University of West London

The Career University

Academic Quality and Standards Handbook

Section 1: Quality and Standards Framework

2024-25

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

1.1.1 The University of West London ('UWL') is an autonomous degree-awarding body responsible for:

(a) The standard of the awards and qualifications granted in its name; and

(b) The quality of the courses that lead to those awards and qualifications.

1.1.2 The purpose of the Quality and Standards framework is to ensure that the University can give the Board of Governors assurance that the University is monitoring quality and standards appropriately so that it can in turn provide assurances to the Office for Students (OfS). As the framework is risk based, it will identify areas deemed to be most at risk and take appropriate action.

1.1.3 To meet its responsibilities, UWL's Quality and Standards Framework must comply with the OfS Conditions B of registration, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered (including through an academic partnership). The University also seeks to meet the Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code for Higher Education.

2 OFS CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

2.1 Condition B1

The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high quality academic experience.

For the purpose of this condition, a high quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring all of the following:

a. each higher education course is up-to-date;

b. each higher education course provides educational challenge;

c. each higher education course is coherent;

d. each higher education course is effectively delivered; and

e. each higher education course, as appropriate to the subject matter of the course, requires students to develop relevant skills.

2.2 Condition B2

The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure:

a. each cohort of students registered on each higher education course receives resources and support which are sufficient for the purpose of ensuring:

i. a high quality academic experience for those students; and

ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education; and

   b. effective engagement with each cohort of students which is sufficient for the purpose of ensuring:

i. a high quality academic experience for those students; and

ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education.

2.3 Condition B3

The provider must deliver positive outcomes for students on its higher education courses.

For the purpose of this condition, delivering positive outcomes means that either:

   a. in the OfS's judgement, the outcome data for each of the indicators and split indicators are at or above the relevant numerical thresholds; or

   b. to the extent that the provider does not have outcome data for each of the indicators and split indicators that are at or above the relevant numerical thresholds, the OfS otherwise judges that:

i. the provider's context justifies the outcome data; and/or

ii. this is because the OfS does not hold any data showing the provider's numerical performance against the indicator or split indicator; and/or

iii. this is because the OfS does hold this data but the data refers to fewer than the minimum number of students.

2.4 Condition B4

The provider must ensure that:

   a. students are assessed effectively;

   b. each assessment is valid and reliable;

   c. academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible;

   d. academic regulations are designed to ensure effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner that appropriately reflects the level of the applicable higher education course; and

   e. relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.

2.5 Condition B5

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):

 a. any standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; and

 b. awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.

2.6 Condition B6

The provider must participate in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

3 QAA QUALITY CODE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 Sector-Agreed Principles

Sector-Agreed Principles identify the features that are fundamental to securing academic standards and offering a high-quality student learning experience in the UK.

Strategic approach

 1) Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards

 2) Engaging students as partners

 3) Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience

Evaluating quality and standards

 4) Using data to inform and evaluate quality

 5) Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision

 6) Engaging in external review and accreditation

Implementing the approach to quality enhancement and standards

 7) Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes

 8) Operating partnerships with other organisations

 9) Recruiting, selecting and admitting students

 10) Supporting students to achieve their potential

 11) Teaching, learning and assessment

12) Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes.

Key Practices set out how a provider can demonstrate they are adhering to the Sector-Agreed Principles. These are detailed in the full Quality Code.

Advice and Guidance supports the Quality Code by offering further detail in relation to each of the Sector-Agreed Principles. Advice and Guidance is currently being developed by the QAA and will follow shortly.

4   PRINCIPLES AND CONTEXT

4.1   Principles

4.1.1   The Academic Quality and Standards Handbook outlines processes and procedures to support and ensure the effective and efficient implementation of processes to support student achievement of academic standards and a high-quality learning experience.

4.1.2   Each of the processes and procedures is underpinned by the University principles of quality management. These principles are:

(a)   Principle 1: Education is Collaborative

Students, staff, professional bodies, academic partners, employers and local communities are all valuable stakeholders of higher education. The standards and quality of UWL qualifications are ensured when all stakeholders are - individually and collectively - share the development, assurance and enhancement of the educational experience.

(b)   Principle 2: Professionalism is Valued

Standards and quality of University qualifications are ensured by the effective exercising of academic expertise and administrative professionalism. Appropriate documentation of robust dialogue between expert peers, students and wider stakeholders provides the basis for efficient and effective quality assurance and enhancement. A commitment to supporting and maintaining professional and academic expertise is a core part of the University's approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

(c)   Principle 3: Inclusivity is Deliberate and Informed

Schools or Colleges encourage and promote evidenced-based enhancement which seeks to develop a learning environment and curriculum from which students are supported to achieve outcomes which are unaffected by their background or prior educational achievement and which provide opportunities for students to recognise, value and utilise their social and cultural capital.

(d)   Principle 4: Quality Assurance is Effective, Transparent and Proportionate

The aims of quality assurance mechanisms will be made clear and regular reflection on their impact will be undertaken, with the views of key

stakeholders sought and taken into account. Effective and supportive lines of communication will be established between key stakeholders to ensure transparency from all parties, enabling the early reporting of concerns and issues and promoting identification and sharing of good practice. A risk-based approach to quality assurance will be used normally, with clear justification provided where a more standardised approach for all is used.

4.2 Values

4.2.1 The University Quality and Standards Framework is underpinned by the following values:

(a) Students are treated fairly, equitably, and are supported by well qualified staff to access, succeed in, and progress from their chosen University qualification.

(b) Students - irrespective of their background - receive a high-quality academic experience, in line with the standards and quality expressed by the national frameworks.

(c) Students are properly and actively informed at appropriate times of all matters relevant to their course of study.

(d) Students, employers, external experts and wider professional groups have the opportunity to shape the standards and quality of University learning experiences including actively promoting innovation and creativity.

4.2.2 The University believes it must ensure courses - whether delivered solely by the University or in partnership – have undertaken and clearly documented:

(a) Systematic, strategic and informed approval for delivery.

(b) Routine and strategic monitoring, review and updating informed by robust data and information.

(c) Ongoing constructive and expert dialogue with all stakeholders (students, employers, professional bodies) regarding the structure and impact of initiatives for enhancing academic standards and quality.

4.3 Roles to support Quality and Standards

4.3.1 To support the implementation of the University Quality and Standards Framework, it is important to ensure that there are appropriate levels of consistency across Schools and Colleges, and courses. To assist with this, the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook has taken a role-based approach which seeks to provide clarity on responsibility and accountability.

4.3.2 These roles are:

(a) Dean or Director or Head of School or College

(b) School or College Academic Quality Lead

(c)   Course Leader

(d)   Module Leader

(e)   Academic Partnership Link Tutor

(f)   Apprenticeship Support Link Tutor

(g)   Chair of Assessment Boards

(h)   Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Assessor

(i)   Student Representative

(j)   External Adviser

(k)   External Examiner

(l)   External Examiner (EPA)

(m)   EPA External Assessor

(n)   Apprenticeships External Examiner

(o)   Independent Assessor

(p)   Lead Independent Assessor

4.3.3   Each of these roles will undergo initial training upon appointment and receive an initial targeted package of support to undertake their role. For some roles, there will be an additional annual cycle of licensing to ensure their knowledge and skills are up-to-date and continues to provide the assurance of standards and quality required by the University.

4.4   Scope

4.4.1   The Quality and Standards Framework applies to all courses and modules that are delivered directly by the University (including End Point Assessment), as well as those operated in academic partnership with external institutions (i.e. courses that are validated by UWL for delivery by an external institution).

4.4.2   In the case of academic partnerships, the relevant Academic Quality Lead and Academic Partnership Link Tutor must work with the partner(s) to ensure that the course or module operates in accordance with the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook and the Academic Regulations. The role of the Academic Quality Lead (or alternate) is to advise the Academic Partnership Link Tutor, and the Dean or Director or Head of School or College must monitor all aspects of the partnership in collaboration with the Global Partnerships Office and other relevant Professional Services.

4.4.3   The requirements for School and Colleges, individual courses or modules may be altered and 'enhanced' depending upon the level of risk assessed to student

outcomes or experience. This is explained in [Sections 4 and 6 of the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook.](#)

4.5 Terms

4.5.1 To ensure that the expectations of School and Colleges, students and staff are clear the following verbs are adopted:

(a) Must: indicates a process that is always undertaken in all circumstances. Exceptions will only be granted by the Academic Board in exceptional circumstances. For example "Students must receive feedback on all assessed work".

(b) Should: indicates a process that is usually undertaken in all usual circumstances. It may be altered if there are sound pedagogical, practical, or regulatory reasons which prevent adhering to the statement or it is part of a 'pilot' scheme approved by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. For example "Students should be provided with timetables at the start of each module indicating when coursework will be set, and when it is to be submitted".

(c) May: indicates a process that is discretionary but Schools or Colleges are expected to demonstrate that taking the action has been considered, and alternative actions are well-justified (the "comply or explain" principle). For example "A standard template for student feedback may be developed to ensure consistency of feedback across all modules and assessment methods". May is used as an indication of the UWL collective view on good practice.

5 UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE OF QUALITY AND STANDARDS

5.1 Board of Governors

5.1.1 The Board of Governors receives regular updates on quality and standards and the student voice. There is an agreed protocol between the Board of Governors to the effect that it will receive regular updates from the Academic Board by means of its minutes and two annual reports; the first focuses on the development of strategy and policy and the second on student outcomes. Both reports will include updates on the University's quality improvement plan. This plan also features in regular updates to the Audit and Risk Committee, Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Board. In addition to the above, there is a direct link with the Students' Union through the Student Liaison Committee which also reviews the annual report on student complaints and appeals.

5.1.2 In addition, the assurances are provided to the Board of Governors by means of the appropriate, verified data to assess the University's performance as follows:

(a) Graduate employment;

(b) Progression to professional jobs and postgraduate study;

(c) Student retention levels;

(d)   Student completion levels;

(e)   Student recruitment levels;

(f)   Degree outcomes;

(g)   Student entry requirements/ UCAS tariff data;

(h)   National Student Survey results;

(i)   Number of complaints to the OIA.

5.2   University Committees

5.2.1   The governance of quality and standards is managed through the 11 key deliberate Committees or Groups or Boards. All have Students' Union representation:

(a)   Academic Board

(b)   Academic Quality and Standards Committee

(c)   Education Committee

(d)   University Research and Enterprise Committee

(e)   School or College Board

(f)   School or College Quality Committee

(g)   Academic Partnerships Committee

(h)   Apprenticeships and FE Committee

(i)   Equality and Diversity Advisory Group

(j)   Academic Regulations Review Committee.

(k)   Apprenticeships Continuous Quality Improvement Group