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UK Quality Code 2024: Institutional Mapping

Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes

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PRINCIPLE 7: DESIGNING, DEVELOPING, APPROVING AND MODIFYING PROGRAMMES

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, implementing the approach to quality enhancement and standards, **Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes** outlines key practices in relation to the design, development and approval of courses and programmes as part of quality assurance and enhancement processes. In doing so, the Quality Code sets out the following: *Providers design, develop, approve and modify programmes and modules to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant Qualifications Framework. Providers ensure their provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered across the UK and, where applicable, The Framework of Qualifications for The European Higher Education Area*.

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) All programmes and modules meet academic standards that are consistent with relevant national qualifications and credit frameworks. Where applicable, provision also meets professional body and accreditation requirements, and apprenticeship standards.	The University programme proposal forms for the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) require that internal and external points of reference must be used to inform the design of programmes. Reference points include the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code, national subject benchmark statements, information about similar or parallel programmes elsewhere and within the University, expectations of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), and employer input. Through the Curriculum Management System, details of all external reference points used to inform programme and course design are collected. This information is considered as part of the approval process by the Quality Assurance Committee. Additionally, the Programme Management Committee (PMC) ensures effective management of the University's portfolio of taught programmes and stand-alone courses, relating to the approval of business cases pertaining to the viability of new programmes, and considering suspensions, withdrawals and amendments to existing programmes. Following which, the QAC will approve the programmes on behalf of Senate. External Examiners provide Schools with further valuable external reference in regard to the comparability of provision to that of other institutions. They also provide valuable insight into the alignment of programmes and courses to external reference points. This advice is used to inform course design and development. Programme Advisory Boards (PABs) in some Schools enable discussion between Schools and employers regarding proposed new programmes and courses and enable proposals being made to be informed by employer insight. The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) runs courses designed for staff engaged in learning and teaching in higher education. These courses focus on a range of topics and provide development opportunities for new or early-career staff to enhance their knowledge-base and skills and ensure compliance with external regulatory bodies. Topics include curriculum design, assessment, feedback, learning outcomes, blended learning, and accessibility and inclusion. Furthermore, there are extended taught, professional programmes that staff and PGRs who teach and/or support learning can	Accredited Professional Development: ABDN:PRS Scheme (Webpage) Centre for Academic Development Design, Deliver and Evaluate your Teaching (Webpage) External Examining (Webpage) Introduction to Learning & Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Aberdeen Course (Webpage) Microcredential Short Course: Enhancing your Teaching (Webpage) Principles of Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (Webpage) Programme Advisory Board (Webpage) Programme Management Committee (Webpage) QAA UK Quality Code (Webpage) Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (Webpage) Subject Benchmark Statements (Webpage) TESTA @ the University of Aberdeen (Webpage)

	undertake, which are accredited by AdvanceHE. Staff and PGRs who teach and/or support learning can also gain AdvanceHE fellowship through the ABDN Professional Recognition Scheme (PRS). CAD also runs sessions for academic staff, who are new to the University of Aberdeen, on course and programme design and planning at the University. These sessions give staff an overview and understanding of the procedures and processes involved, and expectations on, designing and delivering courses at the University. CAD has a small, dedicated team whose role is to support educational development and innovation for staff. The team has played a prominent role in the support and development of staff, and of course delivery, in the context of blended and online learning, and supporting the implementation of the Delivery of Education Principles. The University continues to support programmatic reviews through the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) methodology, which focuses on the student experience of assessment and feedback across a programme, at UG and PGT levels of study. For teaching teams engaging with this process, TESTA facilitates discussions to initiate changes and enhancements of course and programme Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and assessment design, which are submitted for approval by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).	
(b) A definitive set of documents are produced from the design, development, approval and modification processes, which are held securely and act as the primary source of information about each programme. Similar but proportionate arrangements are in place for modules and smaller units of study.	All new courses and existing courses with proposed changes are passed to the QAC for approval. In scrutinising course and programme proposal forms (new and amended) in the appropriateness, accuracy and compliance with external frameworks is ensured. QAC's review also includes consideration of the assessments as well as the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) these assess, to ensure appropriate mapping/coverage and consistency in the approach. The Curriculum Management System (CMS) ensures that there is a single central repository for documentation relating to all courses and programmes. Information to populate various institutional publications originates from the CMS ensuring consistent information is available to all. New and updated information is submitted and maintained through the CMS and scrutinised as part of the quality assurance process therein. Guidance and support for those completing new course and programme proposal forms through the	Annual Course and Programme Review (Webpage) Curriculum Management System [Internal Only] Devising Learning Outcomes using Bloom's Taxonomy (Video)

	Curriculum Management System is embedded within the forms together with links to further external resources. Following positive feedback from students in Schools that piloted a new course institutional templated during 2024/25, all course areas in MyAberdeen for this academic year (2025/26) have been created from a template designed to provide a more consistent, accessible and structured learning experience for students. This approach ensures students are provided with an accessible and consistent learning experience while encouraging innovation in the design of learning materials as course materials are not automatically copied over. The course template has information that is managed institutionally, enabling the university to ensure this information is current and can be updated across all course areas efficiently and in a timely manner. The Annual Course and Programme Review processes require the currency of courses and programmes to be examined and updated as appropriate.	
(c) The award to be received and how outcomes of study are recorded and certificated are made clear to all students and staff involved in the teaching, learning and evaluation of the programme and module.	The University makes all its awards publicly available as part of the University Prospectus, available both in print and online and for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research. The Prospectus webpages provides detail on individual degree programme awards, including detail on the degree to be awarded; specific course information; modes of study; entry requirements; tuition fee requirements; and career information. Information provided in the prospectus is reviewed regularly to ensure the most up-to-date information is provided to prospective students and applicants. Further, the University's Course Catalogue provides detail of specific courses to be studied as part of a programme curriculum. Course information includes an overview and description of the course, key details such as credit weighting, the teaching timetable and contact hours; and assessments, including intended learning outcomes. Similarly, the University Calendar provides details of programme prescriptions which details the curricula to be studied on every degree programme awarded by the University. The University Calendar also sets out the general and supplementary degree regulations for the award of degrees. This information is publicly available to students. Through the course and programme approvals processes by both the Programme Management Committee (PMC) and Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), degree awards are clear in the documentation considered by the	Course and Programme Approvals (Webpage) Course Catalogue (Webpage) Programme Management Committee (Webpage) Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (Webpage) Student Induction (Webpage) Transcripts (Webpage) University Calendar (Webpage) University Prospectus (Postgraduate Research) (Webpage) University Prospectus (Postgraduate Taught) (Webpage) University Prospectus (Undergraduate) (Webpage)

	respective committees. Additionally, the QAC scrutinises the proposed programmes that are received to ensure they meet the respective external regulatory requirements (such as Scottish Credit and Qualifications Frameworks, for example). Degree awards are also made clear to students upon graduation, whereby the degree certificate and student transcript details courses that a student has undertaken during their period of registration. Transcripts indicate the academic year in which a course has been taken, its credit value, any merit awards and the definition of the Common Grading Scale bands. Information pertaining to certificates and transcripts is made available to students online and is included as part of key communications issued to students. Students and staff should also be made aware of the programme award and its requirements during induction and orientation periods at the University.	
(d) Policies and processes that support the design, development, approval and modification of programmes and modules are published on each provider's website and are easily accessible to key stakeholders.	The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has oversight for quality assurance and enhancement activities across the University. It is chaired by the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, who has senior oversight of all quality matters, including curriculum management. Minutes and agendas are published on the University website, available to all staff and students for their information. Business cases for new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as well as suspensions, withdrawals, and substantive amendments (e.g. a change of title or adding a new variant) are considered via the Programme Management Committee (PMC) prior to approval by the Quality Assurance Committee. This allows strategic oversight, at university level, of all proposals made by Schools for the introduction of new programmes, withdrawals, suspensions and amendments. It also allows the University to monitor the market viability of its academic portfolio, ensuring that it meets the needs of not only of our students but our other stakeholders (e.g., employers). The PMC is chaired by the Dean for Programme and Portfolio Development, and involves colleagues from across the University, such as marketing, recruitment and academic services alongside senior academic colleagues (e.g., Head of School, Director of Education, Senate representative) ensuring there is full and informed consideration of all proposals.	AFG College with the University of Aberdeen (Webpage) Annual Academic Development Symposium 2025 (Webpage) Annual Course and Programme Review (Webpage) Course and Programme Approval (Webpage) Enhancement Themes (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Learning Teaching and Enhancement Programme (Webpage) Programme Management Committee (Webpage) Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) SCNU (Webpage) Setting up a Partnership (Webpage)

	The University has a robust system for the quality assurance approval of all programme and course proposals (new, amended and withdrawn) which is overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee. Following business case approval, where required, proposals for new courses, stand-alone courses, and amendments to existing courses are submitted by Schools to the Curriculum Team. Information sought at course level includes detailed information on intended learning outcomes and linkage to assessment. At a programme level, proposals are scrutinised to ensure appropriate reference has been made to subject benchmarks and other appropriate external frameworks. Proposals are reviewed at monthly Curriculum Approval meetings involving members of the Quality Assurance Committee and, where necessary, active dialogue between the QAC representative and the School is used to resolve any queries. Through the CMS, other professional service departments, such as Timetabling and Marketing, are able to access information submitted and use this to inform their operational activities. The involvement of colleagues from across the University, and at various levels, in the PMC and the QAC ensures there is full and informed consideration of all proposals and that any colleagues new to the approval process are supported in the development of their knowledge and expertise in this area. It also serves as a channel back into Schools to share good practice being reported from other areas of the University. The University requires that provision delivered in collaboration with a partner institution must be at least as rigorous as those for the University's internal provision. This is assured as part of a comprehensive process for scrutinising the establishment and ongoing maintenance of partnerships. All proposals for student-related partnerships are reviewed through the Quality Assurance Committee as part of the approach to assure the academic quality of such partnerships. There are two separate procedures, depending on the type of partnership that is proposed, and the perceived risks associated with the partnership. Higher levels of risk are managed through higher levels of scrutiny at all stages of the process i.e. establishment of the partnership through to ongoing operation and monitoring. For our Transnational Education partnerships in Qatar and the Joint Institute with South China Normal University, a series of joint committees ensures robust governance and oversight of these arrangements.	

	A TNE Action Group was established in academic year 2023/24 to identify new TNE opportunities and oversee the development of TNE partnerships. The Group is led by the Vice-Principal (Global Engagement) and includes a range of stakeholders from across the University, including professional services and academic Schools, as well as quality assurance representation. The University uses a variety of review mechanisms to drive improvement and enhancement to the quality of the services we provide. These include: • **Policy Review**: Each year, a selection of Education policies are revisited and reviewed, ensuring practices are consistent, effective and up-to-date. As part of this rolling process, procedures for course design, development and approval are reviewed. • **Internal Teaching Review (ITR)**: Our ITR process enables a holistic review of an academic School's education provision providing a focus both on quality assurance and enhancement. Through the process, engagement from academic staff, support staff and students (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research) is enabled ensuring that there is wide input into the discussions and recommendations. • **Annual Course & Programme Review**: These processes aim to examine the effectiveness of our courses and programmes: to ensure that they remain current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application; to evaluate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are being attained by students; to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and of assessment in relation to the intended learning outcomes; and to ensure that recommendations for appropriate actions are followed up to remedy any identified shortcomings and to monitor and review the student experience. Both ACR and APR are informed by feedback drawn from a range of stakeholders. • **Quality Enhancement**: The Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) is designed to improve and enhance learning, teaching, the student experience, and staff development across tertiary provision. STEP is part of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and is underpinned by TQEF principles. Collaborative enhancement projects under the theme of 'Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys' will produce outcomes for the entire tertiary sector. The University's enhancement activity will align with this theme, building on its existing and active Community of Practice which aims to enable the dissemination of good practice, making funds available annually to support work in this area	

	through the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP) and running the Annual Academic Development Symposium. This work is overseen by a Quality Enhancement Steering Group, chaired by the Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement.	
(e) External engagement and evaluation form a component part of the design, development, approval and modification process.	All courses and programmes are monitored annually through the University's Annual Course and Programme Review procedures. These procedures draw upon a range of feedback to inform the process of review including student feedback through the course reflection form, Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings, feedback from External Examiners, Programme Advisory Boards and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies together with analysis of course data and feedback from the course delivery team and input from class representatives. While Schools manage the Annual Course Review process reviewing these internally, all forms are submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Annual Programme Reviews are submitted by Schools to QAC and are discussed with Schools with any policy issues being referred to relevant committees for consideration, as appropriate. The University's Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process is used to review all teaching-related activities at a School / Discipline level in line with the requirements of the QAA (Scotland) Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework. The ITR process can help to identify areas for further review and programme development within a School's provision. As part of the ITR process, External Subject Specialists are engaged as panel members reviewing the quality and enhancement of any given School's pedagogic offering. External Subject Specialists provide valuable insight into our practices enabling us to learn from good practice across the sector. Additionally, External Subject Specialists may be from another institution or from industry, where appropriate. In the design and ongoing development of courses, External Examiner feedback is taken into consideration, as well as input from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies and Programme Advisory Boards, which include industry experts and employers. This external stakeholder input ensures content remains relevant and appropriate. In the design and delivery of all the University's courses, student feedback plays a large role in the assurance of quality and standards and includes both informal and formal mechanisms for providing such feedback. Feedback is then used in the improvement of the University experience for students.	Annual Course and Programme Review (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Course and Programme Approvals (Webpage) Student Feedback (Webpage) Course Evaluation (Webpage) Class Representation (Webpage) Programme Advisory Board (Webpage)

	Feedback is gathered through discussion at Staff-Student Liaison Committees, through the University's Course Feedback and Reflection Forms or more informally though focus groups, mid-term student feedback or other means. As noted above, this feedback informs the Annual Course and Programme Review process and may initiate amendment to courses and programmes in a dynamic and proactive manner.	
(f) The design, development, approval and modification processes align with providers' policies and practices on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability.	All information related to course design and approvals are available on the University webpages. The Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) is a virtual tool for all staff to access with details of all policies and procedures for all education provision, including course design, delivery and approvals. The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) offers flexible opportunities to engage with course design principles through its range of workshops, accredited programmes and bespoke courses. An initial introduction to the University's procedures and practices for course design and approval is included as part of the two-day 'Introduction to Learning & Teaching at the University of Aberdeen' induction for academic staff who are new to the University of Aberdeen. The web page on 'Design, Deliver and Evaluate your Teaching' provides a comprehensive starting point for staff on areas to consider in developing new courses. For those developing fully online programmes, courses or CPD, resources and support are available to aid staff in carefully planning their provision to ensure it meets the needs of the fully online learner. As part of this process, CAD provides support with programme review and storyboarding.	Course and Programme Approval (Webpage) Design, Deliver and Evaluate your Teaching (Webpage) Five Principles of Education (Webpage) Introduction to Learning & Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Aberdeen (Webpage) Online Development Steps (Webpage) Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) Storyboarding Your Course (Webpage)
(g) Students are involved meaningfully in the design, development, approval and modification of programmes and modules.	The University places strong emphasis on the involvement of students on committees and in decision making. Each School has at least one Students' Union elected School Convener who is the lead student representative for each School. They work closely with the elected class representatives to feed any concerns about courses and programmes to the School. The School Convener(s) (or other student representative) attends School-level committees (e.g. School Education Committee) where they are able to contribute to discussions around future courses and programmes, policy matters, feedback (e.g. NSS results) and other matters. At a University level, Students' Union representatives are also full members of all Education committees including the University Education Committee and the Quality Assurance Committee along with Senate which is the University's main academic decision-making body.	Education Committee Composition (Webpage) Quality Assurance Committee Composition (Webpage) Class Representation (Webpage)

	Student feedback is actively encouraged and there are a variety of mechanisms for students to provide feedback to the University on any aspect of their student and academic experience. Feedback mechanisms include the Class Representative system and Staff-Student Liaison Committees, as well as through the University's Course Feedback and Reflection Form process and more informal means of gathering feedback. This feedback plays a role in the quality assurance of our provision and in informing course and programme enhancements. Changes made in response to feedback are captured within the Course and Programme Amendment Forms, which are reviewed by the Curriculum Team. The reasons for change are stored as part of the change request.	