

BSc (Hons) Business Information Systems

Programme Specification

Primary Purpose

Course management and quality assurance.

Secondary Purpose

Detailed information for students, staff and employers. Current students should refer to the related Course Handbook for further detail.

Disclaimer

The University of Portsmouth has checked the information given in this Programme Specification. We will endeavour to deliver the course in keeping with this Programme Specification; however, changes may sometimes be required arising from annual monitoring, student feedback, review and update of units and courses. Where this activity leads to significant changes to units and courses, there will be prior consultation of students and others, wherever possible, and the University will take all reasonable steps to minimize disruption to students. It is also possible that the University may not be able to offer a unit or course for reasons outside of its control, for example; the absence of a member of staff or low student registration numbers. Where this is the case, the University will endeavour to inform applicants and students as soon as possible. Where appropriate, the University will facilitate the transfer of affected students to another suitable course.

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Course Details

1. Named Awards

Business Information Systems

2. Course Code (and UCAS Code if applicable)

C0058S (G521)

3. Awarding Body

University of Portsmouth

4. Teaching Institution

University of Portsmouth

5. Accrediting Body

British Computer Society (BCS)

6. QAA Benchmark Groups

Computing

7. Document Control Information

Edit 2.10 dated July 2015

Edit 2.20 dated July 2017

8. Effective Session

2017-18

9. Author

Penny Ross

10. Faculty

Faculty of Technology

11. Department

School of Computing

Curriculum

12. Educational Aims

The programme aims to equip students to work as professional information systems analysts, designers and developers, particularly in environments where competence in systems analysis and design, and project management are required. In addition, the course aims to:

- Provide a challenging, stimulating and self-rewarding study environment.

- Provide a framework whereby individual study paths may be forged based on choice of a range of options.
- Enable students to broaden their studies by including study units from outside their discipline as substitutes for degree option choices.
- Develop a range of transferable skills by means of opportunities provided in the core units.
- Accommodate student needs in relation to maximising their career potential by enabling them to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in their chosen subject area.
- Promote career aspirations by including study topics on professional practice and skills, which is further extended by the practical work experience gained from the placement year.
- Maintain a course that has equality of opportunity, enabling access for people with differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. In addition, disabled and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary.

13. Reference Points

The major reference points were University of Portsmouth Curricula Framework 2012 Document (2010), British Computer Society (BCS) requirements, Computing 2016 Benchmark Statement, , Code of Practice for Work-based and Placement Learning (October 2010), National Qualification Framework and QAA Codes of Practice.

The Computing 2016 Subject Benchmark states (section 2.): there are key ideas which constitute a certain ethos that can be expected to characterise an honours degree programme in computing and specifically an Information Systems and Information Technology programmes:

- (2.1) The Computing discipline is evolving at a rapid rate, touching on all aspects of life. Computing delivers solutions to problems and drives technological, economic and social progress.
- (2.3) Computing graduates apply their understanding, skills, knowledge and experience to create social and economic value by building secure, reliable and usable systems.

Subject Specific statements include

(2.12) Information Technology

- is concerned with the selection and application of software and hardware
- Integration of components to provide solutions in a variety of application domains
- Risk, cybersecurity and service management aspects of IT systems

(2.13) Information Systems

- Is concerned with the modelling, codification and storage of data and information for later retrieval. It includes:
- Data management, databases, information modelling, indexing and searching. Systems analysis, systems lifecycle and interactions between information systems and other socio-technical systems, including societal and environmental issues. Generally these are expressed in the ability to construct systems that acquire, codify, store, transform and transmit information

The programme has been designed with the following Computing 2016 benchmark elements (section 2.18):

- The concept of computational thinking, the recognition of its main elements and the relevance of these to everyday life.

- The information system (including a Computing System), and the process of developing or analysing it is important; understanding of the system and its operation will go deeper than a mere external appreciation of what the system does or the way(s) in which it is used.
- The balance of practice and theory such that practical activity is supported by an understanding of underlying principles.

14. General Learning Outcomes

Level 4

Certificates of Higher Education are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study
- an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work
- communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments
- undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility

Level 5

Diplomas in Higher Education are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed
- ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context
- knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study
- an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analysis and interpretations based on that knowledge

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis
- effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively
- undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making

Level 6

Bachelor's degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systemic and systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline
 - to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
- an appreciation of systems thinking, including the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge
- the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline)

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature

15. Learning Outcomes

A. Knowledge and Understanding of:

- A1. Systems thinking, systems analysis and design as applied to real world complex problems.
- A2. Efficient as well as effective project management as applied to information systems development for organisations of all sizes.
- A3. The theoretical and practical issues in various systems development lifecycles as applied to a range of information systems projects.
- A4. Options for systems development and change management within organisations.
- A5. Factors affecting the security of information systems and techniques for security solutions.
- A6. The management of large and complex Information Systems for business and enterprise use.
- A7. The social, ethical and legal constraints within which organisations have to work.
- A8. The principles for the management of data and its strategic business use.
- A9. The business environment, including aspects of the information technology that underpin and support business processes and the technical, sociotechnical and work systems solutions for information systems development.

B. Cognitive (Intellectual or Thinking) Skills, able to:

- B.1 Apply general abilities of an intellectual, analytical, creative and problem-solving nature to the field of information systems.
- B.2 Apply and integrate methods and techniques from both the Systems Thinking, Business and Computing disciplines to the solution of information systems problems.
- B.3 Develop critical skills with regard to research methods, literature searching, appraising and evaluating information from a variety of sources and viewpoints, and synthesising the results.
- B.4 Plan, manage, undertake and report on a significant final year project related to the field of business information systems.
- B.5 Develop an awareness of the effects upon society of technical and technological development and develop a proper self-updating sense of professional conduct in relation to society's increased dependence on information systems.
- B.6 Professional considerations: recognise the professional, economic, social, environmental, moral and ethical issues involved in the sustainable exploitation of computer technology and be guided by the adoption of appropriate professional, ethical and legal practices..

C. Practical (Professional or Subject) Skills, able to:

- C.1 Select or create appropriate, effective and productive methods and tools for the successful construction and timely delivery of reliable, secure and usable work and computer-based business information systems.
- C.2 Understand and manage appropriate software, hardware and work systems to produce designed outcomes for IS projects.
- C.3 Competency in evaluating data needs for organisations and selection and use of appropriate tools to create and manage strategic data management systems.
- C.4 Competency in using and critically evaluating and assessing business information systems.
- C.5 Have an awareness of ongoing and future IS trends and innovations and an appreciation of their implications.
- C.6 Demonstrate experience and productive capability in the placement setting (sandwich degree only)
- C.7 Be aware of security threats relating to information systems and tools and techniques to mitigate these threats.
- C.8 The ability to critically evaluate and analyse complex problems, including those with incomplete information, and devise appropriate solutions, within the constraints of a budget and relevant work systems.

D. Transferable (Graduate and Employability) Skills, able to:

- D1. Communicate effectively in writing, speaking and in appropriate forms of presentation.
- D2. Read and understand a range of complex business documentation related to business information systems, work systems, software products, sociotechnical and system requirements.
- D3. Use information systems to handle complex data, produce simulations to assist with design thinking and business analytics.
- D4. Competently deal with numerical data as might be found in typical business orientated applications.
- D5. Assess problem domains and formulate appropriate problem-solving strategies and to develop viable solutions.
- D6. Develop the ability to Self-manage by demonstrating self-awareness, reflection, goal setting and action planning; demonstrate independence and adaptability through innovation and creativity and develop skills for ongoing learning.
- D7. Ability to professionally network in a team environment to achieve goals, but nevertheless retain distinct individuality.
- D8. Develop and demonstrate employability and entrepreneurship skills within the IS domain
- D9. Understand the role of sustainability. Recognise factors in environmental and societal contexts relating to opportunities and challenges created by information systems across a range of human activities.
- D10. Ability to deliver appropriate outcomes in a timely fashion to the standard required by the placement client (sandwich degree only).

16. Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

Core knowledge is acquired mainly through lectures and tutorials. Individual learning is supported by directed reading, study guides, tutorial, real world case studies, practical sessions and worked examples.

Knowledge is imparted through tutor led learning through interactive lectures with relevant skills developed in the tutorials, practicals and seminars through the application of theoretical material to case studies, discussion and reflection using real world examples. These skills are developed by appropriate use of material where problem solving ability can be exploited including interactive and student-led learning groups. Professional conduct issues are taught in lectures and developed in group work and by means of role playing exercises as well as in the industrial/commercial placement. Individual and group reports will be used to develop the necessary intellectual skills needed to plan and write concise and lucid reports.

The emphasis is on building competent skills and promoting confidence in their use coupled with the ability to select and apply appropriate skills. The professional training is formalised by the placement year, and applied holistically within the workplace during that year.

17. Assessment Strategy

Testing of theoretical knowledge and practical ability is largely through portfolios of coursework and examinations offered in several styles. Major systems development related activities are assessed

by observation or reports based on completion of extended programmes of work set either individually or to small groups.

Use is made of examinations, offered in several styles, for assessing breadth of subject knowledge. Additionally reports, courseworks and portfolios are used for assessing transferable, cognitive, practical and employability skills including intellectual and analytical skills.

The ability to work in teams will be assessed through group work and reports and marked by the tutor or by peer observation.

Individuality will be assessed by presentations and individual assignment and reports. Mathematical and IT related skills will be demonstrated and assessed within the course curriculum. The placement experience will be assessed by a supervisor visit and report, by manager's report and a final student written report.

Level 4

The assessment approach for each of the level four units has been designed to enable students to practice and build confidence in their abilities by using a broad range of assessments. Assessments are used to show that the students understand the fundamental concepts of the computing discipline and the information systems field and to introduce the transferable and employability skills including problem solving skills. In general, practical skills are assessed through individual and group coursework whereas theoretical underpinning is assessed through examination assessment, within all group work, which helps develop team working skills, there is a well-defined individual component. An assortment of assessment styles are utilised at level 4, the nature of the discipline lends itself to practical coursework based exercises and portfolio assessment. Posters and verbal presentations are used as well as computer assessment and traditional written exams. Formative assessment and feedback opportunities are provided through both online tests and more traditional classroom based exercises.

Level 5

The broad range of assessment methods continues into level 5 but with the emphasis moving from assessing knowledge to assessing application of knowledge and higher level cognitive skills. Essential problem-solving skills, introduced at level four, are expanded upon. Areas such as: identification of information systems and how they are applied to business organisations, analysis of information systems, systems development methodologies, project management and selection and/or creation of tools are assessed by applying more complex problems through a combination of coursework and exam. Formative assessment and feedback opportunities are provided through both online tests, verbally and through classroom based exercises.

Level 6

Students will be required to demonstrate the higher skills of analysis, synthesis, critical judgement and evaluation along with comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the relevant areas of information systems. Students mainly work independently, but with peer support and staff supervision where appropriate. Students at this level are expected to undertake a significant amount of their own background reading and research in both taught and project units. Consequently a greater proportion of level 6 assessments are in the form of verbal or written reports on student's research findings. The final year engineering project unit is assessed by a substantial piece of individually researched, specified and built artefact relating to the field of information systems and technical report. The final year study project is assessed by a report that documents an in-depth piece of research, including analysis of findings and use of appropriate research methodologies on a current, potential or interesting business information systems issue. Formative feedback is given in taught units and through discussion with student's project supervisors.

18. Course Structure, Progression and Award Requirements

See [Unit Web Search](#)¹ for full details on the course structure and units

The award of Honours degree requires 360 credits.

Standard University rules apply. The regulations must be consulted for a full description of exit awards.

This is a 4 year sandwich or 3 year full-time course. The course consists of a mix of lectures, seminars, practical work and final year project. It makes extensive use of the School's computer suites and software. The course consists of 20-credit taught units plus a 40 credit final year project. Each year consists of 120 credits. A 20-credit unit is expected to require 200 hours of total study of which a proportion would have formal staff contact and there would be additional self-study and practical work. In the final year of the course there is a 26 week, 40-credit, tutor supported project. Scheduled individual and small group tutorials ensure that contact is also maintained between students and their tutors. Additionally, for each year of the degree, every student is allocated an individual personal tutor who maintains contact with the student throughout the year. Optional units may be taken in the 2nd and final year.

19. Employability Statement

The course as a whole is highly career-focused, with the technical content and opportunities to develop analytical and design skills being the major factors contributing to this. Practical work uses hardware and software systems that are widely used in industry and this familiarity eases the transfer of graduates into employment. The content of the course is informed by discussions with our Industrial Advisory Board and collaboration with a range of local employers. The Department has an Industrial Liaison Officer whose brief is to maintain contact with employers, although most staff maintain good industrial and research links. The industrial placement, which is usually taken between the second and final year of a sandwich course is strongly recommended, and may include overseas industrial placements or study abroad options.

Course Management

20. Support for Student Learning

- The Course is managed by a Course Leader
- Collaborative programmes are managed on a day-to-day basis by the University Contact who may or may not be the Course Leader
- The Combined Honours Degree is managed by a Course Leader from one subject area and a Deputy Course Leader from the other
- An extensive induction programme introduces the student to the University and their course
- Each student has a personal tutor, responsible for pastoral support and guidance
- University support services include careers, financial advice, housing and counselling
- The Academic Skills Unit (ASK)
- The Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre (ASDAC)
- Excellent library facilities
- Student course and unit handbooks provide information about the course structure and University regulations
- Feedback is provided for all assessments
- Personal Development Planning (PDP) for all awards

¹ www.port.ac.uk/unitwebsearch

21. Admissions Criteria

A. Academic Admissions Criteria

For Level 4 entry a student will need to have obtained at least 104-120 UCAS Tariff points that should include at least two A2 level (or equivalent) passes in any subject. Vocational 'A' levels, BTEC and access courses to an equivalent standard will be accepted.

Additionally GCSE Grade C (or equivalent) in Mathematics and GCSE Grade C (or equivalent) in English is required.

For Level 5 entry an acceptable pass in a subject relevant HND or equivalent is required.

For Level 6 entry a good pass in a subject relevant HND or equivalent is required or 240 points of Advanced Standing.

Where a student's first language is not English, the standard university admissions requirements for English proficiency will apply at Levels 4 & 5, while at Level 6 students are required to have achieved IELTS 6 with a minimum of Level 6 in each element.

B. Disability

The University makes no distinction in its admissions policy with regard to disability and will endeavour to make all reasonable adjustments in order to make it possible for students to study at Portsmouth on a course of their choice. We also seek to extend participation in the University to groups that have traditionally been under-represented in further and higher education such as those with disabilities or special needs.

Further information on our disability policy is available on our web-site www.port.ac.uk/departments/disability.

22. Evaluation and Enhancement of Standards and Quality in Learning and Teaching

A. Mechanisms for Review and Evaluation

- Course Leader's Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review.
- Head of School's Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review.
- Unit and Course Level student feedback considered at Board of Studies.
- Unit Assessment Board consideration of student performance for each programme.
- Annual Standards and Quality Reports to Board of Studies, including consideration of Subject and Award External Examiner Reports.
- Periodic Programme Review.
- Student Representatives and Student/Staff Consultative Committees.
- National Student Survey.
- Staff Performance and Development Review.
- Peer Review and Development Framework.
- Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee.

B. Responsibilities for Monitoring and Evaluation

- Unit Co-ordinators for unit content and delivery
- Course Leader for day-to-day running of course
- Board of Studies with overall responsibilities for operation and content of course
- Head of Department
- Associate Dean (Academic)
- Associate Dean (Students)
- Quality Assurance Committee
- Unit, Award and Progression Board of Examiners

C. Mechanisms for Gaining Student Feedback

- Student Representation on Board of Studies.
- Student Staff Consultative Committees.
- Unit and Course level student feedback questionnaires.
- University participates in external student surveys, e.g. National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and International Student Barometer (ISB).

D. Staff Development Priorities

- Academic staff undertake activities related to research, scholarship, teaching and learning and student support and guidance.
- Annual staff performance and development reviews match development to needs.
- Managers undertake a variety of management development programmes.
- All academic staff encouraged to seek Higher Education Academy membership.
- Academic staff new to teaching required to undertake Initial Professional Development Programme (iPROF).
- Academic staff new to teaching required to undertake Teaching Induction Programme (TIPs)
- Support Staff are encouraged to attend short courses in areas such as minute taking, and specific IT packages.

23. Assessment Regulations

The current University of Portsmouth academic regulations will apply to this programme (see [Assessment and Regulations²](#)).

24. Role of Externals

Subject External Examiners who will:

- Oversee unit assessment and usually attend Unit Assessment Boards
- Review unit assessment strategy
- Sample assessment artefacts
- Present report to Unit Assessment Boards

Award External Examiners (usually also a Subject External Examiner) who will:

- Oversee and attend Award/Progression Boards
- Scrutinise and endorse the outcomes of assessment
- Ensure that the standard of the award is maintained at a level comparable with that of similar awards elsewhere in the United Kingdom

25. Indicators of Standards and Quality

A. Professional Accreditation/Recognition

BCS accreditation, February 2014.

B. Periodic Programme Review (or equivalent)

School of Computing Undergraduate Periodic Review March 2015

<http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/ReviewOutcomes/filetodownload,191524,en.pdf>

² www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/assessmentandregulations/

C. Quality Assurance Agency

QAA Higher Education Review, March 2015, judgements about standards and quality meet UK expectations (for full report see [Higher Education Review of the University of Portsmouth, March 2015³](#)).

D. Others

None.

26. Further Information

Further information may be found in:

- Student Handbook
- University of Portsmouth Curriculum Framework Document
- University of Portsmouth Prospectus
- [University of Portsmouth⁴](#) and [School/Department⁵](#) websites

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/University%20of%20Portsmouth/University-of-Portsmouth-HER-15.pdf

⁴ www.port.ac.uk/

⁵ www.port.ac.uk/school-of-computing/