

# **ANNUAL MONITORING and ACADEMIC REVIEW POLICY**

**September 2020**

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# Summary

## What is this document about?

This Policy document sets out the University's risk-based approach to annually monitoring and review the academic standards of its courses, the quality of learning opportunities for its students, and the outcomes they achieve. A separate operational handbook supports this Policy, which sets out the mechanisms through which this takes place including the use of data to support identification of areas requiring improvement, and the co-production of quality improvement plans with students.

## Who is this for?

This document will be of most interest to our staff, students and external subject advisers. It will be of interest also to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and the Office for Students (OfS). It may additionally be of some interest to the wider public.

## How does the University check this is followed?

This Policy is checked intrinsically through the processes it details, through consideration at Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), and operationally through Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships (ASQP) within the Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA).

## Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?

If you have questions about this document please contact Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships, Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA) [asqp@port.ac.uk](mailto:asqp@port.ac.uk)

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 [The UK Quality Code](#), developed by the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#) on behalf of the [UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment](#), sets out national expectations for standards and quality of UK higher education. This policy has been designed to be consistent with the expectations and practices outlined in the Code, which capture ways of working that support effective management of quality and standards, and underpin the delivery of positive outcomes for students.
- 1.2 The University has a longstanding commitment to ensuring that the higher education it delivers reflects the academic standards and requirements set out in the national qualifications framework, and is of high quality – in other words, it is well-designed, provides an enriching and inclusive academic experience for all students, incorporates reliable assessment of students' achievements, and provides them with the support they need to access, succeed in and benefit from higher education.
- 1.3 The standards and quality of the learning opportunities available to students are assured through adherence to the [Framework for the Maintenance and Enhancement of Academic Standards and Quality \(FMEASQ\)](#). The University works in partnership with its students in order to enhance all aspects of the student experience, as outlined in the [Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice](#).
- 1.4 The University subscribes to the following key quality principles:
  - All staff and students own quality assurance, and responsibility for ensuring quality therefore rests with everyone.
  - Students' views are at the heart of our policies and procedures for managing quality – they are engaged individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.
  - The outcomes of our work to assure standards and quality drive improvement and enhancement.
  - Our decisions about quality are made on the basis of shared information that is transparent and accessible across the academic community.
  - Our policies, processes and practices treat everyone with equal dignity and worth, and accord with our [Equality and Diversity Policy](#).
- 1.5 This policy is accompanied by the Annual Monitoring and Academic Review process document.

## 2. Principles

2.1 Our approach to assuring standards and driving up quality through annual monitoring and academic review is:

- **Data-informed:** A core data set will be used to evaluate quality and achievement against University quality indicators and sector benchmarks at different levels, and to drive enhancement. A supplementary data set will also be provided to support contextually-relevant analysis of core data, and to complement consideration of qualitative information (which is essential in avoiding over-simplification or, worse, omission of complex issues). Robust data provides us with a starting point for asking the right questions, enabling us to react quickly and collectively understand and improve our performance over time.
- **Transparent:** Our processes are underpinned by intelligent, agile use of shared information that is accessible to all staff. Effective sharing of information enables the collective identification and prioritisation of actions to be taken to address problems and drive continuous improvement.
- **Risk-based:** Data will be used to reach an assessment of risk, and specific interventions will only be required where performance against quality indicators needs to be improved.
- **Proportionate:** Effort is directed where it is most needed. Colleagues supporting successful provision will have less to do, improving efficiency and encouraging continued innovation and good practice. Those whose provision is in need of improvement against the quality indicators will be actively engaged with their students in developing a more targeted response.
- **Timely:** Careful and routine analysis of data as it becomes available, rather than at a single point in the academic cycle, will support the early identification of risk, and early intervention.
- **Action-focused:** Where performance against quality indicators needs to be improved, the process will clearly identify the actions that need to be taken, by whom, and within what timescale, to ensure the quality of the provision and the student experience through achievement of the relevant performance indicators going forward.
- **Inclusive:** Through timely engagement with our data, and through appropriate co-production with students, our enhancement activities will reflect our commitment to ensuring that all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from their University of Portsmouth education. Annual monitoring activity, and the targeted actions arising from it, will identify and seek to address gaps in attainment for students with particular demographic characteristics.

- 2.2 The University's approach to annual monitoring and academic review provides **an internal level playing field to assess and drive up quality at Portsmouth**, facilitating the best possible opportunities for learning, progression and achievement for all students. All benchmarks that are applied within the annual monitoring and academic review processes will be periodically reviewed by the University Executive Board.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1 The policy incorporates all credit and award-bearing academic taught and research degree provision, including:
- Undergraduate courses
  - Postgraduate taught courses (including the taught phase of Professional Doctorates)
  - Postgraduate research degree provision (including the research phase of Professional Doctorates)
  - Collaborative Provision<sup>1</sup>
  - Credit-bearing short courses<sup>2</sup>

## 4. Purpose

- 4.1 In their entirety, annual monitoring and academic review offer a supportive and developmental system of review, reflection, and enhancement, through effective sharing of good practice and timely collaborative action planning. This allows for the early identification of shortfalls in performance against the University's ambitious Quality Indicator benchmarks, and for appropriate local action to be taken. Quality risks will be automatically indicated on the basis of variance from key internal benchmark data; however, it is incumbent on staff to design appropriate actions and be clear what support is required to drive improvement. The indicators and benchmarks used by the University in evaluating the quality of provision and identifying shortfalls in performance may be reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis to ensure that our focus remains continually on driving up quality where there is the opportunity to do so.
- 4.2 In order to enhance quality and standards, the University is committed to the effective capture and dissemination of good practice in learning, teaching, assessment, research and innovation. Colleagues across the institution are engaged in an impressive variety of good practice that contributes to positive outcomes for our students. The annual monitoring and academic review policy and processes provide a structure for consistently capturing and recognising excellence at all levels, for sharing that effectively, and for understanding the **impact** of the good practice that colleagues and students have developed, and for making that knowledge, expertise and experience available to support enhancement in those areas that would benefit from it. Basing our identification of good practice upon data, where available, supports us in engaging in focused

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<sup>1</sup> This policy will apply to collaborative provision and modules from 2021/22. Until this date, collaborative courses continue to complete an Academic Standards Quality Evaluative Review (ASQER) report and modules continue to complete a Module Evaluation Review form

<sup>2</sup> The policy will be extended to credit-bearing short courses in 2021/22, in line with the launch of the policy to cover modules.

enhancement conversations, and in recognising excellence, and allows us to achieve things collectively that we might not otherwise be able to achieve. We aspire to use data collegially and intelligently to inspire different ways of working that make a positive impact on the University of Portsmouth student experience.

- 4.3 Consistent with the principle that responsibility for assuring quality rests with all of us, students are genuine, knowledgeable partners and participants in our quality processes. Boards of Studies, Student Voice Committees, and Faculty Research Degree Committees, have key roles to play in supporting the academic management and health of our taught and research higher education provision respectively. They provide local 'ownership' for the effective management of quality and standards, and for the delivery of positive outcomes for students, allowing for large numbers of colleagues and students to provide crucial input into the process for making recommendations for development and improvement. They allow for consideration of cross-University issues and good practice, while at the same time allowing for locally sympathetic and relevant practice through consideration of local plans for co-producing interventions aimed at enhancing quality. Student Voice Committees, in particular, provide a focus for the engagement of the collective student body in directly influencing the quality of the student experience, and the learning opportunities they participate in. Through routine engagement with this process, students have a central role to play in working with staff to drive consideration of how data can be used to shape our enhancement activities. Their voice is also crucial in helping staff better understand the context in which the data have come about, and to engage with cultural concepts for which data and benchmarks are not readily available (such as student identity, belonging and community).

## 5. Annual Monitoring

- 5.1 Academic colleagues are expected to engage with the Quality Assessment Dashboard (QuAD) as relevant to their role (Module Coordinator, Course Leader, Department Research Degree Coordinator, Head of Department, Associate Dean etc) throughout the year to review module, course and research degree Quality Indicator outcomes. Taking a risk-based approach, an Excellence and Quality Improvement Plan (EQuIP) is produced, targeting actions relating to any Quality Indicators that do not meet the university's internal benchmarks. The EQuIP also captures good practice, the extent of student co-production, outcomes from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body events, and feedback from External Examiners. The course EQuIPs are considered at departmental level, which in turn is supported by a departmental EQuIP. These are reviewed at the undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) Faculty Quality Review meetings. The outcome from the Faculty Quality Review meeting is a faculty-focused action plan. This is not a reproduction of course/department EQuIPs but instead aims to identify the interventions and support which can be resourced and channelled at faculty level to address themes across the faculty. The faculty plans are signed off at Faculty Executive and submitted to University Education and Student Experience Committee, along with a University-wide report on Quality Indicator outcomes for the year under review. Refer to the Annual Monitoring and Academic Review process document for full details.



## 6. Academic Review

The Annual Review process has been designed to enable academic teams to provide targeted intervention relating to student experience, quality, standards and outcomes. However, where those interventions do not demonstrably improve the targeted areas then the academic provision may undergo an Academic Review. Courses, collaborative partnerships and research degrees are identified for Academic Review based on whether or not it meets the Academic Review Criteria. Academic Review is a peer-based review of documentation, statistical data and discussion with faculty, departmental and course representative/s.

## 7. Evaluation and Review

- 7.1 Any queries regarding this policy, and its accompanying process document, should be directed to [asqp@port.ac.uk](mailto:asqp@port.ac.uk).
- 7.2 The fitness for purpose and effectiveness of this policy will be formally reviewed in line with ASQP's standard review schedule for University academic policies<sup>19</sup>.
- 7.3 Future development of the annual monitoring and review process will take appropriate account of advances in data analytics and sector-wide good practice in quality management. It will also consider whether the data indicate that the process has asked the right questions to enable us to develop a full and robust understanding of our performance, and whether our use of the data and our application of the process has enabled us to implement improvements over time.