Course Structures in NUI Galway
A guide to common features.

Abstract

Understanding how a programme works on the Student Records system is important when you are proposing and designing a new programme. This preparation can help to avoid common pitfalls and misunderstandings about what is required when entering new course details and why.

This document outlines the common course structures and coding conventions on the NUI Galway Student Record system. It is aimed at clarifying how they work, the main differences between them and facilitating informed decisions about the most appropriate structure for your programme.

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Adding a new Programme to the Student Record System usually involves 3 main steps

Step 1 : Course Design When a course is designed it usually includes a set number of credits to be completed and a set number of years in which to complete them. Other issues such as NFQ level and award are also considered. The course is approved via college curriculum committees and Academic Standing to ensure academic requirements have been met.

Step 2: Entry of Curriculum details All curriculum updates are completed by Disciplines Schools and College on the Curriculum Management system. This includes creation of new courses and modules and updates to existing ones. Once approved they are transferred to the Student Records System, Quercus.

Step 3: Adding Marks and Standards The Syllabus team add rules to all new programmes. These are referred to as Marks and Standards. The addition of these rules ensures that results can be accurately calculated, once marks are returned, on completion of assessment. These are University rules that apply to all courses.
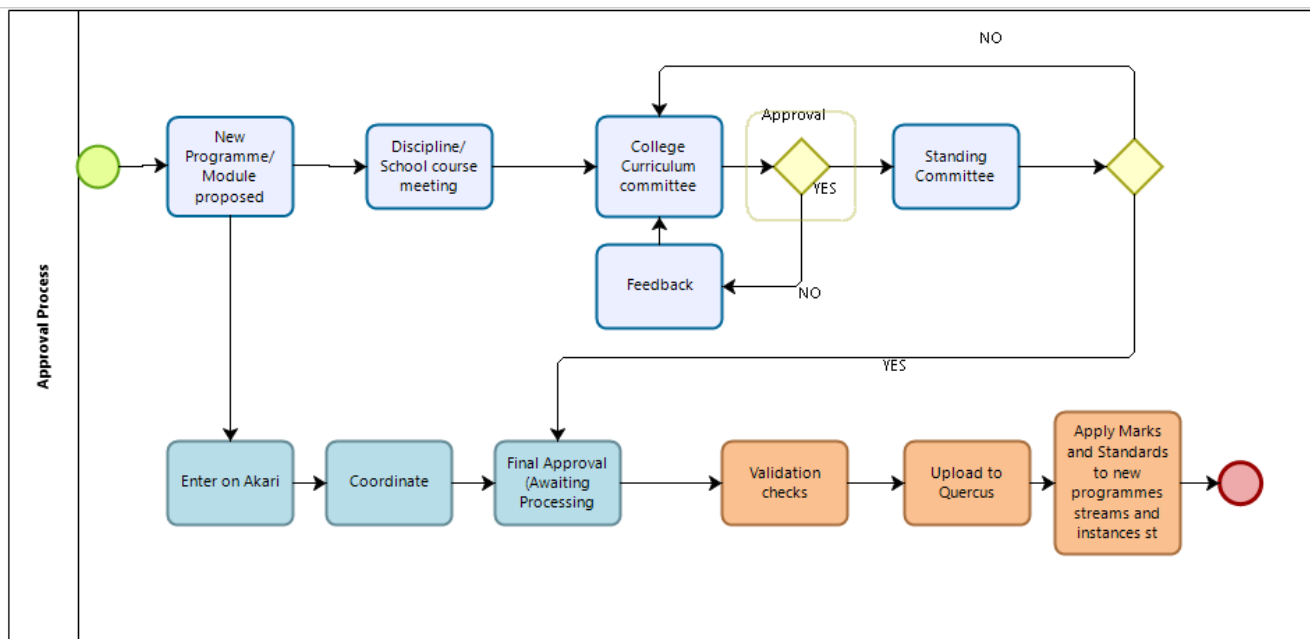
It is important that local Disciplines schools and Colleges are aware of some key rules regarding course structure and assessment.

Some of the language

- All courses (or programmes) have a code at the top level referred to as a ***course code***.
- There may be different variations of the programme e.g. full time or part time. The variations are referred to as ***Streams***
- Each stream has a set number of years over which the programme must be completed. Each year of study is referred to as a ***course instance***.

All of these form the course and are linked by code, so the Course code, Stream code and Instance codes follow a format such as the one below;

Course Code: BCW
Full time stream: BCW**1**
Part time Stream   BCW**2**

Years of study full time stream: **1**BCW1, **2**BCW1, **3**BCW1, **4**BCW1

Years of study Part time stream: **1**BCW2, **2**BCW2, **3**BCW2, **4**BCW2

There are two main course structure types in use in NUI Galway referred to as

1. 'Standard'structure: this structure is the one that is most common in the University and is used by the majority of programmes.
2. Continuous structure: this is less common.

Basic rules need to be followed regardless of structure; however, there are differences in how the two different structures work.

Standard Structure

The standard programme structure has two variations, which work in a similar ways but differ in design. These are referred to as

- One Level courses (also referred to as Level 1 courses)

- Two Level courses (also referred to as Level 2 courses).

Level 1 Structure is displayed below
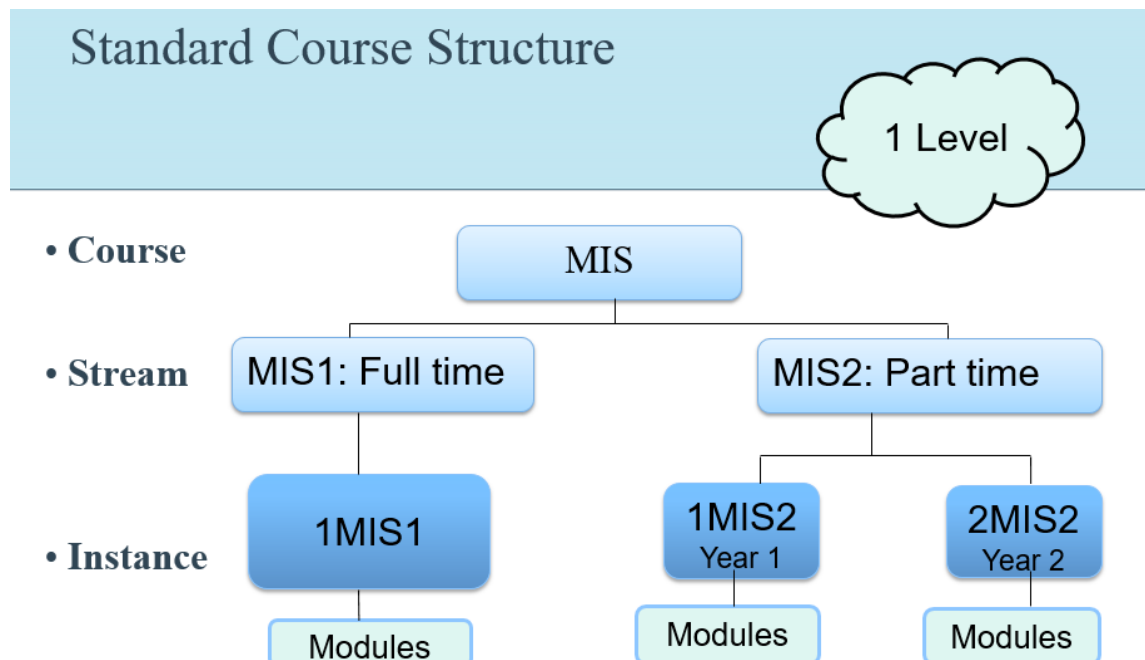
The majority of programmes follow this 1 level structure where modules are contained in the year of study. In this example there is a full time stream (MIS1) and a Part time Stream MIS2.

There is 1 year of study or instance in the full time stream (coded 1MIS1) and 2 years of study (instances) in the Part time stream (coded 1MIS2,2MIS2).

The second variation is referred to as a 2 level structure and is displayed below.
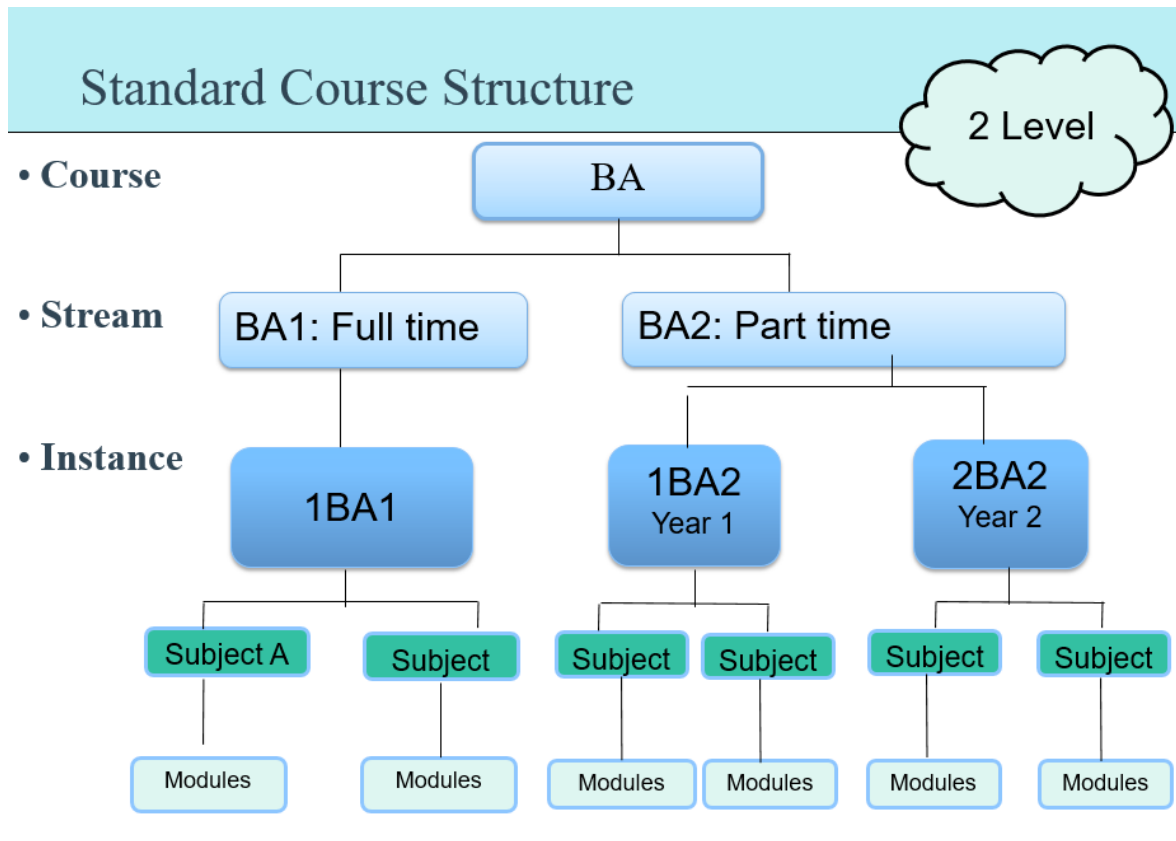
In this case' the modules are contained in subjects, so there is an additional tier or level. The coding convention used is similar to the Level 1 structure; subjects on the Level 2 structure are also assigned codes. Details of the coding convention are on the syllabus website.

This two Level structure is only used in the College Of Arts Social Sciences and Celtic Studies (CASS&CS) and only at undergraduate level. The number of subjects will vary across programmes and credits within those subjects will also vary.

The additional layer in the 2 level structure adds complexity in terms of entry onto Curriculum Manager and also at the calculation of results.

Both variations of this 'Standard 'structure behave in the same way.

- Courses have a number of years over which the student must successfully pass all modules
- Required credits are split over these years.
- Rules are applied to the programme according to the relevant University marks and standards
- Results are calculated based on the marks returned for each module.

- o Where a student successfully passes all credits assigned to a year of study (or courses instance) they are progressed to the following year of study.
- o Where a student is unsuccessful, they are progressed back into the same year of study so they can repeat the year.
- o Whether a student is progressed to the next year/ or back into a repeat year they are *pre-registered*. They activate their enrolment when they register
- o When a student successfully passes all required course credits in their final year of study, they are progressed to the conferring table and exit the programme with an award
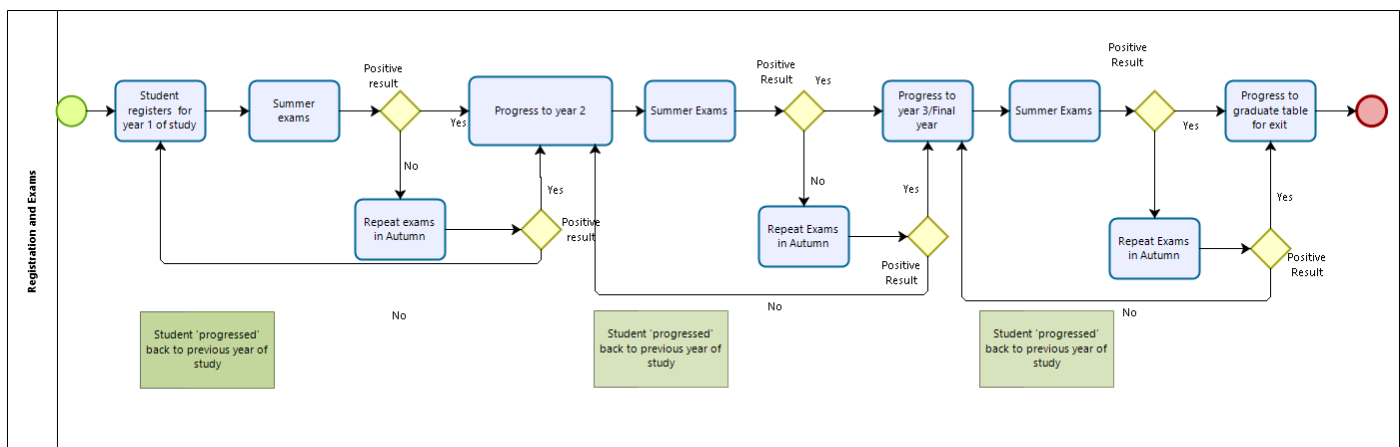
This 'Standard 'structure type supports a variety of course features

- Previous year exemptions: i.e. exemptions from module completed on the programme in a previous academic year
- Recognised Prior Learning (RPL). This is granted where a student has completed a similar module on another programme previously. Details of RPL policy are available at http://www.nuigalway.ie/adult-learning/policiesprocedures/

- Core modules (modules that must be attempted) as well as optional modules where the student has a choice
- Compensation is allowed on standard structured courses (Level 1 and Level 2) in line with Marks and Standards rules.
- Requisites are supported. These are rules applied to a module to control access. See box.
- Required modules; where a student must pass the module clear and no compensation is permitted for that module. This rule is applied in a very limited number of cases.
- In certain circumstances the transfer of a student from one course to another can be accommodated, once the same NFQ level and or modules are the same or comparable

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Requisites are used to control access to a module. There are 3 types
- A **pre-requisite** if a student wants to take module X they must have completed module Y in the previous year Co – Requisite
- A **Co – Requisite** if a student selects module X they must also choose module – Requisite
- An **Exclusion Requisite** is where if a student chooses module X they cannot then choose module Y or Z (whatever they are not permitted to take along with module X)

How it works
Details of the programmes are entered on Curriculum Manager (Akari) by the user in the Discipline/School or College including
- required number of years
- required amount of credits to be passed for each year of study
- details of modules
- Assessment details for the modules

How marks are calculated
Marks are calculated based on the credits per module and marks gained. Students can compensate up to a limit.   See University marks and Standards for more details.

Award calculation
When a student reaches the final year of study the award is calculated. This calculation varies according to whether the course is undergraduate or postgraduate.

Undergraduate :
The award calculation for an undergraduate degree is based on 70% of the final year and 30% of the penultimate year of study.

One exception to this are degree programmes with international years abroad in year 3. In these cases the students results are calculated on 30% of year 2 and 70% of year 4. This is because the international year is a Pass/Fail year.

Postgraduate
At post graduate level all modules across the programme are included in the calculation and year weightings depend on how credits are distributed across years.
More details are available in the University Marks and Standards.

Continuous Structure
The second type of structure is called *Continuous* and is less common.   A continuous programme works differently than the Standard Structure.

Instead of setting a time limit on when a student should complete the programme and requiring that a set number of credits must be passed each year, continuous courses allow the student more time and flexibility to pace their learning.

In effect, the student (or school) can decide how many modules /credits they want to complete each year. They continue on the programme until they have completed the required amount of credit. They retain the flexibility of deciding how long they take to complete the programme and can work at their own pace.

Continuous Course Structure

- **Course** — BAO
- **Stream** — BAO1
- **Instance** — 1BOA1
  - Modules
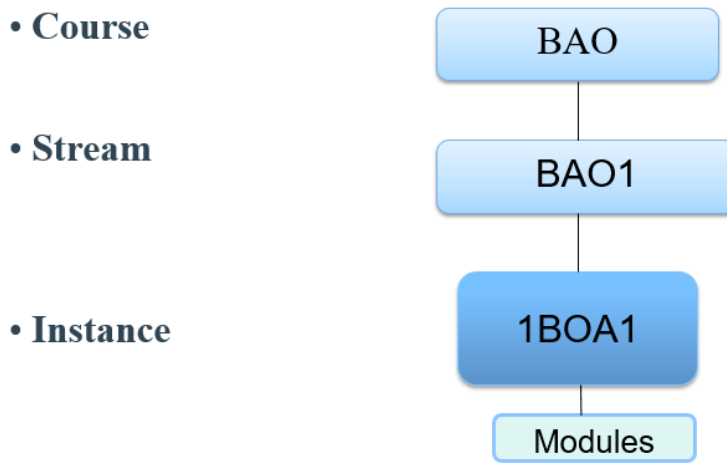
- Continuous Courses are set up on the system as if there is just one year of study.
- All required credits are contained in this one year of study.
- A student must successfully pass all modules in this programme before exiting with an award
- Rules are applied to the programme according to the relevant University marks and standards
- Results are calculated based on the marks returned for each module.

  - Where a student successfully passes all credits for which they are registered in the academic year they are 'progressed' back into the same year of study.
  - Where a student is unsuccessful, they are progressed back into the same year of study so they can repeat the modules.
  - Whether a student is repeating or progressing they are *pre-registered* . They activate their enrolment when they register
  - The overall result on their transcript will be "*In progress*". The pass/fail result for the module will be recorded along with the relevant academic year
  - When a student successfully passes all required course credits in their programme of study, they are progressed to the conferring table and exit the programme with an award.

The Continuous structure affords more flexibility in terms of the number of years over which the course must be completed.

Courses using the standard structure would be more rigid in terms of time so that a student is required to complete a set amount of credits to progress to the next year of study. Failure to attain credits means they are put back into the same year of study to repeat the year.

For this reason continuous courses are seen as a flexible option in programme design. However time is the only thing that the continuous structure permits. It is important to remember this when designing programmes. In practice, the standard structure allows a lot more control over the programme.
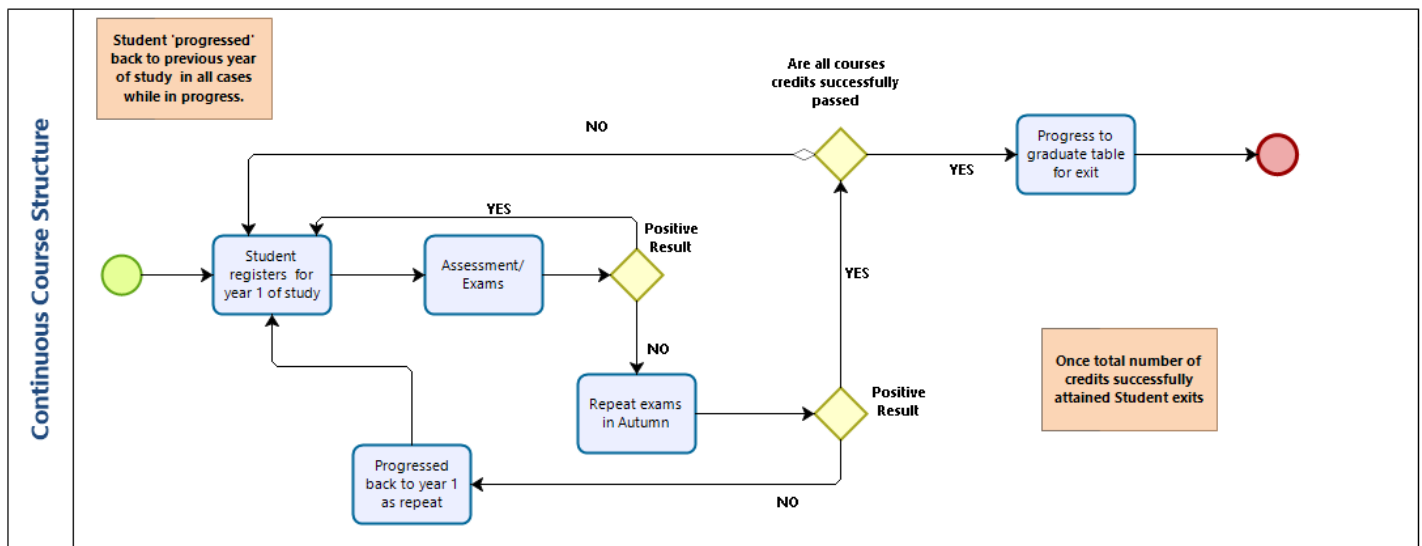
The continuous structure do not support a variety of course features
- Previous year exemptions: i.e. exemptions from module previously completed on the programme
- Recognised Prior Learning
- Cant transfer from another programme as exempts not allowed.
- Required modules : i.e. module that must be passed
- Core modules : modules that must be attempted.
- Compensation is not allowed
- Requisites are not supported

How it works
Details of the programmes are entered on Curriculum Manager (Akari) by the user in the Discipline/School or College
- All modules for the entire course are entered into one instance or year of study
- All modules levels are set as being continuous. See below. This is a crucial step so that the calculator can recognize these specific modules
- Assessment details are entered for the modules

How marks are calculated
Marks are calculated based on the credits per module and marks gained. Students cannot avail of compensation and RPL/EX modules cannot be accommodated.

Award calculation
- Once a student has completed all the required credits for the entire programme an overall result is calculated.
- Due to the fact that there is only one year/instance in the continuous programme there is no weighted calculation as there would be with other programmes.
- The overall award result is calculated over the total credits.

A specific set of marks & standard rules apply to continuous courses. These are available on the Syllabus Website and should be read before deciding on this structure.