Framework for the Maintenance and Enhancement of Academic Standards and Quality

October 2014
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<tr>
<th>Document author and department</th>
<th>Responsible person and department</th>
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<tr>
<td>Liz Hunt, Senior Registrar, Quality Management Division, Academic Registry</td>
<td>Rebecca Bunting, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Directorate</td>
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External queries relating to the document to be referred in the first instance to the University Secretary: telephone +44 (0)23 9284 3195 or email university.secretary@port.ac.uk

If you need this document in an alternative format, please contact +44 (0)23 9284 5776.

The latest version of this document is always to be found at:

[www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/curriculumandqualityenhancement/filetodownload,13340,en.pdf](http://www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/curriculumandqualityenhancement/filetodownload,13340,en.pdf)
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**NB Footnotes:** Many of the underpinning policies/guidelines referred to are updated regularly, therefore web addresses, which remain constant, are provided for ease of access. If you experience any difficulty in accessing referenced documents, try [www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation](http://www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation) or contact Quality Management Division at qmd@port.ac.uk.
Summary

What is this Policy about?
This document replaces the Framework for the Maintenance and Enhancement of Academic Standards and Quality 2007. The revised document sets out an overview of the University’s approach to the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards and references a number of related policies where more detailed information can be found. It also includes the University’s approach to external policy developments such as the Quality Assurance Agency’s UK Quality Code.

Who is this Policy for?
This document will be of most interest to external audiences such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB) and the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). It may additionally be of some interest to the wider public. It may also be of interest to our staff, students and external subject advisers who require an overview or an indication of where to go for more specific detail.

How does the University check this Policy is followed?
This Framework is followed implicitly through the meeting of the policies and carrying out of the processes it is informed by, all of which are monitored by appropriate officers and central committees. For specific detail see the relevant policy referenced.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this Policy?
If you are external to the University and you have any questions about this Policy please contact the University’s Quality Management Division (QMD) at qmd@port.ac.uk.

If you are internal to the University please contact the Faculty Associate Dean (Academic) or Academic Registry Quality Management Division at qmd@port.ac.uk.

1. Introduction

1.1 The University Strategy 2012–2017 sets out the vision, ethos and headline aims for the University. The overarching Strategy is supported by three underpinning strategies, for Education², Knowledge Services³, and Research⁴.

1.2 The key aims of the University in relation to the standard of its awards and the quality of provision can be summarised as follows:

• To maintain the standards and reputation of the University’s awards.
• To ensure an effective learning experience for our students.
• To be responsive to external agendas.
• To promote a culture where all staff and students can contribute to reflection, evaluation, development and enhancement in the University.

1 www.port.ac.uk/strategy
2 www.port.ac.uk/educationstrategy
3 www.port.ac.uk/knowledgestrategy
4 www.port.ac.uk/researchstrategy
1.3 Our vision for the Education Strategy is:

‘To provide an excellent, inspiring and challenging educational experience underpinned by research, scholarship and professional and ethical practice, through which our students will be able to achieve personal, academic and career success.’

‘This will be achieved through a culture of enhancement with five strategic aims:

- We will provide an educational experience underpinned by research, scholarship and professional and ethical practice that inspires, engages and challenges students and promote success in an inclusive and supportive environment.
- Through and beyond the curriculum, we will enable students to develop skills and gain experience which will prepare them for success in the graduate global labour market.
- Our learning and support environments, resources and infrastructures will be high quality, effective, efficient, flexible and conducive to student learning.
- We will foster a shared responsibility for learning and enhancement with our students to further enrich their overall experience.
- We will develop, recognise and reward excellent and inspirational staff.

Through these aims we expect the Portsmouth graduate to:

- Demonstrate command of a significant body of subject knowledge and skills.
- Be able to make a successful transition into employment and/or further study.
- Be confident to engage in lifelong learning in pursuit of personal, academic and career development.
- Display effective academic, research, information and digital literacy skills.
- Be able to work autonomously and collaboratively.
- Have an enterprising outlook and be capable of logical, critical and creative thinking to solve a range of problems.
- Have a global perspective and be able to act in an ethical and socially responsible manner.’

1.4 The University’s systems seek to manage, establish, communicate, maintain, assure and enhance the quality of the learning experience offered to students and the standards that they study to achieve. This document sets out both general principles and specific reference points as of October 2014. It will be updated periodically through Quality Assurance Committee, to take account of changes in internal and external requirements.

1.5 These principles apply to all our taught programmes, therefore, no distinction is made between Further Education, Higher Education, campus-based, flexible, distributed or work-based learning, home or collaborative provision. Our research degrees’ provision adheres to many of the same principles. Unless stated otherwise, therefore, all sections of this document are applicable to all modes and levels of delivery.

1.6 The maintenance and enhancement of academic standards and quality are inextricably linked and when separated in this document are done so for the purposes of clarity only.

2. Summary

2.1 The key features of the University's Academic Standards and Quality Framework

2.1.1 An overarching committee management structure, including the Board of Governors, Academic Council, Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Policy Committee, Research Degrees Committee and their sub-committees, as appropriate. Information relating to the constitutions, terms of reference and memberships of statutory committees in the University is available on line.

2.1.2 Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for staff with respect to management and enhancement of quality standards.

2.1.3 Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for External Examiners and assessors.

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5 www.port.ac.uk/educationstrategy
6 www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/academicregistry/committees/filetodownload,31954,en.pdf
7 www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/externalexaminers/filetodownload,10392,en.pdf
8 www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/courseapproval/filetodownload,24384,en.pdf
2.1.4 Admission to
design and operation of, courses, programmes and assessment of students, both taught and
research based within a University-wide framework of policies.

2.1.5 Rigorous course approval with external participation.

2.1.6 Consideration of internal and external reference points in the setting of standards and curricula appropriate to the
award.

2.1.7 Unit and course modification effected through documented procedures.

2.1.8 Clear communication of programme and unit learning outcomes to students, staff and external examiners.

2.1.9 Clear descriptions of the mechanisms that enable the programme and unit outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated.

2.1.10 Involvement of students in the quality framework and systematic scrutiny and evaluation that is informed by students' views.

2.1.11 Annual programme monitoring through Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Reviews (ASQERs), ASQER Data
Reports and Boards of Studies, and Periodic Programme Review, the latter involving External Assessor(s).

2.1.12 The quality management and assurance of Postgraduate Research Degree programmes through University and Faculty
Research Degrees Committees, Chair Faculty Research Degrees Committee ASQERs, and University Postgraduate
Research Degree Programmes Periodic Review.

2.1.13 Internal and External Examiner review of assessment strategies and artefacts.

2.1.14 External Examiner participation in Unit Assessment and Award/Progression Examination Boards and comment on the
comparability of standards.
2.1.15 Gathering, evaluating and responding to feedback from peers\textsuperscript{31}, External Examiners\textsuperscript{32} and students\textsuperscript{33}.

2.1.16 Support and advice to students, through personal tutors (or equivalent)\textsuperscript{34} and central student advice services\textsuperscript{35}.

2.1.17 Support to, and development of, staff\textsuperscript{36, 37}.

2.1.18 Dissemination and evaluation of key information concerning student learning experience performance and achievement\textsuperscript{38}.

2.1.19 An emphasis upon quality enhancement, for example, via evaluative reporting and explicit requirements to identify enhancement opportunities\textsuperscript{39}.

2.2 This document sets out:

- The University's definition of, and principles underlying, academic standards and quality (section 3).
- How the academic standards and the quality framework are established (section 4).
- How academic standards and quality are managed (section 5).
- How academic standards and the quality framework are communicated (section 6).

3. Definitions and principles

3.1 Academic standards

The University works with the definition of academic standards as:

‘the level of achievement that a student has to reach at a threshold level in order to gain an academic award.’

3.1.1 The management, establishment, maintenance and assurance of the academic standards of its programmes are essential to the integrity of the University’s awards. The clear definition and communication of academic standards is important to students, staff and other stakeholders and the adoption of a common set of regulations is important to ensure equity.

3.1.2 Thus the underlying features of this Framework can be summarised as ones that:

- Provide an explicit definition and statement of what students have to know or do to gain entrance to a particular programme of study\textsuperscript{40}.
- Are informed by external references.
- Ensure that the standards set are appropriate to the award and subject area and are comparable with those expected within the subject area in other universities.
- Provide an explicit definition and statement of what students have to know and do to achieve a particular award, part of an award, or a classification within an award.
- Design and manage the assessment process so that it can be shown to be valid, clear, reliable and equitable.
- Communicate the expectations of achievement clearly to students.
- Seek to enhance the standards achieved by students.

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\textsuperscript{31} Peers Enhancing Practice Framework. \url{www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation/policies/teachingandlearning/filetodownload,76928,en.pdf}

\textsuperscript{32} External Examiners Report Form. \url{www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation/policies/externalexaminers/filetodownload,175893,en.doc}

\textsuperscript{33} Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice. \url{www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation/policies/qualityassurance/studentfeedback/filetodownload,18293,en.pdf} Annex 5

\textsuperscript{34} \url{www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation/policies/curriculumandqualityenhancement/filetodownload,52364,en.pdf}

\textsuperscript{35} \url{www.port.ac.uk/media/Media,180899,en.pdf}

\textsuperscript{36} Continuing Professional Development Policy. \url{www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation/policies/humanresources/filetodownload,18715,en.pdf}

\textsuperscript{37} Human Resource Strategy. \url{www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation/policies/humanresources/filetodownload,51828,en.pdf}

\textsuperscript{38} Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice. \url{www.port.ac.uk/accessstoinformation/policies/qualityassurance/studentfeedback/filetodownload,18293,en.pdf}

\textsuperscript{39} Programme Monitoring and Review Operational Handbook. \url{www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,182255,en.pdf}

\textsuperscript{40} \url{www.port.ac.uk/courses}. Individual course “key facts”. 
3.2 Quality of student learning opportunities

The University works with the definition of academic quality as:

‘a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award.’

3.2.1 The central reference point is the student – their learning experience, environment and achievements. Thus the University’s quality strategy seeks to ensure an effective learning experience of high quality for its students.

3.2.2 A quality learning experience will be one that:

- Provides curricula that:
  - are current, coherent, flexible, accessible and responsive to needs of students;
  - are informed by research, consultancy and other scholarly activities of staff;
  - encourage and stimulate learners to participate and provide opportunities for them to achieve their full potential.

- Provides courses of the appropriate level for the award to which they lead.

- Provides clear aims and learning outcomes and the mechanisms whereby they may be achieved.

- Employs a range of approaches to teaching and learning including the use of digital learning technology where appropriate.

- Provides opportunities for students to develop knowledge, understanding and/or competence to the required level, and to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

- Provides students with the opportunity to assess their own entry and ongoing skills.

- Supports students and staff in their work through pastoral and academic support services.

- Treats students fairly and with respect.

- Promotes employability.

- Is supported by quality material and physical resources, including general and specialised accommodation, equipment, administrative support and the range of learning resources available.

- Is characterised by a culture of continuous enhancement that is informed by best practice.

3.3 Quality assurance

3.3.1 Quality assurance processes ensure that there are systems both for support and maintenance of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities.

3.3.2 The quality assurance framework at the University of Portsmouth recognises that quality of provision is most effectively evaluated and enhanced by those directly involved in the educational process. The most important site of responsibility for maintaining academic quality therefore rests with individual staff in their contribution to courses and as facilitators of students’ learning. Thus the University’s quality assurance system is devolved within institutionally agreed frameworks.

4. Establishment of academic standards and quality assurance framework

In establishing the standard of the awards, selection criteria and its framework for quality assurance, the University of Portsmouth takes cognisance of both internal and external expectations and agendas.

4.1 Establishing the standards of awards

4.1.1 Reference points

In setting the standard of the award, the University considers external and internal reference points. The following are applicable:

- The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education:41
  - Part A on academic standards including:
    - the framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ)42
    - subject benchmark statements.
  - Part B on academic quality.
  - Part C on information about higher education provision.
  - Higher Education Credit Framework for England43.

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41 www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code
43 www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Academic-Credit-Framework.pdf
• The South-East England Education Consortium (SEEC) level descriptors. These set out the expectations of achievement at various levels of learning and are particularly of use to course teams in setting unit learning outcomes44.
• The Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark45.
• Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS)46.
• The requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)47.
• The University Curriculum Framework48 which incorporates curriculum structures related to Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Combined Honours, Foundation Degrees and Professional Doctorates. This framework defines qualifications, levels, credit volume and stages and general course and unit design policy.
• The University’s Academic Regulations49.
• The University Policy for the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning50.
• The University Guidelines for writing unit and programme learning outcomes51 and programme specifications52.

4.1.2 External and Internal Review

External and internal input into the establishment of standards and the assurance of their comparability with subject and generic expectations is achieved through course approval, modification, review and assessment. This is achieved through:

• The inclusion on Course Approval panels of the University members from ‘away’ Faculties, student panel members and members external to the University, including those representing PSRBs53.
• A training programme for Chairs and panel members of Course Approval Committees and Periodic Partnership and/or Programme Reviews.
• Programme specifications checked and reviewed as part of Course Approval, Annual Monitoring44 and Periodic Review.
• Unit Management Procedures.
• The consideration, through an internal panel of subject specialists, of assessment artefacts and marking/grade criteria prior to being distributed to students55, 56.
• The inclusion in the Periodic Programme Review process of one or more members external to the University and Faculty57.

4.2 Establishing the standards required for entry to programmes

4.2.1 Admissions Policy58

4.2.1.1 The University’s focus is not primarily input driven, based on entry criteria but rather about the applicant’s potential for educational benefit and achievement. Thus specific entry criteria vary according to the aims of a programme, curriculum design, its reputation and its accredited status. The overriding criterion (including the standard of literacy in the English Language) is the admission of students only if there is a reasonable expectation that they can successfully complete their proposed course of study.

44 http://www.seec.org.uk/seec-credit-level-descriptors-2010/
46 QAA. Subject Benchmark Statements. www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements
47 www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/psrb/
49 Examination and Assessment Regulations. www.port.ac.uk/assetinformation/policies/academicregistry/filetodownload,10383,en.pdf
50 Policy for the Award of Credit for Prior Learning. www.port.ac.uk/assetinformation/policies/accreditationofpriorlearning/filetodownload,11037,en.pdf
53 Course Approval, Modification and Closure. www.port.ac.uk/assetinformation/policies/courseapproval/filetodownload,51504,en.pdf
54 www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviecycle/filetodownload,184494,en.pdf
56 www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/dcqes/storeddocuments/filetodownload,171073,en.pdf
57 Programme Monitoring and Review Policy, section 5. www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviecycle/filetodownload,80797,en.pdf
4.2.1.2 Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning is governed by the University Policy for the Accreditation of Prior Learning\(^5\).

4.2.2 Responsibilities
The University Admissions Centre (UAC) is responsible for admission to all undergraduate and most postgraduate taught courses. The UAC ensures that decision-making is carried out in accordance with the University’s policies and agreed procedures. UAC staff work closely with academic staff in the Faculties, recruitment staff in Marketing and the Recruitment Centres and the International Office to ensure that approved standards of accuracy, timeliness and fairness are maintained.

4.3 Establishing the quality of learning opportunities
In establishing the quality of learning opportunities for its students the University takes cognisance of existing legislation and strives to reflect current best practice in teaching and learning and student support. The Education Strategy underpins the University’s vision and priorities regarding teaching and learning, this in turn informs the Faculty education strategies and action plans and departmental action plans.

The University Curriculum Framework\(^6\) incorporates policy and guidance on personal development planning; graduate and employability skills; career management; placement learning and the roles of unit coordinators and personal tutors.

4.4 Quality assurance
4.4.1 Reference points
The University pro-actively seeks to consider and incorporate where relevant new or revised external policies and guidance, including those published by the QAA, through a process of gap analysis. Policy revisions or new policies resulting from this process are drafted, disseminated for comment and then presented to the appropriate committee.

4.4.2 External and Internal Review
External input into the development of the University’s quality assurance framework takes place through external participation in the University’s practices and processes. Internal input is through the processes that result in the establishment of new or revised policies and procedures. Examples include:

- The involvement of external subject specialists in Course Approval Committees and in the Periodic Programme Review process\(^6\).
- The involvement of External Examiners\(^6\).
- Visits by external agencies such as QAA, Ofsted, Health and Care Professions Council and other PSRBs.
- Course Approval and Review Committees.

4.4.2.1 Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Reviews (ASQERs): In line with the University’s recognition that the most important site of responsibility for maintaining academic quality rests with individual staff in their contribution to courses and as facilitators of students’ learning, a number of ASQERs are prepared annually to inform enhancement activities in all aspects of our provision. These ASQERs are prepared by:

- Course Leaders
- Collaborative Partners’ Academic Contacts
- Collaborative University Academic Contacts
- Heads of Department
- Chairs Faculty Research Degree Committees

ASQERs inform consideration of the University’s Academic Standards and Quality through Boards of Studies, Faculty Annual Review Groups, Faculty Executive Committees and Academic Policy and Quality Group meetings. These considerations culminate in the Chair, Quality Assurance Committee report to Academic Council and the Board of Governors in respect of academic standards and to Quality Assurance Committee for the quality enhancement agenda for the following year\(^6\). The ASQERs are informed by External Examiners’ Reports, Student Feedback, progression and other management information data. A range of key performance indicators also inform University Research Degrees Committee and ASQERs for Research Degrees.

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\(^{5}\) Policy for the Award of Credit for Prior Learning. [www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/accreditationofpriorlearning/filetodownload,11037,en.pdf](http://www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/accreditationofpriorlearning/filetodownload,11037,en.pdf)

\(^{6}\) Curriculum Framework. [www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/qualityassurance/filetodownload,52364,en.pdf](http://www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/qualityassurance/filetodownload,52364,en.pdf)

\(^{6}\) Programme Monitoring and Review Policy. [www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,80767,en.pdf](http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,80767,en.pdf)

\(^{6}\) Programme Monitoring and Review Flowchart. [www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,80769,en.pdf](http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,80769,en.pdf)
To support the writing of the ASQER reports, there is one main source providing timely and accurate management information\textsuperscript{64}. This evidence arises from a number of sources including both quantitative data and qualitative information. Business Intelligence Dashboards are used to enable staff to access quantitative data relating to the student profile and all key aspects of the student life cycle.

A standardised data approach is adopted in which specified data gathered at particular census points is made readily available for report writers\textsuperscript{65, 66}. This ensures consistency and comparability in the reporting process. The three-year trend data in the ASQER Data Report provides a primary focus for reports and includes:

- Admissions/enrolments
- Widening participation
- Withdrawal/mid-year transfers/progression/non-completion rates
- Achievement/classification
- Destinations of Learners from Higher Education (DLHE) survey
- National Student Survey (NSS) results
- Internal Student Survey questionnaire results
- Course satisfaction quality indicators

It is a particular feature of ASQERs that they require evaluative and evidence-based consideration and the explicit identification of enhancement opportunities. The University recognises that students’ educational experience and achievement on a course is more than the sum of their experiences and achievements in individual units and it is important that the course leaders’ ASQERs provide a strong course-level focus upon quality and standards.

4.4.2.2 Periodic Programme Reviews. Approximately every six years, defined groups of programmes are subject to Periodic Programme Reviews to an approved schedule\textsuperscript{67, 68}. These reviews provide the opportunity for External Assessors, external to the University, to review the standards and quality of learning opportunities within a subject area. The purpose of periodic review is to confirm the ‘continued validity and relevance of the curriculum and that annual monitoring and review processes are being effective’. The focus is on identifying key strengths and proposed actions and monitoring of results in relation to internal policies and guidelines. The reviews are informed by existing documentation and a specially prepared Periodic Review Commentary together with student and staff meetings. A report from the panel and an accompanying action plan for any ‘conditions’ prepared by the course team, are submitted to Quality Assurance Committee. There are clear follow up processes for any provision receiving a “no” outcome\textsuperscript{69}.

Collaborative franchised programmes are generally included with “home” provision review. Every three years collaborative partners also undergo Partnership review with judgements on the fitness of partnership arrangements and the learning environment. Collaborative validated/validated external partnerships will have partnership review at three year intervals and combined partnership and programme reviews at six years.

4.4.3 The University is committed to fair and equitable treatment for all its students and all potential students. It seeks to encourage, support and value diversity in the student population. These principles are enshrined in the Equal Opportunities Policy Statement\textsuperscript{70}. Programme Reviews consider whether provision is consistent with the University’s equal opportunities policies.

5. Management of academic standards and quality

Management of academic standards and quality is achieved through a framework of committees and by attaching specific responsibilities to particular roles.
5.1 Committees

5.1.1 The alignment between the University committees, their membership and terms of reference can be found online\(^{71,72}\) and is maintained by the offices of the University Secretary.

5.1.2 **Board of Governors:** has overall responsibility for the determination of the educational character and mission of the University and the efficient use of resources. The **Audit and Quality Committee**'s includes in its remit to recommend the appointment of external and internal auditors and monitor their performance and effectiveness; review the internal audit plan and consider all audit reports. It also receives and discusses reports on all reviews undertaken by external bodies concerned with quality. The **Student and Governor Advisory Group** is an informal, student-centred Group that meets on a needs basis to discuss key strategic issues. The purpose of the Group is to provide an opportunity for unrestricted discussion on broad themes, the outcomes of which will then be fed into the relevant Governors’ committees as appropriate.

5.1.3 **Academic Council:** subject to the Articles of Government of the University and the overall responsibility of the Board of Governors, Academic Council has responsibility for general issues relating to research, scholarship, teaching and courses and for the definition and approval of the University’s awards. It is responsible for the maintenance of academic standards and the approval of Academic Regulations. It has ultimate responsibility for the quality assurance processes. The sub-committees of Academic Council in respect of standards and quality assurance are Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Policy Committee and, for postgraduate research degree programmes, Research Degrees Committee.

5.1.4 **Academic Policy Committee (APC):** has delegated authority, as necessary, for debating and approving the policies and regulations that support the establishment of standards and the assessment of student performance (e.g. Academic Regulations). The University Library Committee reports to APC. Through the delegated authority of the Committee, the Academic Registrar has responsibility for the consideration of requests for exemption from University policy. Phase 1 of the course approval procedures due to their strategic nature, are discussed at a sub-committee of APC – Curriculum Committee which also regularly reviews each faculty’s curriculum strategy.

5.1.4.1 **Curriculum Committee:** is a sub-committee of APC which, due to their strategic and financial implications, discusses and approves provision at phase 1 of the course approval procedures\(^{73}\) and regularly reviews each Faculty’s curriculum strategy.

5.1.4.2 **University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC):** is a sub-committee of APC and has responsibility for the University’s overall Education Strategy and receives, monitors and advises on Faculty Education strategies. It coordinates the work of Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees and promotes improvements in the quality, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of learning and teaching processes and practices. It also provides a forum for the dissemination of best practice and enhancement through the support of a range of learning, teaching and assessment research and innovation projects.

5.1.4.3 **Student Support and Advice Committee (SSAC):** is a sub-committee of APC and provides a forum for discussions related to student support and guidance and other matters related to enhancing the quality of the student experience. It provides liaison between Faculties, Student Support Services, selected central departments and the Students’ Union.

5.1.4.4 **Academic Policy and Quality Group (APQG):** is a sub-committee of Academic Policy Committee (and also of Quality Assurance Committee, see 5.1.5) which includes the roles of Director, Department for Curriculum and Quality Enhancement, Associate Deans (Academic), Associate Deans (Students), Academic Registrar and officers from Quality Management Division. This Group meets regularly and acts as a forum for the consideration of cross University matters relating to the curriculum, quality of student learning opportunities, external and internal quality assurance and enhancement agendas. It has an advisory role in relation to policy and procedures, and an operational role in relation to implementation. APQG submits proposals to APC, Quality Assurance Committee and ULTC and receives from them, delegated tasks, as necessary.

5.1.5 **Quality Assurance Committee (QAC):** has delegated authority, as necessary, for the detailed management of academic standards and quality assurance. This includes, in particular to:

- Sustain and promote high academic standards and a culture of critical appraisal and quality enhancement within the University.
- Monitor the operation of the institutional Quality Assurance System.
- Oversee the approval of programmes.
- Receive and consider Periodic Programme Review reports, and Collaborative Partnership and/or Programme Review reports and action plans as required.

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\(^{71}\) Information on Governors’ committees is available at: [www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/boardofgovernors/aboutus/](http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/boardofgovernors/aboutus/).

\(^{72}\) Information on the University’s academic committees is available at: [www.port.ac.uk/intranet/registry/academiccommittees/](http://www.port.ac.uk/intranet/registry/academiccommittees/).

\(^{73}\) [www.port.ac.uk/assetinformation/policies/courseapproval/filetowownload,51504,en.pdf](http://www.port.ac.uk/assetinformation/policies/courseapproval/filetowownload,51504,en.pdf)
• Receive, consider and follow up any reports from HEFCE, QAA, Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and action plans which are relevant to Quality Assurance.

• Recommend the appointment of External Examiners to Academic Council and oversee the proper consideration of External Examiners’ reports.

• Monitor, evaluate and review research degrees and taught courses.

• Consider and respond to cross-University issues arising from the Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review (ASQER) process including the Deputy Academic Registrar (Quality and Partnerships) Collaborative Partnership and Articulation report.

• Receive and consider an annual report from the Academic Registrar on the Examination and Assessment processes for the preceding year and the Identifying and disseminating good practice in quality assurance.

5.1.6 **University Research Degrees Committee (URDC):** reports directly to Academic Council and has delegated authority, as necessary, for debating and approving the policies and regulations that support registration, supervision, monitoring and confirmation of awards in relation to Research Degree Programmes of the University. URDC considers a range of key performance indicators, student feedback, minutes of the Graduate School Management Board, Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Reviews from Chairs, Faculty Research Degree Committees and oversees the work devoted to Faculty Research Degrees Committees.

5.1.7 **Faculty level:** Various boards and committees operate at Faculty level, for example, Faculty Board, Faculty Executive, Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, Faculty Research Degrees Committee. These are important for managing the distinctive requirements of standards and quality in individual faculties, defining details of procedures for implementation of policies according to faculty needs, operationalising and disseminating practices, identifying specific needs for enhancing teaching resources and acting as a route of communication between departments and central committees and vice versa. Faculty Executive Committee, for example, includes consideration of ‘learning resources’ relating to their departments, including the staff complement.

5.1.8 **Boards of Studies:** For taught programmes, the quality and standards cycle is built around the Board of Studies thus ensuring ‘ownership’ at a local level with the involvement of staff and students. The Board of Studies is responsible for ongoing evaluation of the academic standards and quality of the learning opportunities and for making recommendations for development and enhancement. Boards of Studies consist of groups of cognate programmes and related pathways. All courses within the University, including collaborative provision, report to a named Board of Studies. The Board of Studies have standard agendas for Autumn and Spring.

5.1.8.1 **Student Staff Consultative Committees (SSCC):** All Boards of Studies hold Student Staff Consultative Committees at least three times per year unless equivalent alternatives have been approved through APC. Students on all pathways associated with the Board of Studies have their views represented through one or more SSCC. There are standard agendas for the Autumn and Spring and a third meeting takes place around January to a SSCC-defined agenda.

Students are able to access External Examiner Reports, Programme Specifications and student feedback summaries through the virtual learning environment (VLE) known as ‘Moodle’.

5.1.9 **The Student Representatives and Senior Management Committee:** the purpose of this committee is to act as a forum for communication between student representatives, University of Portsmouth Students’ Union (UPSU) post holders and senior University staff. It is designed to facilitate discussion of generic course-related matters, shared issues concerning student academic support and guidance, and other matters related to the quality of the student experience. The Committee aims to address shared issues arising from prior UPSU Faculty Rep Executive, Faculty Forum and Student-Staff Consultative Committee meetings. The membership also includes the UPSU Vice-President (Education and Democracy), the Chair of the UPSU Faculty Rep Executive, along with Faculty and Deputy Faculty Student Reps from this body, as well as student reps from each of the Faculty Forums. The senior University members include Directors of major central departments involved in the provision of student support (DCQE, Information Services and the Library), and all the Associate Deans (Students). Normally, it will be chaired by a Dean.

5.1.10 **Examination Boards:** are responsible for ensuring that awards and classifications are determined in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations, policies and standards defined by the University. A two-tier system operates whereby:

- Unit Assessment Boards are responsible for maintaining standards at the level of the subject and the unit through the confirmation of marks.

- Boards of Examiners are responsible for decisions on student progression and awards, and act on behalf of Academic Council.

74 [www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,182255,en.pdf](http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,182255,en.pdf), Annex B.

75 [www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,182255,en.pdf](http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/reviewcycle/filetodownload,182255,en.pdf), Annex C.
5.2 Policies and procedures

5.2.1 A number of policies, procedures and guidelines particularly relating to course development, approval, modification and review; annual and periodic standards and quality evaluative reviews, academic regulations and the assessment of students; are approved, monitored and revised through the formal committee structures outlined above.

5.2.2 The University operates its courses, assesses its students and makes awards in accordance with the relevant policies, including the Academic Regulations.

5.2.3 Each department establishes and communicates through its Education Strategy and operational documents, those local policies and procedures delegated to them within University-wide guidelines. In doing so they are minded of both the need for consistency and equity of practice across the University and the opportunity to draw upon subject related best practice.

5.3 Role and individual responsibilities

5.3.1 The job descriptions for staff within the University set out the responsibilities of the role with respect to the establishment, maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality. Those with particular responsibility include the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Pro Vice-Chancellors; Academic Registrar; Deans; Associate Deans: Academic and Students and Faculty Research Degree Coordinators; Heads of Departments and, for Collaborative Programmes, the University Academic Contact. Specifically:

- The **Vice-Chancellor**, as Chief Executive and Chair of Academic Council, combines the responsibilities for academic standards and the oversight of quality assurance with authority for the executive implementation of the Board of Governors’ and Academic Council’s decisions, including matters arising out of the annual monitoring and periodic review processes.

- The **Deputy Vice-Chancellor** chairs Academic Policy Committee and Quality Assurance Committee and has management responsibility for the implementation and operation of the quality assurance system.

- The **Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)** has responsibility for the Education Strategy, chairs the University Learning and Teaching Committee and has management responsibility for the Department of Curriculum and Quality Enhancement.

- The **Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)** has overall responsibility for the University’s Research and Innovation Strategy. He chairs the University Research Committee, the University Research Degrees Committee and the Ethics Committee. He has management responsibility for the Graduate School and Research and Innovation Services.

- The **Director, Department of Curriculum and Quality Enhancement** (see 5.3.5 below).

- The **Director, Graduate School** (see 5.3.6 below).

- The **Academic Registrar** has overall responsibility for the administrative processes and the maintenance and interpretation of regulations supporting the recruitment, admission, registration and examination of undergraduate and postgraduate students, taught and research degrees programmes quality assurance processes, servicing related committees and graduation.

- The **Deans of Faculty** are responsible to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for the academic provision in their Faculties.

- The **Heads of Academic Departments** are responsible to Deans for the academic activities and curriculum management within the Department. Through staff performance and development reviews, managing staff workloads and directing and supporting staff development they have a key role in facilitating enhancement.

- The **Associate Deans (Academic)** are responsible for overseeing the development and quality of academic provision within their respective Faculty. The core aspects of this are the curriculum framework and the University’s quality management processes. This includes appointment and deployment of External Examiners, support for course approval, external and internal periodic reviews and collaborative partnerships. They are formally accountable to both their Dean and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

- The **Associate Deans (Students)** are responsible for overseeing the quality of the student learning experience in the Faculty. The core aspects of this responsibility begin in the pre-admission stage and continue throughout the students’ relationship with the University. Strands of the Education Strategy they focus upon are student support, student representation and communication, widening participation and employability. They are formally accountable to both their Dean and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience).

- The **Faculty Research Degree Coordinators** have delegated responsibility from Faculty Research Degree Committees for ensuring registration, progression and examination of postgraduate research students, evaluating their supervision and overseeing the provision of research training.

- The **Heads of Central Departments** have an important role in the support and enhancement of the academic function.

- The **Equality and Diversity Adviser** has strategic responsibility for Equality and Diversity for both students and staff.
• **Course Leaders (or equivalent)** have a vital role in the management, evaluation and enhancement of courses for which they are responsible.

• **Collaborative Programme University Academic Contacts** provide a link between the University and Partner and oversee the operation of the programme at the collaborative institution. Additionally, they organise and participate in staff development for their partners.

• **Unit Coordinators** are responsible for the academic leadership, management, systematic evaluation and enhancement of the units for which they are responsible.

• **Individual lecturers** are responsible for the delivery and enhancement of their contribution including seeking and responding to feedback from peers and students. They are encouraged and facilitated to participate in external activities such as external examining that contribute to the assurance of standards and the enhancement of quality.

5.3.2 **Students** have roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement, through reflection on their learning; through the expression and articulation of their views on the effectiveness of teaching and learning support; and through their representatives at Student Staff Consultative Committees, Boards of Studies, Faculty Forum and University Committees where they can participate in feedback and decision-making processes.

5.3.3 **External Examiners:** The University selects suitably qualified and experienced External Examiners to advise Examination Boards. Nominations for External Examiners are scrutinised under the auspices of Quality Assurance Committee. External Examiners report upon the assessment of students, the achievement and comparability of standards, and the operation of assessment generally. The Head of Department or nominee responds to the External Examiner reports which are also considered at Departmental, Faculty and University level. The reports are also made available to students through the Virtual Learning Environment.

5.3.4 **Academic Registry**, in the context of quality management, provides support for Academic Council and its committees. It has responsibility for a number of academic standards and quality assurance functions through its Divisions: Admissions, Student Administration, Academic Management Information, Central Timetabling Unit, Quality Management and the Academic Registrar’s Office. The Quality Management Division (QMD), in particular, provides central support and development in relation to the University’s quality assurance framework. Key areas of expertise and responsibility are:

- Academic Committees
- Assessment Regulations
- Student Appeals and disciplinary events
- External Examining arrangements
- Course Approval, modifications and closures
- Annual programme monitoring and periodic partnership and/or programme review
- Collaborative Agreements
- Articulation Arrangements and Memoranda activity
- Audits and Reviews
- Collaborative Programmes
- Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies database
- Quality Assurance arrangements
- Research Degree Programme Students

Academic Registry manage information related to course approval, modifications and closures; collaborative programmes; External Examiners; periodic reviews; and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies ’ through the University’s Electronic Document Management (EDM) and the QMD quality management information database.

5.3.5 Under the leadership of its **Director**, the **Department for Curriculum and Quality Enhancement (DCQE)** has a particularly enhancement-focused role for University teaching and learning including provision of academic staff development in the areas of pedagogy, adoption of new technologies and course and educational development events. Other DCQE responsibilities include academic skills support, advice, counselling and disability services for students and the elearning centre which is important to the achievement of the university's eLearning strategy.

5.3.6 Under the leadership of its **Director**, the **Graduate School** works in partnership with academic and central departments to oversee and enhance the quality, delivery and student experience of postgraduate research students’ degree programmes. To this end it provides a compulsory Introductory Workshop for new research supervisors, a programme of staff development events for research supervisors, as well as the Graduate School Development Programme for PGRS research training.

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76 For further detail on these areas of responsibility: [www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/](http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/).
6. Communication of academic standards and the quality framework

Fundamental to the management, establishment, maintenance, assurance and enhancement of standards and quality, is the communication of the underlying principles, policies and procedures to staff, students, employers and external examiners.

6.1 Staff development

This is made available through a variety of mechanisms:

- The APEX programme for staff involved in teaching and support learning.
- Developing Academic Practice.\(^77\)
- Graduate School Supervisor Introductory Workshop and CPD programme.
- Central and local induction arrangements for new staff.
- An induction programme for External Examiners – face-to-face and on-line.\(^78\)
- Mentoring for all new full-time and fractional staff.
- Specific arrangements for Collaborative Programme partners.
- Training for Chairs and panel members – including, where appropriate, student members – of Course Approval Committees, Periodic Programme Reviews and Examination Boards.
- Performance Development Reviews (PDR) and agreed development priorities for all staff.\(^79\)
- Formal staff development sessions held centrally, in the Faculty or Department.
- Peer review through the Peers Enhancing Practice framework.\(^80\)
- Learning and teaching conferences at Faculty and University level.
- Staff development also encourages and promotes research and innovation in curriculum design and delivery.

6.1.1 The APEX programme is aligned to the UK Professional Framework Standards, provides a structured initial and continuing development programme for University full-time and part-time hourly paid (PTHP) staff; the programme is mandatory for new academic staff. APEX is also open to staff at our collaborative partners and leads to membership of the Higher Education Academy.

6.2 Dissemination of information

The communication of all University and Faculty Committee discussions and decisions is disseminated through:

- The members of those committees.
- The publication of minutes of major committees on the University website.
- Faculty Executive, Faculty Board and associated Faculty Committees.
- Faculty, Departmental and Course staff meetings.
- Specific roles and officers.

6.3 Students

Students are informed of the standards and general conduct expected of them, both before and during their time at the University through:

- Student entry profiles.
- Admissions policies.
- Student Charter.\(^81\)
- The written communication of programme and unit learning outcomes through course and unit handbooks/supplements and programme specifications.
- Written information about the teaching, learning and assessment strategies that enable the learning outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated.

\(^77\) [Link to APEX programme]
\(^78\) [Link to external examiner induction]
\(^79\) [Link to PDR support]
\(^80\) [Link to Peers Enhancing Practice]
\(^81\) [Link to Student Charter]
• Introductory lectures to courses and units.
• The written communication of specific and generic assessment grades and criteria.
• Written feedback on assessments.

6.4 External Examiners

External Examiners are informed of the University’s mechanisms for setting standards, determining whether they have been achieved and the University’s quality assurance framework through a variety of mechanisms including:

• Written information upon University appointment.
• Training for newly appointed examiners.
• Written and verbal assistance from appropriately trained internal staff.
• A named Departmental contact.

6.5 Wider Information Sets and Key Information Sets

The University provides accessible and transparent information for its students, applicants, and the wider public, as appropriate, including by meeting the Key Information Sets and Wider Information Sets national requirements, and providing Quality Management Information on its website at www.port.ac.uk/qmi. Periodic review reports and ASQERs are available to the public upon request via qmd@port.ac.uk.