Programme Specification

Systems Track

3A. Knowledge and understanding	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/assessment methods**
On completion of this degree, students will have knowledge and understanding of: **A1**. Understand the mission and purpose of the workplace and the environment in which it operates; **A2**. Draw upon previous knowledge and understanding gained from workplace practice and relate this to relevant management theory. **A3**. The development of systemic understandings of situations, using diagramming, modelling and other conceptual tools; **A4**. Actions to bring about situation improvement for stakeholders using processes designed with systems concepts, techniques and methods; and the use of critical reflection on student's own activities as a systems practitioner; **A5**. Core systems concepts (e.g. process, emergence, feedback, dynamism, interconnectedness, dependency, coherence), diagramming and modelling types and protocols;	Knowledge and understanding are acquired at all levels through UK OU published distance-learning materials, including specially written module materials, study guides, assignments and project guides; through a range of multimedia material; through work on original texts; and through feedback on assignments. The key teaching vehicles are supported open learning materials which comprise a range of compulsory reader texts and specially prepared study guides directing student reading and illustrating key teaching points. These are especially adapted for use in Arab countries by removing certain references that would not be appropriate in the Islamic world. Student learning is supported by a tutor, who is the student's first and main point of contact, answering their queries, grading and commenting on their work and facilitating group learning. Students receive face to face tuition for each module (receiving 2 hours per week for a 30 point module). Assessment of the knowledge and understanding components of the programme is achieved through a combination of continuous assessment and exams. These assessments are central to the teaching of each module, enabling tutors to identify and comment on student knowledge and understanding. Every major module

3A. Knowledge and understanding	
A6. How an action learning cycle can be used to guide practice and reflection; **A7**. The nature of messes and perceived complexity commonly experienced in organizations, technology and environment; **A8**. Group process and communication concepts. **A9.** The range, scope, and complexity of the issues and problems related to the management of technology and innovation; **A10.** The “state of the art’ of the management of technology and innovation; **A11**. The range of situations in which information systems are used, the ways in which people interact with them and the ethical, social and legal problems that information systems can create.	comprises assignments, a mid-term examination and final examination. The AOU model does not support end of module assessments and in this manner it varies from the UK OU model. Diagramming is an important feature of systems work, and the module material makes considerable use of simple diagrams and animations, together with audio material to deliver the diagramming component of the systems modules. The systems modules use an interactive webzone - the programme's innovative online study guide – as an integrative part of the programme. In the Level 6 systems module the examination and TMAs are heavily based on the students capacity to reflect on their own systems practice, especially the project TMA, and to do so in ways that reflect their conceptual understanding of the module material.

3B. Cognitive skills	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
On completion of the degree, students will be able to: **B1**. Use systems diagramming and/or modelling tools and techniques to engage with messes and perceived complexity for understanding and managing change. **B2**. Appreciate the nature of problems where a systemic intervention can help and apply conceptual skills to analyze situations and formulate systems of interest. **B3**. Appreciate the technical, economic, commercial, social, political, ethical and other factors that influence decisions and decision making. **B4**. Compare, contrast and critically assess different approaches and techniques; interpret and critically analyze literature from a systems perspective and extract relevant information. **B5**. Analyze and refine managing and practice skills according to different models; and design and evaluate situation-improving strategies in contexts of uncertainty and multiple stake holdings.	Cognitive skills and processes are introduced at a very simple level at Level 4, primarily via material specifically designed to develop business related social science, technological and mathematical skills in a progressive way. Although modules at Levels 5 and 6 continue this work, there is significant variation between modules in the degree to which skills are taught explicitly in the module materials. Significant teaching is, however, maintained through the assessment strategy and tutor feedback. In the five core modules, students are encouraged to develop specified skills. In each module the specific components of the skills are identified, mapping out where each skill will be developed and practiced. As the module progresses, these skills are sign-posted and students are offered an opportunity to practice them in association with their work on the module materials. Initially, the module study guides offer students advice and guidance with these activities, but as they progress through each module, the extent of this guidance decreases so as to encourage independent learning The level 5 data analysis module introduces students to the use of statistics in business and equips them with mathematical and modeling skills appropriate to business.

3B. Cognitive skills	
B6. Become aware of their own worldviews, values and epistemology.	In the Level 5 systems modules, students are asked to analyse their progress with skills associated with their current work, submitting this assessment as part of their assignments. This allows students to develop a systematic and self-conscious approach to their skill development, assisted and supported by their tutor. These activities culminate in an assessment solely concerned with skills development where students are asked to reflect on their skills progression and achievement. The Level 6 core business module expects students to show application of skills developed earlier. In requiring students to work with fellow students in a small research group, it also aims to develop their ability to conduct independent research using a variety of databases and websites, and to develop group-working skills. Other more discipline-specific skills will be developed and assessed in the systems related modules through use of module materials, tutorial delivery and module assessments and tutor feedback. Assessment of the cognitive skills of the programme is achieved through a combination of continuous assessment and exams. In some modules the examinations include case studies to encourage synthesis of material. In some modules case studies are used in assignments. These assignments are central to the teaching of each module, enabling tutors to identify and comment on student knowledge and understanding. Every major module comprises one

3B. Cognitive skills	
	assignment, a midterm assessment examination and final examination. The AOU model does not support end of module assessments and in this manner it varies from the UK OU model. In the Level 6 systems module there is a requirement to perform a Reflection on Learning and the assessment strategy is coordinated around its use, via a project to an examination designed to promote reflective systems practice. In the specialist systems modules skills are developed within the teaching materials and supported by tutor feedback and guidance on assignments. At Level 5 students develop group working skills, working with others in preparation for their final project. At Level 6 these skills are extended.

3C. Practical and professional skills	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
On completion of the degree, students will be able to: **C1**. Apply the principles, concepts and techniques of systems thinking for understanding and managing in professional and personal situations of perceived complexity;	To support the development of their group-working and ICT skills, students are required to use the Learning Management System (LMS – the AOU equivalent of the UKOU Electronic TMA system) and also for some modules to participate in computer conferencing. This provides students with an additional environment in which to

3C. Practical and professional skills	
C2. Develop practical skills in the use of systems methodologies, methods, techniques and tools to understand and improve a range of problem/opportunity situations. **C3**. Identify and handle the ethical, social and legal issues that may arise during the design and use of information systems	share learning and resolve module-related problems with other students and their tutor. Some assignments require students to undertake internet based research. The AOU has developed its e-library through the addition of relevant databases which include academic refereed journals, publications, conference proceedings to name just a few on topics relevant for the for the different faculties. Students discuss case studies and current business issues in tutorials and use these to practise their application of module concepts in tutorials. This also follows through with case study based assignments in some modules. Students practice analysis of systems situations using diagramming techniques in the webzone. Branch module coordinators are inviting guest speakers from regionally important businesses to come and address students. Branches are encouraged to organise students to visit local businesses to increase their understanding of key business issues in the region.

3D. Key/transferable skills	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
On completion of the degree, students will have developed their: **D1**. Ability to communicate effectively, as a student presenting evidence of learning, and as a systems practitioner engaging with stakeholders in situations perceived as complex learn more effectively, by engaging in reflection on their own practice; **D2**. Ability to use information systems more effectively based on experience of using different problem-framing techniques appropriately; **D3**. Ability to use appropriate numerical and business mathematical skills; **D4**. Ability to work cooperatively with others.	Interpersonal skills of effective listening, negotiating, persuasion and presentation are taught through the undertaking of small group activities in face to face tutorials. This starts with level 4 and these skills are developed through to level 6 modules. The Level 6 module expects students to show application of skills developed earlier. In requiring students to work with fellow students in a small research group, it also aims to develop their ability to conduct independent research using a variety of databases and websites, and to develop group-working skills. In order to develop the skills of self reflection and criticality the cognitive skills assessments focus on this area at level 5. Diversity is introduced to students through a truly internationalized selection of cases provided by UK OU materials, additional cases used in tutorials and this is also assessed through the use of such case studies in assignments in some modules. Because AOU students are part-time and studying at a distance, there is strong emphasis on helping the student to develop as an independent learner. At Level 4 this means helping the student to develop basic skills (e.g. time planning, using feedback and support), but also laying the foundations for the increasing emphasis on reflection at Levels 5 and 6. This is not assessed directly but will be demonstrated by an increasing ability to study

3D. Key/transferable skills	
	autonomously. We expect students to naturally develop the skills of learning to learn as they develop through the suite of modules, and this is drawn to their attention through a combination of skills based assessment and tutor feedback in tutorial and feedback to assignments. The provision of guest speakers and encouragement to visit organizations in the region also assists in developing this appetite as links are formed between the module and local organizations. Skills are developed as a consequence of module work throughout the programme and implicitly built into assessment. The nature of entry to the AOU means there is considerable emphasis on reading and writing skills at Level 4. At subsequent levels there are assumptions about students' basic abilities in these areas, although tutor feedback on writing skills continues to be important. However, the material from which students work becomes increasingly complex and diverse, and more sophisticated skills of interpretation, selection and synthesis are required. Students are taught basic applications of technology in a range of modules from Levels 4 to 6, the ability to work with information technology is a compulsory element in two of the three core modules and in several of the specialist modules in the named degree, although students may select additional elective modules

3D. Key/transferable skills	
	(at Level 4) that give them the opportunity to develop skills in this area. Assessment, in the majority of cases, is via tutor-marked assignments (TMAs), midterm assessment, and final examination. The assessment strategy at Level 4 also has a strong focus on cognitive skills development for which students obtain detailed feedback. Key skills are central to the presentation of assignments; consequently, they are assessed throughout the programme both via continuous assessment and examination. There is increasing emphasis at Level 6 on the selection and use of material from a range of sources, including original texts. Assessment of subject knowledge and understanding is linked to the benchmarking standards of individual disciplines. In the systems modules and the level 6 business modules students are encouraged to work in small research groups sharing research and ideas. This is facilitated in the face to face tutorials.