Background

In December 2012, the Court approved a proposed set of definitions relating to the components of the University's constitutional framework (the revised version (2) of the document was approved in May 2014). The purpose of adopting a set of commonly agreed definitions is to provide direction and support for any work undertaken in the future to tidy up or to develop parts of the constitutional framework. Agreed definitions and adherence to these are necessary to support the achievement and maintenance of good order in the University's constitutional framework. [http://www.hw.ac.uk/documents/constitutional-framework.pdf](http://www.hw.ac.uk/documents/constitutional-framework.pdf)

The constitutional framework is defined in terms of: Charter and Statutes, Ordinances, Regulations, Policies (Corporate), Policies (Academic), Procedures, Guidelines and Codes of Practice. In addition, lines of responsibility for each category are specified.

As regards policies, in essence, corporate (non-academic) policies are the responsibility of the Court, the University Executive, Secretary of the University and the Secretary's Board; they are devolved to various committees and groups as appropriate. Academic policies are the responsibility of the Senate: learning and teaching policies are the responsibility of the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) and the Learning and Teaching Board; they are devolved to the Student Learning Experience Committee and the committees of the Senate as appropriate.

Definition of Academic Policy

The University's constitutional framework includes definitions of both corporate and academic policies. Academic policies are defined as follows:

1. Academic policies encompass learning, teaching, assessment, research, the student learning experience, and associated quality assurance processes.
2. Academic policies exist to define and communicate institutional standards and to ensure equitable treatment of all students.
3. Academic policies apply to all programmes offered by Heriot-Watt University in any location and by any mode of study.

Policies (Academic)

A University academic policy is a concise, formal and mandatory statement of principle and applies, by definition, institution-wide. Academic policies encompass learning, teaching, assessment, research and the student learning experience, and also include the quality assurance processes associated with each area. Academic policies are part of the regulatory framework which governs the University's core academic activities.

The Senate is "the governing and executive body responsible for the academic work and standards of the University, both in teaching and research, and for the regulation and superintendence of the education and discipline of the students of the University" (HWU Charter, Clause 9 (1)). Therefore, the Senate has ultimate authority over the University's academic policies.

Academic policies aim principally to:

- guide academic practice and decision-making by setting out mandatory requirements;
- ensure the integrity of, and consistency across, the University's decision-making;
- help ensure that the University is compliant with national codes and external policy or legislation;
- provide a framework for ensuring the equitable treatment of all students;
- assure the quality and standards of the University's academic provision;
- safeguard the University's academic reputation;

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1 Research policies are the responsibility of the Senate, the Deputy Principal (Research and Knowledge Transfer), the Research and Knowledge Exchange Board and its committees.
• enhance the University's academic provision and the student learning experience.

Academic policies aim to support the University's academic strategy and operations, and should not be subject to frequent change.

The remainder of this Framework document focuses on the process for developing learning and teaching policies. “Learning and Teaching” is used in its broadest sense to make policies related to: learning and teaching practice and administration, assessment and the student learning experience, and all related quality assurance processes.

Process for Developing and Reviewing Learning and Teaching Policies

In its review of its Terms of Reference in March 2012, the Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) agreed to devolve all matters related to learning and teaching policy to the Student Learning Experience Committee (SLEC). At its first meeting on 20 September 2012, the Student Learning Experience Committee agreed the following process for the review and development of learning and teaching policies:

• the groundwork (in terms of review, drafting, etc.) would be undertaken by small groups of SLEC members and colleagues with relevant expertise.
• the Clerk to SLEC would be responsible for completion of the Equality and Privacy Impact Assessment (EIA and PIA) with the exception of policies with learning and teaching management implications, for which the EIA and PIA would be completed by the Clerk to LTB.
• a draft proposal, including the completed EIA and PIA would be considered by SLEC, with a view to wider consultation.
• a finalised draft would be sent from SLEC to the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies Committees or Quality and Standards Committee for consideration.
• U/PSC or QSC would make recommendations to the Senate for approval.

The Student Learning Experience Committee noted that, as part of its remit, it would be responsible for putting in place a more managed approach to the development and review of learning and teaching policies, procedures etc. As a consequence, a schedule for review of existing learning and teaching policies and development of new policies is overseen by SLEC and is maintained by the Clerk to the Committee. https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/student-learning/student-learning-experience-committee.htm

Process for Developing and Reviewing Procedures for Learning and Teaching Policies

Learning and Teaching policies are usually accompanied by a series of procedures which outline in detail the steps to be followed in implementing, and adhering to, the overarching policy. In terms of the definitions within the University's constitutional framework, procedures are defined as follows:

Procedures relate to and aid implementation of a University policy; representing the “how” rather than the “what” and “why” covered by policy documents. Procedures documentation sets out the prescribed and specific tasks or sequence of actions necessary to comply with the policy with which they are associated.

The proposal for a new or revised learning and teaching policy includes a recommendation on the group or individuals responsible for developing or amending the underpinning procedures. The finalised procedures are ratified by the designated group or individuals, and a report is then provided to the relevant Committee, with a view to endorsing the procedures and confirming their adherence to the associated policy.

This framework for developing learning and teaching policy was approved by the Learning and Teaching Board in November 2012; an updated version (with the inclusion of Equality and Privacy Impact Assessment) was approved in November 2014. A further update to include the section on Procedures was approved in October 2015.

Academic Registry