



Annual Assurance Report from Senate 2016–17

<p>Outcome requested:</p>	<p>Council is asked:</p> <p>[a] to consider the Annual Assurance Report from Senate for 2016–17;</p> <p>[b] to give full assurance to HEFCE on the mechanisms that are in place to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes, and to ensure that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained.</p>
<p>Executive Summary:</p>	<p>[a] Council is required, as part of the annual accountability return, to give assurances to HEFCE on academic quality and standards, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>[b] Council previously agreed that it will undertake this responsibility on the basis of a report and recommendations from Senate. An overview of Senate’s approach to improving the student experience and the management of academic standards is attached. A more detailed summary of the Annual Assurance Report 2016-17 has been prepared in line with the CUC’s illustrative practice note on academic assurance; this report is provided in the additional reading for Council members. The report does not repeat information on student complaints, the outcomes of student satisfaction surveys and student progress data that has been provided to Council previously.</p> <p>[c] Senate considered the report at its meeting on 12 October 2017 and recommends to Council that full assurance should be provided in relation to each of the above statements.</p>

QMUL Strategy:	Strategic Aim 3: to provide all our students, wherever based, an education that is judged internationally to be of the highest quality, and which exploits innovations in teaching, learning and assessment.
Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:	HEFCE Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) The Higher Education Code of Governance (CUC)
Strategic Risks:	Aligns with strategic risks: 2.01 High quality student experience throughout the student lifecycle 7.01 Design and delivery of high quality portfolio of programmes 9.01 Reputational development and external relations 10.01 Partnerships 13.01 Maintain effective and constructive governance
Equality Impact Assessment:	None required. Consideration of academic outcomes for different student groups is embedded in QMUL's academic quality assurance arrangements.
Subject to prior and onward consideration by:	Education Quality and Standards Board, 20 September 2017 Senate, 12 October 2017
Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA:	No
Timing:	For assurances to be given on 1 December 2017
Author:	Academic Secretariat, ARCS
Date:	12 October 2017
Senior Management/External Sponsor:	Professor Colin Bailey, President and Principal

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1. Overview

1.1 Senate is nominated in the QMUL Charter as the body with overall responsibility for the academic activity of the university, subject to the general superintendence and control of Council. In practice, Senate assigns individual responsibility to the Vice-Principals for the management of academic quality and standards in the faculties, as well as for the development of cross-cutting academic strategies. It also delegates responsibility for detailed scrutiny of certain issues—the quality of the academic experience; curriculum approval and review; postgraduate research; academic partnerships; and research ethics—to a small number of boards. Senate’s role is therefore to hold the Vice-Principals and the chairs of the boards to account, as well as to decide on matters of principle, while giving assurance to Council through regular reports that it is fulfilling its responsibilities effectively.

1.2 The boards of Senate that have responsibilities most closely aligned with the assurances to be given by Council are:

- Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB), chaired by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning), which establishes academic regulations and quality assurance mechanisms, considers the outcomes of reviews of the academic provision, and develops policies to improve the quality of the academic experience;
- Taught Programmes Board (TPB), chaired by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning), which scrutinises and approves the standards, content and arrangements for the delivery of new taught programmes;
- Partnerships Board, chaired by the Vice-Principal (International), which judges the appropriateness of potential partner institutions in teaching and postgraduate research;
- the Degree Examinations Boards, chaired by senior academics appointed by Senate, which consider recommendations from schools and institutes on the academic progress and achievement of individual students in order to gain assurance that institutional procedures for setting and maintaining standards have been followed and that assessment regulations are being applied consistently and fairly;
- Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board, chaired by the Head of the Doctoral College, which combines the functions of EQSB, TPB and the Degree Examinations Boards for postgraduate research.

1.3 The above arrangements are set out in the Academic Governance Framework and supported by the Academic Secretariat. Reviews of academic governance are conducted periodically alongside the corporate governance reviews. The review of academic governance in 2015–16, that was reported to Council, concluded that QMUL has a comprehensive academic governance framework that provides structured opportunities for members of staff and students to engage on issues at all levels of the institution and conforms to sectoral expectations. More recently, Senate has introduced an annual effectiveness survey encompassing the arrangements in schools and institutes, as well as faculties and the centre.

1.4 Sectoral expectations on how universities should manage academic standards and deliver a high-quality student experience are set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA), which is itself aligned with guidelines issued by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). QMUL meets these expectations through its academic regulations and a comprehensive set of institution-wide policies contained in the Education Manual. ARCS has undertaken a detailed mapping of the UK Quality Code to QMUL’s internal quality assurance arrangements and any resulting recommendations or

enhancements have been considered by the Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB). The arrangements include:

- policies and processes through which QMUL assures the standards, content and arrangements for the delivery of new taught programmes before they are offered to students;
- mechanisms for reviewing the 'health' of programmes on an annual basis, using information on student recruitment, progress and achievement, as well as feedback from students;
- mechanisms for reviewing local arrangements in schools and institutes on a six-year cycle;
- the involvement of students and student views in programme approval and review processes;
- the involvement of external specialists (who have been appointed through formal mechanisms to ensure their suitability and independence) in student assessment and programme approval and review processes;
- formal governance arrangements and the work of the Academic Secretariat to ensure that the arrangements are implemented.

Further information on these arrangements is provided in the summary of the Annual Assurance Report 2016-17 as part of the background reading for Council members.