



Annual Assurance Report from Senate 2020-21

Outcome requested:	Council is asked to consider the Annual Assurance Report from Senate for 2020-21.
Executive Summary:	<p>Senate's annual assurance report to Council 2020-21 details the formal governance arrangements for managing academic standards and quality during the academic year 2020-21, together with details of significant initiatives related to quality, standards and the student experience.</p> <p>The report explains our baseline compliance with the Office for Students' conditions of registration. Appendix 1 summarises the conditions of registration that relate to quality and standards and provides detail of the responsible body/mechanism for ensuring compliance, alongside developments that have been undertaken during 2020-21 to enhance our arrangements.</p> <p>In addition to this report, Council has received assurance during the year in relation to relevant Strategy KPIs and strategic risks, and the deep dive at the Council away day.</p>
QMUL Strategy: strategic aim reference and sub-strategies [e.g., SA1.1]	<p>Education and the Student Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellence in education • Excellence in student engagement • Excellence in student employability • Excellence in the learning environment
Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:	<p>The Office for Students Regulatory Framework Higher Education and Research Act 2017 UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Assurance Agency) The Higher Education Code of Governance (CUC)</p>
Strategic Risks:	<p>Aligns with strategic risks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greater student satisfaction 4. Remove student attainment gap 7. Improved student progression 16. Compliance
Equality Impact Assessment:	None required. Consideration of academic outcomes for different student groups is embedded in Queen Mary's academic quality assurance arrangements.
Subject to prior and onward consideration by:	<p>Considered by the Education Quality and Standards Board on 29th September 2021. Considered by Senate on 21st October 2021.</p>
Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA:	n/a
Timing:	n/a

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Date:	10 November 2021
Senior Management/External Sponsor:	Jonathan Morgan, Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary

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1. Overview

1.1 Senate is nominated in the Queen Mary Charter as the body with overall responsibility for the academic activity of the university, subject to the general superintendence and control of Council. In practice, Senate assigns individual responsibility to the Vice-Principals for the management of academic quality and standards in the faculties, as well as for the development of cross-cutting academic strategies. It also delegates responsibility for detailed scrutiny of certain issues—the quality of the academic experience; curriculum approval and review; postgraduate research; academic partnerships; and research ethics—to a small number of boards. Senate's role is therefore to hold the Vice-Principals and the chairs of the boards to account, as well as to decide on matters of principle, while giving assurance to Council through regular reports that it is fulfilling its responsibilities effectively.

1.2 The boards of Senate that have responsibilities most closely aligned with the assurances to be given by Council are:

- Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB), chaired by the Vice-Principal (Education), which establishes academic regulations and quality assurance mechanisms, considers the outcomes of reviews of the academic provision, and develops policies to improve the quality of the academic experience;
- Taught Programmes Board (TPB), chaired by the Vice-Principal (Education), which scrutinises and approves the standards, content and arrangements for the delivery of new taught programmes;
- Partnerships Board, chaired by the Vice-Principal (Policy and Strategic Partnerships), which judges the appropriateness of potential partner institutions in teaching and postgraduate research;
- the Degree Examinations Boards, chaired by senior academics appointed by Senate, which consider recommendations from schools and institutes on the academic progress and achievement of individual students in order to gain assurance that institutional procedures for setting and maintaining standards have been followed and that assessment regulations are being applied consistently and fairly;
- Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board, chaired by the Head of the Doctoral College, which combines the functions of EQSB, TPB and the Degree Examinations Boards for postgraduate research.

1.3 The above arrangements are set out in the Academic Governance Framework and supported by the Academic Secretariat. Reviews of academic governance are conducted periodically alongside the corporate governance reviews. The review of academic governance in 2015–16, that was reported to Council, concluded that Queen Mary has a comprehensive academic governance framework that provides structured opportunities for members of staff and students to engage on issues at all levels of the institution and conforms to sectoral expectations. A full review of academic governance has been delayed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic but will take place during 2021-22.

1.4 Sectoral expectations on how universities should manage academic standards and deliver a high-quality student experience are set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education provided by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the body designated by the Secretary of State to carry out the quality and standards assessment functions on behalf of the Office for Students (OfS). Queen Mary meets these expectations through its academic regulations and

a comprehensive set of institution-wide policies found on its website at <http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality-assurance/index.html>.

The arrangements include:

- policies and processes through which Queen Mary assures the standards, content and arrangements for the delivery of new taught programmes before they are offered to students;
- mechanisms for reviewing the 'health' of programmes on an annual basis, using information on student recruitment, progress and achievement, as well as feedback from students;
- mechanisms for reviewing local arrangements in schools and institutes on a six-year cycle;
- the involvement of students and student views in programme approval and review processes;
- the involvement of external specialists (who have been appointed through formal mechanisms to ensure their suitability and independence) in student assessment and programme approval and review processes;
- formal governance arrangements and the work of the Academic Secretariat to ensure that the arrangements are implemented.

The Office for Students is consulting on its arrangements for regulating quality and standards; its proposals, if implemented, will not require institutions to comply with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Rather, the OfS proposes to amend its current conditions of registration for managing quality and standards to include detailed explanations regarding expectations for compliance, and examples of issues that will be considered to breach of the conditions of registration.

1.5 As was the case for the majority of 2020, during 2020-21 the priorities for academic standards and quality were focused on the arrangements to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on student assessment, progression and award. The Queen Mary Covid Mitigating Measures Policy 2020-21 was developed by a group that was co-chaired by the Deputy Vice-Principal (Education Strategy) and the Vice-President (Science and Engineering) of the Queen Mary Students' Union. The group met regularly in order to develop the arrangements as a co-created process, overseen by the Vice-Principal (Education) to ensure that proposals aligned with guidance from the Office for Students. The arrangements were also informed by the requirements of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), some of which amended elements of their requirements in the light of the impact of the pandemic on assessment.

1.6 The arrangements for 2020-21 were considered the Education Quality and Standards Board on behalf of Senate. Queen Mary is confident that the principles and Policies were deployed effectively to protect academic standards while ensuring the best outcomes for students. Feedback on the arrangements was provided by external examiners at meetings of Subject Examination Boards, and by the external member of the Degree Examination Board. The Degree Examination Board makes academic awards on the recommendation of Subject Examination Boards and is supported in its work by an external member who provides commentary on the application of the academic regulations and the maintenance of academic standards.

1.7 Significant areas of work during 2020-21 have included:

- **Assessment and feedback work stream**
This work stream formed part of the Curriculum Enhancement Project and comprised a working group that oversaw five task and finish groups each focussed on a particular aspect of assessment and feedback: marking, external examining, assessment design and feedback, the student voice in assessment, and assessment integrity and security.
- **The delivery of mixed-mode education**
In advance of the 2021-22 academic year, the University has developed a mixed mode education approach, which allows students to participate fully whether they are physically in the room or joining an activity remotely. Central to the delivery of this approach has been the upgrade of audio-visual equipment in more than 100 rooms across our campuses, and training 1071 staff in both the technology and the associated pedagogy.
- **NSS Task Force**
An NSS Task Force was established following the publication of the 2020 NSS results. The Task Force has supported a number of Schools and Institutes in understanding their results and developing action plans.
- **Adviser training**
Further to the review of the advisor scheme, which was completed during September 2020, a series of new training resources for advisors have been developed by the Queen Mary Academy which include an online training course, Effective Advising.
- **Review of programme approval, monitoring and review**
A dedicated project board is considering revisions to processes for programme approval, monitoring and review. The work follows an initial review which featured a pilot programme of reviews in 2019-20 and seeks to streamline processes while ensuring agility and robustness of approach in addressing any emerging issues.
- **Student voice**
A working group, supported by the Queen Mary Academy, has developed a course, Co-chairing and co-creating in Student-Staff Liaison Committees, which aims to promote strong partnerships between student and staff co-chairs and opportunities for co-creation in Student-Staff Liaison Committees.
- **Learner engagement analytics**
Work is underway to develop a Queen Mary approach to Learner Analytics that is rooted in our values and aims to support the student experience while providing a better understanding of student engagement in order to develop engaging pedagogy.
- **Inclusive curriculum**
This work, which also forms part of the Curriculum Enhancement Project, has developed a set of [eight principles which underpin inclusive practice](#) through a process of engagement with Schools/Institutes, Professional Services, and QMSU. The principles have been illustrated through a series of case studies which reflect good practice from across the Faculties.
- **Graduate attributes**
Work is underway to refresh the Queen Mary Graduate Attributes as part of the Curriculum Enhancement Project. Programme teams are being given the opportunity to build on the existing attributes so that they are relevant, discipline-specific and reflect good practice from across the sector.

- **Review of compliance with consumer protection law**

The Office for Students required all institutions to conduct an audit of their compliance with consumer protection law at the beginning of 2021. Audits of undergraduate and postgraduate provision were undertaken, and the reports of these audits confirmed that there was good evidence to provide assurance that the University had complied with consumer protection law. Council has received the reports of the audits at previous meetings.

1.8 Appendix 1 contains a summary of the conditions of registration with the Office for Students and detail of the usual mechanisms for monitoring compliance with these, together with any amendments made during 2020-21. As noted, several aspects of the framework for monitoring academic standards and quality are under review with the aim of refining our approach to programme review and reducing burden on academic colleagues, enabling effort to be targeted where it is needed most.

1.9 During the 2020-21 academic year Council has considered the following items in relation to academic assurance:

- a report following each meeting of Senate
- TEF Metrics
- Reports on student surveys
- Annual Student Casework Report

Jane Pallant, Deputy Academic Registrar (Secretariat)
September 2021

Appendix 1

<p>Condition of registration with the Office for Students: B: Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students</p>	<p>Responsible body/mechanism</p>	<p>Changes or amendments during 2020-21</p>
<p>B1: The provider must deliver well designed courses that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed</p>	<p>Senate Taught Programmes Board Education Quality and Standards Board</p>	<p>Queen Mary Covid Mitigation Measures, were developed in partnership with students and built on the principles and policies for the management of assessment, progression and award approved during 2019-20.</p> <p>The process for approving new programmes of study has been the focus of a project board led by the Deputy Vice-Principal (Education). The revised process will streamline programme approval while ensuring that it is agile and that resource is appropriately aligned to support new initiatives.</p>
<p>B2: The provider must support all students, from admission through to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.</p>	<p>Student and Academic Services Admissions Policies Queen Mary Academy</p>	<p>Queen Mary Academy has delivered an ambitious and comprehensive training programme for academic advisers. This programme will ensure that academic staff are equipped to support students through the full range of teaching and learning activity.</p>
<p>B3: The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and</p>	<p>Subject Examination Boards Degree Examination Boards External Examiners reports</p>	<p>The principles and policies approved for use in 2020-21 were</p>

Appendix 1

<p>valued by employers, and/or enable further study.</p>	<p>Engagement with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies</p>	<p>reviewed by external examiners and the external member of the Degree Examination Board.</p>
<p>B4: The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards.</p>	<p>Annual Programme Review Periodic Review Degree Outcomes Statement External engagement</p>	<p>The processes for programme monitoring and review are currently under discussion as part of the Project Board SP109 to ensure that mechanisms for programme review are effective, risk-based and improve the student experience.</p> <p>Queen Mary Academy has developed training resources for external examiners.</p>
<p>B5: The provider must deliver courses that meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications at Level 4 or higher.</p>	<p>External examiner engagement Academic Regulations Assessment Governance</p>	<p>Assessment and feedback workstream which had oversight of five task and finish groups with a focus on a specific aspect of assessment and feedback: marking, external examining, assessment design and feedback, the student voice in assessment, and assessment integrity and security.</p>
<p>C: Protecting the interests of all students C1: The provider must demonstrate that in developing and implementing its policies, procedures and terms and conditions, it has given due regard to relevant guidance about how to comply with consumer protection law.</p>	<p>Complaints Procedure Terms and Conditions Student Protection Plan</p>	<p>Review of the complaints procedure to streamline the process.</p> <p>Regular review of terms and conditions and the Student Protection Plan.</p>

Appendix 1

		Review of compliance with consumer protection law for both UG and PG provision
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