Managing Quality, Academic Standards and Academic Risk: the Effectiveness of HWU's Quality Processes
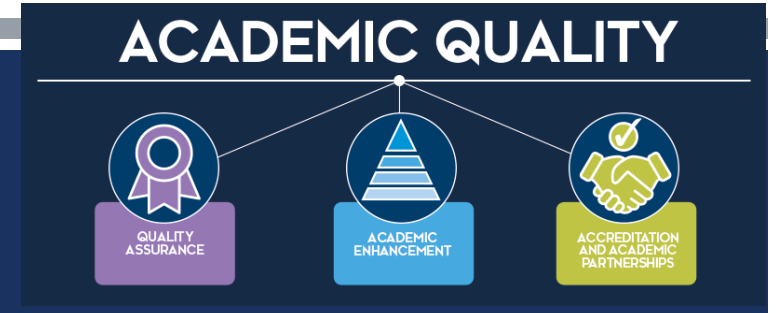
Dr Maggie King, Head of Academic Quality,

April 2021

SUMMARY: KEY PROCESSES

Managing Quality, Academic Standards and Academic Risk related to Taught Provision and the Student Experience (Foundation, UG, PGT, PGR). Two Key Aspects:

1)   Key Internal and External Quality Processes

2)   The Student Voice: Listening and Responding

Internal and External Quality Processes:

How Heriot-Watt currently manages quality, academic standards and academic risk

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Scottish Sector Definitions:

- **Assurance**
  - "guaranteeing the quality and academic standards of educational provision"

- **Enhancement**
  - "taking deliberate steps to improve the effectiveness of the student learning experience"

An ENHANCEMENT-Led Approach to Quality

The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework:

- Innovative approach
- Emphasis on enhancement, not only quality assurance
- Focus on the whole student learning experience
- Collaboration and partnership

Assurance is embedded in Enhancement

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK

Quality Enhancement Framework: the enhancement-led approach to quality in Scottish Higher Education.

- Five key aspects, plus one-year Focus On Projects

- In place since 2003

- Developed in partnership by a range of agencies: the Scottish Funding Council, the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland and the National Union of Students Scotland

- Emerged from, and was a reaction to, quality assurance processes that seemed to be intrusive, emphasised compliance and concentrated on the current state of play, rather than on improvement.

- Founded on the principle that the purpose of quality systems in higher education is to improve the student learning experience

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

ENHANCEMENT THEMES

INSTITUTION-LED REVIEWS

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC INFORMATION

FOCUS ON PROJECTS

QAA UK: Transnational Education Reviews; UK Quality Code

CURRENT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEWS OF HWU'S QUALITY PROCESSES

What we currently do:

- Each year, Academic Quality reviews quality assurance and quality enhancement processes, adapting in response to user feedback and/or external requirements. Process changes endorsed by UCQS or UCLT

- Sector-wide fora enable us to draw on good practice to adapt or strengthen or quality processes

- ELIR provides an external, periodic perspective on the effectiveness of our quality processes and our ability to manage academic risk

ELIR, November 2020: HWU **commended** for the effectiveness of its global quality processes, including during COVID-19

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR NOVEMBER 2020): COMMENDATION

External validation of HWU's robust, effective global quality framework

The University has a mature and effective institutional quality framework which is well-understood by staff across all campuses and is supported by the use of clear and accessible documentation.
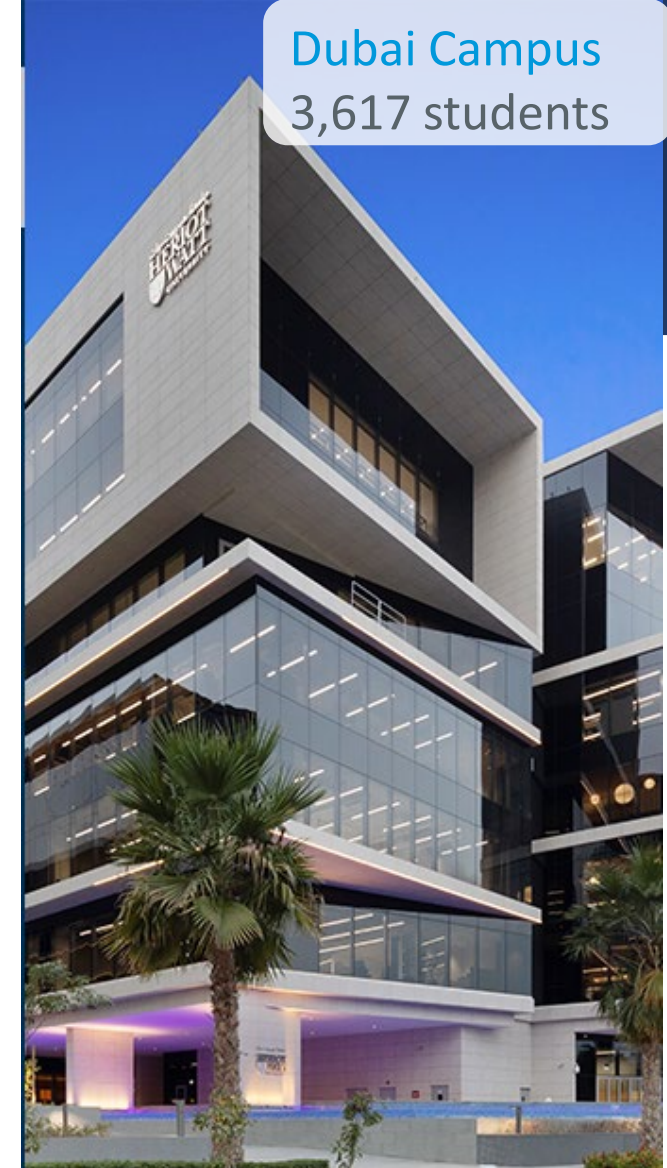
This has enabled an agile and effective response to the global coronavirus pandemic across all campuses, which was effectively led and coordinated at senior level, working across different national contexts.

Edinburgh Campus
9,195 students

Scottish Borders Campus, Galashiels
725 students

Dubai Campus
3,617 students

Orkney Campus
39 students

Malaysian Campus
1,992 students

Heriot-Watt: A Global Institution

GLOBAL STUDENT POPULATION

2018/19 Data

27,459 registered students in total:

15,570 on 5 campuses

11,889 studying with an academic partner or online as an independent distance learner

EXTERNAL QUALITY PROCESSES

Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland. UK)
Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)

Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland. UK)
Transnational Education Reviews (TNE)
(eg Hong Kong 2018, Malaysia 2019)

In-country Accreditation Authorities
Malaysia Qualifications Agency (MQA)
Knowledge and Human Development Agency (KHDA: Dubai)

Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRBs)
UK and international accreditation of HWU programmes

Challenge of meeting requirements of multiple accreditation authorities/ organisations

ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS

- Implementation of University's Academic Regulatory Framework

- Clear and consistent application of Regulations across all Schools, all modes and location

- Key role through Regulatory Framework (incl. policies and procedures) in assuring quality and academic standards globally

- Assessment and Examination

https://www.hw.ac.uk/documents/regulations.pdf

HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

Session 2020/21

(version 15 - updated after a meeting of the Senate on **3 September 2020**, which agreed modifications to Regulation 3 and Regulation 42). This update also takes into account Senate decisions on Regulation 4 (in July 2020), and Regulation 34 (June 2020).

Terminology in the Regulations
"Primary Academic Units" (from 2019):
In line with the definitions in the new Charter and Statutes, which were approved by the Privy Council on 12 June 2019, the Senate has agreed that all references in the Regulations to "Schools" should be read as references to "Primary Academic Units".

"Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness" (from 2017):
In line with a change to its Standing Committees, the Senate has agreed that all references in the Regulations to "Senate Business Committee" should be read as references to "Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness".

| Regulation number	Regulation Title	Page No.
1.	General Regulation	3
2.	Admission	7
3.	Modular First Degrees	10
	• Schedule 1A : Degree of Bachelor in Combined Studies	
	• Regulation 3 (Old): Non Modular First Degrees	
4.	Postgraduate Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas	35

HWU'S CODE OF PRACTICE

Global Code of Practice for the Management, Assurance and Enhancement of Taught Programmes

- A framework for managing, assuring and enhancing the quality and academic standards of programmes and of the student learning experience across all forms of taught provision (campus-based; via partner organisations (academic and industrial); through independent distance learning/online).

- Enables HWU to meet UK Quality Code, Competitions and Markets Authority, Scottish Funding Council and global accreditation

- BUT …. "*an ethos of enhancement and continuous improvement overarches and influences the implementation of this Code in practice. The University unequivocally adopts an **enhancement-led approach** to quality and encourages diversity and innovation.*"

https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/quality-codes.htm
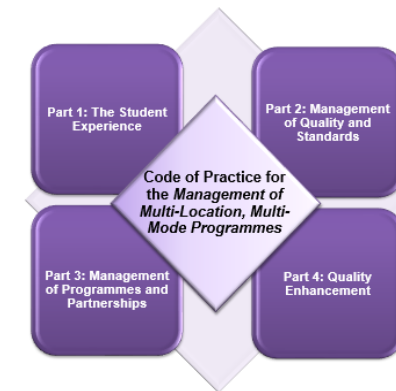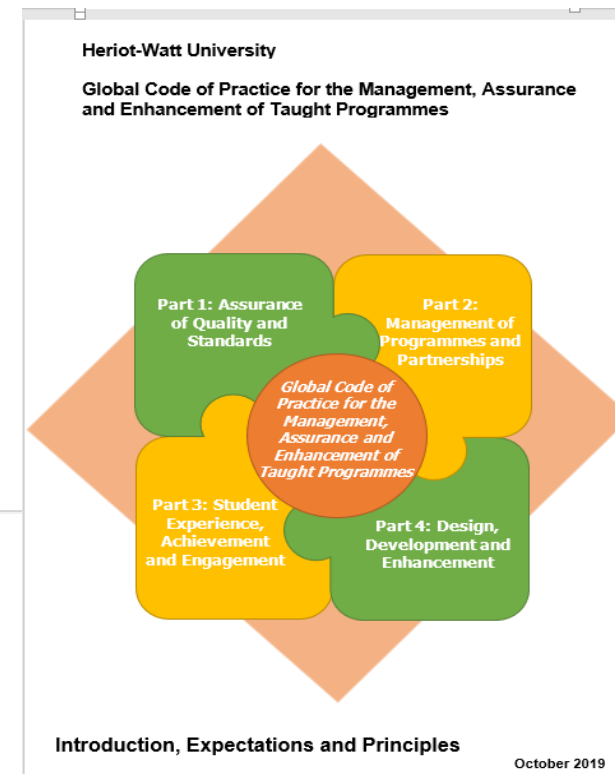
BRIEFING PAPERS: LEARNING AND TEACHING; QUALITY ASSURANCE

https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/academic-registry/quality/learning-teaching/learning-and-teaching-briefing-papers.htm

https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/quality-assurance-briefing-papers.htm

KEY TO MANAGING ACADEMIC RISK: IDENTICAL ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The most critical element of HWU's global quality framework

Programmes on 5 campuses, partnerships, online

How do we assure academic standards?

How do we enhance the quality of the student learning experience?

Identical academic standards; diversity of learning experiences

KEY PRINCIPLE OF IDENTICAL ACADEMIC STANDARDS

*Identical academic standards;
Diversity of learning experiences*

- Same learning outcomes irrespective of location or mode

- Same academic standards irrespective of location or mode

- Different experiences in different locations and modes to meet the needs of different students

- Always sufficient to allow students to achieve the learning outcomes

One Heriot-Watt Degree Worldwide

https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/docs/academic-registry/9.ltbp-identicalas.pdf

GLOBAL ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES
(QUALITY, LEARNING AND TEACHING)

5

University Committees are mirrored in Schools

Academic Management Structures:
Global Management of Learning and Teaching
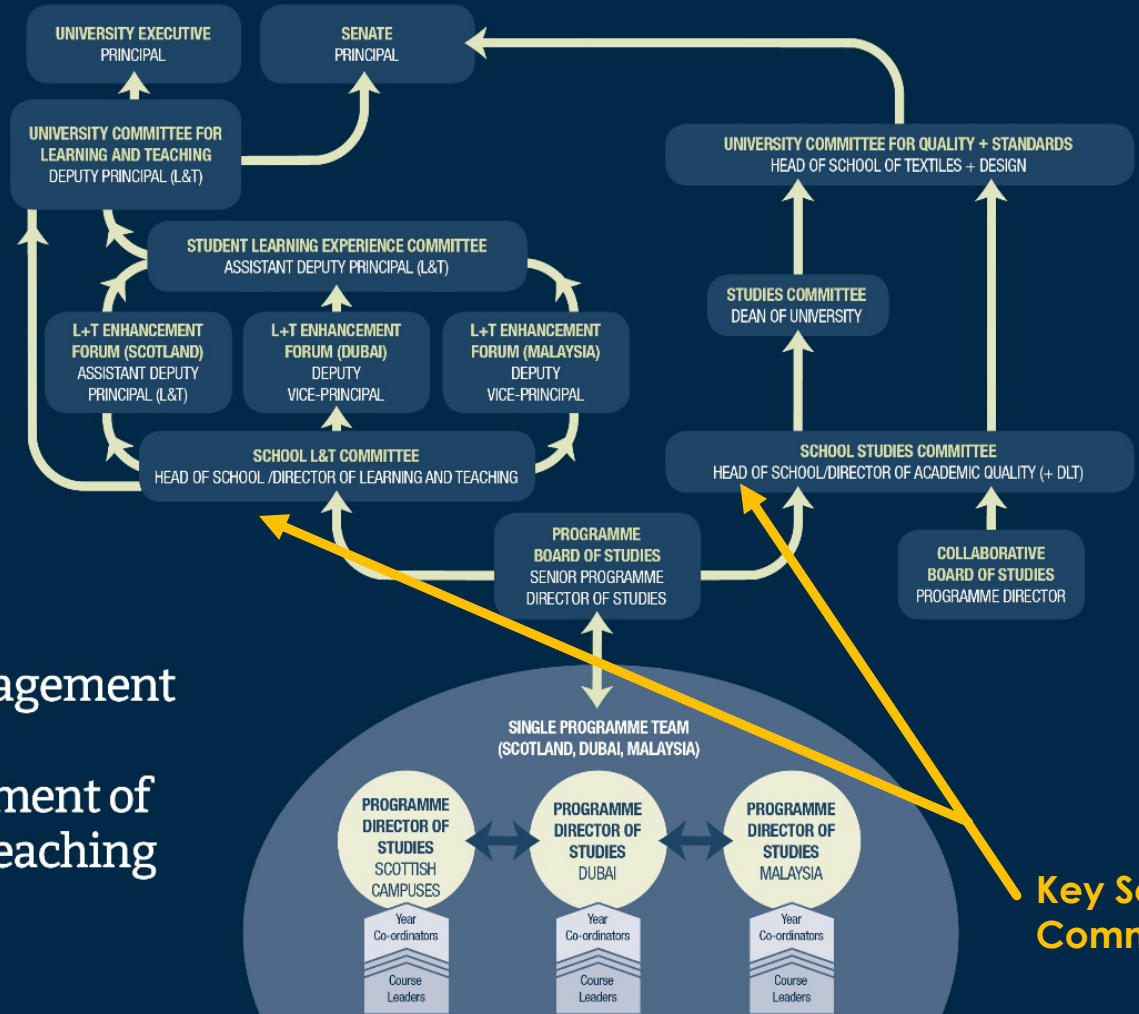
Key School Committees

GLOBAL MANAGEMENT OF THE THREE KEY ASPECTS OF QUALITY

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL (EDUCATION AND STUDENT LIFE)

GLOBAL ACADEMIC QUALITY TEAM
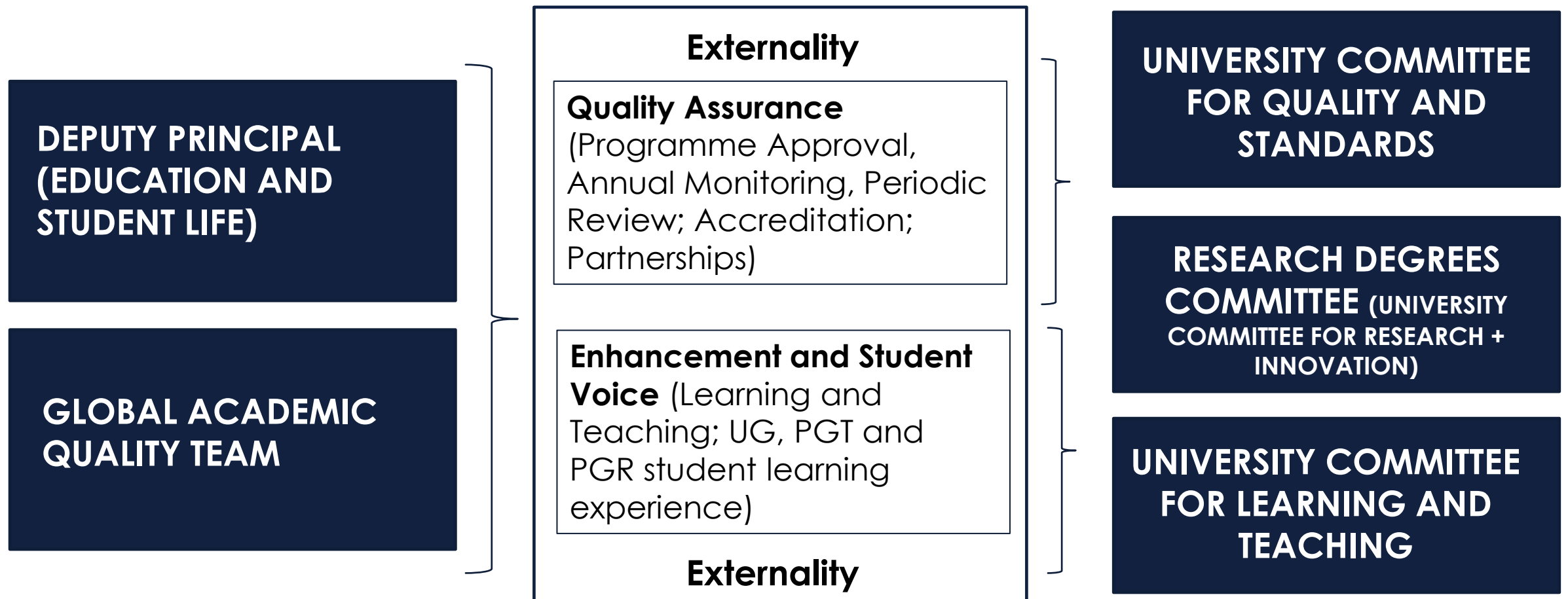
Externality

Quality Assurance (Programme Approval, Annual Monitoring, Periodic Review; Accreditation; Partnerships)

Enhancement and Student Voice (Learning and Teaching; UG, PGT and PGR student learning experience)

Externality

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE (UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH + INNOVATION)

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Quality Assurance

Programme Approval
- Business Approval of a Programme by Programme Management Board
- Academic Approval of a Programme by University Studies Committee
- Annual Report on Programme Approvals to UCQS

Annual Monitoring and Review
- School Review Report on all L+T activity (incl. Partner Monitoring)
- Review of Reports by Academic Quality, Associate Deans, Deputy Principal (E+SL)
- Annual AMR Report to UCQS AMR Dissemination Event

Periodic Review: Academic Review
- Review of Discipline/Service every 5 years
- Review Report and Action Plan to UCQS
- Annual Report on Academic Reviews to UCQS

Periodic Review: Internal Audit
- Audit of Schools' high risk activity every 3 years
- Audit Report and Action Plan to UCQS
- Annual Report on Internal Audits to UCQS

Examinations
- Report on Exam Boards by Deans Reps
- Review of On-Campus and Off-Campus Exams
- Annual Report on Exams and Exam Boards to UCQS

Partnership Approval
- Partnership documentation submitted to Academic Quality
- Partnership approved by named Senior Officer
- Annual Report on partnerships to UCQS
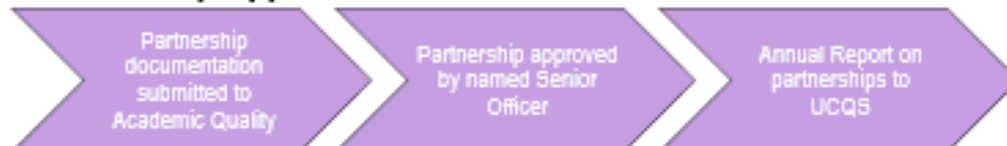
Summary of all Annual Reports to the Senate

Quality Processes in Action

1. Quality Assurance

Specific processes for managing higher risk areas:

- Internal Audit
- Off-Campus + Multi-Campus Exams Policies
- Risk Assessment in Partnerships

Enhancement and Student Voice*

Learning and Teaching Strategy + School Enhancement Plans
- Review of L+T Strategy by Academic Quality
- Review of School Enhancement Plans by DP (E+SL) + Head of Ac.Quality
- Annual Report on L+T Strategy to UCLT

Student Partnership Agreement
- Review of SPA by Student Rep Bodies and Academic Quality
- Review of SPA by Global Student Liaison Committee
- Annual SPA Report to UCLT, GSLC, Senate + Court

Student Surveys: Pulse Surveys, January Starts, Course Experience Survey
- Survey Reports considered by UCLT + Research Degrees Committee
- Tracking Reports to UCLT + Research Degrees Committee
- Annual Report on Student Surveys to UCLT

Student Surveys: NSS
- NSS Report by Planning Office and Academic Quality to UCLT, UE etc
- Tracking Reports to UCLT, UE, Senate + Court
- Annual Report on Student Surveys to UCLT

Student Representative Structures
- School Officers/Class Reps gather student views
- Views are reported through Student Representative Structures
- Annual Report on Academic Representation in SPA Report (as above)

Summary of all Annual Reports to the Senate

Student Complaints
- Student makes a complaint
- Complaints process is undertaken
- Annual Report on Complaints to Senate

Student Academic Appeals
- Student makes a an academic appeal
- Academic appeals process is undertaken
- Annual Report on Appeals to Senate

Annual Reports to the Senate

Quality Processes in Action

2. Enhancement and Student Voice

Global Engagement:

- Student Partnership Agreement
- Surveys: Foundation, UG, PGT, PGR
- Three Student Representative Bodies

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR 2020): COMMENDATION

Partnership Working with Students

Positive partnership working with student representative bodies (SRBs) - the University effectively engages with its SRBs, involving them in active consultation and decision-making processes. They have built, over a period of time, open and collegial relationships between senior management and student officers which demonstrate mutual respect, leading to increasing effective student representation and, in turn, effective enhancement of the student learning experience.

External Examiners

Reports reviewed by Academic Quality, Deans + Chief External Examiners → Chief External Examiner Reports reviewed also by Deputy Principal (E+SL) → Annual Report on External Examiners to UCQS

PSRBS

Accreditation of Discipline every 5 years → Accreditation reports to Academic Quality → Annual PSRB Report to UCQS

In-Country Accreditations

Annual accreditations for Dubai (KHDA) + Malaysia (MQA) → Outcomes reported to Academic Quality → Annual Report on KHDA +MQA accreditations to UCQS

QAA Scotland Annual Discussion

Annual Discussion with HWU + QAAS → Outcome reported to UCQS + UCLT → QAAS reports outcome to SFC

QAA Reviews (ELIR and TNE)

Review undertaken by external team → Review reports to QAAS, QAA UK and SFC → Review Reports to UCLT, UCQS, Senate and Court

Summary of all Annual Reports to the Senate

Externality

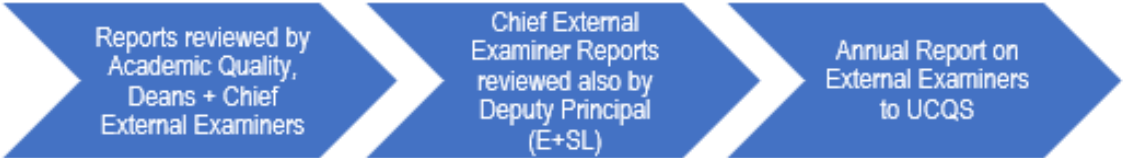# Quality Processes in Action

3. Externality

Specific processes related to higher risk areas:

- ELIR
- Transnational Education Review
- In-country accreditations
- PSRBs: outwith UK
- Chief External Examiners

OVER-ARCHING ANNUAL REVIEWS: BRINGING TOGETHER QUALITY ASSURANCE;, ENHANCEMENT + STUDENT VOICE AND EXTERNALITY

Annual Institutional Report on Quality to the Scottish Funding Council

Annual Discussion with Quality Assurance Agency Scotland

Heriot-Watt University

Annual Institutional Report on Quality to the Scottish Funding Council

2019/20

Academic Quality
HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY

Approved + signed off by Court

QAA Scotland: Annual Discussion with Heriot-Watt University
17 September 2020

List of Documentation

The following documents have been provided in advance for the Annual Discussion meeting:

A. Periodic Review 2019/20

1. Academic Review Process and Schedule (UK + Dubai)
   a. Global Academic Review Process *(future process)*
   b. Academic Review Briefing Paper
   c. Academic Review Guidance Materials
   d. Main Schedule of Academic Reviews
   e. Interim Schedule of Academic Reviews (2020/21 and 2021/22)

2. Academic Review Process and Schedule (Malaysia)
   a. Global Academic Review Process *(future process)*
   b. Academic Review Process for Malaysia: Committee paper
   c. Academic Review (Malaysia) Briefing Paper
   d. Academic Review (Malaysia) Guidance Materials
   e. Main Schedule of Academic Reviews

3. Academic Review Reports (UK)
   Report; Action Plan; Enhancement Workshop:
   a. Civil and Structural Engineering
   b. Chemical Engineering
   c. Mathematics

4. Academic Review Reports (Dubai)
   • *No Reviews took place (no documentation to provide)*

5. Academic Review Reports (Malaysia)
   • *No Reviews took place (no documentation to provide)*

6. Academic-Related Review of Professional Services
   • *No reports for individual reviews as BOC Project is reviewing the Professional Services*
   a. Handbook - Academic-Related Review of Professional Services
   b. Schedule

7. Internal Audits
   • *No Internal Audits took place in 2019/20 (no reports to provide)*
   a. Internal Audit Handbook (updated March 2019)
   b. Schedule of Internal Audits

B. Annual Summary Reports

8. Summary of Reports from External Examiners and Chief External Examiners, 2018/19 *(report deferred until end of Semester 1 2020, and so not included here; verbal update only)*
9. Summary of Academic Reviews, 2019/20
10. Summary of Deans' Representatives at Examination Boards, 2020 *(report deferred until end of Semester 1 2020, and so not included here; verbal update only)*
11. Summary Report of Annual Monitoring and Review 2019/20

C. Student Engagement 2019/20
12. Student Partnership Agreements 2019/20 and 2020/21
13. Results and Analysis of 2019 NSS-PTES-HWU Annual Survey
14. University 2019 Survey Action Plan

D. Enhancement 2019/20
15. University Committee for Learning and Teaching: Annual Strategic Review Report, 2019/20
16. Learning and Teaching Strategy 2018-2025

Note:
Enhancement Theme Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience: Heriot-Watt University, Year 3 Report - *this has been deferred following extension from QAA Scotland and so is not included here; verbal update only*

E. Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council 2019/20
17. Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council on Institution-Led Quality Review

F. ELIR4 January, March and November 2020 *(no documentation provided)*
ELIR4 Update on Resumed Review, 9-13 November 2020; *verbal report only*

G. Response to COVID-19 in AY2019/2020 and AY 2020/21

AY 2019/2020
18. Summary of COVID-related actions for Exams and Assessment in 2019/20
19. HWU's Approach to No Detriment Policy, April 2020
20. Academic Quality – Revised Processes and Deadlines, March 2020
21. Supporting Students Learning Online, March 2020
22. Summary of L+T COVID Student Survey, May 2020

AY 2020/2021
23. a) L+T COVID Group – Preparing for AY 2020/21
   b) L+T COVID Group – Remit
   c) L+T COVID Group – Membership
   d) L+T COVID Group – Timeline
   e) L+T COVID Group – Decisions
   f) School Summaries - Responsive Blended Learning

H. Briefing Papers
24. L+T and QA Briefing Papers