

Office of Quality, Standards
and Partnerships



QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL

General Principles and Quality Assurance Policy

SECTION 01

This document acts as the University's policy for quality assurance, which is made public and forms part of the institution's strategic management.

Introduction

Quality Assurance is the process by which we verify the standards and academic integrity of the University's academic provision, to support the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. It is benchmarked against external UK and European standards and is verified through institutional processes.

The principles, procedures and practices laid out in this document seek to assure that:

- All programmes and awards, for which the University is the awarding body, are designed to the highest standards and have in place appropriate quality assurance processes.
- All other institutions intending to offer one or more of the University's awards, whether within or outside the UK, have the appropriate academic resources and infrastructure to deliver those programmes and awards to a standard and quality which ensures that their students have an equivalent learning experience to those studying on-campus.

The University's quality processes are concerned with both *assurance* and *enhancement*. In this context it is important that the processes outlined here are seen as the basis for the pro-active development of the University's programmes and the systematic enhancement of teaching and learning.

Definitions of Standards and Quality

The University definitions of Standards and Quality, and the formulation of its associated procedures and practices, have been informed by reference to key documents produced by the Office for Students, the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

For the purposes of this document the term '*Standards*' refers to:

- Compliance with the Office for Students Initial and General Ongoing Quality and Standards Conditions of Registration; 'B Conditions' (see Appendix I).
- Alignment with the internal quality assurance standards of Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (see Appendix II).

- Calibration of programmes against QAA *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (Qualifications Frameworks) and, specifically, *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) (see Appendix III).
- Alignment with the *Expectations and Practices* within the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* (Quality Code) (see Appendix III).
- The setting and verification of programme standards against QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, QAA Qualification Characteristic Statements, and as appropriate, against standards laid down by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). These will normally be expressed in terms of intended learning outcomes.
- The alignment of the curricula of programmes to ensure they fully reflect those intended learning outcomes.
- The alignment of the assessment employed on a programme to ensure that it appropriately measures the student's attainment of the intended learning outcomes.

The term '*Quality*' refers more particularly to:

- The alignment of learning, teaching and assessment strategies, to ensure that they are effective in enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and levels of their awards and to enhance the student experience.
- The monitoring of the progression and achievement of students, from initial enrolment profiles through to completion profiles and subsequent employment/further study.
- The management and deployment of the learning resources required for/available to the programme (including staffing) and monitoring of their effectiveness in assisting students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and levels of their awards.

Responsibility for Standards and Quality

The University, as the awarding institution, is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name no matter where delivered or by whom. These standards must be both equivalent to those for comparable awards delivered by the University and be compatible with any/all relevant benchmarks for all programmes including those delivered under collaborative arrangements. Where a programme leading to an award of the University is delivered at an institution other than the University, written agreements will acknowledge the University's primary responsibility for the setting and verification of academic standards.

Where a programme is delivered by a partner institution, however funded, the quality of the student experience shall be of an equivalent standard to that for a student of the University studying on-campus and the management of the responsibility must accord with University and sector-wide requirements.

Collaborative arrangements must be clearly defined and formally set out and agreed by all of the partners. The University retains overall responsibility for the quality of the student experience. All students enrolled on a University programme, whether at the University or at a Partner institution, are subject to the University Regulations currently in force.

Key Principles

There are eight key principles established by the University to underpin its Standards and Quality. The University's quality assurance procedures and processes flow from these principles and are refined and developed within the context defined by the University's Strategic Plan.

Collegiality

- concern for, and responsibility for, standards and quality is shared by all members of the University and by its partner institutions.

Peer-Based Evaluation

- the standards and quality of provision will be assessed at various stages by groups composed of peers, drawing upon expertise both in the field of study and in the HE sector.

Externality

- peer-based assessment will include representatives of the academic and vocational community providing a vehicle for 'benchmarking' University provision against external standards.

Student Engagement

– the standards and quality of provision will be assessed at various stages by students.

Stakeholder Satisfaction

- feedback from students, industry, employers, PSRBs and other stakeholders is essential information for maintaining and enhancing quality.

Transparency

- the systems and procedures by which quality is assessed will be well documented and their outcomes a matter of public record.

Accountability

- the roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees, for quality assurance and management, will be clearly stated.

Enhancement

– the University will take deliberate steps to enhance the student experience. For example, through teaching quality, where students are co-producers of knowledge.

Key Processes

The University has a number of key processes designed to ensure the setting of appropriate Standards and the maintaining and enhancement of Quality across its provision.



The University publishes a series of Quality Assurance Manuals and associated documents detailing the principles, procedures and practices of each of these key processes. These are listed in Appendix IV.

Appendix I

The Office for Students Initial and General Ongoing Quality and Standards Conditions of Registration

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/conditions-of-registration/>

Conditions of registration are the primary tool that the OfS uses to regulate individual Higher Education providers.

They are minimum requirements that providers must meet in order to be/stay registered with the OfS, because they demonstrate that the provider is able to offer high quality higher education to students.

Initial and general ongoing conditions are those that registered providers must satisfy at the initial time of registering, and then must continue to meet in order to stay registered.

B Conditions: Quality, Reliable Standards and Positive Outcomes for all Students

Condition B1	<p>Academic Experience</p> <p>The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high-quality academic experience. A high-quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring that each course:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is up-to-date 2. provides educational challenge 3. is Coherent 4. is effectively delivered 5. as appropriate to the subject matter of the course, requires student to develop relevant skills
Condition B2	<p>Resources, Support and Student Engagement</p> <p>The Provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students receive resources and support to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a high-quality academic experience for those students: and b. those students succeed in and beyond higher education 2. effective engagement with each cohort of students to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a high-quality academic experience for those students: and b. those students succeed in and beyond high education.
Condition B3	<p>The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.</p>

Condition B4	<p>Assessment and Awards</p> <p>The provider must ensure that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students are assessed effectively; 2. each assessment is valid and reliable; 3. academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible; 4. academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a way which appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; and 5. relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.
Condition B5	<p>Sector-Recognised Standards</p> <p>The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body);</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. any standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; and 2. awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.
Condition B6	<p>The provider must participate in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework.</p>

N.B. Condition B3 is currently under review.

Appendix II

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG).

http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education.

The *Standards* set out agreed and accepted practice for quality assurance in higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and should, therefore, be considered by those concerned, in all types of higher education provision.

The ESG have the following purposes:

- **They set a common framework** for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level
- **They enable the assurance and improvement of quality** of higher education in the European higher education area
- **They support mutual trust**, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders
- **They provide information on quality assurance** in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

Appendix III

UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) was revised and republished in March 2018. The Quality Code aims to continue fulfilling its role as the cornerstone for quality in UK Higher Education, protecting the public and student interest, and championing UK Higher Education's world-leading reputation for quality. The Quality Code continues to articulate fundamental principles that should apply to Higher Education quality across the UK, irrespective of changing national contexts.

The structure of the Quality Code is based on three elements that together provide a reference point for effective quality assurance:

1. **Expectations** which clearly and succinctly express the outcomes providers should achieve in setting and maintaining the standards of their awards, and for managing the quality of their provision.
2. **Practices** representing effective ways of working that underpin the delivery of the Expectations, and will deliver positive outcomes for students. These include:
 - a. **Core Practices** that must be demonstrated by all UK higher education providers as part of assuring their standards and quality.
 - b. **Common Practices** that will be applied by providers in line with their missions, their regulatory context and the needs of their students. These are practices common to the underpinning of quality in all UK providers but are not regulatory requirements for providers in England.
3. **Advice and Guidance** which will help to develop and maintain effective quality assurance practices.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

Qualifications Frameworks

The *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (Qualifications Frameworks) describe the achievement represented by higher education qualifications. They apply to degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic awards granted by a higher education provider with degree awarding powers.

The University's reference point is *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks>

Qualifications Characteristics Statements

Characteristics Statements complement and contextualise the information provided within the Qualifications Frameworks, providing more detail about the distinctive features of qualifications at particular levels of the frameworks and/or of qualifications at any level, which are awarded in a particular way.

Qualification Characteristics Statements are available for Foundation Degrees, Master's Degrees, Doctoral Degrees, Apprenticeships, and Microcredentials.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/characteristics-statements>

Credit Frameworks

Credit is a means of quantifying and recognising learning whenever and wherever it is achieved. It can be used as a tool to compare learning achieved in different contexts.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/higher-education-credit-framework-for-england>

Subject Benchmark Statements

Subject Benchmark Statements set out expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

Appendix IV

University of Lincoln Quality Assurance Manual

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 - Appendix 02b Higher and Degree Apprenticeships
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- 03 Continuous Programme Monitoring
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- 09 Internal Review
- 10 End-Point Assessment Organisation

All Manuals are available via the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships website –
<http://oqsp.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk>

University Policies and Regulations

All are available via the University Secretariat website –
<http://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>