1495 UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UK Quality Code 2024: Institutional Mapping

Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality

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PRINCIPLE 4: USING DATA TO INFORM AND EVALUATE QUALITY

Introduction

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) articulates the principles of UK higher education for securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality. The Quality Code is a sector-led reference point which can be used in a range of flexible ways. It enables providers to evaluate their policies and practices with reference to Sector-Agreed Principles and it aligns with key international reference points including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The Quality Code is comprised of two key elements: (i) sector-agreed principles; and (ii) key practices. Sector-agreed principles identify the features that are fundamental to securing academic standards and offering a high-quality student learning experience. Key practices set out how a provider can demonstrate they are adhering to the sector-agreed principles. There are 12 principles and each has a set of key practices which providers can follow to demonstrate how they are adhering to that principle.

Under the theme, evaluating quality and standards, **Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality** outlines the practices which inform and evaluate quality and academic standards, and their enhancement therein, by way of use of data. In doing so, the Quality Code sets out the following: *Providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, programme and module levels. These analyses inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience.*

In undertaking this mapping to the UK Quality Code, a number of stakeholders were consulted across the University to ensure that the information presented is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Additionally, it should be noted that the information contained within each section of the mapping is current as at time of publication. Further updates to the UK Quality Code Mapping will follow on an annual basis and will be overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

Key Practices

Key Practices	University Commentary	Supporting Documentation
(a) A consistent, coherent and evidence-informed strategic approach to the collection, storage and management of data is employed across the provider. The provider makes explicit the type and level of data utilised (such as departmental, programme, module level) and the policies and processes that underpin its use in the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality.	The University uses data to provide an evidence base to inform institutional and academic school level decision making. As part of an ongoing project to enhance access to data, the University uses a business intelligence platform, Microsoft PowerBI, which allows Schools to access data pertinent to their own School and provides data on areas such as student population, student admission applications, research income, research applications and awards, Research Excellence Framework (REF) results, Graduate Outcomes results, National Student Survey (NSS) results, and degree classifications data. Further data will be added to this platform in the next phases of the project. The University has a dedicated Information Governance Team and Data Protection Officer whom, in consultation with key stakeholders and groups, develops and reviews the University approach to Data Protection compliance and Records Management. The University's Data Protection Policy outlines responsibilities in regard to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Retention policies ensure the appropriate management of data and ensure it is disposed of appropriately when no longer required in accordance with the Records Management Policy. The University maintains a suite of documentation and processes which are kept up to date, approved via the Information Governance Committee and communicated via a communications plan to the wider University community to ensure a consistent and coherent approach. Further, these policies and processes ensure that decision making is recorded in accordance with the Accountability Principle under UK GDPR. The University uses survey data to inform decision making and enhancement to the student experience. Such survey information includes National Student Survey data, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, Undergraduate Experience Survey, and the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey. Furthermore, Course Feedback and Reflection Forms provide course level data and more ad hoc surveys are also used to ascertain feedback on particular services or specific topics. These various metrics are used by University and School Committees to provide an evidence base to support monitoring and evaluation and to inform	Annual Course & Programme Review (Webpage) Data & Business Intelligence Hub (webpage) Data Protection (Webpage) Data Protection Policy (Policy) Equality Impact Assessment (Webpage) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Policy) Inclusivity and Accessibility (Webpage) Inclusivity and Accessibility Framework (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Monitoring & Review (Webpage) Records Management (Webpage) Records Management Policy (Policy) Surveys (Webpage)

	decision making (for example at School Education Committees, Student Support and Experience Committee, Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee, University Education Committee). Such information is also used as part of the Institutional Planning Process through use of key performance indicators to enable monitoring of progress towards objectives. Such metrics are also used in the processes for monitoring and review of teaching and learning: our Annual Course (ACR) and Programme Review (APR) processes and our Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process. In ACR and APR, analysis of course and programme data is an important component of the process. Similarly, within the ITR process, an action plan is identified with key performance indicators identified as to how the School will achieve the actions as set out. Staff including External Examiners are trained on how to deal with potentially sensitive or confidential information. Information is provided in induction materials pertaining to the handling of data. The University makes use of key principles in relation to inclusivity and accessibility for all students accessing their education. An Inclusivity and Accessibility in Education Framework has been developed which aims to enable inclusion and accessibility to be fully integrated into all aspects of the design and delivery of learning, teaching and assessment. The Framework draws together relevant guidance, policies, resources, support and specialist training relating to accessibility and inclusivity. The University operates Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that no group is discriminated against and to ensure activities are carried out in a fair and transparent way. All new policies should be reviewed by means of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure they are fit for purpose in an inclusive environment.	
(b) Staff and students are aware of the types of data gathered and how it is stored and used in the management of quality and standards.	The University is committed to protecting personal information and being clear on what information is collected and how it is used. The approach to data is supported by the University's Data Protection Policy. The University adopts a layered approach to the provision of privacy notices to all data subjects (including staff and students) with the majority of these available on the University website.	Data Protection Policy (Policy) Privacy Notice (Webpage) Example: Privacy Notice within Document (Document) Example: Privacy Notice within Webpage (Document)

	Other privacy notices are included directly within application forms, for example, or are uploaded to a dedicated page on the University website specific to that subject matter. *Examples are provided in the supporting documentation*. As indicated on the privacy notice landing page on the University website, there are various privacy notices directed at specific data subjects, for example, staff and students, but also privacy notices which are more specific to the purpose of the processing. The links to the privacy notices are provided at the earliest point in the process (for example, in a research Participant Information Sheet) or on an application form. These privacy notices include required details such as the types of data gathered and storage/retention of data.	
(c) When designing and operating monitoring and evaluation arrangements, staff and students adhere to ethical and data protection requirements relating to gathering and submitting data for national data sets, regulatory purposes, and internal monitoring and evaluation.	The University's Data Protection Policy sets out the University's responsibilities as Controller and Processor. The University carries out Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) where the processing meets the relevant criteria. Details are provided on the University website including links to template DPIA documentation. In a research context, specific Data Protection advice is provided to researchers via the University website and via a bespoke Guidance document. Further, the Information Governance Team provide an annual training session aimed at Data Protection and Information Governance for researchers which is open to staff and postgraduate students. Various metrics are used in the processes for monitoring and review of teaching and learning: the Annual Course (ACR) and Programme Review (APR) processes and the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process. In ACR and APR, analysis of course and programme data is an important component of the process. Similarly, within the ITR process, an action plan is identified with key performance indicators identified as to how the School will achieve the actions as set out. Staff and students participating in the annual and periodic review processes are expected to comply with all information governance legislation and policy.	Annual Course & Programme Review (Webpage) Data Protection Checklist for Researchers (Document) Data Protection Impact Assessments (Webpage) Data Protection Policy (Policy) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Research and Data Protection (Webpage)
(d) Staff who are required to collect, manipulate and analyse	The University issues mandatory data protection training and information security training to all staff annually.	Data and Business Intelligence Hub: PowerBI Training (Webpage)

data for reporting, quality assurance and enhancement purposes receive training that enables them to undertake these activities effectively, ethically and securely. Policies cover any third-party use of data, including applications utilising Generative Artificial Intelligence.	The University requires all staff to carry out a data protection impact assessment (DPIA) before embarking on high-risk processing of personal data. The Data & BI Hub offers training to support the use of Microsoft Power BI at the University of Aberdeen, including mandatory training for access to dashboards to ensure ethical and secure collection and use of data. The University's Research Handbook provides detailed guidance on research ethics and governance. The University has a Supplier Cyber and Data Assessment (SCDA) in place to ensure personal data is protected by suppliers and that information is given the appropriate level of security. This would include any use of AI in the supply chain. There are template SCDAs which are incorporated within Procurement processes and guidance is also in place. The responses are assessed by the Information Governance and Information Security Teams. The University's Information Security Policies apply to third party suppliers providing hosting and other services to the University.	Data Protection Impact Assessments (Webpage) Information Security (Webpage) Mandatory Data Protection Awareness Training (Webpage) Research Data Management (Webpage) Research Governance (Webpage) Supplier Assessment (Webpage)
(e) Providers in partnership arrangements (including the student representative body, where applicable) ensure data sharing agreements and reporting requirements are clearly stated, understood and reviewed periodically.	The University's Data Protection Policy sets out arrangements and requirements relating to data sharing and further details are provided on the University's Data Protection webpages. Data Sharing Agreements (or data sharing clauses within overarching agreements) are put in place where appropriate. A data sharing agreement involving personal data should document the parties involved, the purposes of the arrangement, the data to be shared, the lawful basis and any exemptions for special category of personal data or criminal offence data, the arrangements for complying with data subjects' rights and the operational procedures for sharing data, including any agreed security measures to protect the data. The University, in its operation of transnational education and partnerships, ensures that data sharing agreements are in place to enable effective and transparent operation of the partnership. For example, the University's partnership with South China Normal University to operate the Joint Aberdeen Institute of Artificial Intelligence and Data Science makes use of dedicated data sharing sites to ensure effective communication and operation of the partnership. This approach ensures compliance with both UK and Chinese data protection legislation.	Data Protection Policy (Policy) Data Sharing (Webpage)

(f) Data is collected and analysed in ways that enable providers to understand and respond to the needs of their student populations, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability.	The University collates a number of datasets pertaining to students and staff. A Data and Business Intelligence Hub provides access to students' data in a variety of areas. The Data and Business Intelligence Hub is a series of Power BI data dashboards, managed by the Data and Business Intelligence team, within the Directorate of Planning and Governance. In that regard, a number of dashboards exist pertaining to, for example: • Course and Programme Enrolments; • Student Withdrawals and Non-Continuations; • Admissions; • Degree Classifications and Awarding Gaps; • National Student Survey; • Graduate Outcomes; and • League Table Staff-Student Ratios. Data can be broken down to subject and course level, which allows Schools the opportunity to review whether there are any particular issues of interest which might be addressed by intervention. For example, the datasets include data pertaining to protected characteristics, which highlights trends in relation to particular groups of students (e.g. for withdrawals and non-continuation). Data from admissions to graduations allows the University to ascertain the demographics of the student population in order that it is responsive to student needs. Further, the University prepares data in relation to its student casework processes for appeals, complaints and academic discipline. This data includes student demographic data to identify any trends and analysis is prepared highlighting potential reasons for some of the data trends identified. The complaints data is published and made publicly available on the University's webpages. Through the University's Annual Course and Programme Review processes, the University provides responses to student needs and feedback, through use of a variety of student feedback and data collation channels, such as Course Feedback and Reflection Forms, and Staff-Student Liaison Committees. Both Annual Course Review (ACR) and Annual Programme Review (APR) processes allow for comment on equality, diversity and inclusion issues, including aspects related to decolonising the curriculum.	Data Protection Policy (Policy) Data and Business Intelligence Hub (Webpage) Annual Course and Programme Review (Webpage) Course Evaluation (Webpage) Staff-Student Liaison Committees (Document) Course and Programme Approvals (Webpage) Appeals and Complaints Data (Webpage)

	The Quality Assurance Committee adopts a flexible approach to consideration of course and programme proposal forms. Through consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion matters pertaining to course and programme approvals, the University is able to consider student needs at the point at which courses and programmes are approved. Additionally, the Quality Assurance Committee offers the opportunity for late assessment changes in the planning cycle for Schools to make any necessary changes in respect of student feedback. For example, in response to feedback from the National Student Survey or Course Feedback and Reflection Forms. Importantly, key data is made available to Schools and discussed at key University committees, both at School- and University-level. For instance, School Education Committees or Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committees consider relevant datasets, such as appeals, complaints and discipline data.	