



QUALITY ASSURANCE & ENHANCEMENT CODE OF PRACTICE

Scope of this Code of Practice

- This document sets out the School's overall approach to the assurance and enhancement of academic quality and standards – describing a framework and broad principles under which more specifically-focused School policies and codes of practice should operate.
- This framework should apply across all forms of teaching and training at the School, including both taught (especially award-bearing) courses and research degrees, and both face-to-face and distance learning modes of study.
- It should also apply for all collaborative provision offered by the School, even if specific mechanisms may differ in areas for which a partner institution has responsibility.

Related documentation

- This code of practice is intended to help support the School's Education Strategy.
- Staff should make themselves aware of other relevant LSHTM regulations, policies, codes of practice and guidance documents, as cross-referenced throughout this document.

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OVERARCHING POLICY AND PRINCIPLES

Aims of teaching quality assurance and enhancement at LSHTM

1. The School will assure itself, its students and other stakeholders that the education and training it offers upholds internationally-excellent academic standards and provides an internationally-excellent quality of learning opportunities.
 - Such assurance will be achieved through rigorous and effective policies and processes, that both reflect on and (wherever appropriate) seek to enhance quality and standards.
 - Policies and processes will draw on and align with key external reference points, particularly the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education.

2. Quality assurance and enhancement activities will support the School's vision, mission, values and strategy – specifically the strategy for education.

Strategic principles underpinning quality assurance and enhancement

3. Quality assurance and enhancement activities will be grounded in the following key principles:
 - (i) Quality and standards are the individual and collective responsibility of all staff involved in learning & teaching. In their work, staff should always look to uphold the School's academic standards, and support the quality of students' experience.
 - (ii) The School will offer students suitable opportunities to contribute towards quality improvement, including through individual and collective feedback and representation on appropriate oversight and decision-making bodies.
 - (iii) The School will maintain processes to secure consistent academic standards across all teaching and training programmes, whilst encouraging an appropriate diversity of practice that allows these programmes to offer an optimum teaching and learning experience to students.
 - (iv) The School's teaching quality management structures and processes should:
 - support effective and efficient quality assurance and enhancement;
 - operate in a consultative and collegiate manner;
 - devolve quality responsibilities to those best placed to exercise them;
 - foster a culture of critical review and reflection in a positive and supportive environment; and,
 - encourage the dissemination and adoption of good practice.
 - (v) The School will take a systematic approach to planning and reviewing quality-related developments, in a strategic and institution-wide (rather than reactive or piecemeal) way, so as to determinably improve the quality of learning opportunities for students.
 - (vi) Quality assurance and enhancement activities should be closely linked, so that regular monitoring identifies areas for improvement – particularly with regard to the student experience – and evaluates the success of such improvements. Such links should ensure enhancement developments are embedded, maintained, and can be identified as good practice to extend to other areas.
4. Furthermore, linked to the School's vision, mission and values:
 - (i) All teaching and training should ultimately develop students' professional capability to address contemporary and future critical health challenges.
 - (ii) Excellence in education will be achieved by attracting and retaining high calibre, committed and diverse staff and students.
 - (iii) Synergies with the School's research and other activities, including an ethos of rigorous scientific enquiry, will strengthen the quality of the School's teaching and training provision.
 - (iv) Interactions among and between staff, students and any other stakeholders should be based on mutual respect, honesty and openness, and support the sharing of expertise.
 - (v) Quality assurance and enhancement activities should have due regard to equal opportunities principles.
 - (vi) Quality assurance and enhancement activities should have due regard to financial and environmental sustainability.

Key components of quality assurance and enhancement

5. The School's spectrum of quality assurance and enhancement activities, responsibilities and reference points may be divided into the following major components:

- (i) Academic governance
- (ii) External reference points
- (iii) Course design and approval
- (iv) Assessment (including External Examiner input)
- (v) Student feedback and engagement
- (vi) Annual monitoring (including External Examiner input)
- (vii) Periodic review of courses
- (viii) Thematic review and enhancement
- (ix) Information management and provision
- (x) Collaborative provision

These are described further in the following sections.

6. Policies and processes which are focused more directly on teaching, learning and the student experience, rather than quality assurance, are not specifically addressed in this Code of Practice – although they may have potentially significant impacts on quality. These include (but are not limited to):
 - Ensuring learning resources and student support are adequate and appropriate.
 - Ensuring teaching staff are suitably qualified and competent, and that suitable avenues for professional development and career enhancement are available to them.
 - Ensuring the appropriateness of admissions policies and procedures.
 - Ensuring that effective appeals and complaints procedures are in place.

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Academic governance

7. Key responsibilities for quality and standards will be distributed across the School's teaching management structure. Policies will be determined primarily through committees, with operational management responsibilities assigned to key staff roles. Key details are listed below.
8. The Senate is the senior academic body of the School. The Senate Executive holds substantial delegated authority from the Senate. Key powers include approval of courses, regulations, and strategically significant policies and procedures. The Director and Vice-Director of the School and the Chair of Senate Executive have key responsibilities at this level.
9. The Quality & Standards Committee is the main institutional-level forum for assuring academic standards and quality, and considering enhancement needs identified through quality processes. Key responsibilities include monitoring the ongoing effectiveness of all quality processes, and setting or developing relevant School-level policies and procedures in the light of internal experience and external best practice. The Learning & Teaching Committee and Research Degrees Committee have related remits in relation to monitoring the quality of learning opportunities and the student experience. The Dean and Associate Dean of Studies have key responsibilities at this level.
10. Faculty Learning & Teaching Committees and Faculty Research Degrees Committees are the main fora for addressing quality and standards at Faculty level. This includes direct responsibility for modules offered by each Faculty which may be taken by students from across different courses. Taught Course Directors and Research Degrees Directors have key responsibilities at this level and act as key links with the wider School.

11. Exam Boards and Course Committees are responsible for the quality and standards of individual courses, while Departmental Research Degrees Committees are likewise responsible for the students studying in their Departments. Exam Board Chairs and Course Directors, and Department Research Degrees Co-ordinators, have key responsibilities at this level.
12. The School recognises that individual staff, in discharging their responsibilities for teaching, supervision, assessment or student support, play the single most crucial role in assuring academic standards and the quality of students' learning and overall experience. To ensure that staff appreciate and feel ownership of this aspect of their role, the School operates a collegial culture of quality assurance and enhancement. Consultation on proposed developments should take place up, down and across the committee and management structure as appropriate – for example consulting Faculty committees, and where relevant departments or courses, on proposed School-level policy developments of major significance.

External reference points

13. All quality-related policies, processes and developments at the School should pay due regard to appropriate external reference points, including as set out below.
14. The University of London's [Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations](#) provide a key reference point where applicable to LSHTM. The School is responsible for setting and implementing its own academic quality assurance procedures, consistent with the broad requirements set out by the University (particularly University Regulation 1).
15. The Quality Assurance Agency's '[Quality Code for Higher Education](#)' will be used as a framework to manage the security of academic standards and the quality of teaching and training provision.
 - (i) National guidance and benchmarks will be adapted into institutional practice in a considered way that fits with both the underlying intentions of the Quality Code and the specific needs of the School.
 - (ii) Awards offered by LSHTM will align with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, as part of the QAA Quality Code. This should also ensure equivalence in the threshold standards of all awards made under LSHTM auspices.
 - (iii) Standards of achievement and learning outcomes will be set out in programme specifications, aligning with national subject benchmark statements where appropriate.
 - (iv) Operation of School courses such as Masters degrees and doctoral degrees will broadly align with QAA degree characteristics statements.
 - (v) The QAA Quality Code will form a key reference point for ensuring that teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities for LSHTM students meet national expectations. All programmes of study will be governed by clear procedures for approval, amendment, annual monitoring, and strategic periodic review.
 - (vi) Alignment with the QAA's Quality Code should ensure alignment with the standards for internal quality assurance of higher education institutions set out in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
16. School courses will make use of a credit system in line with the [Higher Education Credit Framework for England](#), published by QAA.
17. The professional development of staff as teachers in higher education will be aligned with the [UK Professional Standards Framework](#), published by the Higher Education Academy.

18. The professional development of research degree students as doctoral-level researchers will be aligned with the [Researcher Development Framework](#), and the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#), both published by Vitae.
19. The requirements of any other professional, statutory, regulatory, funding or accrediting bodies, both in the UK and internationally, that are of relevance to the School's provision will be monitored, understood and engaged with, so as to safeguard and enhance the quality and standards of the School's teaching and training. This forms part of Terms of Reference for key committees and job descriptions for key staff.
20. The School's quality policies should be broadly consistent with the Universities UK document [Quality and Standards in UK Universities: A guide to how the system works](#). UUK also publish a useful [summary](#) of this, which may be helpful for anyone seeking to understand the broader context of quality assurance in UK higher education.

Course design and approval

21. The School has comprehensive formal mechanisms for approving, significantly changing or terminating programmes or awards. These are set out in Course Approval and Review regulations, supported by comprehensive Course Approval and Amendment procedures, and a Course and Module Design code of practice.
22. These regulations, procedures and codes of practice set out requirements for each course and module to provide detailed information in a Programme Specification or Module Specification about intended learning outcomes for students taking the course or module, and how these outcomes will be achieved and demonstrated.

Assessment

23. Students at the School are assessed in line with regulations, procedures and published criteria, applied in a consistent way. Key documentation includes:
 - Regulations, programme specifications and student handbooks for taught courses and research degrees, outlining general assessment requirements for students.
 - Award schemes defining the basis on which individual qualifications will be awarded.
 - An Assessment Code of Practice which sets out the School's general framework for marking and grading – thus helping to assure the validity, reliability and consistency of assessment, and underpinning the comparability of standards across awards.
 - Exam Board and External Examiner processes and responsibilities, including Moderation, help to quality assure assessment standards. These are set out in relevant handbooks, policies and procedures. The role of External Examiners is particularly key in helping to assure standards.

Student feedback and engagement

24. A Student Feedback Code of Practice sets out the School's standard mechanisms for gathering and responding to student views. The related Annual Monitoring Code of Practice gives more detail on how matters identified are followed up.
25. The School also has mechanisms and policies for student representation and ensuring that students can contribute to quality enhancement, including participation in key committees.

Annual monitoring

26. An Annual Monitoring Code of Practice sets out the School's formal mechanisms for reviewing programmes and awards each year.
 - Annual Monitoring includes consideration of reports from External Examiners (whose input is of key importance), Exam Boards, Course Committees, Taught Course Directors and Module Organisers.

- Annual monitoring also considers key performance indicators, statistics and reports – including pass rates, progression and completion, grade distributions, assessment irregularities, etc.

Periodic review of courses

27. A Periodic Review handbook, constituting a code of practice, sets out the School's formal mechanisms for reviewing award-bearing programmes on a five-yearly strategic basis. External input is a key aspect of the periodic review process.

Thematic review and enhancement

28. While individual teaching staff at all levels have personal responsibility for quality and standards regarding the work they are involved with, key committees (as set out in their Terms of Reference) have responsibility for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards across the School as a whole.
- In particular, the Quality & Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of School regulations, policies, procedures, codes of practice or other guidance relating to quality assurance or enhancement.
 - As well as 'vertical' periodic review of courses, quality-related policies and procedures that apply across the School are reviewed 'horizontally' accordingly to a rolling quality workplan maintained by QSC. This provides a firmer basis for enhancement initiatives than simply reviewing current issues on an ad-hoc basis.
 - Additionally, standard processes and channels such as annual monitoring or student feedback may identify specific issues relevant to standards, quality or the student experience for which it may be appropriate to consider changes and enhancements.
 - Formal committees may establish working groups to review and make recommendations on particular areas of provision.
 - Such internal developments in policy and procedures may be relevant to staff, students or other stakeholders.

Information management and provision

29. The School will collect/record, analyse and use relevant information about courses or other activities so as to aid their effective management. Appropriate use of information forms part of Terms of Reference for key committees and job descriptions for key staff.
30. Such information should as a general principle be made available to students, staff and other stakeholders, and be made publicly available wherever appropriate to do so. The School will endeavour to ensure that both quantitative and qualitative published information about the programmes and awards offered is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Collaborative provision

31. For any programmes offered by the School in collaboration with external partners, a clear Memorandum of Agreement or Understanding should establish a basis for the governance of each such programme and division of responsibilities between partners.
- Various responsibilities for quality and standards may be shared between LSHTM and the partner institution(s).
 - Collaborative programmes should normally operate some form of joint course committee.
 - Within the School, responsibilities for managing and monitoring collaborative provision will be distributed across all relevant levels (School, Faculty, Department, Course, Module) as appropriate and best-aligned to standard School practice.
 - Consistent with University of London Regulations, LSHTM does not engage in any validation or franchising of degrees delivered by external providers.

32. The broad principles of this Quality strategy should apply to all collaborative provision, even if precise mechanisms for securing quality and standards differ. The academic standards and quality of teaching and learning opportunities on all collaborative programmes should at least match the threshold expectations that would apply to an LSHTM-only course, and monitoring and review mechanisms should provide evidence to confirm this.

LSHTM Quality Assurance & Enhancement Code of Practice

Approved by Quality & Standards Committee, 04 July 2012; updated by the Quality Manager, 20 July 2012.