Module Specification

Space Systems Design

Version: 2026-27, v3.0, Approved

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Part 1: Information

Module title: Space Systems Design

Module code: UFMFCV-15-M

Level: Level 7

For implementation from: 2026-27

UWE credit rating: 15

ECTS credit rating: 7.5

College: College of Arts, Technology and Environment

School: CATE School of Engineering

Partner institutions: None

Field: Engineering, Design and Mathematics

Module type: Module

Pre-requisites: Space Engineering 2025-26, Spaceflight 2022-23

Excluded combinations: None

Co-requisites: None

Continuing professional development: No

Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements: None

Part 2: Description

Overview: The module provides the principles and methods of space systems engineering. The objective is to architect a heterogeneous and complex space system at the preliminary design level. The content will encompass broad aspects of design and performance analysis through payload and bus subsystem behaviours, interactions and emergent properties.

A space system is a unified whole of integrated payload and platform subsystems.

The system performs tasks that the subsystems alone cannot. The subsystems have origins in multiple technologies and energy domains (electrical, electronic, electromagnetic, information, optical, mechanical, nuclear and thermal). The subsystems contend for common resources. The system design begins with the analysis and trading the requirements to develop a conceptual design and a functional architecture. This is followed by apportioning the required sub-functions, performance requirements and technical budgets in a cordial way that no single subsystem surmounts or starves any other. Once each subsystem is allocated resources, a design and analysis process suiting the particular technology or energy domain of the subsystem is followed.

In this module, a high-level space system will be defined and designed, and the payload and bus subsystems will be developed to sufficient detail. The subsystems will be integrated and validated through several engineering analyses to ensure the overall spacecraft meets the mission objectives and system requirements.

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: Apply the industry practice of systems engineering to the design of space systems. Develop a space system by allocating top-level functions, requirements and performance budgets to the subsystems. Integrate and validate system architecture. Use analytical and numerical techniques for system analysis. The module broadens the scope of the aerospace discipline to the space regime. The practice is favoured by the Royal Aeronautical Society.

Outline syllabus: Topics are likely to include but are not limited to:

Spacecraft systems engineering.

NASA and ESA lifecycle engineering methodologies, processes and standards.

Technology readiness levels (TRLs).

Management of electrical, electronic, electromechanical (EEE) and commercial off the shelf (COTS) parts, procurement and parts reliability.

Model philosophy.

Conceptual design.

Mission and system requirements.

System architecture.

Functional analysis and functional tree.

Product tree and configuration management.

Preliminary design.

Analysis of system budgets and margins: mass, area, volume, CoG, envelope (mechanical loads), pointing accuracy, field of view, thermal margin, radiation dose budget, link budget, reliability margin cost.

Interfaces: segment, electrical, bi-level, data bus, mechanical, deployer and launch vehicle.

Allocation of requirements, functions and system technical budgets.

Payload design.

Bus design: On-board computer (OBC), Electric power system (EPS), Attitude and orbit control system (AOCS), sensors and actuators, Communications, Propulsion and pyrotechnics, Structure, thermal and mechanisms.

Assembly, integration & test (AIT).

Verification & validation (V&V).

Qualification.

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: The module delivery is designed to support students to engineer a space system at the preliminary design level.

The space systems engineering process, standards and design methods will be applied to the development of payload and bus subsystems of a spacecraft. To motivate and make clear the connection between theory and practice, the students will apply design and simulation techniques on different aspects of the system design. The material will then be explored in-depth and discussed in small groups in tutorials to develop a full-scale space vehicle system and its subsystems which will be analysed for technical feasibility, performance and space worthiness.

Module Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

MO1 Develop mission-level concepts and architectures, define user, operational, and commercial requirements, and ensure subsystem interfaces and resources are compatible within the overall system.

MO2 Carry out mission and system design, define subsystem designs at the appropriate level of detail, integrate them into a coherent system, and critically evaluate performance against mission requirements.

MO3 Apply the systems design cycle to verify and validate the system against defined criteria, iterating the design to achieve required improvements.

Hours to be allocated: 150

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 114 hours

Staff-guided learning = 36 hours

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at readinglists.uwe.ac.uk via the following link https://uwe.rl.talis.com/index.html

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: The assessment strategy is designed to allow students to follow the standard space systems engineering design process as part of a space team.

The space system will be developed during the module with a methodological approach supported by the weekly delivery of material. The students will work in groups in the tutorial and simulation-based workshops to conceptually design the space system. The student will then synthesise and refine the systems architecture by allocating resources, performing necessary technical analysis, and proving the design suitability.

The assessment for this module is as follows:

A multidisciplinary space systems engineering team portfolio. The output will be a 3500-word group report that documents the design detail of the space systems and a half-hour group presentation and a demonstration of the mission viability.

The group marks will be moderated using a peer review process as set out in the Departmental Group Work Policy.

Resit is the same as the first sit

Resit deliverable(s) will be scaled appropriately to group size and task complexity

Assessment tasks:

Portfolio (First Sit)
Description: A multidisciplinary space systems engineering team portfolio. The output will be a 3500-word group report that documents the design detail of the space systems and a half-hour group presentation and a demonstration of the mission viability.
Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes
Group work: Yes
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Portfolio (Resit)
Description: A multidisciplinary space systems engineering team portfolio. The output will be a 3500-word group report that documents the design detail of the space systems and a half-hour group presentation and a demonstration of the mission viability.

Resit deliverable(s) will be scaled appropriately to group size and task complexity
Weighting: 100 %
Final assessment: Yes
Group work: Yes
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Part 5: Contributes towards

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Aerospace Engineering with Pilot Studies [Frenchay] MEng 2023-24

Aerospace Engineering [Frenchay] MEng 2023-24

Aerospace Engineering [Frenchay] MEng 2023-24

Aerospace Engineering with Pilot Studies [Frenchay] MEng 2023-24

Aerospace Engineering with Pilot Studies [Frenchay] MEng 2022-23

Aerospace Engineering with Pilot Studies [Frenchay] MEng 2023-24

Aerospace Engineering [Frenchay] MEng 2022-23

Aerospace Engineering [Frenchay] MEng 2023-24

Aerospace Engineering with Pilot Studies [Frenchay] MEng 2022-23

Aerospace Engineering [Frenchay] MEng 2022-23

Aerospace Engineering with Pilot Studies [Frenchay] MEng 2023-24

Aerospace Engineering [Frenchay] MEng 2023-24

Aerospace Engineering [Frenchay] MEng 2022-23

Aerospace Engineering with Pilot Studies [Frenchay] MEng 2022-23