Managing Quality, Academic Standards and Academic Risk: the Effectiveness of HWU’s Quality Processes

Dr Maggie King, Head of Academic Quality,
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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
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: 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
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 our 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.
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.
Heriot-Watt: A Global Institution

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
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
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/ga/quality-codes.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

- 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

Identical academic standards; Diversity of learning experiences

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)

University Committees are mirrored in Schools

Academic Management Structures: Global Management of Learning and Teaching

https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/docs/learning-teaching/policies/amsmultiplecampuses.pdf
GLOBAL MANAGEMENT OF THE THREE KEY ASPECTS OF QUALITY

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL (EDUCATION AND STUDENT LIFE)

GLOBAL ACADEMIC QUALITY TEAM

EXTERNAITY

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

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

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE (UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH + INNOVATION)

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING
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
## Quality Processes in Action

### 2. Enhancement and Student Voice

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

#### 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, UG, Senate + Court
- Annual Report on Student Surveys to UCLT

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

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

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

#### Summary of all Annual Reports to the Senate

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Learning and Teaching Strategy + School Enhancement Plans

- Review of L+T Strategy by Academic Quality
- Review of School Enhancement Plans by DP (E+L) - 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, GSCC, Senate + Court

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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.
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

GAA 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 Reviews 2019/20
1. Academics Review Process and Schedule (drafts in Circulation)
   a. Global Academic Review Process (social science)
   b. Academic Review Quality Guidelines
   c. Academic Review: Quantitative Data
   d. Mean Results of Academic Reviews
2. Academic Review Process and Schedule (Malaysia)
   a. Global Academic Review Process (social science)
   b. Academic Review: Prerequisites for Malaysia, Commitment paper
   c. Academic Review: Malaysia, Drafting Paper
   d. Academic Review: Malaysia, Examinations
   e. Mean Results of Academic Reviews
3. Academic Review Reports of FOC:
   a. Mature, Old and Established in Malaysia
   b. Chemical Engineering
   c. Mathematics
   a. All Review Reports for documentation purposes
5. Academic Review Reports (Malaysia)
   a. Review of 2010/11 (new version)
   a. All reports for institutional reviews on ISIC project reviewing the Professional Services
   b. Handbook of the Academic Review of Professional Services
7. Internal Audits
   b. Schedule of Internal Audits
8. Summary Reports
   a. Summary of Reports from External Examiners and Chief External Examiners, 2019/20
10. Summaries of Academic Reviews, 2018/19

Approved + signed off by Court

Annual Discussion with Quality Assurance Agency Scotland

GAA Scotland Annual Discussion with Heriot-Watt University
17 September 2020

Scottish Funding Council Annual Report on Quality
Annual Discussion with Quality Assurance Agency Scotland

Heriot-Watt University
Annual Institutional Report on Quality

2019/20

C. Student Engagement (2019/20)
D. Scratch Proofing: Approaches to 2019/20 and 2020/21
E. Recruitment of 2019/20 and 2020/21
F. Learning and Teaching Strategy 2018/2022
G. Enrolment Management: Challenges and Lessons Learned from COVID-19
H. Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019/2020