Work Based and Integrative Studies (WBIS)

A modern approach to Higher Education

Introduction Guide
INTRODUCTION

Work Based & Integrative Studies (WBIS for short, and usually pronounced 'WiBIS') is a flexible framework for the accreditation of work based and work related learning. The Isle of Man College as an Associate College of the University of Chester, is authorized to operate the WBIS higher education framework.

The framework is offered at undergraduate Level 4 up to full honors degree level. Typically, it allows participants to negotiate their own pathway of learning related to their area(s) of working practice, and to choose a relevant award title. For instance, an undergraduate student who works as a nurse may well negotiate a pathway towards a BSc Hons, Nursing Studies (WBIS) award, whereas a medical secretary working in the same hospital may choose to negotiate a pathway towards a BA Hons, Administration (WBIS) degree. Their negotiated learning pathway can a mix of work based projects and taught modules, depend on the learning and career needs of the student.

Other students on WBIS undertake a programme that has been in large part negotiated in advance with their employer. These are cohort negotiated programmes such as the WBIS ‘Foundation Degree in Policing. Here, room for individual negotiation may be more limited.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS ARE ON OFFER?

There is an undergraduate modular programme with the following structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Credit total</th>
<th>Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>120 credits (6 modules)</td>
<td>Certificate of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>240 credits (12 modules)</td>
<td>Diploma of Higher Education/ Foundation Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>360 credits (18 modules)</td>
<td>BA / BSc degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also a postgraduate modular programme, structured as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit Total for Master’s Level</th>
<th>Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 postgraduate credit points (3 modules)</td>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 postgraduate credit points (6 modules)</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180 postgraduate credit points (9 modules)</td>
<td>MA / MSc Master’s degree</td>
</tr>
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</table>
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I START THE PROGRAMME?

Usually, participants, who can start the programme at any time, start off with the Self Review & Negotiation of Learning module (or equivalent). This is about looking at your personal and professional development to date, about encouraging you to think about the sort of person you are today, and about helping you decide where you would like to go next in life generally, or with your career more specifically. It usually leads on to a consideration of how studying on WBIS may be helpful in this regard, and then a full WBIS programme of study with an identifiable award title and outline plan of learning. In some cases your employer may have an input into this.

Your Personal Academic Tutor (or ‘PAT’) will be the person who takes you for this initial module and will typically remain as your Personal Tutor throughout your study on the programme, even though you may have other tutors for specific modules.

LENGTH OF STUDY

All award pathways have a specific time frame for completion which varies depending on the award. While students must complete within the given time frame, the programme allows students to progress at a quicker pace. Generally though, students are expected to complete a 20 credit module within a three month period.

WHAT SUPPORT WILL I RECEIVE FROM TUTORS?

Your PAT will help guide you throughout your learning experience and they should be the first port of call for personal advice or academic programme issues. They will assess your Self Review portfolio and will typically act as advisor for any Accreditation of Prior Learning claims you may be putting together, and usually as supervisor for any negotiated experiential learning you undertake. Taught modules on the programme are the exception, as they may have a different tutor with a highly developed specialism in the particular field concerned, and this tutor should be the main point of contact for the taught module (or modules) concerned.

Tutors are available by phone or by e-mail to give advice and offer encouragement. In particular, they will be able to offer formative assessment feedback - check with your tutor, but you typically have up to three opportunities to send them drafts of any one piece of work and they will give you sound advice about how to improve your assignments and about when any given piece of work is deemed ‘submittable’.

WHAT TYPES OF MODULES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE PROGRAMME?

Your initial module (Self Review & Negotiation of Learning) will typically involve you planning all (or at least elements of) your programme of study with us. There are a variety of ways in which you can thereafter build up the academic credits you need to trigger the award you desire:

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL). This is where someone has been on a course previously that carries Higher Education credits and which is relevant to their programme. For instance, they may have previously taken a HNC or
done a module with the Open University. This credit can then be brought in to their programme and count as part of their pathway.

**Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).** This is a way in which the WBIS programme is extremely helpful, as it is designed to help participants gain recognition for their previous learning, in the workplace, ‘on the job’. Most participants on WBIS are able to make significant claims for prior experiential learning, and one of the most important tasks at the outset of the programme for students and tutors to engage in is to determine the extent (and likely evidence for) APEL claims. Normally, Chester regulations allow up to half of an entire award to be claimed through accreditation of prior learning (whether APEL, APCL or a combination).

**Taught modules.** We offer a wide variety of taught WBIS modules which can be an important source of work-related learning. These taught modules are either delivered with initial group workshops, one to one tutorials and the use of online resources. Your PAT will be able to advise you of forthcoming taught modules. It is also possible to take taught modules offered elsewhere within the IOM College that are validated by University of Chester (e.g. from the Public Health, Computer Science) should they be available and fit your programme of study. If you are interested in this option, speak to your personal tutor.

**Negotiated Experiential Learning.** Like APEL, this is about learning experientially, ‘on the job’, as opposed to in a lecture theatre or seminar room, but this time with regard to current or future learning rather than learning that has already happened. Negotiated Experiential Learning Modules (NELMs) give participants the freedom to negotiate their own learning outcomes in topic areas, and the method of assessment too. Often, this type of learning takes the form of a work based project and students use the outputs and artefacts generated on the job as part of their assessed work.

**ARE THERE ANY COMPULSORY MODULES?**

Most students begin WBIS with **Self Review & Negotiation of Learning and** plan their programme from this point on with a degree of freedom and flexibility; though after Self Review has been completed it may be the case that employers have arranged for students they are sponsoring to undertake certain other modules which can also be regarded as mandatory.

For participants on fully negotiated programmes, we recommend that **Skills and Approaches for Work Based Learning** should follow Self Review if the participant has little previous experience of work based learning in an academic setting. This module is designed to give students the wherewithal to be a successful work-based learner on the programme, with the ability to undertake work based projects and experiential learning at work more generally, for the purposes of academic credit. This module exists at all levels.

At postgraduate level we also recommend participants take our **Designing Practitioner Research** module if they are planning a research project of some kind.

Students nearing the end of their Master’s Level on WBIS are required to take this module and then their 60 credit research NELM to finish off their programme.
WHAT HAPPENS IF I WANT TO CHANGE MY PATHWAY OR AWARD TITLE?

In these circumstances you will need to speak to your PAT. At the start of every level of study, students on negotiated programmes complete an Approved Studies Learning Agreement (ASLA) form, indicating their likely pathway for the level concerned, together with their desired end award title. If a pathway needs to be completely renegotiated, students need to speak to their PAT about this and will almost certainly need to complete a new ASLA. If the proposed award title is to change, then the same process must take place, with the new suggested award title being included on the resubmitted ASLA.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I CHANGE JOB?

You will again need to speak to your PAT about this, although this is only normally an issue if the line of work in your new appointment is significantly different to your job role when you entered the programme. In these cases, a new ASLA (including possibly a new award title more reflective of the new work area concerned) may need to be negotiated. Do also remember that there may also be financial implications of changing job if your WBIS programme was being sponsored by your previous employer.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY NEGOTIATED PATHWAY IS COMPLETE?

The programme is ‘topped and tailed’ so that all participants usually engage with Self Review & Negotiation of Learning (or equivalent) at the beginning of their programme, and then - after they have completed their negotiated pathway - they can finish their studies with a final module called Exit Review & Forward Planning. This is a module which encourages learners to reflect on their entire pathway of learning on WBIS. Arising from this process of reflection on the learning experiences students are also encouraged to develop an action plan for future personal & professional development, which may include further learning opportunities on the programme, if desired.

GRANTS

Your may be eligible for a grant from the Department of Education & Children [http://www.gov.im/education] or Department of Economic Development [http://www.gov.im/ded]

WHAT NEXT?

The next step is to attend an Introduction to WBIS workshop or undertake an initial discussion (either face-to-face or via telephone) with the WBIS Programme Leader.

Contact details are:

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