

UK Quality Code 2024: Institutional Mapping

Principle 6: Engaging in external review and accreditation

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PRINCIPLE 6: ENGAGING IN EXTERNAL REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION

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 6: Engaging in external review and accreditation** outlines the key practices in respect of external review, whether by national regulatory or accrediting body at all levels of the University. In doing so, the Quality Code sets out the following: *Providers engage with external reviews to give assurance about the effectiveness of their approach to managing quality and standards. External reviews offer insights about the comparability of providers' approaches and generate outcomes that providers can use to enhance their policies and practices. Reviews may be commissioned by providers, form part of a national quality framework or linked to professional recognition and actively include staff, students and peers. They can be undertaken by representative organisations, agencies or professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with recognised sector expertise according to the provision being reviewed.*

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 |
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| <p>(a) External review, whether optional or required by national quality frameworks or accrediting bodies, is built into the provider's strategic approach and aligns to internal quality and standards monitoring and evaluation activity.</p> | <p>The University's strategic approach to quality assurance and enhancement is overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), who hold responsibility for the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards across all taught provision at the University. This includes regular updates in respect of external review, including standing items on QAC meeting agendas to provide the Committee with an update on recent developments in the external regulatory landscape and also to provide awareness of recent accreditations.</p> <p>The University complies with a number of external arrangements in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, including liaison with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland (QAAS) and ensures it is built into the strategic approach to quality assurance and enhancement. In particular, the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) supports enhancement and gives assurance on quality standards and the quality of the student experience, and informs the review, monitoring and evaluation of the University's strategic approach to quality.</p> <p>On an annual basis, the University completes a Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) which is submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and which replaced the annual report on institutional quality review. The SEAP supports the University to reflect annually on institutional quality assurance and enhancement activities and outcomes, including reflections on the actions from the previous external review. The action plan also allows the University to plan and monitor key strategic enhancements. The SEAP is followed up through engagement with the SFC and QAAS, by way out institutional meetings (such as Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM)).</p> <p>The University also submits an annual report in relation to Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP), which replaced the Enhancement Themes. The report allows the University to reflect on its engagement with the STEP in the preceding academic year and outline the key areas of success and challenges. It also captures plans and intentions for the following year of the STEP cycle.</p> | <p>Annual Course and Programme Review (Webpage)</p> <p>External Quality Review (Webpage)</p> <p>Internal Teaching Review (Webpage)</p> <p>Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage)</p> <p>Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (Webpage)</p> <p>Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (Guidance)</p> <p>Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (Webpage)</p> |

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| | <p>Internally, the University's Annual Course and Programme Review (ACR and APR) and Internal Teaching Review (ITR) processes allow for reflection at a course, programme and School-level on the provision of education and the student experience. Both ACR/APR and ITR processes feed into the preparations and submissions as part of external review mechanisms. ITR processes also include external subject specialists which provides external oversight and input into the education provision within academic Schools. Additionally, Annual and Periodic review processes allow for input from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).</p> | |
| <p>(b) Providers use outcomes from external review and accreditation as a catalyst for ongoing improvement and strategic enhancement of the student learning experience.</p> | <p>The University is committed to enhancement of its provision and always uses the outcomes from external review arrangements to ensure continued enhancement of academic standards. In doing so, the University ensures regular updates to its action plans from external review, such as the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR), which the University underwent in February 2023. The action plan is regularly reviewed by the action owners and signed off by the Quality Assurance Committee. The University regularly updates its External Quality Review webpages in this regard.</p> <p>On an annual basis, the University is required to submit to the SFC, a Self-Evaluation and Action Plan, which is signed off by the Senior Management at the University and reported to the Education Committee structure. The reporting to the QAC and University Education Committee (UEC) ensures institutional awareness of key actions identified and monitoring of any progress in this regard. The action plan also details follow-up from external review mechanisms to ensure closure of the feedback loop in respect of reviews previously undertaken (such as QESR, and the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review).</p> <p>The Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process ensures that external expertise is embedded into the review mechanism, with external subject specialists appointed as full panel members. In some cases, recent examples have included external subject specialist expertise from a PSRB organisation. For example, for the ITR of the School of Law, a representative from the Law Society for Scotland (a PSRB accreditor for the School of Law's programmes) was appointed as one of the external subject specialists, which ensures both internal and external review mechanisms are working collaboratively. Following the ITR, a report is produced detailing an action plan for the School</p> | <p>Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR 4) (Webpage) External Examining (Webpage) External Quality Review (Webpages) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review: School of Law Report (Document) Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (Webpage) Quality Enhancement and Standards Review Action Plan (Document) Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (Guidance) University Education Committee (Webpage)</p> |

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| | <p>to take forward over the following years. Annually, the action plan progress is updated to QAC.</p> <p>External Examiners also form a part of the external expertise and review mechanisms at the University. All taught provision is covered by external expertise in the form of at least one External Examiner. As part of the external examining process, External Examiners are required to submit a report to the University annually which identifies areas of good practice and areas for further development and enhancement. Responses are provided to the annual reports by the Schools and QAC, with a fully signed off report being returned to an External Examiner in order that they can review the comments to their recommendations and observations. Further, External Examiner Reports are published on MyAberdeen, on an organisation page titled <i>Acting on Feedback</i> to ensure the closure of the feedback loop for students.</p> | |
| <p>(c) Providers acknowledge and support the expertise and resource required to participate in external review and accreditation.</p> | <p>The University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has a prominent role in the oversight of external review and accreditations across the University. Part of the remit of the QAC is responsibility, on behalf of the Senate, for the oversight of the University's engagement with the work of the Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland (QAAS), including for external review mechanisms. The QAC, in this regard, oversees the appropriate resource and expertise in supporting external review and accreditation processes. Within the QAC, there is representation and input from all academic Schools of the University covering all academic disciplines, including arts, humanities and social sciences; science, engineering and technology; and life sciences and healthcare.</p> <p>The QAC is supported by the Academic Services team, who are responsible for the coordination and administration of external review mechanisms, including liaison with relevant stakeholders and external bodies to ensure the effective organisation of the reviews.</p> <p>In that regard, regular updates are provided to the QAC in respect of external review and accreditations, including regular updates to the institutional register for Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. Updates are provided to University Committees, including the QAC and the University Education Committee (UEC), as often as required in relation to external review. Updates include preparations and the necessary requirements to be fulfilled by the University over the course of preparation and the review itself.</p> | <p>Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) University Education Committee (Webpage) Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (Webpage) External Quality Review (Webpage) External Examining (Webpage)</p> |

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| | <p>In relation to the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER), preparations are being managed by a small team, including the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Vice-President for Education at the Students' Union, and representatives from the Academic Services team. This approach ensures effective engagement with key stakeholders throughout the review period, and that preparations can be progressed as necessary. Throughout the preparatory period, forum-style engagement ensures that stakeholders across the University, both academic and professional services alike, are able to input to the submission as part of the review. Further information will follow on the External Quality Review webpages.</p> <p>Throughout the University, there are a number of individuals who have undertaken the appropriate training, provided by QAA, to become a reviewer for the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER). The expertise of these individuals is recognised and drawn upon in the preparations for external review.</p> <p>The University's register of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, detailing all accreditations for Schools and Programmes across the University is updated biannually and presented to the QAC for information. The Register is updated by the Academic Services team with input from the relevant Schools to ensure regular review and current information being presented.</p> <p>The University also recognises the importance of External Examiners as part of the external review of the quality of the University's education provision. Upon their induction, External Examiners are provided with training and induction materials pertinent to their roles to ensure that they can effectively discharge their duties during their tenure.</p> | |
| (d) Providers who engage in external review understand the UK national regulatory and legislative contexts in which they operate and the different approaches, forms and focus they may take. Providers may engage colleagues with international expertise, in | <p>The University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has a prominent role in the oversight of external review and accreditations across the University. Part of the remit of the QAC is responsibility, on behalf of the Senate, for the oversight of the University's engagement with the work of the Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland (QAAS), including for external review mechanisms. The QAC, in this regard, oversees the appropriate resource and expertise in supporting external review and accreditation processes.</p> | <p>Accredited Professional Development: ABDN:PRS Scheme (Webpage) Applications: ABDN:PRS Scheme (Webpage) External Examining (Webpage) External Quality Review (Webpage) Principles of Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (Webpage) QAC Members' Guide (Document)</p> |

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| <p>addition to those familiar with UK requirements.</p> | <p>The QAC is supported by the Academic Services team, who are responsible for the coordination and administration of external review mechanisms, including liaison with relevant stakeholders and external bodies to ensure the effective organisation of the reviews. The Academic Services team ensure that regulatory and legislative requirements are borne in mind during preparations for any review.</p> <p>In that regard, regular updates are provided to the QAC in respect of external review and accreditations, including regular updates to the institutional register for Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. Updates are provided to University Committees, including the QAC and the University Education Committee (UEC), as often as required in relation to external review. Updates include preparations and the necessary requirements to be fulfilled by the University over the course of preparation and the review itself. Updated quality guidance from the Scottish Funding Council or Quality Assurance Agency are also presented to Committee where appropriate for their information.</p> <p>In relation to the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER), preparations are being managed by a small team, including the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Vice-President for Education at the Students' Union, and representatives from the Academic Services team. As part of the organisation for the review, forum-style engagement sessions will be held to ensure effective engagement from colleagues across the University. In addition, separate briefings will take place immediately prior to the initial and main review visits to ensure that all staff participating are aware of their role and responsibilities in the respective sessions. This will further ensure effective engagement and knowledge of the legislative and regulatory contexts in which the University is operating.</p> <p>The University's Committee structures also ensure effective communication between central governance and academic Schools. For instance, on each of the Education Committees, a School representative is present for all Schools, who acts as a conduit between central and School governance structures. Those representatives on Education Committees are expected to liaise with School Education and Executive Committees as required in relation to the business of the central Education Committees. This ensures that regulatory or</p> | <p>Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (Webpage) University Committees (Webpage) University Education Committee (Webpage)</p> |
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| | <p>legislative updates provided to Committees are disseminated to Schools as appropriate, along with aspects of good practice.</p> <p>On an annual basis, a QAC Members' Guide is updated and provided to members to assist them in the effective discharge of their duties. The QAC Members' Guide provides guidance and support with relevant processes, such as annual course and programme review, and curriculum approvals, which assists the QAC members in their roles. The QAC Members' Guide is also provided to new QAC members upon their induction as it provides a useful reference point, detailing all University and external quality processes that are relevant to the School QAC member role.</p> <p>The University has two accredited lines of provision with Advance HE, thereby allowing members of academic and professional services staff who teach and/or support learning to work towards Associate Fellow, Fellow, and Senior Fellow status (D1-D3) with Advance HE. It is not compulsory for staff to hold a category of fellowship. There is a six-week taught route to Associate Fellow; the Principles of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PLTHE) course. Furthermore, PGR students and staff can be paired with a mentor to work on a written application for D1-D3. Both lines of provision are accredited by Advance HE, against the Professional Standards Framework 2023, until 2027. Moreover, the PLTHE course was approved by the University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) as it is also a zero-credit course within the School of Education, thereby giving it further credibility.</p> <p>The University also recognises the importance of External Examiners as part of the external review of the quality of the University's education provision. Upon their induction, External Examiners are provided with training and induction materials pertinent to their roles to ensure that they can effectively discharge their duties during their tenure. This includes their role and responsibility, and the requirements of them therein.</p> | |
| (e) Providers understand the requirements and process for external reviews that may be required by regulators in partner delivery locations. | <p>The University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has a prominent role in the oversight of external review and accreditations across the University. The remit of the QAC includes partnerships and transnational education, ensuring appropriate global quality assurance on all programmes and courses designed, delivered and awarded by the University. The QAC retains oversight of requirements of partnership arrangements, including international quality arrangements. The University has an International Partnerships workflow for</p> | <p>International Advisory Group (Webpage) Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) University Partnerships Committee (Webpage) Setting up a Partnership (Webpage) QE-TNE Scheme (Webpage)</p> |

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| | <p>approving new or renewed international teaching partnerships, such as articulation and dual degree arrangements. With Head of School support, the Proposer completes the International Partnership Initiation Consent Form, which is reviewed by the QAC, the International Advisory Group (IAG), and approved by the University Partnerships Committee (UPC).</p> <p>The University ensures continued engagement with partners regarding requirements for accreditations and/or regulatory requirements. For instance, the University's partnership with AFG College to deliver the Qatar campus underwent a recent relicensing with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar. Additionally, the partnership submitted to the National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation (NCQAA) to accredit its provision. The University and partner ensured collaborative working in the preparations for the submission, which included both narrative and evidence submissions.</p> <p>Additionally, as a further example, the University's Joint Institute with South China Normal University adheres to the regulatory requirements as required in China. In doing so, both Universities work together to ensure effective engagement in review mechanisms, such as the Mid-Term Review, and on annual review submissions to the SCNU and Chinese Ministry of Education. The preparations for both reviews are overseen by the Joint Institute Academic Group and Academic Committee, which includes representation from both Universities.</p> <p>Governance structures related to the transnational education partnerships also ensure effective oversight of requirements of the University and partner therein. For example, the Qatar Campus includes a number of Committees and Groups which include representation from the University and Partner, such as Qatar Strategic Partnership Board; and Qatar Academic Planning Sub-Group. Conversely, for the South China Normal University Joint Institute, a number of Groups / Committees support the work of the Joint Institute, including the Academic Group and Academic Committee, as well as an Implementation Group. Through the appropriate governance structures, the University is able to assure its understanding of the relevant legislative and regulatory requirements in the international context. Clearly, different approaches have been taken for these example partnerships, which</p> | |
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| | <p>demonstrates the University is flexible and agile in adapting to fit the specifications of international partnerships.</p> <p>A Transnational Education Action Group was established in response to the Financial Recovery Plan which oversees the development of new international partnerships, prior to consideration at the International Advisory Group (IAG), University Partnerships Committee (UPC) and QAC. These groups/Committees together oversee the initiation, development/renewal, and termination of such partnerships with regular reporting thereon (on an annual basis) to the UPC. UPC itself reports to the Senior Management Team and, through that, to the University Court. The requirements of international partners therein are reviewed and assessed by various Committees prior to implementation of the partnership arrangements.</p> <p>Additionally, the QAC has changed its process for the approval of partnership arrangements, notably including fortnightly meetings with the Dean of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Academic Services to consider partnership proposals and agreements to ensure effective oversight and scrutiny. This approach also ensures that the wider implications of a partnership proposal can be considered and challenged as relevant.</p> <p>The University is part of the QAA Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK TNE (QE-TNE) Scheme, joining in 2021. By registering for the QAA QE-TNE Scheme, the University is investing in the quality of our students' academic experience and demonstrating our commitment to the advancement of UK higher education delivered overseas. Membership of the Scheme is also extended to partnership organisations; as such, AFG College in Qatar is also a registered member of the Scheme.</p> | |
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