



**Senate**

<b>Paper Title</b>	HEFCE Annual Provider Review
<b>Outcome requested</b>	<p>Senate is asked to <b>consider</b> the update on QMUL's compliance with HEFCE's revised operating model for quality assessment (full details of the operating model are available at <a href="http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201603">www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201603</a>)</p> <p>Senate is asked to <b>consider</b> the evidence and proposed action that will be presented to Council in order for it to provide assurances on the continuous improvement of the student academic experience, student outcomes and the reliability of degree standards. Senate members are also asked to <b>consider</b> whether full or partial assurance can be given by 1 December 2016.</p>
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although QMUL is in the 'transition' group of HEIs (those that were due to have an audit by the QAA in 2016), all HEFCE funded providers are required to submit these assurances as part of the Annual Accountability Return to HEFCE.</li> <li>• HEFCE has provided for partial assurances and an action plan for the first year of implementation (2016). HEFCE will visit those institutions returning partial assurances in spring 2017 to discuss any gaps and accompanying action plans in more detail.</li> </ul>
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is Senate satisfied that the evidence to support these statements provides Council with the information needed to provide full assurance by 1 December 2016?</li> <li>• Are there any areas where Senate would recommend partial assurance?</li> <li>• If partial assurance is recommended, what must Senate do in order to provide full assurance in advance of spring 2017?</li> <li>• Is Senate content with the proposed action points for work to be undertaken 2016-17?</li> <li>• Are there any additional actions that Senate would like to be addressed during 2016-17?</li> </ul>
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	<p>Memorandum of assurance and accountability between HEFCE and QMUL</p> <p>Quality Assurance Agency, <i>UK Quality Code for Higher Education</i></p>

	<p>European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</i></p> <p>Committee of University Chairs, <i>The Higher Education Code of Governance</i></p>
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	<p>Aligns with strategic risks;</p> <p>2.01 High quality student experience throughout the student life cycle</p> <p>7.01 Design and delivery of high quality portfolio of programmes</p> <p>9.01 Reputational development and external relations</p> <p>10.01 Partnerships</p> <p>13.01 Maintain effective and constructive governance</p>
<b>Reporting/ consideration route for the paper</b>	n/a
<b>Authors</b>	Jane Pallant, Deputy Academic Registrar
<b>Sponsor</b>	Jonathan Morgan, Academic Registrar and Secretary to Council

## HEFCE Annual Provider Review

### Background

1. HEFCE published initial details of its revised operating model for quality assessment in March 2016 ([www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201603](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201603)), with further updates in August 2016. The revised model significantly reduces the burden of external quality assessment and mirrors QMUL's own approach in recognising that 'quality' should not be considered as a separate work stream for the purposes of external scrutiny. QMUL's academic governance framework has a clear focus on the provision of assurances at every level on the issues that matter to students – degree standards, student outcomes and the academic experience.

### Assurances

Council will be asked to include the following assurances on academic quality and standards in its annual accountability return to HEFCE by 1 December 2016:

- the governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This included evidence from the provider's own periodic review processes, which fully involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review.
- the methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.
- the standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.

The subsequent submission, due on 1 December 2017 and relating to activity during the 2016-17 academic year, will also include the following additional assurance statement:

- the governing body has received a report that confirms that the provider continues to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

2. These assurances are aligned with efforts made following the Council effectiveness review in 2014-15 to provide Council with sufficient information on the academic business of QMUL to gain assurance that Senate is fulfilling the responsibilities given to it in the Charter and Ordinances. QMUL's framework for academic governance makes the Vice-Principals individually accountable for decisions and strategic delivery, consultation and communication in their areas of responsibility and for providing assurance through regular reports to Senate and Council.

*2.1 The governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This included evidence from the providers own periodic review processes which fully involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review.*

#### Evidence for assurance

- Council receives regular reports from Senate with supplementary background reading which includes details of survey results (NSS, PTES, PRES, QMSS), sub-strategies related to the student experience (e.g. Student Engagement, Retention and Success Strategy) and student outcomes.
- Council considered a detailed report on student casework (appeals, complaints, assessment offences, discipline and fitness to practise) at the meeting of 5 April 2016. Council had previously received the report on cases referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator; this more comprehensive report on casework provided assurance that student complaints were addressed effectively and that the wellbeing of students was secured.
- Council receives regular reports from the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) which provide Council with a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student experience.

- Council receives regular reports from the Vice-Principal (Research) which inform Council members on the research student experience and provide information on research student outcomes and completion rates.
- The Vice-Principals and Executive Deans also make annual reports to Council which include matters relating to the student experience and the quality of provision.

#### Action for 2016-17

- Strategic Planning will prepare an annual report on student outcomes, with appropriate sector benchmarking, for 2017 onwards. This report will be available for consideration by the Education Quality Board (May 2017), Senate (June 2017) and Council (July 2017).
- Council members have been invited to participate in periodic reviews as observers from 2016 onwards. This opportunity will provide members with more context on the operation of the process and its role in the continuous improvement of the student academic experience. Issues emerging from periodic reviews will be monitored through the academic governance framework; reports of periodic reviews will be provided for Council members' information as background reading.

*2.2 The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.*

#### Evidence for assurance

- Council receives regular updates from the Vice-Principals on the mechanisms used to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes.
- Council received a presentation on academic governance at its meeting in October 2015. This presentation formed part of an ongoing aspiration to strengthen the interaction between Council and Senate, while noting that Senate already provides Council with appropriate assurance in relation to academic risks.

#### Action for 2016-17

- Senate may wish to offer an additional programme of presentations to Council members to enhance their understanding of the methodologies used for the enhancement of the student academic experience and the improvement of student outcomes. This is linked to the assurance related to the European Standards and Guidelines (2015), described in 3. below.
- The Education Quality Board has approved the development of a web-based Education Manual which will house all policies related to teaching, learning and the student experience. It is intended that this resource will be of use to both staff and external audiences, providing accessible information on QMUL's approach to the management of academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

*2.3. The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained*

#### Evidence for assurance

- Each subject examination board for taught programmes has an external examiner to ensure that academic standards have been appropriately set and maintained. Issues raised by external examiners are addressed by the relevant school/institute and reports are monitored by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) and by the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat. Panels for research degree examinations include external representation. Potential risks to academic standards are monitored by Senate and reported to Council where necessary.
- Each Degree Examination Board has an external member who provides a report on the effectiveness of QMUL's mechanisms for maintaining academic standards. The Education Quality Board considers this report and any emerging issues would be referred on to Senate for further consideration, with reference to Council if the issues were deemed to be sufficiently serious.

#### Action for 2016-17

- Council to receive the external examiners' overview report and reports from external members of the Degree Examination Boards in their background reading.
- The report from Strategic Planning (referred to in the action for 2.1) will provide additional information on student attainment with relevant benchmarking information.

3. For 2017 onwards, *the governing body has received a report that confirms that the provider continues to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).*

#### Action for 2016-17

The Education Quality Board will consider a detailed mapping of QMUL's compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (2015) on behalf of Senate. Council will receive a briefing on the report in order to enable it to provide the appropriate assurances in December 2017.

#### Questions for Senate to consider

4. Senate is nominated in the Charter as the body responsible for the academic activity of QMUL, subject to the general superintendence and control of Council. Council's oversight of Senate is regulated by its commitment, through the CUC Code of Governance, to the principles of collegiality and academic freedom. Senate is required to provide appropriate assurances to Council on the security of academic standards and the quality of the student experience in order that Council can be confident in endorsing the statements of assurance required by HEFCE.

5. In order to take account of the new approach to quality assessment, during the first year of implementation, HEFCE has confirmed that it will accept partial assurances, together with an account of the action that the governing body is taking to reach a position in which it can provide full assurance. Where only partial assurance is given, HEFCE will arrange a follow-up meeting in spring 2017 to obtain more detail on the position and proposed action.

6. Senate is asked to consider the evidence and proposed action that will be considered by Council in order for it to provide assurances on the continuous improvement of the student academic experience, student outcomes and the reliability of degree standards.

- Is Senate satisfied that the evidence to support these statements provides Council with the information needed to provide full assurance by 1 December 2016?
- Are there any areas where Senate would recommend partial assurance?
- If partial assurance is recommended, what must Senate do in order to provide full assurance in advance of spring 2017?
- Is Senate content with the proposed action points for work to be undertaken 2016-17?
- Are there any additional actions that Senate would like to be addressed during 2016-17?

Jane Pallant  
Deputy Academic Registrar  
September 2016

