Response to MAODE student consultation – September 2017

Summary

This is a response to the consultation about module presentation patterns which took place between 18th September 2017 and 2nd October 2017 in the MAODE Board of Studies Student Consultative Forum. The summary of student feedback is at https://learn1.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/view.php?id=16094.

The current MAODE programme consists of modules with a variety of start dates, duration and credits. The programme team were interested to know whether this worked for students and whether it gave them the flexibility they needed to complete their qualification. The consultation identified that most students studying modules from the MAODE programme intend to complete the full Masters qualification and are doing so largely for career reasons. The issues of workload and flexibility were the overriding themes of the consultation.

Since the consultation was held, the Curriculum Review conducted by the Open University has resulted in a decision to withdraw the Masters, and Diploma, in Online and Distance Education qualifications, with the last possible date for completion being December 2021. As a result, it is no longer appropriate for the MAODE programme team to make significant changes to the modules that will be going into teach-out, and this has impacted on the actions in response to student comments on the forum. However, a new module, H880, is currently in production and will be launched on the FutureLearn platform in 19B. A Certificate in Online and Distance Education will still be offered.

Full response

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Students told us that they felt that the workload on the 30 credit modules was too heavy and not reflective of a 30-credit module. *"I agree with others that the workload for the 30 point is a good deal more than half the 60 but I have certainly enjoyed the two 30s I have done and am not sure they could be stretched to 60 points."* *"I wouldn't have had the time or energy to study two modules concurrently - and don't feel the 30/60 credit courses were accurately measured. The 30 credit course is not half the workload of a 60 credit course. I felt it was closer to 45 credits. (However, I enjoyed my two 30 credit courses more than my 60 credit*	There will no longer be any 30 credit modules available on the programme when the current modules have been through teach-out and withdrawn. Our new module, H880 will be 60 credits.	

courses - less content redundancy, better tutor involvement, more manageable tutor group participation)"		
Students stated that they would like multiple presentations of modules to allow maximum flexibility to study at a time and pace that suits them. *"I'd prefer rolling registration with no fixed start dates. I procrastinated for several years before deciding to study partly because of the start dates were usually too far in the future. I would not have wanted to start all courses in February or be restricted to 60 credit modules. I prefer flexibility in learning."* *"The various threads on this forum demonstrates that people have wildly differing needs and interests. I would advocate for maximum flexibility within the constraints of what is viable and feasible."*	Unfortunately, it is not financially viable to offer multiple start dates for every module. It could make for a poorer student experience if there are low student numbers on a cohort as a result of numbers being spread across multiple presentations. Tutor expertise could also be diluted when spread across multiple presentations.	
Students suggested the possibility of offering a standard and a fast-track route through the qualification. *"I noticed that someone mentioned the MA Ed and spent some time this evening looking through that programme. That has two presentation modes, a 'standard' route and 'fast track' for those who aspire to complete the qualification within two years. Modules are overlapped, and the dissertation is a module on its own. Having the option to go fast track looks very useful, hard work but I would be tempted. I suggest that something like that might work well for some on the MA ODE. A dissertation module, for the standard and fast track, might also be welcome. I would certainly opt for that."*	As the MAODE qualification in its current format is being withdrawn we will not be offering this as an option.	
Students suggested the development of a qualification planning tool that would allow students to map out different configurations of modules/start dates, including TMA/EMA deadlines, to create a plan that works for them. *"One thought may be to develop an overall multi year calendar tool where people can drag and drop the different modules to build up a picture of the overall degree according to different combinations. It would clearly indicate overlaps as well as precise dates of TMAs,*	A recommended pathway through the qualification is provided on the online prospectus: http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/ Courses/media/Courses/Qualifica tion/Infographics/Pathways-through-the-MAODE-modules.pdf A qualification planning tool for Postgraduate study would need	

EMAs, breaks and online tutorials. A brief overview of each TMA/EMA would also allow people to evaluate their ability to complete work and plan their study schedules"	to be developed on a university-wide basis.	
Several students said that a break mid-module was helpful to allow some breathing space or for catching up, if required. 1-2 weeks was suggested as the optimum time for this. Students also suggested adjusting presentation patterns so there is a shorter break between modules (most students said 2-4 weeks would be their preference).	We have recently introduced short breaks mid-module to allow for reflection and catch up on H818 and H819 and will continue this practice in H880. We will not be making any changes to presentation patterns due to the qualification being withdrawn.	
Students suggested the possibility of breaking modules down into even smaller chunks such as 15 or 20 credit modules to allow for more personalised learning. *"I feel 30-credit courses or even 15-credit courses might allow the student greater customization. For example, H817 had 4 distinct parts: innovation, OER, Learning Design Studio, and learning analytics. If each of those parts were offered as 15-credit modules, the student who is not interested in one part could still take the others. It would also perhaps make it easier for the design team when refreshing content or module offerings because they could concentrate on one topic instead of the whole module (and could be on a different schedule for update deadlines as a result)."* *"I would have liked 20 credit courses as this would have given more opportunity to design a more personalised learning path, and to study a broader range of subjects."*	The OU is exploring the possibility of introducing shorter modules via other platforms e.g. FutureLearn.	

Date: 9th August 2018