



Annual Quality Report 2016/17

Executive Summary and Action Plan

January 2018

For the full version of the Annual Quality Report please email quality@cardiff.ac.uk

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Registry
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ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT SUMMARY 2016/17

Introduction

This is a summary of the 2016/17 Annual Quality Report, which covers the operation and outcomes of all academic quality management policies and processes during the 2016/17 academic cycle. The report covers all elements of the academic quality system, including quality assurance, enhancement, assessment and admissions activities, and confirms that all processes and procedures are regularly reviewed, and that enhancement activity is responsive to feedback and external requirements. It identifies ongoing enhancement activities and actions for the 2017/18 academic cycle.

Cardiff University's academic quality system (quality assurance and enhancement policies; Senate Regulations; and codes of practice) describes the academic processes, principles, roles and responsibilities. The University adopts an effective and efficient quality management framework assuring itself, students, staff and external bodies, of the quality and standards of its provision; it is also one of the channels of communication through which good practice and enhancement are encouraged and disseminated. The system is dynamic and live, and continuously evolving to ensure that we remain at the forefront of good practice. Our approach to quality management is described in detail on the [Quality and Standards](#) webpages.

Our risk-based approach for annual review of the operation of the academic quality system has been highlighted as an area of good practice in the Leadership Foundation review of governing body arrangements for academic assurance. We will continue to review and enhance our academic quality system and it will continue to be updated to meet any new requirements.

The full report will be available on the University's Public Information webpages. This summary, and associated action plan for all areas with a risk status of 'red', provides the essential information for Council and Governance Committee in order that they can have confidence in the academic quality management policies and processes operated during the 2016/17 academic cycle.

Risk assessment status

Table 1 shows the risk status for each area of activity: red indicates that there is concern that requires significant or immediate action; amber indicates that there are some areas of concern that may require actions; green indicates no concerns in that area, and that the policies and processes are operating effectively with reviews undertaken within the agreed schedule. The final column shows the change in status since the previous year's report.

Table 1: Summary of Quality Processes Risk Assessment Status

Activity Name	Red	Amber	Green	Change since 2015/16
Section 2: Academic Regulations		Amber		↓
Section 3: Admissions		Amber		=
Section 4: Annual Review and Enhancement			Green	=
Section 4: External Examining			Green	=
Section 4: Programme Approval Policy		Amber		=
Section 4: Collaborative Provision Policy Framework		Amber		=
Section 4: Periodic Review		Amber		↓
Section 4: Accreditation by Professional Bodies			Green	=
Section 5: The Student Experience		Amber		↓
Section 5: Curriculum Design and Enhancement		Amber		(revised section)
Section 5: Assessment and Feedback	Red			↓
Section 5: Examination Paper Errors	Red			↓
Section 5: Release of Results	Red			New section
Section 6: Academic Appeals	Red			↓

No areas of activity have seen significant improvement since the 2015/16 annual quality report with the majority of areas retaining an 'amber status' due to new or additional actions identified. Changes from green to amber reflect actions that are ongoing or not completed during the timescales originally identified.

Four areas are identified with a red status:

- (i) assessment and feedback;
- (ii) examination paper errors;
- (iii) release of results;
- (iv) academic appeals

In all of these areas actions are identified, with priority given to support improvements through a Business Process Review. Updates will be regularly presented to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC).

Below, we summarise the six sections of the full report.

Section 1: External context for quality and standards

During 2016/17 there were a number of external reviews and consultations, reflecting the continuing change in the Higher Education landscape in Wales and the UK, and the impact this may have on the University's quality management system. We also anticipate further change following a full review of the Pilot Quality Enhancement Review methodology, identified for 2017/18, along with a full review of the QAA Code of Practice.

Cardiff University received a silver rating in the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework, and it was noted that "students from all backgrounds achieve excellent outcomes" and "very high proportions of students continue with their studies and progress to employment, highly skilled employment or further study".

Section 2: Academic Regulations

The Academic Regulations provide definitive rules, policies and procedures for all academic awards and related processes of the University. The Academic Regulations are published in a handbook on the intranet which provides a comprehensive and valuable source of information. There will be a reworking and restructuring of the Regulations during 2017-8, with a view to increase accessibility, legibility and understanding.

The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) has undertaken a review of ASQC sub-committees, which highlighted some duplication of process and effort. To simplify processes a number of sub-committees have been disestablished for the 2017/18 academic session.

Section 3: Admissions

The academic session continued to build upon the Confirmation, Clearing and Adjustment (CCA) Project and the First Choice Recruitment and Admissions Project with an overall aim of improving student quality, achieving the agreed recruitment targets, supporting widening access, and further developing systems and processes.

The University is committed to fair and equal access to higher education. To ensure our continued development in this area, a contextual admissions policy review has commenced. The key area of focus for this review is to widen participation by utilising multiple indicators of deprivation by looking at attainment versus academic potential and degree outcome. The review will gather information on whether differential offer making is appropriate based on available contextual information and learning outcomes. Recommendations will be brought forward during 2017/18 with a view to implementing a new contextual admissions policy in 2018/9.

The University also continues to demonstrate its commitment to fair admissions by supporting the establishment of a SPA (Supporting Professional Admissions) Centre of Excellence in collaboration with University of Aberystwyth and supported by HEFCW. The Centre will provide the facility for joint research and shared best practice across Wales along with ensuring that events and training are provided bilingually by SPA across the north and south regions.

A review of undergraduate entry requirements was undertaken in 2016/17, following a decline in UCAS tariff on entry and the associated impact on league table position and actions identified. All Schools published entry requirements will now show the typical entry requirements (i.e. the level of which the majority of offers are made) and aim to encourage as many applicants as possible (who are of the level where we would make an offer) to

submit an application. Offer levels have been agreed looking at performance and quality on entry.

Section 4: Academic standards

The policies and procedures reviewed in this section include: annual and periodic reviews; programme approval; collaborative provision; external examining; and accreditation by professional bodies. The report confirms that our policies and processes for reviewing and maintaining our academic standards remain robust as reported through our external examining system and reports from professional statutory and regulatory bodies.

Actions are detailed in the report, identifying further work to ensure the scope and purpose of all quality-related processes are fully aligned, avoid duplication, and ensure we can respond in an agile and consistent way to internal and external developments.

Section 5: Student experience

Three areas of activity in this section are identified with a red status, as being of significant concern: (i) assessment and feedback; (ii) examination paper errors; and (iii) release of results.

Student satisfaction with Assessment and Feedback, as measured by the National Student Survey (NSS), remained static, with an institutional score of 69% against a sector-wide average of 73%. The University has now also fallen below the median performance for the Russell Group and for Wales. In May 2017, ASQC approved a set of University Commitment and Principles on Assessment and Feedback to drive consistency and transparency for students. All Schools have mapped their current practice against the commitments and principles and Colleges are now working with Schools towards full delivery. A high-level group has been established to give focus to this work and to develop a targeted plan of action, to include collaboration with students to develop a shared understanding around a Cardiff approach to assessment.

In last year's report, we stated that as the number of errors in examination papers had reduced and the risk was categorised as green. However, but as the number of errors did not significantly reduce, the risk status has been increased to 'red'. Although in many cases, the errors were minor and rectified in the first half an hour of the examination, there was disruption to students' examinations.

During the main summer examination period a number of students did not receive the decision of the Examining Board on the date they had expected. Initial investigations reveal a range of reasons, and Registry is working with School and College staff to identify specific causes, and implement solutions.

Section 6: Academic appeals, unfair practice, fitness to practise, fitness to study and discipline cases, student complaints and OIA cases

Individual reports on Student Complaints and Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) cases have previously been presented to Senate and Governance Committee separately from the Annual Quality Report which reported on other areas of student case work: academic appeals; unfair practice; fitness to practise; fitness to study; student discipline. From 2016/17 all policies and procedures relating to student case work will be included within the Annual Quality Report as they may provide evidence of issues relating to students' academic experience.

Academic appeals are an area of concern with a risk status of 'red', primarily due to delays in appeals being processed within the 90-day timelines set out in the OIA framework. Additional staff capacity have been brought in to deal with appeals more promptly, and we are looking at the potential for greater use of SIMS to provide a more efficient appeal system.

Conclusion

The report concludes that the University can continue to have confidence in all quality management policies and processes operated during the 2016/17 academic cycle. Although there are certain areas causing concern, we are taking appropriate action in all of these for the 2017/18 academic year.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

The actions for areas with a risk status of 'red' are detailed below as they require substantial or immediate action:

Reference	Action	Person Responsible	Completion by	Risk Status
Assessment and Feedback				
5.5.1	Student Engagement and Education Support Team to work with Schools to align with the University's 'Principles and Commitments', as well as supporting ongoing enhancement activities in individual Schools including the new Curriculum Design Toolkit.	Head of Student Engagement and Education Support Team	Report on progress in the 2017/18 Annual Quality Report	Red
5.5.1	Student Engagement and Education Support Team Continue to support the Assessment and Feedback Lead Networks in each College to lead the strategic improvement of assessment and feedback, including reviewing overall leadership requirements for this area of activity.	Head of Student Engagement and Education Support Team	Report on progress in the 2017/18 Annual Quality Report	Red
5.5.1	<p>Student Journey Programme of the Education Portfolio to progress a series of projects to improve the way Schools design and manage assessment to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of a prototype 'Assessment Schedule Tool' to enable staff to be able to visualise the assessment patterns across programmes; • publication of a personalised Assessment timetable for students, to be trialled initially within the Business School; • trial of an Assessment Mark Integration tool, to allow marks to be automatically transferred between Learning Central and SIMS. 	Student Journey Programme of the Education Portfolio	Report on progress in the 2017/18 Annual Quality Report	Red

Examination Paper Errors				
5.6.1	College Deans the College Education Officers to work in partnership with Schools to confirm where errors have been found or papers have been submitted late and agree actions to minimise future errors.	College Deans the College Education Officers and School Managers	Report to Council on findings and action plan	Red
Release of Results				
5.7.1	College Education Officers to identify reasons for delays with possible solutions and share areas of good practice	College Education Officers	End of November 2017 with report to be presented to ASQC in January 2018	Red
5.7.1	College Education Officers will identify the cause of changes to calculated marks to identify solutions and minimise the requirement to change.	College Education Officers	Report to be presented to ASQC in January 2018	Red
5.7.1	College Education Officers will agree with School managers a schedule for Examining Board meetings and dates for the release of results. Schedule used to confirm that sufficient staff available to process decisions and issue results to students on time.	College Education Officers	Report to be presented to ASQC in January 2018	Red
5.7.1	A revised programme of training and briefing for Chairs of Examining Boards and professional services staff supporting Examining Boards, will be in place to ensure clarity of requirements, to harmonise working practices, address issues or questions to ensure that post-Board amendments to results and queries are minimised.	Deputy Head of Registry	Schedule to be presented to ASQC in January 2018	Red

Academic Appeals, Unfair Practice, Fitness to Practise, and Discipline Cases				
6.1.2	The Student Cases Team to monitor and report case progress to the Academic Registrar on a regular basis.	Head of Student Cases	Updates to Academic Registrar to inform ASQC and Council.	Red
6.1.2	The Student Cases Team to continue to monitor and review the operation of the SIMS appeals system during the 2017/18 academic session identifying areas of good practice and further areas for development and to improve the timeliness of response.	Head of Student Cases	Updates to Academic Registrar to inform ASQC and Council.	Red
6.1.2	The Student Cases Team to report on the impact of specialised staff on the timeliness of processing of cases in the 2017/18 Annual Quality Report.	Head of Student Cases	Report on progress in the 2017/18 Annual Quality Report	Red
6.1.4	The Student Cases Team to continue to monitor and review the operation processing of appeals submitted from Spring and Summer 2017 results.	Head of Student Cases	Updates to Academic Registrar to inform ASQC and Council	Red