

Framework for the Management of Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Aim

- 1 The overall aim of the University's Framework for the Management of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QA&E) is to demonstrate that the University's responsibility for setting and maintaining the academic standards of awards and for managing the quality of its courses, is being satisfactorily discharged, and to ensure that the student experience is continuously improved.

Objectives

- 2 The University seeks to achieve this aim by means of the following objectives:
 - a. to satisfy the University and external stakeholders that it meets the expectations and associated core practices for standards and quality as set out in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(2018\)](#)
 - b. the Quality Code states that expectations for standards are -
 - *the academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework*
 - *the value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualifications and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards*
 - c. the Quality Code states that expectations for quality are -
 - *courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed from admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education*
 - d. to demonstrate a commitment to the enhancement of the quality of the student learning experience and to teaching excellence
 - e. to implement quality assurance and enhancement processes in an efficient and effective manner.

Key Terminology

- 3 **Quality assurance** - the process for checking that the academic standards and quality of higher education provision meet agreed expectations.
- 4 **Threshold academic standards** - the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for the award of academic credit or a qualification, as set out in [Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(2014\)](#).
- 5 **Academic standards** - the standards that individual degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of their academic credit or qualifications. These may exceed

the threshold academic standards. They include the standards of performance that a student needs to demonstrate to achieve a particular classification of a qualification, such as a first-class honours degree classification in a certain subject or the award of merit or distinction in a master's degree.

- 6 **Academic quality** - how, and how well, the higher education (HE) provider supports students to enable them to achieve their award. This covers learning, teaching and assessment, and all the different resources and processes a provider puts in place to help students progress and fulfil their potential.
- 7 **Quality enhancement** - deliberate steps taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Principles

- 8 University quality assurance and enhancement processes and activities are underpinned and shaped by a number of key principles. These are as follows:
 - a. students should be engaged as participatory partners in the quality management of their experience
 - b. processes should be informed by appropriate internal and external peer involvement, and by an understanding of risk awareness and risk management
 - c. processes and activities should be evidence based and underpinned by the systematic generation and consideration of robust management information, and feedback from students, external examiners and advisors, and other stakeholders
 - d. identifying good practice and opportunities for further improvement at strategic and operational levels
 - e. result in actions that positively enhance the quality of student learning opportunities
 - f. provide for frequent self-evaluation and reflection on the effectiveness of processes and impact on outcomes.

More specifically:

- 9 **Internal peer review** is an important basis for assuring and enhancing quality. For example, College Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committees include staff membership from all of the Schools that make up the College, which provides a basis for sharing of effective practice, as well as an independent check for internal processes such as the annual evaluation of courses and the approval of changes to modules and courses.
- 10 **External peer review** provides an independent assessment of standards and quality, and is achieved in a number of ways, such as through external examiner reports which form a critical element of the annual evaluation process. Equally, all periodic review events involve relevant external subject expertise as does the process for course planning and approval.

- 11 **Student engagement** is fundamental in informing the future development of programmes and the student experience, and is achieved through the range of student feedback and representation mechanisms as well as the involvement of students as partners in the processes for approval, monitoring and review.
- 12 An **evidence based approach** to enhancement-led quality assurance informs all key processes, drawing on an increasingly wide range of quantitative indicators and qualitative information to evaluate effectiveness, identify issues and inform planned action for improvement.
- 13 **Risk awareness** has become increasingly embedded in the key processes of approval, monitoring and review, and informs the ongoing work of the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) and its sub-committees.
- 14 **Evaluation** is seen as fundamental both in the operation of key processes and their impact on student outcomes, most explicitly the annual evaluation process, and also in the ongoing review of the management and operation of such processes themselves.

Implementation of Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- 15 The **Academic Quality Unit (AQU)** is responsible for the development, maintenance, implementation and evaluation of quality assurance and enhancement processes with the aim of ensuring that these are fully understood and implemented by staff delivering all programmes for which the University has the responsibility for quality assurance.
- 16 A range of **professional development programmes** and opportunities are made available at University and School levels to enable HE practitioners to enhance student engagement with the nature of learning in all forms, provide excellent inclusive learning, teaching and assessment, and to encourage reflection on practice and progress new developments.
- 17 The **Board of Governors** is responsible for ensuring the University meets the ongoing conditions of registration as an HE provider and making assurances to the Office for Students (OfS) about student academic experiences, student outcomes, and the standard of awards, based on the reports and action plans it receives from **Academic Board**.
- 18 The **Academic Board**, in association with the Board of Governors, is responsible for ensuring that the University's academic strategy is fit for purpose. It is responsible for the formal approval of academic policies and procedures, together with formal responsibility for the standards, quality and enhancement of academic provision within the University. Academic Board is also responsible for oversight of the organisation of learning and teaching, research, scholarship, standards, students and courses, and advising the Vice Chancellor on academic matters. Academic Board delegates some of these responsibilities to its subcommittees.
- 19 The **Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC)** is responsible, on behalf of Academic Board, for all aspects of academic quality assurance and enhancement to assure the quality and standards of the University's academic awards. It is supported in this work by the **College Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee (LTQE)**

- 20 The **Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC)** advises Academic Board on University strategy and policies to foster and encourage excellence in learning and teaching and the student experience, and to raise the external profile of the University in this area of its activity.
- 21 The **Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC)** advises Academic Board, through the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC), on matters relating to the University's academic partnerships and collaborative provision.
- 22 The **Apprenticeship Programmes Sub-committee (APSC)** advises Academic Board, through the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC), on matters relating to developing, monitoring and advising on all aspects of the quality management of Apprenticeship programmes delivered by the University or in association with partners.
- 23 The **Research Committee (RC)** advises Academic Board on the University's strategy and policies to foster and encourage research and to raise the external profile of the University in this area of its activity.
- 24 The **Academic Regulations and Governance Committee (ARGC)** advises Academic Board on matters relating to academic regulations and associated procedures and matters relating to effective academic governance, so as to ensure that the University applies principles of best practice and regulation.
- 25 All academic staff belong to a School. The **Head of School** is responsible for maintaining the standards, efficiency and good management of the School in accordance with University regulations, guidelines and codes of practice, and for the maintenance of quality procedures and processes established by ASQEC on behalf of Academic Board. The Head of School maintains operational responsibility for the activity of the School and its curriculum. In each School there are designated senior members of staff who provide strategic leadership to assure the quality of subject provision, and promote academic development and learning and teaching initiatives. Schools monitor their courses through the annual evaluation processes and are assisted in this work by a **College Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee**, reporting to ASQEC and LTSEC on relevant matters.
- 26 **Course Teams** are responsible for the design, delivery and assessment of courses, and are required to monitor the standards and effectiveness of these courses and, via appropriate means (such as through the annual evaluation process), to seek to continuously improve the student experience.
- 27 **Student:Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC)** comprise elected student academic representatives and the teaching team. They meet each semester to review teaching and learning and the delivery, organisation and assessment of each course. The minutes of these committees are kept as a formal record and made available to students, and relevant members of the School Senior Management Team.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Processes

- 28 **Approval of the development of new course proposals:** The **Academic Planning and Portfolio Group (APPG)** reports to the **Vice Chancellor's Executive Board** and the **Academic Board** on the approval of the development of new course

proposals within the context of the Strategic Plan and the likely resources available to the University.

- 29 **Course planning and approval:** The considerable expertise of the University with various forms of course approval and review has led to the adoption of the current model which balances the responsibilities of various members of the academic community at course, School and University levels, and internal and external peers, who may offer advice, subject and contextual expertise, and ultimately make a judgement on the appropriateness of a new course proposal to be offered by the University or one or more of its partners.
- 30 **Course Modifications:** In addition to course approval, there are related procedures for modifications to courses, by which alterations can be made to approved provision. These apply to all taught courses offering a University award.
- 31 **Accreditation:** The University may accredit modules or short courses delivered by other organisations. These modules are subject to the quality mechanisms of the University.
- 32 **Periodic Review:** Periodic reviews are six-yearly events focused on academic departments, the main purposes of which are to review, evaluate and confirm arrangements for managing the academic standards of awards within a subject area, evaluating the quality of learning opportunities, and promoting quality enhancement, support reflective evaluation, and to enable and encourage the sharing of good practice.
- 33 **Partnership Approval:** A formal procedure exists for the approval of new partners. This includes consideration through a formal approval meeting as well as due diligence checks. A register of partners and collaborative provision is maintained and published by the University.
- 34 **Partnership Review:** The University operates a process of six-yearly review of partnerships whereby stakeholders from both the partner institution and the University meet to discuss the operation of the partnership and the quality management of the courses delivered with the partner. External participation is involved.
- 35 **Annual Evaluation:** Annual evaluation provides the institution with the evidence it requires to enable it to discharge its responsibility for the standard of each award made in its name, and to be assured that the quality of education provided for students is, at least, satisfactory. The process identifies issues requiring attention and a mechanism for ensuring that these are addressed, and brings forward examples of good practice, which should make a significant contribution to enhancing the quality of provision. The process operates at course, School and University levels and results in the production of Course and School Enhancement Plans related both to the assurance and continuous improvement of quality. These annual evaluation reports (AERs) are produced and reviewed at course and School level, and are considered by College Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committees feeding into the University's Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.
- 36 **External Examining:** External examiners have an important role in assuring the standards and academic quality of courses. They are required to make an annual report to the University on the conduct of the course and matters related to

standards and assessment. The report and the course response to it is part of the documentation for annual evaluation and periodic reviews.

- 37 **Student Feedback and Representation:** Students have a number of opportunities to provide feedback and evaluate the courses they are undertaking. Formal evaluation occurs at the end of each module and through the annual Course Experience Survey and the National Student Survey. Student:Staff Liaison Committees are held each semester with student representation and students are members of all key academic committees.
- 38 **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation and approval:** A number of the University's courses are accredited or approved by PSRBs (such as Ofsted, British Psychological Society, Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health Care Professions Council) who themselves have mechanisms for the initial and continuing approval, monitoring and review of courses. Wherever possible the University seeks to integrate University and PSRB requirements for quality assurance, and consider reports through School and, where appropriate, University quality committees. A register of courses accredited or approved by PSRBs is maintained by AQU.
- 39 **Apprenticeships:** All University HE Apprenticeship Programmes are subject to the University's standard quality monitoring and evaluation processes that apply to other approved courses of the University and the same overarching principles of evaluation, review and reporting apply.

Operational Documentation

- 40 **Academic regulations, policies and procedures** are set out in documentation lodged on the University's webpages (maintained primarily by [Registry Services](#) and the [AQU](#)). Documentation constitutes the basis of the formulation, delivery and maintenance of the education provided by the University. It represents the terms by which, at any given point, participants in the University's academic provision are operating. Constituent parts of the regulatory framework, policies and procedures are regularly reviewed by relevant committees.
- 41 The **Academic Regulations** provide a framework for the operation of all courses and programmes of study offered by the University. These derive from three main sources: the regulations and processes governing the conduct of the general academic affairs of the University; the [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework \(TCRF\)](#) for undergraduate courses and the [Research Degrees Regulatory Framework](#) for postgraduate courses; and any regulations agreed at the point of approval for specific courses and programmes of study, as detailed in programme specifications.
- 42 The **AQU webpages** are designed to bring together procedures, policies and operational guidance relating to the assurance and enhancement of quality and standards across the whole University.
- 43 As an integral part of the course planning and approval process, Academic Board requires that all academic courses leading to an award must have a **programme specification** and a **course handbook**, including **module specifications**. For apprenticeships, an **apprenticeship specification** must be read as a companion document to the programme specification for the academic award linked to the apprenticeship. This represents a full statement of the course as approved by the University. The programme specification is the primary reference point for the information on award and unit/module titles, admission and assessment regulations,

and the curriculum. Students are issued course handbooks which include a hyperlink to the programme specification and details pertaining to the operation of their award. Module specifications and associated Module Outlines are made available via Blackboard, the University's Virtual Learning Environment.

- 44 Following approval, **programme specifications and apprenticeship specifications (where applicable) are published by the Academic Quality Unit** on the AQU webpages. Academic Board expects that courses will be kept under continual review and it is the responsibility of the course team to maintain and modify the programme and apprenticeship specifications, module specifications and course handbook, and associated marketing information, through formal approval as appropriate.
- 45 The [Student Handbook](#) provides students with general information about the University and its policies and procedures as well as providing advice and guidance.
- 46 **National documents** such as the Subject Benchmark Statements, Qualifications Characteristics Statements, the Higher Education Qualifications Frameworks and the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(2018\)](#) are considered by relevant managers and committees as appropriate, and are regularly reviewed. University quality assurance and enhancement processes make explicit reference to these documents, and where appropriate the University integrates principles into its own processes.

Review and Evaluation of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Processes

- 47 These processes form part of an integrated whole and are separable only in terms of emphasis and timing. For instance, the approval of a new programme of study carries with it the implication of continued monitoring/evaluation, modification and review. In turn, annual evaluation and responses to external examiner reports comprise an integral part of review.
- 48 The University does not regard these processes as static or immutable. It keeps them under review and modifies their operation in the light of experience and changing educational circumstances. This function is the responsibility of ASQEC and is managed at an operational level by the AQU.

Publicly Available Information

- 49 The University keeps under review the information it makes publicly available about the University and its courses, following the **guidance published by QAA and the Competitions and Marketing Authority**. Information about quality assurance and enhancement processes and policies, the learning and teaching strategy and on collaborative partnerships, as well as information about courses, including programme specifications, is available via the University webpages. Policies for student complaints, appeals and representations, and procedures for external examining are also available on the University webpages.

External Quality Assessment

- 50 The University is subject to ongoing **risk-based monitoring by the Office for Students** of its standards and quality to ensure that it continues to meet the ongoing conditions of registration as an HE provider. The University participated

in the first Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in 2017 and achieved a Silver outcome.

- 51 A high proportion of the University's courses are **regulated, accredited, recognised or endorsed by PSRBs**, and as a consequence are subject to the external quality processes of those bodies for specific provision.

Approval/Review Table

Item	Notes
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Date of Approval	September 2019
Approved by	ASQEC
Effective from	Immediate
Policy Officer	Head of Academic Quality
Department	Academic Quality Unity
Review date	July 2023
Last reviewed	<p>April 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragraph 22, 39 added, to reflect apprenticeship provision • Paragraph 43 and 44 amended to reflect apprenticeship provision • Paragraph 27 and 37 amended to reflect new SSLC, replacing CMCs
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	
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