

## **GUIDELINES 7**

### **THE PROFILE OF TOURISM STUDIES DEGREE COURSES IN THE UK: 1997/98**

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Tourism was first introduced as a distinct area of academic study in the United Kingdom (UK) over 25 years ago, with the first postgraduate tourism students enrolling in 1972 and the first undergraduate programmes starting in 1986 (Airey, 1997; Holloway, 1995). The intervening years have seen rapid growth in course provision, from two courses in 1972 (Airey, 1997), to fifty institutions delivering 99 programmes in 1997 (see Table 1). Two-thirds of all the undergraduate courses and just over half of the postgraduate programmes started after 1990 (Middleton & Ladkin, 1996).

This paper provides a summary of a study of UK degree level courses in tourism undertaken in 1997. Part of the purpose of the study was to upgrade and add to the existing body of knowledge on this topic. The work follows earlier surveys carried out by the NLG in 1993 and 1995 in *The Profile of Tourism Studies Degree Courses in the UK: 1993* (Airey *et al*, 1993) and *The Profile of Tourism Studies Degree Courses in the UK: 1995/96* (Middleton & Ladkin, 1996). These two survey were preceded by the first study of its kind undertaken in 1991/92 as part of the *Review of Tourism Studies Degrees* produced by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) which was published in 1993 (CNAA 1993). Through these initiatives it is possible to track the development of degree level courses in tourism in the UK during the 1990s and to identify rates of growth and trends in provision.

The 1997/98 census is concerned with undergraduate courses leading to the award of BSc or BA degrees (mostly with honours), and with postgraduate courses leading to the award of MA, MSc, MBA degrees, or Diplomas. Tourism is included in the titles of all these awards although the range of titles used is very wide. (Table 3).

Information was collected from individual prospectuses about all known courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels for the academic year 1997 to 1998 which include the word 'tourism' in the title. The prospectuses provided comprehensive and generally comparable information on the nature of the tourism courses on offer during 1997/98. Six sources were used to compile an up-to-date list of institutions offering courses for the academic year 1997/98:

- The Big Official UCAS Guide to University & College Entrance 1997, UCAS/Independent Letts Study Guides.
- Higher Education in the UK – Graduate Courses 1996/97, The Times.
- Postgrad 1996/97, the Directory of Graduate studies, Hobsons publishing.
- Postgrad 1997, the Students Guide, CRAC.
- The NLG's 1995/96 List of Tourism Courses supplied by Adele Ladkin.
- 1996/97 List of Tourism Courses supplied by Marion Stuart.

The above sources provided a list of fifty higher education institutions offering tourism degree level programmes in 1997/98. Prospectuses from all fifty institutions were secured. These were then used as the basis to examine a range of topics of which five are commented on in this summary.

## **Introduction**

## **Methodology**

**Growth in Tourism Degree Course Provision**

**Table 1**  
**\*Growth in Degree Level Courses in Tourism in the UK: 1991 – 1998**

	<b>1991/2</b>	<b>1993/4</b>	<b>1995/6</b>	<b>1997/8</b>
institutions offering courses	15	36	43	50
number of courses offered	22	53	75	99
of which undergrad	12	27	42	66
of which postgrad	10	26	33	33

*Criteria for inclusion: undergraduate courses leading to the award of BA or BSc degrees (mostly with honours), and postgraduate courses leading to the award of MA, MSc, MBA degrees, or Diplomas. The word 'tourism' is included in the title of all these awards although the range of titles used is very wide – see Table 3. (CNA, 1993; Middleton & Ladkin, 1996, p.3; Johnson, 1997, p.73).*

Table 1 shows that the remarkable growth in the provision of degree level courses in tourism, highlighted in 1993 by the CNA report and in 1993 and 1996 by the NLG surveys, has continued up to the third quarter in the 1990's. The Table shows that since the first survey was undertaken in 1992 for the CNA Review the number of institutions offering courses has increased by over 230% and the number of courses offered has gone up by 350%. The growth in undergraduate course provision has far outstripped that of postgraduate provision with increases of 450% and 230% respectively.

Table 2, shows that since the last survey was undertaken by the NLG in 1995 the growth in the provision of degree level courses in tourism has continued. In the intervening two years the number of institutions offering courses has increased by one sixth and the number of courses offered has gone up by almost one third. Within this overall growth in provision there has been no increase in the number of postgraduate courses, whereas the number of undergraduate courses has risen sharply by well over one half.

**Table 2**  
**\*Growth in Degree Level Courses in Tourism in the UK between 1995/96 and 1997/98**

	<b>1995/6</b>	<b>1997/8</b>	<b>+/-No</b>	<b>+/-%</b>
institutions offering courses	43	50	+7	+16
number of courses offered	75	99	+24	+32
of which undergrad	42	66	+24	+57
of which postgrad	33	33	Nil	Nil

*Criteria for inclusion: undergraduate courses leading to the award of BA or BSc degrees (mostly with honours), and postgraduate courses leading to the award of MA, MSc, MBA degrees, or Diplomas. The word 'tourism' is included in the title of all these awards although the range of titles used is very wide – see Table 3. (CNAAC, 1993; Middleton & Ladkin, 1996, p.3; Johnson, 1997, p.74).*

***\*It has to be stressed that these data are the best estimates which can be made of the growth in provision in the UK, relying upon voluntary methods***

### **The Range of Titles/Awards Offered in Tourism Degree Courses**

There is currently no agreement on common terminology for use in tourism course titles and Table 3 sets out a remarkable range of different titles now in use. Fifty-one different titles were found to be in use to describe a total of 99 courses surveyed, a ratio of approximately two courses per title. Of the 51 titles used, just one title, that of 'Tourism Management', was found to predominate, being used on 19 separate occasions. Put another way, the title 'Tourism Management' is selected by almost 20% of course designers as the most appropriate way to encapsulate the nature of the course content to prospective students and employers. The Table shows that only three other course titles are used by more than 5% of courses: 'Tourism' (8%), 'Leisure and Tourism Management' (6%), and 'Tourism Studies' (6%). Thirty-six out of the 99 courses surveyed (36%) do not share the title they have chosen for their course with any other programme. This Table clearly highlights the diversity of approaches to tourism education at degree level and throws light on the comment by Middleton and Ladkin (1996) that *'this apparent "richness of diversity" creates confusion among prospective employers and students seeking to evaluate different courses for their own purposes.'* In addition to diversity, the Table highlights the emphasis which is now being placed upon programmes with a business management orientation; just over half (51%) of the 51 course titles include the words 'business' and/or 'management.'

### **The Range of Departments in which Tourism Degree Courses are Located**

The diversity in the range of different tourism course titles shown in Table 3 is continued in the diverse range of different departments in which the courses are located as set out in Table 4. Table 4 shows that, of the 99 tourism courses surveyed, around one third are located in departments of business and management, which is the same figure arrived at by the NLG's 1995/96 survey findings. This demonstrates the continuing emphasis placed upon vocational courses with a business management orientation. The next largest groups are housed in service sector departments (17%), in departments of sport and leisure (14%), and in departments of hospitality and hotel and catering (13%). Eight per cent are located in departments of tourism and tourism management, with a further 8% in departments of environment, geography, planning and so forth, and 7% in departments of social sciences, sciences and sociology. In their 1995/96 survey the NLG found about one fifth of courses located in departments of hospitality and tourism management, another fifth in departments of hotel and catering, and a further fifth in tourism, leisure and recreation departments. Although the categories used by the NLG are much broader than those shown here, there seems to be some commonality in the findings between the two surveys.

## **The ‘Top Twenty’ Aims and Objectives of Tourism Degree Courses**

Table 5 sets out the ‘top twenty’ aims and objectives of the 99 tourism degree courses surveyed. Once again, the focus on vocational, business management courses is highlighted. The Table shows that over three quarters (77%) of the prospectuses mention ‘career opportunities’ and in excess of a half (54%) cite ‘employment’ as reasons why prospective students might consider taking a place on the course. One half (51%) of the prospectuses mention the tourism industry as a ‘large/important/global/growth’ industry and almost a half (46%) refer to the industry as a provider on ‘international’ job opportunities. Almost a half (49%) of the prospectuses declare that the students will be taught ‘vocational/“reality” skill’ and over one third (36%) state that the students will be taught ‘management’ and/or ‘business’ skills. Equipping the students with ‘transferable’ skills that are relevant to industries other than tourism is featured in over a quarter (28%) of the prospectuses. It is noticeable that the more ‘academic’ aims and objectives of the courses are referred to significantly less often than the vocational ones. For example, ‘sound education/academic understanding’ is specifically referred to in just a quarter (25%) of the prospectuses surveyed, and educational concepts such as providing students with a broad education and equipping them with analytical skills are cited by only about one fifth of the courses surveyed (22% to 20% respectively). It is interesting that almost a fifth (19%) of the prospectuses specifically refer to the inclusion of the ‘fashionable’ topic of ‘sustainable’ tourism in the course content in setting out their course aims and objectives. Whether the course aims and objectives are more biased towards the ‘reality skills’ or the intellectual aspects of the course content is, unsurprisingly, closely linked to the extent to which the course is vocationally driven.

**Table 3**  
**Range of Degree Level Tourism Courses Titles in use during 1997/98**

Title	Number
1. Tourism Management	19
2. Tourism	8
3. Leisure and Tourism Management	6
4. Tourism Studies	6
5. Business Studies with Tourism	3
6. International Hotel and Tourism Management	3
7. Tourism and Leisure	2
8. International Tourism	2
9. International Tourism Management	2
10. Hotel and Tourism Management	2
11. Travel and Tourism	2
12. Hospitality and Tourism Management	2
13. Tourism and Hospitality Management	2
14. Tourism and Hospitality Education	2
15. Sport, Recreation and Tourism	2
16. European Tourism Management	1
17. European Business Studies with Tourism	1
18. European Tourism	1
19. Tourism Management/Languages	1
20. Tourism with Languages	1
21. Tourism with Marketing	1
22. Tourism Marketing	1
23. Tourism and Leisure Studies	1
24. Leisure and Tourism Studies	1
25. Tourism and Leisure Management	1
26. Tourism, Leisure and Service Management	1
27. Leisure Services and Tourism	1
28. Leisure and Tourism	1
29. Leisure Management with Specialism in Tourism Management	1
30. Leisure and Tourism Resource Management	1
31. Adventure Tourism	1
32. Tourism and Travel	1
33. Hospitality (Tourism Management)	1
34. Travel and Tourism Management	1
35. Tourism Planning	1
36. Tourism Management and Planning	1
37. Tourism Policy and Management	1
38. Tourism with Heritage Studies	1
39. Tourism Management and Marketing	1
40. Tourism and Environmental Management	1
41. Tourism Planning and Development	1
42. Sociology and Anthropology of Travel and Tourism	1
43. Business and Tourism Management	1
44. Tourism Business Management	1
45. Tourism Development Studies	1
46. Rural Recreation and Tourism	1
47. Tourism and Social Responsibility	1
48. Recreation and Tourism Management	1
49. International Leisure and Tourism Management	1
50. International Tourism and Hospitality Management	1
51. International Tourism Policy	1

*A total of 99 courses  
were surveyed*

**Table 4**  
**Range of Departments in which Tourism Degree Courses are Located**

<b>Business and Management</b>	<b>32</b>
• Business School	19
• Management	4
• Business and Management	4
• Business, Leisure and Food	2
• Business, Finance and Management	2
• Business, Management and Law	1
<b>Service Sector</b>	<b>17</b>
• Service Industries	8
• Management Studies for the Service Sector	6
• Service Industries	3
<b>Leisure/Sport</b>	<b>14</b>
• Leisure and Tourism	6
• Leisure and Food Management	4
• Leisure Management	1
• Leisure and Tourism Management	1
• Leisure, Tourism and Transport	1
• Sport and Leisure	1
<b>Hospitality/Hotel and Catering</b>	<b>13</b>
• Tourism and Hospitality Management	4
• Hospitality and Tourism	3
• Hospitality and Tourism Management	2
• Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure	1
• Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Management	1
• Hospitality	1
• Hotel, Catering and Tourism Management	1
<b>Tourism Management/Tourism</b>	<b>8</b>
• Tourism Management	5
• Tourism	3
<b>Environment/Geography/Land Use/Planning etc.</b>	<b>8</b>
• Urban and Regional Studies	2
• Environment	1
• Tourism and Environmental Studies	1
• Geography	1
• Agriculture, Food and Land Use	1
• Rural Economy and Land Management	1
• Planning and Estate Management	1
<b>Social Sciences/Sciences/Sociology</b>	<b>7</b>
• Social Sciences	4
• School of Sciences	1
• Sociology	1
• Creative, Cultural and Social Studies	1

**Table 5**  
**'Top Twenty' Aims and Objectives of the Tourism Degree Courses**

Aim/Objective	Number
1. Career opportunities	76
2. Employment/employer links/work	53
3. Tourism industry: large/important/global/growth	50
4. Vocational/'reality' skills/theory into practice	48
5. Tourism industry: international opportunities	45
6. Management/Business skills	36
7. Private/public sector opportunities	31
8. Transferable/relevant skills for other industries	28
9. Sound education/academic understanding	25
10. Broad foundation/wide range/thorough grounding	22
11. To meet the needs of the tourism industry	21
12. = Decision-making/analysis/judgement	20
12. = European context/opportunities	20
14. Social context/sustainable tourism	19
15. = Professional/professionalism	17
15. = Quality/excellence	17
17. = Flexibility	14
17. = Service delivery/service sector/customer service	14
19. Successful/succeed	10
20. Competitive/compete	7

*A total of 99 courses  
were surveyed*

### **The Modular and Vocational Nature of Tourism Degree Courses**

Table 6 shows that all of the 99 courses surveyed are, to a greater or lesser extent, modular in structure and that only a small minority (4%) are non- vocational in nature. However, it should be stressed that the word 'modular' is used in its broadest sense and that the majority of courses include a prescribed number of compulsory, core modules which all students take to secure a particular award.

**Table 6**  
**Modular/Vocational Nature of Tourism Degree Courses**

<p><b>Modular Courses</b></p> <p>All 99 tourism courses surveyed are run on a modular basis of credits, options, modules or other similar flexible arrangements usually combining core modules with optional ones.</p> <p><b>Vocational Courses</b></p> <p>Of the 99 tourism courses surveyed just four made no reference to career or employment prospects/opportunities.</p>
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Table 6 shows a continued shift towards modularity since the NLG's 1995/6 survey when eight out of ten undergraduate courses and three quarters of postgraduate courses were found to be operating on a modular basis. At that time the NLG expressed concerns about the implications of such 'flexibility' for *'the content and rigour of tourism courses and standards of provision'* (Middleton & Ladkin, 1996, p.7). Although 96% of the courses surveyed for this study were found to be vocational in nature it should be emphasised that some have a far stronger vocational focus than others.

## **Conclusion**

In concluding this report, by any yardstick the growth in tourism course provision during the 1990s has been remarkable. Such rapid growth has been facilitated by government policy: its desire to see an increased take up of places in higher education and its emphasis on vocational courses as set out in the 1987 White Paper On Higher Education; by tourism being perceived as a growth industry and a provider of employment; by modularity of courses and the relative ease and low cost with which tourism programmes can be provided relative to science subjects and other more traditional academic disciplines; and by the popularity of tourism courses amongst prospective students.

Rapid growth at degree level has helped to generate a massive expansion of tourism teaching in schools and further education institutions as demonstrated by the tens of thousand of students now taking GNVQs in leisure and tourism. This growth is mirrored by an increased number of vocational degree courses in leisure, recreation and sports studies and, to a lesser extent, in the longer established hospitality management courses. The increase in the number of courses available has been matched by the growth in the diversity of programmes which has been strongly influenced by the rapid shift to modular provision for the vast majority of courses.

Such rapid growth and scale of supply have created concerns about over-provision of courses and related employment prospects for graduates, tensions between the academic and the vocational emphases of programmes, and debate about whether tourism is a proper academic subject worthy of study at degree level. It has also generated one of the most lively and controversial debates amongst tourism educators in recent years concerning the fundamental lack of agreement about the **content** of tourism degrees and whether such diversity of provision requires the introduction of a minimum core curriculum for vocational tourism degree courses. (Airey, 1995, 1997; Johnson, 1997; Middleton & Ladkin, 1996).

## References

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