

## University Framework for Quality and Standards

### **Introduction and Context**

The University's Education Strategy Vision for 2026 is to support its students as they become creative and culturally rich graduates, with the capacity to find employment that will enable them to be agents for change in a connected world.

The Education Strategy sets out to develop and implement those areas of Strategy 2026 which relate to learning, teaching and assessment for academic programmes and details the objectives for the development, monitoring and enhancement of the curriculum and the student learning experience.

The Framework for Quality and Standards specifies the responsibilities and processes by which the standards of the academic programmes and the quality of the student learning experience are managed, assured and enhanced.

The main purposes of this Framework are:

- To secure the academic standards of the University's awards, whether delivered within the University or by a partner organisation, assuring students, graduates and other stakeholders that:
  - The level of achievement required for those awards meets or exceeds national, international and relevant professional requirements and is in line with the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and Apprenticeship Standards where appropriate;
  - Curricula are up-to-date and in line with external expectations for the discipline.
- To assure and enhance the quality of the student learning experience, ensuring that students:
  - Receive appropriate and effective forms of learning, teaching, assessment and support;
  - Are provided with learning opportunities that enable them to attain appropriate academic standards.

Key principles underlying this Framework are that:

- The primary responsibility for the quality of the student experience lies at the point of delivery, with staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning across the University's

Faculties, its Professional Support services and, where appropriate, its Partner Institutions;

- Quality assurance processes exist to support the University's aim of delivering excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. They will lead to enhancement of learning and teaching and will be subject to ongoing review of their effectiveness;
- Quality assurance processes will be evidence-based, making full use of available management information and contributing to the further development of that information.

## **Management Responsibilities for Quality and Standards**

### **Committees**

Senate is the University's senior committee in relation to academic matters. It has overall responsibility for the University's awards, the quality and standards of the academic programmes and the quality assurance framework, it also approves changes to the Code of Practice on Assessment and the Postgraduate Research Code of Practice (PGR CoP). However, more detailed functions are largely delegated to its sub-committees: Education Committee, Academic Quality and Standards Committee, University Approval Panel, Postgraduate Research (PGR) Committee and Collaborative Provision Committee. These committees in turn operate a series of subcommittees responsible for the operation of quality assurance processes:

For the Education Committee, these include:

- Guild Liaison Sub-Committee;
- Faculty Education Committees;
- Student Success Boards.

For Academic Quality and Standards Committee, these include:

- Assessment and Feedback Working Group;
- Quality Assurance Process Review Group;

For Collaborative Provision Committee, these include:

- Joint Liaison Groups for all partners;
- XJTLU Link Tutor Working Group;
- Online Programmes Operational Group.

For the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Committee, these include:

- Faculty Postgraduate Research Committees;
- Assessment and Feedback Working Group.

Senate and Council receive an Annual Report on Quality Assurance, which evaluates and reflects on all activity during the relevant academic year and assures Senate and Council of the quality and standards of University awards.

## Executive Responsibilities

- The Vice-Chancellor is responsible to Council and has ultimate responsibility for the quality and standards of the University's awards;
- Pro-Vice-Chancellors support the Vice-Chancellor via the Senior Leadership Team and have specific responsibilities for Education and Research and Impact;
- Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors have responsibility for quality and standards of programmes in their respective areas and for ensuring the appropriate operation of processes to support this at Faculty level;
- Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellors provide support for the Pro-Vice Chancellors and the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors in the areas of Education and Research;
- The Director of Student Experience and Enhancement, supported by the Director of Academic Quality, has responsibility for operation and maintenance of the University's Code of Practice on Assessment, PGR Code of Practice and associated quality management processes.

## Key Elements of the Quality and Standards Framework

### External Reference Points

- The main external reference for this framework is the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), developed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The Quality Code is a key reference for the development of the University's processes and programmes. UoL awards are aligned with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Subject Benchmark Statements inform academic programme development of taught programmes;
- Through the FHEQ, UoL awards are also aligned with the Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA). Where UoL awards are part of international collaboration, equivalence of national awards are evidenced appropriately or evidence of mapping against the FHEQ is obtained;
- Many UoL programmes have recognition and/or accreditation by external and professional bodies;
- For Degree Apprenticeship Programmes, the Apprenticeship Standards are the key external reference point;
- Programme specifications for taught programmes are available via Curriculum Manager and detail programme aims, learning outcomes, learning teaching and assessment strategies, admissions requirements, etc;
- Externality in processes is an underpinning principle of the quality framework and is evidenced, for example, in the role of the external reviewer in programme approval and periodic review and the role of the external examiner for all awards.

### Academic Frameworks

- The University's Code of Practice on Assessment (CoPA) is the common framework for its taught awards;
- The CoPA defines progression, compensation and classification requirements and defines regulations pertaining to academic misconduct and conduct of examinations. Any exemptions to the CoPA must be sought in advance of programme approval activity.
- The Postgraduate Research Code of Practice (PGR CoP) is the common framework for research awards;
- The PGR CoP defines admission, academic progress, supervision, academic misconduct, conduct of examinations;
- Any exemptions must be sought and approved before students begin their programme.

## External Examiners

- External examiners are appointed to cover all programmes, their responsibilities are outlined in the CoPA (Appendix H) and the PGR CoP (Appendix 8);
- Criteria for appointment for taught programmes is shown within CoPA (Appendix H); new External Examiners are appointed by the Faculty on behalf of Senate;
- Criteria for appointment for research programmes is shown in PGR CoP Appendix 8; Faculty Directors of Research are responsible for the appointment of examiners;
- External Examiners for taught programmes submit an annual report, which is responded to by Directors of Studies and approved at Faculty level. Reports and responses are also shared with students;
- External examiners for research programmes submit a report as part of the *viva* process, this is then signed and confirmed after the *viva*. Examiners are also asked for feedback on the process.

## Programme Approval and Periodic Review processes

- Procedures for the approval of new programmes are detailed on the Academic Quality and Standards Division website. Programme approval is the quality assurance process used to scrutinise a proposed new programme of study in order to assure Senate that the programme meets the University's expectation of quality and standards;
- The programme approval process is designed to secure academic standards by reference to external benchmarks, including the FHEQ, relevant subject benchmark statements and any PSRB requirements;
- External reviewers are used as part of the approval process;
- The procedures also specify the processes for changes to programmes once approved and processes for the suspension and closure of programmes;
- Approval of collaborative programmes can be either through the specified internal processes or by bespoke arrangement with a particular partner. Additional due diligence activity and drafting of contractual agreements will also be included;
- Procedures for periodic review of programmes are detailed on the AQSD website;
- Periodic review assures the University that the quality and standards of its programmes are being appropriately managed;
- Periodic review will look at: the curriculum; the learning environment; support for students; staffing; and quality management and enhancement.

## Research programmes: approval of collaborations and periodic review

- Initial approval of research programmes is only needed when a partner is involved, when the focus will be on how the partnership will be managed, ensuring quality and standards and management of the student experience;
- New partners are approved via the Due Diligence Panel and AQSD are responsible for drafting institutional agreements, with input from relevant staff;
- Periodic Review is operated using a similar process to that for taught programmes. The purpose of the review is to assess the quality of the PGR provision and promote enhancement of the PGR student experience;
- Periodic Review will look at: the research environment; student support; management of PGR provision; staff engagement; quality and enhancement management and student engagement.

## Annual Monitoring of taught programmes

- For internal programmes this process is called annual subject action planning, for collaborative programmes it is called annual monitoring;

- Action planning/annual monitoring is a process which supports and facilitates constructive reflection and self-appraisal and celebrates good practice across the University's programmes;
- All internal reports are considered at Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committees and collaborative reports at Collaborative Provision Committee;
- It is an evaluative, evidence-based process, drawing on statistical data and commenting on trends and changes, with links to appropriate KPIs;
- In addition, overview reports are prepared by each Faculty and received at Academic Quality and Standards Committee, which maintains oversight of the institutional action plan.

#### Annual Review Process for Postgraduate Research

- Postgraduate Research Annual Review is the system that the University operates to review its PGR provision on an annual basis;
- The review is carried out within each Level 2 School/Institute and it primarily aims to: monitor and review academic standards and quality; monitor and review the student experience; highlight best practice for dissemination across the University; highlight areas for development and monitor and review action plans;
- All reports are received at the Faculty PGRC, summary reports are then prepared for the University PGR Committee;
- PGR Committee will provide feedback on the reports and oversee any institutional level actions that have been identified;
- Within the Annual Review Process, Level 2 areas will also review any collaborative partnerships that are delivered within their area.

#### Institutional Review of Collaborative Partnerships

- Review of collaborative partnerships will be undertaken within the time period identified within the institutional agreement (normally no longer than five years);
- Faculties will decide whether they wish to continue with the arrangements and institutional review activity will be managed via AQSD;
- The decision whether to undertake a visit as part of the review activity will be based on several criteria, including length of partnership, whether considered low or high risk and an evaluation of quality and standards evidence during the life cycle of the partnership;
- Review activity will be undertaken and a recommendation made to Senate whether to renew the partnership or not.

#### Student Involvement in Quality Assurance

- Student feedback is collected through a variety of quantitative and qualitative processes;
- Students are asked for formal written feedback through module evaluation and via external surveys, e.g. NSS and PTES, programme level surveys, PRES;
- Data from these surveys' feeds into the annual monitoring/review and periodic review processes;
- Students are represented at each level of the governance structure and are involved in each of the processes;
- Collaborative programmes and institutional review events, where possible, include a meeting with students at the partner institution. Where this is not possible, student views will be sought via alternative mechanisms;
- Students are encouraged to participate in curriculum design events, particularly the design workshops as part of the Plan, Design, Approve methodology for taught programmes.

PLEASE NOTE ANY REFERENCE TO THE TERM "STUDENT" INCLUDES APPRENTICES ON DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES

## Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- The University's main enhancement objectives are set out in its Education Strategy, which supports Strategy 2026;
- The Curriculum 2021 Framework is being embedded across the University's taught provision;
- Identification of good practice is part of annual monitoring and periodic review activity;
- Sharing of good practice is supported through many other mechanisms including: Learning and Teaching conference; locally based events; summary reports through the governance structure; Learning and Teaching Awards and Learning and Teaching Fellowships; PGR Week.

## Review of the Quality and Standards Framework

- New developments in external requirements, e.g. Office for Students, Quality Assurance Agency, Institute for Apprentices etc. are received at the University and action considered and agreed by the appropriate committee;
- Processes are evaluated regularly including feedback from all stakeholders and changes are approved at the appropriate committee;
- The Code of Practice on Assessment and the PGR CoP are regularly reviewed to ensure currency and relevance for the University.