Academic Policy Statement APS 11:

Academic Quality and Standards

1. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to ensure the:

- safeguarding of academic standards, and the
- assurance and enhancement of academic quality

of all University awards and/or credit bearing provision, however offered. The policy will also apply where appropriate to non-credit bearing academic provision.

2. Definitions of terms used in this policy

Academic standards

The *safeguarding of academic standards* is the process whereby the University ensures that all awards of University qualifications and/or credits are made on the basis of the achievement of appropriate academic standards and meet the requirements of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ). The process also ensure the value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector recognised standards.

Academic standards of taught programmes are concerned with the appropriateness of intended programme or module learning outcomes (in relation to programme or module aims, content and qualification level), the appropriateness of the syllabus (in relation to learning outcomes), the effectiveness of assessment (in relation to the measurement of the attainment of learning outcomes) and with reference to subject benchmark statements.

Academic standards of research degree taught programmes are concerned with the appropriateness of research degree criteria, student achievement of these criteria, and the effectiveness of assessment (in relation to the measurement of the meeting of research criteria), and they are delivered I appropriate and supportive research environments.

Academic quality

Academic quality includes those activities that make a contribution to the nature of a student's academic experience and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed including:

- learning, teaching, academic guidance and assessment practices;
- the deployment of learning resources; and
- other mechanisms that determine the quality of a student's experince with the University, including:

  - student recruitment and admission;
  - progression advice and programme planning;
  - personal development planning;
  - careers advice and guidance;
  - pastoral support;
  - provision of information; and
  - student academic appeal and complaint procedures.

Academic quality assurance is the process whereby the University ensures that the quality of the academic experince offered to students.

Academic quality enhancement describes the explicit processes put in place to improve the student experience over time. A key element of the process of enhancement is the identification and adoption of good practice, as well as encouraging innovation.

In practice, University academic quality practices and procedures will usually involve elements of both assurance and enhancement, and will take a risk based approach.

3. Safeguarding of academic standards

Principles relating to the safeguarding of academic standards are as follows.

For all programmes or modules:

- standards will be at an appropriate level for the qualification in accordance with the FHEQ
- standards will satisfy the requirements of relevant governmental, professional, regulatory and statutory bodies and similar organisations; and
- standards will be regularly monitored and reviewed, so as to ensure currency and relevance of such standards.

For taught programmes or modules:

- principles underpinning aims, learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment will those as defined in the *Curriculum Design Policy*; and
- the views of recognised domain experts external to, and independent of, the University will be sought when standards are established, monitored or reviewed.

For research programmes or research modules:

- research degree criteria will be defined for every research qualification offered by the University;
- these research degree criteria will describe in an explicit, transparent and consistent manner the achievements a student should be able to demonstrate for the award of the qualification;
- these research degree criteria will be appropriately defined with due regard to appropriate reference points;
- demonstration of the meeting of these research degree criteria will be assessed in a sound, secure and appropriate manner; and
- the views of recognised domain experts external to, and independent of, the University will be sought as part of the process of awarding research degrees.

4. Assuring quality

Principles relating to academic quality assurance are as follows.

- the quality of the student experience will meet the requirements of relevant governmental, professional, regulatory and statutory bodies, and similar organisations;
- result in positive outcomes for students;
- assurance will be informed by robust programme approval, monitoring, review and student feedback processes which explicitly identify and take action to resolve any issues related to the students' academic experience;
- assurance activity will be risk based with an appropriate level scrutiny commensurate with the assessed risk;
- students will be involved in the process of programme development, approval, monitoring and review;
- where delivered in partnership there are effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them; and
- the views of external assessors will be taken into account when the quality of programmes is established or reviewed.

5. Enhancing quality

A key priority for the University will be to enhance the student experience on a continuing basis. In achieving this aim:

- there will be an explicit demonstration of improvement, and therefore measures of the quality of the student experience will be established and regularly monitored;
- where possible, such measures will be based upon already existing data sets such as those derived from annual monitoring enhancement reports, student feedback, progression and achievement data etc;
- students, individually and collectively, will be involved in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their student experience;
- changes made to improve the student experience will be determined on the basis of sound evidence that they are likely to be effective;
- reviews its quality process regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement; and finally,
- it is recognised that any changes made in the spirit of enhancement may themselves pose a risk to quality and where necessary, appropriate contingency plans should be put in place to address any such issues, should they arise.

Enhancing academic quality is a key University aim, and will therefore be:

- actively planned at University level;
- integrated into working practices;
- encouraged by appropriate incentives and initiatives; and
- underpinned by effective staff development.

6. Responsibilities and University oversight

Staff engaged in programme delivery and support are primarily responsible for assuring standards, and assuring and enhancing the student experience, supported by University leaders and managers. The University will maintain institutional oversight of these processes, so as to ensure that these local responsibilities are met and to identify common issues and opportunities that may arise.

7. Ensuring that requirements with respect to academic quality and standards are accessible and understandable

The principles presented above are developed in more detail within the learning and quality procedures (LQEH), academic policy statements and the academic regulations, which will be:

- regularly reviewed so as to ensure currency and appropriateness, and
- developed and reviewed in consultation with the deliverers of academic provision, with students and any other key stakeholders.

Revision history	This policy was approved by Academic Board at its meeting on 18 June 2008 with a further iteration approved by Academic Board at its meeting on 25 June 2015. Revisions to this policy were considered and approved by the Assurance Committee, prior to approval by Academic Board on 16 June2020. This policy is to be reviewed in June 2025.
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