

MA Theatre Collectives information pack

MA Theatre Collectives: Formal Programme Specification

1.1 General Information

Award	MA
Route	Theatre Collectives
Awarding Institution/Body	University of Chichester
Teaching Institution	University of Chichester
Programme Accredited by	University of Chichester
Validation/Approval History	Approval: Summer 2007

1.2 Rationale – Introduction

The MA in Theatre Collectives provides an unparalleled opportunity for emergent artists, *working collaboratively*, who want time and space to make high-quality theatre work and define and further their collective identity.

The programme introduces a unique and innovating educational experience, **only open to collectives**, that celebrates a key way of making theatre and privileges innovation and new ideas. It also formally recognises collaboration as a cultural and intellectual determinate in the processes of performance.

The programme has been set-up in recognition of the vocational norm of 'graduate companies', emerging from many practice-driven university performance departments (and other creative environments and contexts). We recognise the role such collectives have played in the development of theatre and performance in recent years, but also recognise the challenges and threats placed before such companies by the pressures of professional expectations.

Distinctive Features

- A unique collective responsibility at the heart of the learning experience
- Office and rehearsal space
- The intellectual stimulation of key critical and philosophical thinking (not least in respect to the dichotomy between individuality and collective responsibility in collaborative practice)
- Two Years free membership of the *Independent Theatre Council* (ITC) and a lifetime to the *New Work Network*
- The support, advice and assistance of key professional practitioners/organisations/facilitators towards the goal of establishing an enduring professional structure
- A programme of mentoring, with key practitioners, which will continue beyond the course
- Key showcase opportunities at strategic venues at the end of the course

Candidates should refer to [Section 2 of the Programme Handbook](#) for further definitions and clarification of the nature and purpose of the programme, particularly in respect of the collective/individual experience.

1.3 Programme Aims

The Programme aims to:

- Legitimise and privilege collective responsibility in a theatrical creative process
- Support the development of a long-term (five year) and immediate creative mission
- Place the creative mission of the Collective at the forefront of a national/international contemporary performance/theatre context and sector
- Produce a major performance, which can be placed within a national context
- Develop critical understanding of the micro responsibilities and relationships in collective creativity
- Develop critical understanding of key cultural theory and specific research methodology in realising collective creative focus
- Develop a sustainable five-year business plan

1.4 Intended learning outcomes (student achievement)

The following learning outcomes reference the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (**FHEQ**) and the Tuning Template for Theatre Higher Education in Europe (first draft November 2006) (**Prospero**).

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the achievement of the following:

Subject Knowledge

- Autonomous application of analytical tools to produce critical analysis pertinent to the collective mission (*Collective and Individual*) **Prospero**
- Comprehensive understanding of several genres and styles of theatre/performance, appreciating them in relation to the collective mission (*Collective and Individual*) **Prospero, FHEQ**
- Systematic understanding of current problems and insights in the processes and practices of professional theatre making (*Collective*) **FHEQ**

Intellectual/practical skills

- Intervention in the multiple contexts of theatre production as creative professionals, demonstrating technical maturity and artistic awareness in relation to the collective expressive concept (*Individual*) **Prospero**
- Comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to advanced scholarship applicable to collective creativity (*Individual*) **FHEQ**
- Recognition of research as a form of accumulated knowledge, using references found as focus for new ideas and collective aesthetics (*Collective and Individual*) **Prospero**
- Critical and creative commitment, during the production process, as a means of realising the collective identity and the development of a solid and consistent performance (*Individual*) **Prospero**
- Ability to debate and reflect upon artistic projects in an articulate way (*Individual and Collective*) **Prospero**

Transferable Skills

- Recognition of individuality as an original contributor within the work of the collective (Individual) **Prospero**
- Originality in tackling problems in complex and unpredictable situations (Collective and Individual) **FHEQ**
- Organisational skill in the administration of artistic projects, managing both human and material resources appropriately while meeting required deadlines for the successful execution of deadlines at different stages (Individual and Collective) **Prospero**

Teaching and learning strategies and methods to meet intended learning outcomes

The key learning experience throughout the programme is collective-led workshop and rehearsal, presenting outcomes to staff and mentors at strategic points in the process.

Contact class time is dependent on chosen pathways: full-time collectives have weekly contact through semesters one and two and attend intensive summer school; part-time (distance-learning) collectives need to commit to two intensive summer schools and negotiated weekends throughout their period of registration.

When in contact class time, the emphasis is on small group – intra and inter-collective, seminar and workshop – interaction, led by staff and by the collectives themselves. Emphasis in all areas is placed on the individual responsibility to knowledge and so individual tutorials will compliment the collective experience.

Candidates should refer to [Section 5 of the Programme Handbook on Learning and Teaching](#) for further clarification of the processes of learning on the programme.

Assessment

Assessment is through written submissions, group presentations, workshop performances and group-led productions.

Candidates should refer to [Section 6 of the Programme Handbook on Assessment](#) for further clarification, particularly in respect of the relationship between the individual, as the candidates for the degree, and the collective, as the main generator of assessed work.

1.5 Quality Assurance

The subject operates within an established framework of quality assurance mechanisms within the University.

The procedures for quality assurance are laid out in the academic standards committee (ASC) Interim Quality Handbook, the Academic Regulations (July 2005), and the Postgraduate Awards Scheme. Both the School Quality Committee and Academic Standards Committee are responsible to the Academic Board for maintaining quality systems, including the appointment of External Examiners and the approval and re-approval and annual monitoring of programmes.

The management of quality assurance, where every tutor is responsible for standards, is reinforced through the line management structure and by the School Quality Committee. University structures for quality assurance are reinforced by formal and informal methods

within the subject, and include those indicated in the University Postgraduate Awards Scheme.

These include:

- A culture of evaluation through a continuous regular and systematic process.
- A standard evaluation form for all students in the School of Visual and Performing Arts and a summary report by staff in SVAPA module evaluation has been tested and this approach has been applauded by staff outside the school
- Peer observation of teaching
- Internal moderation meetings
- Constant communication with External Examiner(s)
- Subject Board meetings each semester, with student and staff representation
- Academic staff meetings
- Annual monitoring reviews
- Recommendations and requirements of the School Quality Committee and Approval Panels including an externally advised, 6 yearly major review of the programme
- Staff Performance Review and Independent Development Plans
- Periodic evaluation

1.6 Admissions Policy

The degree is open to groups (minimum of 2) who wish to work together in creating and presenting new theatre/performance work. Not all collective members need to be performers (or indeed applicants to the programme), but all should identify a creative role of some sort (this is not a course for theatre administrators). In the collective application, the group will need to provide evidence of either previous creative work together (at undergraduate level or in another appropriate context) or cultural/theoretical/practical reasons for wanting to work together, preferably both.

While the application process is driven by the collective, formal acceptance and registration of students is on an individual basis and, as such, confirms to the University of Chichester's postgraduate scheme rules and regulations in that applicants should be in possession of a good undergraduate degree in performance or a related area or have the equivalent in terms of professional performance experience and achievements. In exceptional circumstances applicants will be accepted with less than a lower 2nd class undergraduate degree, but only if they have supplemented their undergraduate work with further relevant arts experience. In accordance with the postgraduate modular scheme applicants with appropriate 'accredited prior experience and learning' (APEL) or with advanced standing will be admitted in line with the scheme rules and regulations.

All candidates will be expected to submit an individual application form, together with personal references, as well as contributing to the collective application form. All candidates will be interviewed before acceptance and will be expected to represent working ideas within the collective context.

Candidates should refer to Section Two of the Programme Handbook for further clarification of the application process in relation to the individual/collective.

1.7 Award Requirements (Including postgraduate interim requirements)

In line with the Postgraduate Awards Scheme students can obtain the following awards:

- The Postgraduate Certificate (60 C.A.T.S. points) on successful completion of 60 credits (the equivalent of 600 working hours) made up of the following modules: Research Methodologies (15 credits); Cultural Identity and Performance (15 credits) and Company Management (30 credits).
- The Postgraduate Diploma (120 C.A.T.S. points) on successful completion of a further 60 credits from the Production module (60 credits)
- The MA degree is award on successful completion of 180 credits, a further 60 credits from the Developmental Project (dissertation) module.

While interim awards are available it is unlikely that **Full-Time** Collectives will be accepted on anything other than the full Masters programme, not least because, in terms of full-time delivery, the Developmental Project is submitted at the same time as (or before) the Production module.

1.8 Standard Diagram - route requirements

MA Level

<u>MTC05 Developmental Project Dissertation (60 credits)</u> Collective Mission Statement (20%) Collective Workshop Performance (30%) Individual Written Paper (10,000 words) (50%)	Award Requirement Candidates cannot submit work for this module without being registered for MTC04. Students are able to submit work for this module before MTC04.
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Diploma Level

<u>MTC04 Production (60 credits)</u>	Award Requirements Normally, successful completion of Certificate-level modules, although 'Distance-Learning' Collectives may submit for MTC04 at a time determined by their own calendar.
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Certificate Level

<u>MTC01 Research Methodologies (15 credits)</u>	<u>MTC02 Cultural Identity and Performance (15 credits)</u>	<u>MTC03 Collective Management (30 credits)</u>	Award requirements Admission to the programme
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Important: While on paper, the structure of the programme, suggests three separate awards and, correspondingly, three stages to progression, the MA Theatre Collectives is designed as a highly joined-up experience, with all modules working off one-another. **See Section 5.3 and 5.4 for details, together with suggested Module Delivery Schedule.**

Individual Candidature

The MA Theatre Collectives is a programme designed for collective progression – from application to graduation – and the modules, as written and presented in the Handbook, assume that collectives remain in place throughout the programme. However, students are reminded that their contract with the University recognises them as individual candidates and, in the event of circumstances shifting during the programme to the point where candidates are unable to continue working in a collective, the programme will instigate procedures for individual progression, which include offering registration on modules MTC04a and MTC05a; written to clarify the opportunities for individuals within the general academic remit of the original modules. Candidates who find themselves in this position need to appreciate the essential – and inevitable – shift in emphasis, from clear participation in the collective process, towards observation of the nature of collective creativity. The general programme aims (see 1.3) can be interpreted in this individual context and the award for the successful candidate remains MA Theatre Collectives. The formal modular descriptions for MTC04a and MTC05a, together with a rationale document, are placed with all definitive approval documentation for the MA Theatre Collectives with the University Academic Standards Unit.

For further discussion on the issues surrounding individual candidature and the implications of shifting collective structure, see [Section 2.3 of the Programme Handbook](#).

2. Introduction to MA Theatre Collectives

2.1 What is a Theatre Collective?

For the basis of this document and the starting point for critical thinking in relation to the programme, a theatre collective is an ensemble of theatre artists, working together to generate theatrical product, using processes and methodologies that have been decided and defined by the ensemble members themselves. Individual roles and tasks might evolve, together with internal hierarchies, but a clear principle of collective responsibility is retained. The cultural positioning of a collective, in response to traditional theatre hierarchies, is acknowledged and it is understood that most collectives will have a creative mission, again in response to traditional theatre constructs, which assumes the production of 'new' work. Theatre collectives are seen, therefore, as a key result – and product - of current university practice in the discipline of theatre and performance, where innovation and exploration are set alongside commitments to vocational outcomes and where individuals find themselves empowered and stimulated by the continual process of group learning.

2.2 What does this programme offer the 'Emergent' Collective?

This is a flexible programme, offering a 'bespoke' learning experience that can work in a number of ways, depending on the needs of the theatre collective. What we hope, however, is that all candidate collectives will realise the value of this work in three clear concerns: creative opportunity; sustainability and empowerment.

Creative Opportunity

The programme offers space, time and the intellectual resources to facilitate the making of sustainable performance work. At the heart of the programme are two 60 credit modules dedicated to establishing the collective's cultural, political and philosophical identity. The **Production** module aims to provide an opportunity for the collective to represent itself in terms of tangible product through the staging of a substantial performance. Throughout the making process, attention will be drawn to the externality and critical implications of the performance and what it is saying about the collective at a given point in time. In

Developmental Project we hope that a parallel exploration of the collective's long-term creative identity works as a compelling creative stimulant to the immediacy of the Production module. In simple terms, we argue that the programme is of value only if it sees the process of creativity as something that reaches beyond predefined methodologies and restricted timescales, balancing the realities of immediate deadlines and performance demands with the challenges of creative ideas and agendas which might not be realised in the one-off performance.

Sustainability

The Developmental Project module, therefore, provides a challenging notion of sustainability well beyond the timescale of the course. Whatever happens to the collective in the coming years, we argue that sustainability is a key aim in creative opportunity and progression. Also, we believe that critical attention comes only with the establishing of an identity that has been placed against the challenges to creative fluency – challenges brought about by fragmented funding policies and limited resources – and found to have survived. The programme, therefore, will provide the collective with the means to find ways in which it can sustain itself as an entity in its chosen field. It also wants to empower the collective, through knowledge of systems, strategies and structures, to be able to set its creative reason-for-being within professional constructs. In the **Collective Management** module, the collective has a simple but highly challenging task of producing a realistic five-year business plan, which exploits and compliments its own creative mission in reaching an empowering financial sustainability.

Empowerment

There is an ultimate satisfaction and sense of empowerment in being paid for the realisation of your own ideas on your own terms. The problem with theatre and its funding structures is that it hasn't always been concerned with empowerment in these terms. In his book *1956 And All That*, Dan Rebellato¹ uses Foucault's model of panoptical restraint as a way of understanding the operation of theatre systems, post-war, that have worked against notions of diversity, democracy and creativity. An over-dependence on up-down pyramidal structures (carrying with them, notions of hierarchy) in the way the principles of subsidised art have come into play are, Rebellato argues, mechanisms "to inscribe everyone into the values embodied at the peak by the prestigious national companies". Notions of prestige have become merged with notions of excellence, predicated on size (big), geographical place (London or, if you must, Stratford) and tradition (the 'dramatic cannon'). The logical conclusion, therefore, is that for anyone completing training in theatre practice, there has been restrictively identifiable goals and expectations, pre-determined and predefined, that has encouraged the docile acceptance of role and facilitator and discouraged the empowering challenge of innovative thinking.

University theatre programmes, both undergraduate and postgraduate, have come some way in breaking up this idea: post-structuralist critical thinking has increasingly allowed for alternative modes of production that question preordained roles in creative processes. We argue that the essential strength of the work – the gradual evolving development - of a company like Forced Entertainment, (or Lone Twin, or Stan's Café, or Blast Theory) is in its collective structure: particular roles, within the collective, in direction, documentation, design and text have evolved within the collectives, but this has not prevented an over-riding empowerment of individuals.

Ultimately, therefore, this programme is about individual candidature: we feel that, for many, a defined representation and celebration of notions of ensemble and partnership –

¹ Dan Rebellato (1999) *1956 And All That: the Making of Modern British Drama*, London: Routledge

and the creative security that comes from collective support – will be the best way for many creative performance artists to establish themselves as professionals.

2.3 Unpicking the individual candidature from the collective delivery.

THE key issue in delivering this MA as a tangible, rigorous and quality product is in relation to the central issue of all candidates being expected to work within a collective structure. The following section attempts to clarify how you will work as an individually registered student throughout the programme.

Do all members of the collective have to be registered for the MA?

No. We recognise that, for some collectives who have an established structure and recognised output – or who work informally with a wide range of ‘stakeholders’ – there may be artists who do not wish to undergo this kind of professional development. It is important to stress, however, that at least two members of the collective must apply and should see their relationship as crucial in determining the collective development. Also, the wider collective’s creative and business agendas must work in parallel with the ideas developed through the MA programme. This is a key concern to be considered through the collective application ([see below](#)). It is unlikely that a new collective – created for the purpose of the MA – will have any members not registered for the programme.

How is the collective application dealt with?

[All students are referred to the University admissions policy for postgraduate study \(see Section 1.6\).](#)

The programme team will view applications in collective terms, but will seek reassurance, through individual references, of individuals’ personal ability to realise the academic requirements of the degree. Also, the team will want to understand the particular dynamics of the collective and will wish to identify the individual responsibility to the programme and to the collective.

The programme team might wish to reject an application based on individual(s) inability/lack of commitment/personal qualifications. The team will, in this situation, reject the collective **as a whole**. At this stage certain individuals might wish to withdraw from the collective, allowing the remainder to offer a new application: that is a matter for the individuals and the collective involved; the programme team will never involve itself with this kind of negotiation. While the programme team will be happy to accept a revised application from any collective, it does not guarantee automatic success second time around.

Interview

All applicants will be invited for interview. All participating collective members must attend the interview. Before the interview, the collective should decide on how best to present themselves collectively to the programme team. We recommend that the collective offers a simple theatrical ‘statement’, lasting no more than five minutes, which gives the programme team some indication of the aesthetic and cultural ‘position’ of the company at the point of application and an idea of what the collective and individual might want to pursue – creatively and critically – through the programme. Collectives will engage in a group discussion with members of the programme team and will get the chance to talk with staff on an individual basis.

Do all individual candidates need a first degree?

Normally, all candidates are expected to have attained a good honours degree by the time they register for the programme. However, in exceptional circumstances, and in accordance with the University policy, some candidates might have the requisite professional skills, qualifications and experience in a key area of artistic endeavour to satisfy the University that they will be able to complete the programme. In particular, the programme team point to the rigorous academic requirements of the programme and all candidates will have to show a commitment and understanding of these demands.

What happens if the collective changes its make-up (in terms of personnel) during the programme?

The programme is designed to accommodate all accepted candidates and collectives irrespective of changes. The following gives an outline of procedure for all envisaged eventualities:

If someone leaves the collective, the remainder of candidates may continue on the programme, with a reworked infrastructure. The programme coordinator will advise on any changes of individual role and responsibility.

If someone leaves the programme, but remains a member of the collective, the remainder of candidates can continue on the programme, subject to the issues raised in 2.2.1 above

If someone leaves the collective, but wishes to remain registered for the programme, OR if the number leaving the collective/programme is such that only one registered candidate remains, the individual can continue on the programme, but the **key collective experience of the programme changes**. The emphasis of the programme changes to one of observation of the collective experience. For this eventuality the programme team has revised MTC04 and MTC05 – the key collective modules – to ensure coherent delivery from an individual perspective. Candidates will be expected to change module registration onto these modules. All credits attained whilst being a member of a collective can count towards the degree. These modules are NOT offered in any other situation and are not published in the handbook: details are available through the programme coordinator or the University Academic Standards Unit (**See also statement on Individual Candidature in Section 1.8**)

What is the legal status of the collective upon entering the programme?

The university's contract is with the individual rather than the collective and, as such, the collective can determine its own formal status irrespective of programme delivery. However, the Independent Theatre Council's (ITC) document on "Companies Limited by Guarantee" serves as a framework for the programme's delivery in this respect and all collectives are encouraged to follow this particular company structure. The ITC document is available to download from www.itc-arts.co.uk, in the members section (which is available to all collectives at the point of registration to the programme). This process will be started and developed as part of your work in MTC03 (Collective Management) for any collective not formally registered and defined (in legal terms).

If the university's contract is – formally – with the individual, does this mean the individual is the candidate for all examinations?

Absolutely: **please refer to section 6.1 of the handbook on assessment**. Naturally, there are collective exercises, where the initial grade is for the group rather than the individual. But all modules have individual assessments and in only one – MTC04 Production – the collective exercise is significantly of more value than the individual exercise. In this

exercise, while a group mark is arrived at, deviation from this mark might be appropriate for individual candidates if there is clear evidence in performance. As such, the assessment criteria for this exercise allows for clear examination of the individual as well as the group. It should be stressed, however, that the programme team consider it appropriate to assess the group in certain exercises and it is assumed that candidates will expect to be judged collectively at significant stages of the programme. The programme is sensitive to the balance between individual registration and collective responsibility and, in terms of credit weighting, the balance between collective and individual assessments is equal (see 6.1).

What happens if the collective or an individual fails a module?

All candidates have the right to a re-take and this is outlined in section 6.5 on 'Failure and Mitigation'.

3. Programme Staff

3.1 Core Teaching Staff and Module Leaders

Robert Daniels	BA, MA
Designation:	Senior Lecturer in Performing Arts Programme Co-ordinator: MA Theatre Collectives
Module Leader:	MTC03: Collective Management
Research interests:	Interdisciplinary composition, Live Art, physical theatre and practice-led research, UK Performance Studies
Commercial/professional:	Artistic Director for two performance companies making Street art, and experimental theatre.
Email:	R.Daniels@chi.ac.uk Rob is based in the Performing Arts Offices, Bishop Otter Campus
Ben Francombe	BA, PhD
Designation:	Principal Lecturer in Performing Arts Head of Department
Module Leader:	MTC04: Production MTC05: Developmental Project (Dissertation)
Research interests:	Contemporary British Theatre, Post-Colonial Performance, Culture and Identity, Cultural Policy
Email:	B.Francombe@chi.ac.uk Ben is based in the Performing Arts/Dance Office, Dance Centre, Bishop Otter Campus
Ian Hornsby	BA, MPhil
Designation:	Senior Lecturer in Performing Arts
Module Leader:	MTC01: Research Methodologies MTC02: Cultural Identity and Performance
Research interests:	Contemporary Continental Philosophy, Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction, Sophistry, Radical Aesthetics and Politics.
Email:	I.Hornsby@chi.ac.uk Ian is based in the Performing Arts Offices, Bishop Otter Campus
Chris Butler	BEd, MEd

Designation: Head of School of Visual and Performing Arts (25% Lecturer in Performing Arts)
Research interests: Interdisciplinary Performance Practice, New Technologies for Performance, Physical Theatre, and Arts Management

Email: C.Butler@chi.ac.uk
Chris is based in room New Hall 234, Bishop Otter Campus

Louie Jenkins **BA, MA, PGCE**
Designation: Senior Lecturer in Performing Arts
Research interests: Applied Theatre, Playwriting, Directing, and Acting.
Commercial/professional: Founding member of Factory Floor (national female solo performance network)

Email: L.Jenkins@chi.ac.uk
Louie is based in the Performing Arts Office, Bishop Otter Campus

Jem Kelly **BA, MA, PGCE, PhD**
Designation: Senior Lecturer in Performing Arts
Research interests: New Media for Performance, Memory-themed Theatre, Intermediality, Performance Analysis and Documentation, Postmodern theory

Commercial/professional: Co-Convenor, New Technologies for Theatre and Performance, Theatre and Performance Research Association. Creative Director Repeater Performance

Email: J.V.Kelly@chi.ac.uk
Jem is based in room H140, Bishop Otter Campus

Andrew Wilford **BA, MA**
Designation: Senior Lecturer in Performing Arts
Research interests: Contemporary Theatre/Performance, Post-structural Critical Theory and transversal practices

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Andrew is based in the Performing Arts offices, Bishop Otter Campus

3.2 Support Staff

Julie Thurston
Designation: MA Theatre Collectives Programme Administrator
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Julie is based in the Performing Arts/Dance Office, Dance Centre, Bishop Otter Campus

3.3 The Showroom

Vince Field
Designation: Theatre Manager
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Vince is based in the Showroom office

Mike Spice

Designation: Showroom Technician
Email: M.Spice@chi.ac.uk
Mike is based in the Showroom office

4. Key Dates

The programme is delivered in a three semester structure.

Throughout the academic year the programme organises Key Learning Events, compulsory for all Theatre Collectives regardless of full-time or part-time, (details can be found in Section 5.5)

Semester One

Launch Day: Monday 17 September 2007
Theatre Collective 'Scratch' Semester One: Tuesday 30 October 2007 (tbc)
Theatre Collectives Weekend School Semester One: 17 & 18 November 2007 (tbc)
Semester Finishes (Submission Date): Friday 21 December 2007

Semester Two

Launch Day: Monday 21 January 2008
Theatre Collective 'Scratch' Semester Two: TBA
Theatre Collectives Weekend School Semester Two: TBA
Easter Break: 7 – 18 April 2008
Semester Finishes (Submission Date): Friday 16 May 2008

Summer Semester

Summer School (Two weeks): Monday 9 June 2008 – Friday 20 June 2008 (tbc)
Final Submission Date (12 month progression): 25 August 2008

For a detailed explanation on how these key dates work for particular modules and exercises, see Sections 5.4 on Module Progression, 5.5 on Pathways and Routes and 5.6 on Learning and Teaching Delivery.