nature of operational policing. The emphasis is on developing critical thinking, analysis and the promotion of reflective learning through the co-production of an integrated theory and practice curriculum.

## **Purposes of a Policing degree**

1.10 The primary purpose of a degree in Policing is to provide students with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to become competent policing professionals. Throughout their studies, students will develop and demonstrate understanding of the policing profession along with the regulatory and legal context within which policing and the criminal justice system is situated.

1.11 Educational programmes introduce students to the broad and complex, contemporary parameters within which policing operates: developing their ability as reflective professionals; being able to adopt approaches to critical thinking while exploring academic and theoretical perspectives which support them; making evidence-informed decisions; and being confident when engaged in professional practice.

1.12 Through the use of a protected learning environment in which to explore ideas and skillsets, students will develop effective communication and interpersonal skills. Utilising a wide range of learning scenarios will prepare students for the challenges and opportunities they are likely to encounter as policing professionals.

## **Characteristics of a Policing degree**

1.13 Acknowledging that the knowledge, skills and behaviours of a police constable align to Level 6 (FHEQ) and Level 10 (FQHEIS) respectively on the academic qualifications frameworks across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, a Policing degree needs to develop the learner's understanding of a complex body of knowledge.

1.14 Supporting characteristics of the degree will align to key features of professional policing in the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours by linking to the Competency Values Framework (CVF), core professional behaviours and key accountabilities. A foundation of the learning in the degree is derived from the Peelian Principles and the College of Policing Code of Ethics, which defines the principles and standards of professional behaviour for the policing profession.

1.15 The holder of a degree in Policing will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively. Holders of such a degree will have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and evidence-informed decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances. As with all academic degrees, the holder should be able to develop analytically-sound research, evidence-based practice techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in their occupation, with Pepper et al (2021) highlighting how such problem-solving techniques and sound approaches to evidence-based research are increasingly important for application across local, regional and national policing. It is therefore important for the holder of a degree in Policing to be able to establish links between theory and professional practice, alongside the requisite application of transferable skills to the workplace.

1.16 The characteristics of a Policing degree should evidence a system that does not discriminate, stratify or exclude groups based on age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or paternity, socioeconomic background or location.

## **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

1.17 Policing as a subject area has, at its core, a curriculum which embraces and champions equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). All students and stakeholders must be treated openly, fairly, and with dignity and respect. Higher education institutions (HEIs), the College of Policing and local police forces are all subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the *Equality Act 2010*; additional duties may also apply to bodies operating in Wales and Scotland. Institutions in Northern Ireland have similar obligations under Section 75 of the *Northern Ireland Act 1998*. Those designing and implementing Policing courses should also consider completing an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). Where a course is being co-created in a partnership with a police force, the EIA may be completed collaboratively between the force and the HEI.

1.18 EDI should be meaningful concepts that are embedded in culture and practice within the subject area, whether the degree programmes are operational or non-operational in design. Building upon the foundations of EDI across the curriculum is a common thread of ethics, recognising the importance of ethics within all aspects of policing. Ethical behaviour comes from the values, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge that guide the judgements of each individual. All students of Policing must understand the importance of ethics as exemplary standards, as a result translating their learning into everyday practice, by taking responsibility for their own professional behaviour and ensuring that they embody the highest ethical standards.

1.19 Policing as a subject area recognises that students learn best in different ways and progress at different rates. Teaching inclusively enables all students, whatever their circumstances, to enjoy the fullest possible learning experience. It benefits all students because it values their individual strengths and contributions, and makes the learning experience richer and more diverse for everyone. Through the use of innovative curriculum design, students will experience a range of inclusive teaching styles and assessment procedures which will take them through all levels of study and maximise their potential to

succeed. It should, however, be noted that offering a variety of teaching and assessment styles, while good practice, may not necessarily be 'inclusive' for all. As a result, teaching and assessment methods should be designed and planned to be inclusive and accessible from the outset, aligning with good practice, meeting and responding to student needs, while ensuring the fullest possible learning experience.

## **Accessibility**

1.20 Providers of policing as a subject area must demonstrate their commitment to widening access and ensuring that all students can achieve their full potential. Students are entitled to a learning experience that respects diversity and enables their full participation, within an inclusive and supportive learning environment. When inclusion is referred to, it is often in relation to physical factors relating to the learning environment, such as access to a room or building, or printing resources with a particular font. As study becomes more blended or entirely online, there is also the need to explore and address digital divides, such as the ownership or access to digital devices and the subsequent connectivity of students (Cullinan et al, 2021). However, it is also important to consider the various elements of teaching and learning more holistically, to explore how to best enable Policing students to assimilate, process, recall and synthesise knowledge, in ways that are meaningful and effective.

1.21 Rather than focusing on specific target groups or dimensions of diversity, an inclusive approach aims to make higher education accessible, relevant and engaging for all (Thomas and May, 2010). Underpinning this concept are values of equity and fairness, where higher education considers and values students' differences within the mainstream curriculum, including teaching, learning and assessment approaches (Hockings, 2010).

1.22 The provision of policing routes that allow different pathways to promote accessibility to police education will assist in widening participation and increased opportunities - for example, offering programmes as a work-based learning route, a non-practice knowledge and skills focused route, or a route for those who have already acquired a degree and experience in a different discipline. Providers should place an emphasis on promoting flexibility of delivery methodology to support the accessibility of learning and the subsequent recruitment of a diverse workforce (more) representative of communities served.

1.23 Providers of policing are expected to adhere to all relevant policy and legislation in relation to accessibility - for example, 'The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018' that aim to make websites and mobile applications accessible to users. The sector guidance is issued by the Joint Information Systems Committee (Jisc) to help users adapt to their needs. Within a policing context, providers should be mindful of the competing demands on students who should be able to:

- access course support material online in order to work around unanticipated challenges due to illness, transport difficulties or dealing with family or other caring commitments
- keep pace with the speed or complexity of information being provided due to the ability to pause, rewind and review course content
- review course content multiple times to deepen learning, particularly prior to assessments in a work-based environment
- reflect on course content and research concepts before potentially posing questions in a discussion forum (if available); this may suit certain learners who like or need time to deliberate, or students whose first language is not English.



# Sustainability and horizon scanning

## Sustainability

1.24 Policing programmes leading to a Level 6 (FHEQ) or Level 10 (FQHEIS) award need to develop students' knowledge and understanding within the framework of sustainable development. This process is one of addressing wider social, environmental and economic concerns, which leads to an improved worldwide society.

1.25 Education for sustainable development is the process of creating curriculum structures and subject relevant content to support and empower learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society.

1.26 Programmes should be designed with reference to the United Nations 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2021) from which the following provide the opportunity to be explicitly placed within the Policing curricula:

- Promoting the benefits of healthy lifestyles and wellbeing for all
- Ensuring education is inclusive, equitable and accessible, while promoting the benefits of life-long learning
- Reducing inequality and ensuring equity of opportunity
- The direct links between economic vitality, entrepreneurship, job market skills and levels of education
- Ensuring the sustainability of communities by making them safe, inclusive and resilient
- Considering the impact of policing on environmental sustainability
- Ensuring peaceful and inclusive societies with access to equitable justice for all
- The benefits of partnership working locally, nationally and internationally.

## Horizon scanning

1.27 To ensure a contemporary and relevant Policing Level 6 (FHEQ) or Level 10 (FQHEIS) qualification, the current and future challenges to policing, and the wider criminal justice system, should inform the ongoing review of programmes, thus enabling future graduates to be equipped with the required up-to-date knowledge, understanding and skills for their chosen or future careers.

1.28 The College of Policing (2020) identify a number of current key trends that are likely to affect future policing and the associated development of learning; these being climate change, economic transitions, rising inequality and social fragmentation, technological change and convergence.

1.29 Additional changes which may impact on the characteristics of a Policing programme include any reorganisation of the police service, evolution of the demographics of the police service and an evolving culture. This can be linked to financial investments in police constable, staff and volunteer recruitment, along with their required education, training and continuing professional development. Changes in the landscape of crime, criminals and the legal framework, along with possibilities for regional, national and international cooperation in policing and criminal justice, could also impact on the characteristics of a course.

## **2 Distinctive features of a Policing degree**

### **Design**

2.1 Programmes will be designed to demonstrate progressive learning and development in core areas of policing, leading to a comprehensive professional education and achieving key graduate attributes.

2.2 Programmes will therefore enable graduates to:

- comprehend the requirement for the highest professional standards when conducting lawful, ethical, safe and effective policing
- conduct evidence-based research
- develop an understanding of evidence-based policing and problem solving
- develop knowledge of a number of front-line professional policing areas
- proactively embed equality, diversity, inclusivity and human rights
- understand the importance of wellbeing and professional resilience
- understand the concepts of digital policing and cyber-enabled crime
- develop comprehensive knowledge of policing, criminal justice and criminology
- understand the criminal justice system in relation to policing
- develop knowledge of legislation, powers, policy and application in professional practice
- recognise the fundamental responsibility of the police service to identify and provide professional support to those who are vulnerable and at risk
- select and apply relevant specialist strategies and techniques to support individuals in need of public protection
- develop knowledge of national policing strategies, such as counter terrorism.

2.3 Programme design should be holistically planned to develop, assess and enhance graduate skills and attributes, while embedding a wide range of skills transferable to policing and other professions. As a professional subject, the design across all modules in Policing should consider ongoing reflective practice; critical thinking; decision-making; skills of communication; ethics; equality, diversity and inclusion; evidence-based practice; problem solving techniques; approaches to leadership (for example, inclusive, systematic, transactional, transformational); and teamwork.

2.4 The College of Policing sets out the NPC requirements for professionally-licensed programmes. If the programme is seeking licensing by the professional body, the design must ensure that this curriculum is built into the degree programme and will map learning effectively to ensure that all elements of the curriculum are incorporated in the design. There is also a formal professional body process for regular and annual review.

### **Employer involvement**

2.5 The involvement of employers, and the professional body for the police service is of paramount importance for the creation, and in some cases co-creation, of a degree in policing. It is essential that employer involvement is fostered, creating effective trust-based partnerships at all levels across organisations, as only then the building of the required level of understanding can be realised. The potential clash of cultures based on separate values, attitudes and norms is a major challenge that only this close trusting relationship will solve.

2.6 The role of staff associations is also critical in landing any message across policing. The staff associations represent all across policing and so those who join the service and

are trained following the PEQF model, will require support and understanding from their representative peers. In addition, with the recognition of the range of roles and importance of volunteers in policing (along with the potential benefits of volunteering to higher education studies), volunteers should also be formally represented in consultations developing and reviewing programmes. For example, students undertaking a Professional Policing Degree who also volunteer (such as special constables or police support volunteers) may be an additional means of representing the views and needs of those who volunteer within policing. The changing emphasis in the careers marketplace, and the expectations of a modern workforce, has reinforced the argument for a closer relationship and understanding between the intrinsic value of a degree-level qualification and the employer.

2.7 Positive engagement with the existing policing workforce, peers and colleagues, is fundamental to the successful embedding of degree-level qualifications across the police service and is crucial for the enhancement of the learner experience. There is a necessity to recognise, upskill and develop the existing workforce's understanding of education and learning practices occurring in the workplace, to encourage acceptance of the changed structures, as such enabling advocacy and reducing any negative impact on the experiences of graduates recruited by the police service.

2.8 For those students studying as new police constables, the direct link between students and employers specifically manifests itself during operational deployments. Students need to prepare for and understand the expectations of them in the workplace, while ensuring they adhere to the professional body codes of conduct (QAA, 2018). The roles of the workplace tutors, supervisors, practice educators and assessors, their understanding, behaviours, skills base and knowledge are also crucial to the student's experience and competency development. It is therefore essential that these crucial roles receive the support and upskilling required to achieve the learning outcomes for the student.

2.9 Contemporary and discipline-specific research also plays a crucial part forming the creation and informing employers of the benefits of a degree in Policing. Such an evidence-based approach for those creating degrees must mirror other professions where experienced practitioner-researchers inform professional practice, increasing the validity and transferability of subject-specific graduate level skills.

## **Progression**

2.10 Over the course of a degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10) a student in Policing will progress from one level of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each institution. However, it is expected that each completed year of study would see the attainment of certain increasing levels of knowledge, expertise, complexity and experience that build towards the final achievement of meeting the threshold level subject-specific and generic skills listed in this Statement.

2.11 Joint honours undergraduates will achieve core elements of the specific and generic skills for the subject, and will add others according to the subjects covered in joint courses. Additionally, they may explore the overlap between their two subject areas, creating further opportunities for interdisciplinary study.

2.12 In a standard three-year undergraduate honours degree course, students may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education, a Diploma of Higher Education, or an honours degree depending upon the levels of study completed to a satisfactory standard. Scottish bachelor's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education.

## Flexibility

2.13 The balance of teaching and learning methods on degrees in Policing will vary between providers according to institutional aims and interests, and the outcomes of negotiations with individual services supporting or contributing to the delivery of degrees. The Policing focused programmes offered across all UK nations include a diverse range of teaching and learning practices, that support the development of subject knowledge and relevant practice skills for those pursuant of a career in the criminal justice sector. Where those degrees are licensed through the College of Policing, the methods of delivery are also subject to the quality assurance framework of the College of Policing. Independent learning is a core characteristic of both knowledge and practice-centred degree programmes, in addition to classroom, work-based or field-based learning and teaching that reflects a range of contemporary pedagogical best practice. While the accessibility of police practice learning varies between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, students can develop learning through both academic and practical work-based or field-based modules where reflective and evidence-based practice is promoted and assessed.

2.14 In the final year of most policing, criminal justice and criminology programmes offered across England, Wales, Scotland (4th year) and Northern Ireland, students are required to design, undertake and complete a piece of independent research in the form of a problem-based project or dissertation. These projects or dissertations are normally expected to demonstrate a student's maturation of ability; to navigate the practical, ethical and organisational dimensions of policing, criminal justice or criminological research; to critically engage with research evidence, academic literature, legislation, and policy; and to make meaningful connections between research, practice and relevant policy areas.

## Partnership

2.15 The award of a degree in Policing involves students working in a variety of areas, including partnerships, and police educational programmes may also reflect this approach. A partnership is an arrangement between two or more organisations to deliver aspects of teaching, learning, assessment and student support. It is a collaborative agreement involving students and/or awards, which include those involving guaranteed progression and sharing of services.

2.16 There should be a clear institutional strategy for working in partnership with other agencies, which assists in setting the parameters and provides guidance for those considering entering into partnership arrangements. Such arrangements may apply to the delivery of whole courses or to different elements of courses, including work placements, with institutions recognising the value of work-based learning to student employability (QAA, 2018). Consequently, alternative sites and contexts for learning or assessment, or specialist support, resources or facilities for learning, may be required.

2.17 Partners involved in the co-creation and/or completion of policing educational awards must meet the requirements of the relevant national qualification framework and it should be the responsibility of the awarding organisation to ensure that the required standards are met.

2.18 The awarding body must also ensure arrangements are in place for measures to maintain the academic standard of the policing qualification that is being awarded. Partnership input into the policing award should also provide an opportunity for enhancing the experience of the student. In particular, where a partnership arrangement exists where part or all of the course requirements are delivered by other agencies, there should be an

effective process in place for the management and oversight of all aspects of the student experience to ensure it is of the required quality.

2.19 Partnerships between awarding bodies for police qualifications should include legally-binding written agreements with detailed arrangements, including any risks involved. These should be subject to due diligence enquiries during the partnership and prior to any renewal. In terms of records kept, governance procedures should be recorded and kept up-to-date, with awarding institutions monitoring and evaluating all aspects of partnership arrangements on a continuous basis.

## **Monitoring and review**

2.20 A major feature of academic quality assurance and enhancement at a higher education institution, is having in place monitoring and regular review processes for the courses it delivers. Degree-awarding bodies routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course review according to their own needs. They draw on a range of external reference points, including this Statement, to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation is a periodic assessment of a course, conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from both current and historic monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement or inform future course planning.

2.21 Externality is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Higher education providers will use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an external perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved and content is appropriate for the subject. Quality assurance procedures reflect relevant strategies and policies of a provider.

2.22 The external examination system currently in use across the UK higher education sector also helps to ensure consistency in the way academic standards are secured by degree-awarding bodies. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They will consider the types of modules on offer to students, the outcomes of a cohort and how these compare to similar provision offered within other UK higher education providers. External examiners produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to modules and assessments (where appropriate). Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one for Policing, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

2.23 Courses with professional and vocational outcomes may also require evaluation and accreditation from professional and regulatory bodies. These are usually done through a combination of site visits and desk-based reviews.

## 3 Content, structure and delivery

### Content

3.1 Policing, like all academic studies, is constantly evolving. New ideas concerning policing methods generate the need for new knowledge, and those within and/or studying policing contribute to continuous debates across academic disciplines and wider professional practice. Such new ideas may be generated by changes in the political, economic, social, technological, environmental or ethical arenas, which need to be reflected within studies of policing.

3.2 However, the content of every policing award should be the following core themes:

- Impartiality - The course should be designed so students can understand the context of the profession, upholding professional policing standards, while making decisions on objective impartial criteria without bias or prejudice.
- Integrity - Course contents should reflect the highest standards required by those working within policing, including being a role model, which will affect the importance of meeting the highest professional standards.
- Public service - Course content should reflect the fact that those within policing have the responsibility to ensure they act in the best interests of society as whole.
- Transparency - Policing awards should be designed to ensure that students understand the need for those working or volunteering within policing to be transparent in their actions, decisions and communications with all people.
- Diversity - Policing awards should be designed to include the need for students to understand and champion equality, diversity and inclusion within society.

3.3 While not being prescriptive, degrees in Policing may include the following indicative topics:

- Contemporary Operational Policing
- Crime Prevention and Problem Solving
- Criminology and Victimology
- Decision making models
- Digital/Cyber Crime and Forensic Investigation
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Evidence-based Policing
- Information and Intelligence
- Law, Governance and the Criminal Justice System
- Neighbourhood and Community Safety
- Police Investigations
- Principles of Interviewing
- Research Methods in Policing and Criminology
- Serious and Organised Crime
- Technology in Policing
- Vulnerability, Risk and Public Protection.

### Teaching and learning

3.4 The approaches adopted to police education and training have, for many years, been linked with the multiple complexities of policing cultures (Banton, 1964; Constable and

Smith, 2015; Cox and Kirby, 2018). A shift by those involved in policing education from a teacher-centred to a more learner-centred approach encourages multi-layered learning, enabling students to become active learners, creating a stimulating teaching and learning environment.

3.5 In the 1980s, student-centred learning began to gain far-reaching acceptance as an alternative to teacher-centric practices in adult learning environments as part of a pedagogical paradigm shift (Buerger, 2010). Such an approach has been reflected in the changes to both the Policing curriculum and its delivery (Wood, 2020). The rationale for this, at the time, novel design approach, was founded on providing opportunity for students to become independent learners and equip them with the knowledge to critically reflect on their work in a process of adapting and transforming their attitude to tasks and activities. Such an experiential learning approach provides a pedagogical construct in which students experience an activity, reflect on the activity, interpret and generalise to the context of their learning, apply their understanding, and adjust and/or modify their approach and reapply. In this way, the learning is continually evolving and renewing.

3.6 An opportunity to further expand on this pedagogical construct is offered by Jameson et al (2012) who propose the model of the Student as Producer as a response to the commodification of higher education. This is a teaching and learning model with the potential to transform and enhance learning. Students, according to this proposed model, are required to collaborate with academic staff in the production of knowledge from within, rather than judge it from the outside. This ethos is important for considering how teaching can be framed in alternative ways, such as through collaborative teaching.

3.7 The Student as Producer model is more than just redesigning the curriculum. Through the production of knowledge, students experience openness, enquiry, ownership and empowerment. This is particularly relevant when discussing teaching and learning with reference to students undertaking degrees in Policing. In this sense, students can become the producers of knowledge while developing their learning. Such learning is supported and facilitated by both police practitioners and joint partnership working with their academic tutors.

3.8 The importance of different types of knowledge - that is academic and practitioner knowledge respectively - along with the benefits of sharing such knowledge, allows for more than just a redesign of degrees in Policing. The co-production of knowledge in teaching and learning eases the tensions and the efforts to improve or shift the tensions between practice and academia.

3.9 Taking into consideration the core principles of Student as Producer (including collaboration, partnerships, active engagement, among others), the purpose and processes of academic and police collaborations highlight that the process of working together is most significant in shaping how teaching and learning can develop so that academic skills can be taught and explained while applying them to 'real-world' problems. Factors that enable the co-production of knowledge which shape teaching and learning include mutual trust, respect and open communication. This involves core elements of shared partnerships, collaboration, active participation and a sharing of knowledge, all of which are integral to the success of collaborative partnerships between academia and practice.

3.10 By merging practice knowledge and academia to enhance the curriculum, there is an active promotion of students as independent learners. When accompanied with Student as Producer ethos, this provides reciprocal benefits for all parties. By addressing the importance of reflective practice for students to relate their learning journey, and importantly their stake in it, changes within the curriculum design have real potential for professional impact.

## Assessment

3.11 Assessment of students undertaking degrees in Policing will be partially determined by whether the degree is a licensed programme of study as defined within the PEQF or not. Policing degrees that fall under the category of College of Policing licensed PEQF programmes will require assessment strategies that blend the theoretical learning with the application of the learning outcomes. Licensed PCDA/DHEP qualifications require assessments which integrate the requirements of the specific policing environment of the student, demonstrable links to the National Policing Curriculum (NPC), along with the requirements of the academic accreditation provider for the assessment. Where applicable, such assessments for licensed programmes should map the theoretical learning to professional practice with new constables also achieving both Independent Patrol Status (IPS) and Full-Occupational Competence (FOC).

3.12 Other licensed and non-licensed programmes may not require the practical application of policing skills.

3.13 However, it is worth noting that academic and practical skills are not distinct - they are complementary. Learning and assessment that does not attempt to make both relevant is harmful for both research and practice (Bartunek and Rynes, 2014). Therefore, all assessments, whether they are licensed or other degrees in Policing, should focus on applied learning and provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate a grounding in blended theory and applied practice. Assessments should test a mix of academic study and skills that are relevant for the broad contemporary policing and criminal justice workforce, enabling individuals to become professional and reflective practitioners in a range of settings. All students should have the opportunity to engage in a critical exploration of contemporary policing as they develop the skills which can be applied in professional practice. Discussions and the critique of policing concepts alongside a focus on contemporary research should underpin the students' learning and assessment environment, where autonomous thinking is encouraged and individuality nurtured in creating more engaged, critical and reflective students.

## Assessment strategy

3.14 All providers of degrees in Policing must be able to demonstrate that assessments have been co-designed with either policing practitioners or other employers to ensure that assessments are designed with a practice-based focus to enhance student employability. All degrees must provide an assessment strategy that enables students to demonstrate that they have achieved an appropriate level in the required areas of the degree programme and to facilitate learning. The assessment strategy should incorporate the following principles and safeguards:

- Assessments should link directly to the learning outcomes of the module and course.
- Assessments should measure the outcome of student learning, in terms of knowledge acquired, understanding developed and skills or abilities gained.
- Students should be assessed on the central aspects of the learning outcomes, what is taught and learnt.
- There should be consistency and equity in assessment workload and credit value.
- Assessments should facilitate a progressive development path for students across modules and levels.
- Assessments should emphasise deep, active, reflective learning.
- Assessments should actively and constructively improve student learning.
- Assessments should focus upon skills and their transfer.



- Assessments must ensure inclusivity at the core so the learning styles of all students are accommodated and there is parity of experience.
- Assessment strategies must demonstrate the provision of timely, detailed and relevant feedback for all students.

### **Forms of assessment**

3.15 Providers should strive to use a mix of assessments and innovative methods that encourage active participation and critical reflection by students. Students should be given opportunities to demonstrate their skills and understanding in writing, orally and visually, individually and through collaborative group work, as well as undertaking independent research. To accommodate this, the assessment methods should be varied. Matthews (2016) argues that if graduates are to be problem solvers then students must have opportunities to co-create their learning experiences. Providers should show how they incorporate the student voice into the design of assessments for students, and that inclusive assessment is taken into account by all stakeholders. The core of good inclusive design for degrees in Policing is parallel to the principles of all good assessment design - constructive alignment, clear criteria, timely, able to adapt to meet the needs of students and the provision of constructive feedback.

3.16 Throughout the course, students must be given full detail of the assessments being conducted and the assessment criteria/rubric being used. There should be an appropriate balance of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment methods within the degree programmes. Students should be provided with opportunities in taught classes or online to respond to challenging questions that stimulate and promote the type of thinking and debate needed for approaching assessments. As a range of assessments should be co-designed between the provider and employers, the students will be frequently introduced to content that is particularly relevant to current operational policing; this means that the class debates, which draw on theoretical concepts, will be applied in terms of content. Applied assessments can take many forms and may include reflective writing, the development of policy briefs, applied case studies, audio-visual presentations, or the use digital portfolios.

3.17 Assessments should be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that they are current and valid, and to minimise any issues that may arise in relation to academic integrity.

## 4 Benchmark standards

### Introduction

4.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the minimum threshold standards that a student of Policing will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree. Demonstrating these standards over time will show that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding, behaviours and skills expected of graduates in Policing.

4.2 The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2:1, 2:2 and 3rd.

### Threshold level

#### Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

4.3 On graduating with an honours degree in Policing, students should be able to:

- apply an in-depth understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of policing, criminal justice and criminology to their current or future professional responsibilities
- understand and evaluate the application of criminal law to policing
- apply in-depth knowledge and understanding of safe, lawful and effective policing
- understand a range of policing specialisms such as response, community, roads, information and intelligence, and the conduct of investigations
- select and apply appropriate contemporary policing strategies to complex and interrelated contexts
- apply broad knowledge and understanding of digital policing and technology-related crime
- understand and adopt an ethical approach, reflecting the highest professional values and standards of the police service
- take personal responsibility for promoting equality, diversity, inclusivity and human rights
- synthesise specialist interrelated contemporary theories, ideas and methods which can be adopted to provide support to victims, witnesses, the vulnerable, and those at risk
- adopt specialist interrelated contemporary theories, ideas and methods to prevent and detect crime, deal with suspects and offenders
- critically evaluate and apply evidence-based research to the complexities of policing
- select and apply specialist strategies, methods and evidence-based research to the complexities of problem solving
- make informed decisions in complex, unpredictable and interrelated situations, founded upon critical thinking and the evidence-base
- act within selected guidelines and apply professional discretion
- understand and apply the skills of conflict management
- apply an in-depth understanding of leadership, team and partnership-working
- understand and apply techniques to ensure the wellbeing and resilience of self and others in all situations
- actively engage in continual self-reflection, evolving strategies to improve own practice.

## Generic skills

4.4 On graduating with an honours degree in Policing, students should be able to:

- accurately deploy a range of established techniques for the design, collection, analysis and interpretation of research
- organise and communicate interrelated information to a range of specialist and non-specialist audiences
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions and abstract concepts to identify possible solutions
- act autonomously and take responsibility for achieving personal and/or group tasks in complex contexts
- appreciate the current political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal and ethical discussions impacting the discipline
- understand contemporary debates with regard to equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability
- understand the impact of culture on working practices
- apply a range of innovative methods and techniques learned to employment
- select and apply a range of digital skills and techniques in the workplace
- actively engage in self-reflection, to identify and address own learning needs
- understand the importance of engaging with continuing professional development.

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## 6 Membership of the Advisory Group

The College of Policing is committed to championing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and we continue to work closely with stakeholders to foster a culture in which diversity and difference are valued. This culture is vital to achieve our aim of a more representative workforce that will bring the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to meet the challenges of contemporary policing. This QAA Benchmarking Statement has been reviewed by the College's diversity, equality and inclusion function in line with relevant legislation, guidance and best practice to ensure that the College has understood and addressed any potential disadvantage associated with protected characteristics as outlined in the *Equality Act 2010*.

### Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Policing (2022)

Dr Ian Pepper (Chair)	College of Policing
Dave Bamber	Police Federation: England and Wales
Jane Baxendale	College of Policing
Simon Bullock	QAA Officer
Dr Carol Cox	Liverpool John Moores University
Professor Ruth Fee	Ulster University
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