**Guidance on Improving Module Guides**

**School of Sport Studies, Leisure and Nutrition at Liverpool John Moores University**

**(Sally Brown, November 2016).**

**Introduction**

LJMU mandates what should be included in the course guide. This guidance assumes you have used this resource as a checklist and the further guidance provided here is based on a close scrutiny of existing module Guides in the School. There is much good practice, but some potential areas for improvement, hence this checklist of questions to guide your enhancement activities.

**General matters**

* Looking critically at your own Module guides, are they visually attractive and do they look like something students will pick up and use rather than file away or lose? (The sheer volume of information provided for students is hugely variable and may well be overwhelming).
* To what extent do you spell out for students the critical importance of engagement with the course, and committing sufficient time to study at each level?
* Are you confident that your tone and language are supportive and engaging, while being clear and robust about requirements?
* Are you confident that the quality of presentation of your Module guide is modelling good practice for students in terms of what you require from them (e.g. spelling, layout, punctuation, referencing, page numbering and so on)?
* How well do your course guides provide signposting or waymarking to show students how they progress through the course?

**Curriculum**

* Is your curriculum constructively aligned, so what you are aiming to achieve as expressed in your learning outcomes is clearly evident within your teaching, and mapped closely onto your assessed tasks?
* To what extent do you ensure that all information in the module guide is kept up to date?
* How closely do your Module guides match subject benchmarks?
* How good and up-to-date are your reading lists?
* When you describe what students will be doing, are you confident that the level of detail you give is sufficient to support all students?
* Is it clear to see within your Module Guide where PDP is supported, taught and assessed?

**Assessment**

* Have you mapped assignments across the whole module to ensure students are not working to competing deadlines?
* Are you specific about three-week turnaround of assessed work with feedback, and what happens if staff don’t meet them?
* Is your feedback provided genuinely early enough for students to benefit from it before they complete the next assignment within or beyond your module?
* Where do you explain the different weightings of the different assignments and the criteria within those assignments?
* How well do you explain to students what to do if they are unable to meet deadlines, and how the Liverpool John Moores regulations work in relation to late submission and condonements?
* Is there clear specification of required word counts, and clarification about what will happen if students exceed or indeed undershoot requirements?
* How well do you advise students about the purposes and uses of feedback, and how they should be using it?
* What use do you make of grade descriptors? Do students know what they are for?
* When you are giving students a task like “critically evaluate the role of xxx”, how much help do you give students in really understanding what a term like critical evaluation or critical analysis means?
* Is there a clear expectation with assignments like presentations or portfolios that students are expected to achieve progressively higher standards?
* When you use group task, do you brief students on what you expect, share ground rules for group behaviour, give students mark-free rehearsal opportunities, provide formative feedback and unpack the assessment process afterwards?
* Are you using an appropriate range of assessment methods, so that students with diverse study orientations have an opportunity to shine at least some of the time?
* Do your assignments give students experiences they can talk about confidently in placement and job interviews when asked to give examples of how they have, for example, worked with incomplete information, or how they managed a group they were working in when it became dysfunctional, or how they applied novel solutions to complex situations?

**Academic literacy**

* How clear is your advice to students on your required form of references?
* What advice do you give them about how they should be using reference material and the importance of using well-substantiated, accessible and reliable (i.e. peer reviewed) resources?
* To what extent do you specify required reading? Is this advice given at all levels or just at level four?
* What guidance do you give students on good academic conduct, and specifically avoiding cheating and plagiarism? Do your students know what will happen if they breach requirements in terms of good academic conduct?
* To what extent do you guide students about how much work they need to do on your modules to be successful? Does your level of specificity about how much work students are expected to do by themselves vary from level to level, that is to say, are you indicating the need for more independence and autonomy as the course progresses?
* What support are you giving students in becoming effective at reflection?

**Support for students**

* Does your module guide clearly indicate to students who they can contact when they need help? (Best practice teams list the names of all staff who teach on the module and provide all their contact details, including office number as well as their working hours including an indication of how quickly they will respond to emails).
* Could you also provide information about technical, information specialists and specialist support staff who are available to help?
* Is the information you provide for students on inclusive support for disabilities and other special needs really clear?