

Guidelines on the Production of Student Handbooks for Taught Programmes

2019-20 edition (v.1.0)

The Guidelines on the Production of Student Handbooks for Taught Programmes are produced, on behalf of the Learning and Teaching Committee, to assist departments in the preparation of student handbooks for taught programmes and ensure that students receive information about their departments and courses, and the University generally - including its regulations - that is relevant, comprehensive, timely and accurate.

The Guidelines are divided into three sections.

Editors must consult all three sections when preparing student handbooks.

Section 1 – General principles

defines the University's agreed principles about the content, presentation and publication of student handbooks for taught programmes;

Section 2 – Specific guidance about content

contains specific guidance about required and recommended content for each handbook heading

Section 3 – Template

standard text entries

Additional resources: A range of other resources now accompany the Guidelines to assist handbook editors. These include a cover/title page template, a font style guide and a web-site publishing help-document.ⁱ

The pages below comprise section 1 of the handbook guidelines.

Section 1: Principles about student handbook production

Template

To achieve a common visual identity for student handbooks (taught programmes), all departments are requested to use the provided handbook template (Section 3 of the Guidelines on Handbook Production). Centrally supplied text for student handbooks has been pre-inserted.

Training requirements

Training in using the template is available from IT Services for all new student handbook editors and editors who have previously been on the student handbook training course and wish to refresh their skills.

Editors who have not previously attended the IT training course [Update your student handbook in Word](#) **must attend the course prior to using the 2019/20 handbook template.** Training is necessary in order to ensure that functions such as auto-text updates work properly.

Accuracy of content

Standard text entries

Centrally supplied/standard text entries have been deliberately worded for accuracy and relevance to the majority of the student body. Occasionally, it may be necessary for a handbook editor to omit a whole section altogether or to make minor amendments to the default text entry to ensure a handbook is applicable to its specific target student readership. Examples may be deleting the special equipment section for a course with no such requirements or removing a sentence/section relevant only to campus-based study if the handbook in question is for distance learning students. This is perfectly acceptable providing the revised text remains accurate and appropriately regulatory compliant.

If editors are in any doubt about the suitability of a proposed amendment they should discuss it with the contact named in the guidance section (where given) or with the relevant College Academic Advisor in the Quality Office.

Compliance with Regulations

Regulations for Students homepage: www.le.ac.uk/sas/regulations

Senate Regulations 1 to 12: www.le.ac.uk/sas/senate-regulations

Editors must pay close attention to Senate Regulations when preparing student handbooks. All student handbook content must be compatible with regulations, excepting where special dispensation from a specific regulation(s) has been formally granted by the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee, or the Academic Policy Committee for applicable dispensations approved prior to the 2018/19 academic year.

Passages supplied in Section 3 of these guidelines to inform students about key regulatory issues are deliberately succinct in order to direct students to read the applicable Senate Regulation and, when available, a Student and Academic Services student information webpage about the regulation.

Ensure that information in student handbooks about the areas listed below, in particular, is regulatory compliant. **This includes ensuring** that the correct version of the Senate Regulation for the handbook's particular student audience is consulted in instances where intake specific versions of Senate Regulations exist:

- **criteria for assessment and award** - for undergraduate students see the relevant cohort specific version of Senate Regulation 5; for taught postgraduate students see Senate Regulation 6;
- **attendance and engagement** - see Senate Regulation 4;
- **late submission of coursework** - see Senate Regulation 7;
- **mitigating circumstances** - see Senate Regulation 7 and the [Mitigating Circumstances Sharepoint webpage](#), including policy and procedure documents;

- **normal and maximum periods of registration** - see Senate Regulation 2;
- **student discipline** - see Senate Regulation 11.

Additionally, course and module particulars must match those specified in the University approved versions of programme and module specifications. These are available on the course documentation pages of the Student and Academic Services website (<http://www.le.ac.uk/sas/courses/documentation>) and recorded in SITS.

Version control

Readers must be able to clearly identify the academic year(s) to which the handbook relates and the version number or date of issue so that different copies can be distinguished if it is necessary to issue an updated version within an academic year. Version information should be provided in the document header.

Presentation and writing style

All handbooks should look professional, pleasing aesthetically and conform to the University's visual identity. The presentation of electronic student handbooks should be such that their content remains legible if readers chose to print out any pages to read off-screen.

Hyperlinks

In preference, hyperlinks should display the full URL of a webpage to enable the reader to type the URL into a browser if required (i.e. "Guidelines on the Production of Student Handbooks for Taught Programmes (www.le.ac.uk/sas/quality/handbooks)" rather than "[Guidelines on the Production of Student Handbooks for Taught Programmes](#)". If a URL is awkward to publish in a handbook because it is especially long, consider making a request to IT Services for a shortcut URL to be provided. This is worthwhile only if the page in question is frequently visited).

Tone and style

Handbooks should be written in a suitably straightforward style. The general tone should be welcoming and reassuring. Avoid using colloquial language and jargon and where specialist terminology is necessary consider providing a glossary.

Dense blocks of continuous prose should be avoided. To increase readability, use headings, bullet points, tables, checklists, etc., as appropriate. Summarising key points at the end of a section can help readers to absorb the most important information.

Title/cover page

A standard of title/cover page template is available (see [Resources for Student handbook editors](#)). These have been produced by the Creative Team especially for electronic student handbooks.

There are new cover templates for 2019/20 handbooks. Please note that all student handbooks for taught programmes should use one of the two choices available – white or red background. Replace your existing cover with one created using one of the new templates in order to ensure that the handbook complies with current visual identity. Note that neither utilises a cover photo/image.

Heading ordering

After the first topic (Welcome/Introduction), the order is generally not significant and sections can be combined or further sub-divided if required.

Handbook sign-off and publication

School sign-off of handbooks

Heads of School are required to nominate a member of their staff who is responsible for ensuring student handbooks meet the requirements of these Guidelines and for signing them off on behalf of the school. Handbook editors should liaise with this individual to organise the consideration and timely approval of their edited handbooks.

Handbooks are not required to be signed-off for publication by the Quality Office.

Blackboard publication

Please note that student handbooks must be made available electronically to current students via **Blackboard only**. Approved information about courses is made available to prospective students, and other external audiences, via the Study With Us pages. In order to preserve the accuracy of public information, the Study With Us pages act as a single source of up-to-date information, and therefore student handbooks will no longer be made publically available on departmental websites.

It is essential that students can easily locate and access electronic student handbooks. Navigation to electronic handbooks on Blackboard should therefore be straightforward. Refer to the Publish a Student Handbook guide for details about where to position a student handbook on Blackboard (available via [Resources for Student handbook editors](#))

Printed/hard copy handbooks

Departments are required to provide student handbooks electronically as PDFs that include bookmarks for each heading. Printed/hard copy handbooks may be issued at a department's discretion providing these are made available in addition and not instead of electronic handbooks. If your department does wish to produce printed handbooks for 2019/20, contact Print Services for information about printing options and price quotations (printservices@le.ac.uk, ext. 2442).

Send your published student handbook to the Quality Office

Please send the PDF of your published student handbook to the Quality Office for reference purposes; the Quality Office aims to keep a copy of all student handbooks for University quality assurance and enhancement processes and for consultation by relevant external bodies, such as the QAA and OIA.

Queries about the Guidelines/handbook content

Handbook content queries

Please direct any queries about handbook content to your College Academic Advisor in the Quality Office (contact them directly or via qualoffice@le.ac.uk). They are available to check, on request, additional content added to text about regulatory matters.

As mentioned above, handbooks for 2019/20 are required to be checked and signed-off for publication at school-level by the member of staff to which the Head of School has assigned this responsibility. Handbooks are not required to be approved for publication by the Quality Office.

Technical queries about the template

Technical queries only about the template should be directed to Hazel Guyler hmg6@le.ac.uk

Quality Office
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ⁱ The Guidelines on the Production of Student Handbooks for Taught Programmes (Sections 1, 2, and 3) and accompanying additional resources are published at: www.le.ac.uk/sas/quality/handbook-production.