1. **PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

Members of the Senate Business Committee (SBC) are asked to approve the attached Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality, 2016/2017.

This paper is provided for approval.

2. **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

The report is due to be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) by 30 September 2017; the SFC permit the signed Annual Statement of Assurance to follow later if necessary, due to the timing of governing body meetings. The SBC is invited to approve the annual report.

3. **DISCUSSION**

An ‘Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality’ is required by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as a condition of grant to ensure (i) that provision is of an acceptable quality and (ii) that all institutions have an appropriate strategy for quality enhancement. SFC guidance states that the Report should include the following:

- A list of subject areas that were the subject of internal reviews during the academic year.
- A list of subject areas that were the subject of review by other bodies (eg professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs)) during the academic year.
- The ways in which support services were included in the review process.
- The role and nature of student involvement in the review process.
- The outcomes of subject review, indicating whether provision was approved and, if not, what actions are being taken to address issues raised.
- The key messages deriving from and action taken as a result of monitoring and analysis of performance indicators and other collected data.
- Any significant issues relating either to development needs or to the identification of good practice the institution has identified as a result of the review process.
- A forward plan or calendar of future reviews for the following academic year.

The University's governing body must provide the SFC with a signed ‘Annual Statement of Assurance’ (Appendix I). This is a statement that confirms that the University's governing body has considered and is satisfied with the arrangements the University has in place to maintain standards and assure and enhance the quality of its provision.

The ‘Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality’ must show that the University’s provision is of an acceptable quality and that it has in place an appropriate strategy for quality enhancement.
4. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Professor P McGeorge (mcgeorge@abdn.ac.uk or extension 2228) or Emma Hay, Academic Services, Registry (e.hay@abdn.ac.uk or extension 3610).

13 September 2017 [Version 1] [Open]
1 SUBJECT REVIEW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

1.1 INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW

The University of Aberdeen’s process for periodic subject review is termed ‘Internal Teaching Review’ (ITR). A fundamental feature of the University’s quality assurance procedures since 1994, the process has continually evolved to reflect ongoing changes in the external and internal drivers for quality assurance and enhancement. Schools are subject to ITR every sixth year, with the review covering the previous five years. Under the existing ITR process, documentation submitted by Schools includes a Self-Evaluation Document (SED) and an action plan identifying points for improvement. The Final Report resulting from an ITR is a constructive commentary that identifies specific commendations and recommendations. Schools are required to provide a formal Response to the Final Report, considered by the University’s Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Schools are also required to provide a One-Year Follow-up Report indicating the progress made. All Final Reports and Responses are published on the University’s web pages.

As part of the University’s ongoing wider review of its quality mechanisms, the existing ITR process and associated documentation have been carefully considered and, following extensive consultation, amended for introduction as a pilot exercise in 2017/2018. The process to be piloted follows the introduction of a revised Annual Course Review (ACR) process (introduced in 2012/2013) and an Annual Programme Review (APR) process (introduced in 2014/2015). Designed to allow Schools to draw upon the ACRs and APRs they have completed and the External Examiner feedback received, during the period of review, it is hoped the process will provide for a greater enhancement focus and to reduce the bureaucratic burden of ITR on Schools.

The revised process will ask Schools to submit (i) a Critical Analysis (CA), allowing Schools particular contexts to be set out clearly, and have a clear focus on (i) enhancement and (ii) reflection on effectiveness throughout and (ii) a Curriculum Map detailing how programmes address Subject Benchmark Statements and have changed in line with revised statements. The final report resulting from ITR will consist of two parts; Part A will be a QAC report identifying the QA findings, highlighting good practice, commending initiatives worthy of sharing across the institution or which might be considered institution or sector leading, and highlighting areas for development. Part B will consist of a jointly-devised action plan. Schools will be asked to provide an update on the progress of this plan by way of one year follow up report. The report and action plan will be considered by the QAC and posted to ITR webpages.

1.2 STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW

Students are a central part of the University’s ITR process and to the wider quality processes within the University. The University requires Schools to encourage their students to be involved in the preparation of their SED, and to make the Final Reports and School Responses available to their students. ITR panels meet with all levels of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students studying within the School that is under review, as well as with students who undertake the role of Class Representative or School Convener.

The University has a longstanding partnership with the Aberdeen University Students’ Association (AUSA), and all ITR panels include a student member of Senate, who is a senior representative from AUSA with responsibility for academic affairs. This student panel member receives training alongside staff panel members and plays a full role on the panel, usually taking the lead when the panel meets with students.
Student members also form part of any Panel considering validation or accreditation as part of our collaborative activities with other institutions.

Under the pilot ITR process for introduction, students will continue to play an integral role in all aspects of the review process, with an even greater emphasis on helping students prepare for their participation in the review.

1.3 **INTERNAL REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

ITR includes the review of professional services as a fundamental part of the process. Panels meet support staff from within the School under review and topics addressed by the reviewing panel, cover services provided by the central Professional Services departments such as the Centre for Academic Development (CAD), Student Advice and Support, the Registry, Library, Estates, and IT Services.

Specifically, the SED asks Schools to consider the ways in which they have interacted with the various professional service departments and to comment on whether there is anything further these support agencies could do to assist Schools in promoting high quality learning and continuous quality enhancement. Comments on professional services in ITR reports are considered by the QAC and responses and action plans sought from the relevant areas of Professional Services, as appropriate.

Under the pilot process, the review of professional services will remain an integral part of the process and panels will continue to meet with support staff from the School. Any comments on professional services will be considered by the QAC and responses and action plans sought from the relevant Professional Services department as appropriate.

2 **INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS, 2016/2017**

2.1 **REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN IN 2016/2017**

During academic year 2016/2017, Internal Teaching Reviews (ITRs) were conducted in the School of Psychology (October 2016) and in the Business School (November 2016).

2.2 **SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, OCTOBER 2016**

The ITR panel considered Psychology to be a successful, well-organised and thriving School. The panel commended the quality of teaching and learning in the School, expressing confidence in the rigorous maintenance of academic standards, and the work of the School in ensuring students are well placed to pursue other scientific or professional interests as a result of the transferable skills and knowledge afforded to them during their studies.

The panel observed the commitment of the School in ensuring the continual enhancement of teaching and learning provision, noting the implementation of innovative teaching methods and responsive nature of the School to the needs of the student body. The panel commended the strong relationship between the School and its students and the importance placed on their input and feedback.

The panel also commended the School’s use of a range of teaching methods including (i) traditional methods, such as lectures, and (ii) innovative methods, such as a ‘flipped classroom’ where students watch a recorded lecture before taking part in a workshop-type class, and the subsequent exposure of students to a multifaceted teaching model. The panel noted the positive responses of students to this approach, encompassing a range of student needs and preferred teaching styles. The panel also acknowledged the use of small group teaching across undergraduate and some elements of postgraduate provision. The panel noted mixed feedback from the student body with regards to the success of these and recommended the School take forward their own identified action, to clearly express the function of these groups to students.
The panel commended the introduction of innovative teaching and assessment formats as a means of encouraging group work but also as an effective means of teaching and assessing very large level 1 classes.

The panel commended the open and receptive attitude of the School to amending and aligning course outcomes, teaching methods and assessment. They recommend the continued review of courses in this way.

The panel noted further examples of good practice including the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme operated across levels 1-3 of the undergraduate degree programme and the Psychology Internship Programme providing enhanced work-based learning opportunities.

2.3 BUSINESS SCHOOL, NOVEMBER 2016

The ITR Panel recognised the Business School as being committed to delivering a high standard of teaching and learning and maintenance of academic standards. The Panel acknowledged that the School was facing challenging circumstances, although staff were keen and proactive to resolve issues in an efficient manner, and placed the student’s interest at the forefront of all decisions and processes implemented.

The Panel commended efforts made by School staff, academic and administrative, amongst whom there was evidence of a keen sense of collegiality and support. The Panel welcomed the positive response towards the School from undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students.

The Panel commended innovative teaching practices within the School, for example, the development of online teaching, use of the Thomson Reuters Eikon flagship trading floor and the use of video clips in MS 3055 New Product and Service Development and MS3050 New Venture Creation which provided flexibility for students. The Panel felt that the alternative ways of teaching combined the use of advanced pedagogy and technology.

The Panel recommended that the School undertake a review of the feedback given to students, both hand written and provided on MyAberdeen, to ensure consistency across the School. The Panel commended the School for encouraging other forms of feedback other than Student Course Evaluation Forms (SCEFs). The Panel recommended that mid-term feedback questionnaires be used more widely across the School to ensure consistency.

The Panel commended the School’s engagement with employability skills across all programmes and the strong working relationship with the University Careers Service.

The Panel noted School membership of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Scotland’s Enhancement Themes Steering Committee for the First Year Experience and Student Transitions Enhancement Themes but recommended the School more actively ensures that good practice shared at such events or organisations be brought back and integrated to the School’s teaching and learning practices.

The Panel noted several areas of good practice within the School, however, the Panel noted that these areas of good practice tended to be discipline-specific and there seemed to be limited cross-fertilisation of ideas across the School as a whole. The Panel therefore recommended that the disciplines could work more closely together and share best practice.

2.4 OUTCOMES OF INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS

The panels of both ITRs conducted during 2016/2017 were satisfied with the academic standards and the overall quality of learning opportunities provided, and that appropriate systems of course and programme review were in place. There were no significant issues identified in relation to (i) development needs or (ii) the identification of good practice at the institution.

All undergraduate and postgraduate degrees offered by the School of Psychology and the Business School were recommended to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) for revalidation.
Recommendations made by the ITR panels in their Final Reports focus on the enhancement of aspects of provision, and highlight specific areas for commendation or recommendation. Schools are asked to consider these and provide a formal Response, stating relevant actions to be taken or fully considered reasons should the panel’s recommendations be thought to be inappropriate. The Final Reports and School Responses are considered by the University’s QAC, and particular areas of good practice or of concern are reported to the University Committee on Teaching & Learning. During academic year 2016/2017, the QAC reviewed the reports and responses thereto, of the Schools of Divinity, History and Philosophy and Psychology and the Business School together with the one-year follow up reports of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition. The one-year follow-up reports from the School of Psychology and the Business School, reviewed in 2016-2017, will be considered by the QAC in 2017-2018.

The process of the consideration of reports by the QAC and the reporting of particular areas of good practice or concern to the UCTL will continue under the new pilot process.

2.5 FORWARD PLAN OF INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS, 2017–2018

During academic year 2017–2018, an ITR piloting the revised review process, (section 1.1 above refers) will be conducted in the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture. The review will take place in March 2018.

Details of forthcoming ITRs can be found in Appendix III.

3 REVIEWS BY PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODIES, 2016/2017

During 2016/2017, reviews by professional and statutory bodies were conducted across the University’s Schools as follows:

3.1 BUSINESS SCHOOL

(i) The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) confirmed their continued satisfaction and the agreed extension of accreditation of all undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Real Estate and Rural Surveying in 2016. The next review by the RICS will take place in Spring 2018.

(ii) The Designated Degree of Master of Arts in Accountancy, Degree of Master of Arts in Accountancy and Degree of Master of Arts in Accountancy-Finance were awarded continuing accreditation by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) during 2016. Such reviews are undertaken on an annual basis and will therefore be expected again in 2017.

(iii) The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) approved the Designated Degree of Master of Arts in Accountancy, Degree of Master of Arts in Accountancy and all joint variants thereof, for continuing accreditation in 2016. As with the ACCA, reviews are undertaken by the CIMA on an annual basis and will therefore be expected again in 2017.

3.2 SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

The General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) accredited the Postgraduate Certificate in Into Headship in 2016.

3.3 SCHOOL OF LAW

The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb) accredited the LLM in Dispute Resolution in 2016. The accreditation is valid until July 2019.

3.4 SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION

(i) As reported in the 2015/16 return, the division of Dentistry has been visited by the General Dental Council (GDC), each year since the inception of the new Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS)
programme, as is the normal practice for a new programme. The last visit from the GDC to Aberdeen was in May 2016. In October 2016, the division received confirmation that the inspectors recommended that the Aberdeen BDS is sufficient for registration with the GDC as a dentist.

(ii) The MSc in Medical Physics was, in September 2016, accredited by the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM). Initially receiving accreditation for one academic year, this was extended for a further two academic years following the implementation of changes required by the accrediting panel.

(iii) The Association for Nutrition (AfN) last reviewed the MSc in Human Nutrition in September 2016. Further review will take place in September 2017.

Details of the reviews undertaken by Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies in 2016/2017 can be found in Appendix II.

4 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

All Schools are required to provide an account of registrations (including admissions, progression and retention), degrees awarded, course pass rates, and first destinations of leavers during ITR, with course registrations and pass rates considered annually as part of ACR and APR processes. The University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) and Senate consider reports that monitor registration and retention.

The University pays close attention to non-continuation data particularly amongst our full-time undergraduate population. On an annual basis, non-continuation data is analysed in detail and considered by Senior Management and Schools, with regard to level of study, student domicile, incoming qualifications, and entry route (summer school, access, clearing).

The University continues to collect and make extensive use of data from students. These data include survey and focus group data obtained for specific purposes. The University routinely collects data from a variety of sources including the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). Data at individual course level is obtained through ongoing quality enhancement and assurance processes, including the University wide Student Course Evaluation Form (SCEF) and Staff-student Liaison Committees.

The University’s School Planning process led by the senior Vice-Principal also reviews a range of metrics with associated action planning on a quarterly basis with the Senior Management Team (SMT). This includes all relevant QA metrics together with benchmarking data such as degree classification, retention, admission and recruitment. Inclusion of this data and analysis within the ITR process, together with the metrics analysed within the ACR/APR process, meets SFC expectations regarding assuring the quality and standard of our teaching provision without Schools having to provide additional information.

Following review of the outcome of two years of pilots by the Higher Education Academy we also adopted the United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKES) with level one and level three undergraduates in 2016. To make the best use of these data to enhance the student experience responsibility for the collection and analysis of the NSS, PTES, UKES, and PRES is centralised in the University’s Centre for Academic Development (CAD). The centralisation of such collection and analysis has enabled a consistent approach to the analysis and dissemination of performance indicators, associated staff development activities, and the facilitation of support for evaluation of the student experience and pedagogical research. Targets for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) derived from these surveys are now integrated into the school planning cycle and Heads of School are asked to submit action plans on the basis of the data drawn from these surveys.

Data obtained during 2016/2017 demonstrates greater use of the new grading scale and that the University awarded more First and Upper Second Degrees than ever (85%). The University has the highest number of graduates either employed or in further study (98%), with our highest number ever going into further study (35.6%), though we need to work hard to overcome challenges around
graduate level employment (40.6%). University of Aberdeen graduates do very well against the sector in terms of median salaries. Our non-continuation rate is the best we have achieved (4.7%). We are seeing our highest number apply for and achieve HEA fellowship (82 in 2016). Our NSS scores are also continuing to improve.

5 ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

- Enhancements to the University’s online course selection system, MyCurriculum, and the registration process as a whole.
- Discussions have been initiated across the University’s Committee structure, including the Undergraduate Committee, Postgraduate Taught Committee, Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and University Committee on Teaching and Learning, with regards to the way the University reassesses students who have failed courses. It is hoped discussions will consider alternative forms of resit assessment.
- The University is actively investing in ways of identifying students with known characteristics that might place them at greater risk of non-continuation. A pilot using Unique Insights (an external analytics company) during the first half session of 2016/17 has revealed that our data is not yet robust enough to interrogate more fully, and thus we have agreed to be included in a JISC retention/engagement consultancy pilot with a view to developing our proactive approaches in this area.
- We are investing heavily in developing our portfolio of online programmes across a range of disciplines notably Business, Health, Education and Engineering. These programmes are a mix of fully online provision and more blended approaches and cover postgraduate taught degree programmes and short courses. This is a key component of our recently developed Digital Strategy, and it is hoped will address the needs of many students by offering a more flexible way to study. We are also developing more appropriate support systems to register, induct and support online learners.
- The University is in 2017/18, piloting a Policy on Academic Flexibility, designed for any student seeking to apply for flexibility in their studies as a consequence of their involvement in High Performance Sports.
- The consideration of a proposed policy, setting out guidelines for the recording of Education Activities.
- Actively developing a Learning Analytics policy that will facilitate the early identification of students in need of additional support and opportunities for enhancement of learning.
- The introduction of a Lecture Attendance Monitoring pilot, to aid early identification of students with limited engagement.

Professor Peter McGeorge
Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching)
University of Aberdeen

Further information is available from Miss Emma Hay, Academic Services, Registry, University of Aberdeen, Regent Building (F18), Regent Walk, Old Aberdeen, Aberdeen, AB24 3FX e: e.hay@abdn.ac.uk t: 01224 273610
On behalf of the governing body of the University of Aberdeen, I confirm that we have considered the institution’s arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for academic year 2016/2017, including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that we are satisfied that the institution has effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. We can therefore provide assurance to the Council that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by the Council.

Signed for and on behalf of the University Court of the University of Aberdeen,
at: Aberdeen
on: the 4th day of October 2017

by: ....................................................................................................................

[name and designation of the signatory]
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<tr>
<th>Accrediting Body</th>
<th>Accredited Programme(s)</th>
<th>Review Last Undertaken</th>
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| Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)         | Designated Degree of Master of Arts in Accountancy  
|                                                             | Degree of Master of Arts in Accountancy  
|                                                             | Degree of Master of Arts in Accountancy (all joint variants)                          | 2016/2017              |
| Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)        | Designated Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Accountancy  
|                                                             | Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Accountancy  
|                                                             | Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Accountancy-Finance                                     | 2016/2017              |
| Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)              | Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Real Estate  
|                                                             | Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Real Estate (all joint variants)  
|                                                             | Postgraduate Taught Programmes in Real Estate and Rural Surveying                      | 2016/2017              |
| CIArb                                                        | Degree of Master of Laws (LLM) Dispute Resolution                                         | 2016/2017              |
| Association for Nutrition                                    | Degree of Master of Science (MSc) in Human Nutrition                                    | 2016/2017              |
| IPEM                                                         | Degree of Master of Science (MSc) in Medical Physics                                     | 2016/2017              |
| The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)             | Postgraduate Certificate in Into Headship                                               | 2016/2017              |
# APPENDIX III

## SCHEDULE OF FORTHCOMING INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
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APPENDIX IV

THE UNIVERSITY’S ARRANGEMENTS TO MAINTAIN STANDARDS AND ASSURE AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF ITS PROVISION

The University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) has strategic oversight of all aspects of teaching and learning and the wider student experience. This includes responsibility for the assurance of the quality of the University’s educational provision (particularly in relation to the design, implementation, evaluation and review of mechanisms for quality assurance), for the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning, and for the safeguarding of academic standards. The UCTL is a joint committee of Senate and Court and reports to both regularly. It is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) and its membership consists of the Deans of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate provision, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, and the Conveners of UCTL Task Forces (Retention, Feedback and Assessment and Positive Outcomes), with senior representatives from the Directorates of Academic Affairs and Student Life. The UCTL considers reports from three sub-committees, the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), the Undergraduate Committee and the Postgraduate Taught Committee. The UCTL devolves responsibility to the QAC for the operational oversight and monitoring of the mechanisms that assure the quality and maintenance of standards across all taught provision, including postgraduate taught elements of research provision. The regular monitoring and oversight of the operation of these mechanisms by the QAC is reported to the UCTL, and UCTL have overall responsibility for assuring these, implementing any changes to address significant issues and/or to enhance the provision. UCTL then reports on its activity to Senate and the Court, and the Court thereby has opportunity to consider these arrangements and satisfy itself of their sufficiency. The mechanisms include the following:

Internal Teaching Review (ITR) is the University’s system of periodic review of Schools’ teaching and learning provision and the process by which a Schools’ programmes are revalidated. ITR provides a formal opportunity for Schools to reflect on and critically evaluate learning and teaching provision and for the University to satisfy itself that quality and standards are being maintained and that issues are being addressed.

Annual Course and Programme Approval (SENAS): Course and programme proposals are submitted via SENAS forms which are designed to ensure conformity with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), European qualifications frameworks, and QAA guidelines for programme specifications. School SENAS forms are considered to ensure alignment with School policy and resource; QAC reviews SENAS to ensure conformity to institutional regulations and practice, and compliance with the QAA Quality Code and SCQF.

Student Feedback on taught courses is gathered primarily via an annual online ‘Student Course Evaluation Form’ (SCEF) exercise, and twice-yearly ‘Staff–Student Liaison Committee’ (SSLC) meetings. Research student feedback is collected via annual questionnaire and six-monthly monitoring reports and forms a component – along with External Examiner comments – of our Annual Course reviews. Whilst the expected, and minimum, methods for Schools to gather student feedback are the SCEF exercise and SSLCs, Schools are encouraged to consider different and innovative methods to give students the opportunity to provide feedback. Several Schools have courses which make use of mid-term SCEF to identify any issues which could be acted upon before the course ends, whilst others hold student focus groups and informal feedback sessions to allow students to express any concerns or raise issues with the staff throughout the academic year. Large level 1 courses often use Personal Response System (PRS) handsets to get immediate feedback on how the course is going and our School of Education provides opportunities for students across all Education programmes to contribute online to a synchronous student forum via our VLE as a means of eliciting further student feedback.

External Examiners play a major role in verifying standards and monitoring the quality of our provision. Examiners report annually, with their Reports and Responses to them by the Heads of School being considered by the QAC before being returned to External Examiners. Heads of School are asked to consider External Examiners Reports and feedback as part of the ACR and APR exercises.

The University’s Degree Regulations specify the criteria for our awards. Specific assessment policy and practices are set out in the University’s Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) and conform to the SCQF and QAA Quality
Code. The University employs a number of mechanisms related to ensuring the standards of its awards, including clear guidelines in regard to the procedures to be followed in instances of student misconduct (including plagiarism), medical and other extenuating circumstances; and student appeals.