



Annual Quality Report 2018/19

Executive Summary

November 2019

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ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT 2018/19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Quality Report provides a holistic overview of the University's academic quality management systems during the 2018/19 academic session. The report considers 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.

This report provides a risk status and narrative for each area of activity from which Council can provide assurance to the HEFCW in discharging its responsibilities under [Quality Assurance Statements for the Governing Bodies of Regulated Institutions](#) and the [Quality Assessment Framework for Higher Education in Wales](#).

The 2018/19 report, and previous reports, will be used as an evidence source for the University's 2020 Quality Enhancement Review submissions, showing how we continue to meet the relevant baseline requirements as set out under HEFCW's Quality Assessment Framework and Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

Risk assessment status

Two areas (shown in Table 1) are identified as red status signifying serious issues of concern: Assessment and Feedback and Student Cases. The report identifies the immediate actions being taken to address these concerns.

Improvements have been seen in a number of areas: Collaborative Provision and Periodic Review risks have been lowered from 'amber' to 'green'; Examination Paper Errors risk has been lowered from 'red' to 'amber' highlighting significant collaborative work undertaken by staff in Registry and Schools working to find solutions facilitated through a Rapid Improvement Event.

Academic Regulations, Annual Review and Enhancement, and Programme Approval risks have remained at 'amber' despite actions to develop new policies and processes which will be implemented in 2019/20 as the outcomes are yet to be determined.

Section 1: External context for quality and standards

HEFCW Triennial visit to the University

In October 2018, HEFCW Officers visited the University for its Triennial Assurance Visit and met with a range of staff at the University. The report of the visit was considered by HEFCW's Quality Assessment Committee in February 2019. The University's response to HEFCW's findings were confirmed by Council and no further actions were required by HEFCW.

The revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education

In November 2018, the QAA published the focused [Advice and Guidance](#) that complements the Expectations and Practices of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education published in March 2018. Whilst we must meet the Expectations and the Core and Common Practices of the UK Quality Code, the purpose of the Advice and Guidance is to support UK higher education providers in developing appropriate quality assurance processes. We have used the opportunity to embed the guiding principles of the UK Quality Code through our quality assurance practices as part of the holistic re-write of our academic regulations, policies and procedures.

Initiatives to protect the value of UK degrees

In May 2019, the sector-representative bodies for higher education in the UK published a Statement of Intent, reaffirming their commitment to [protect the value of UK degrees](#) and to transparent, consistent and fair academic standards. The UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) has agreed the need for further action to meet this challenge. In October 2019, UKSCQA announced two new initiatives developed by the sector to follow up on that earlier undertaking. We will continue to work with the sector to share ideas and explore what will be needed to do in order to produce the Degree Outcomes Statement.

Revised 'relevant' baseline requirements for Institutions undergoing Quality Enhancement Review

In July 2019, HEFCW Circular W19/23HE confirmed that only the 'relevant' baseline requirements would be tested for Institutions undergoing a Quality Enhancement Review (QER) from January 2020. As a result of these changes, the documentation we are required to submit as part of the QER process (the Change Report) has been revised to focus on relevant baseline requirements, rather than all the baseline requirements, incorporating the new Wales-only elements of the baseline.

Section 2: Academic regulations

The holistic review and re-write of the academic regulations was finalised during the 2018/19 academic session. The new structure and the separation of policies from regulations will address the concerns regarding accessibility and the style of writing was changed to address concerns regarding legibility.

A comprehensive mapping of regulations, policies and procedures was undertaken as a parallel activity to demonstrate how we continue to comply with the requirements of HEFCW's Quality Assessment Framework for Higher Education in Wales and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015). These form the basis of the University's Change Report that will be submitted to the QAA as part of our Quality Enhancement Review that will take place in March 2020.

The implementation of the new regulations and policies will be reviewed to ensure that there have been no unintended consequences and a report submitted to Academic Standards and Quality Committee by the end of session 2019/20.

Section 3: Admissions

The project for UCAS (undergraduate) confirmation, clearing and adjustment was concluded and the service brought into business as usual during the 2018/19 academic session. Phase three of the First Choice project, which introduced a new process for considering applications for UCAS programmes, which require additional consideration e.g. interviews, has been concluded. The next phase of the First Choice project will review the processes for applications for postgraduate research programmes.

A number of admissions policies were reviewed and updated during 2018/19 and significant developments were made to the contextual admissions policy, introducing new metrics of deprivation which along with other metrics are weighted to enable the University to make informed contextual decisions.

Section 4: Academic Standards

Our monitoring and review policies and procedures are fully aligned with the requirements of the core and common practices within the expectations for standards of the [revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and ensure that all modules, units of study and awards are appropriately mapped against the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the credit levels set out in the Credit Qualification Framework Wales.

We have enhanced our Annual Review and Enhancement process, which will be implemented in 2019/20 and continuous improvement is supported through the extensive use of appropriate [external reference points](#) that provide the School, College and University with a comprehensive overview of the strengths and areas for improvement.

University Awards

The Awards and Process Committee, under authority delegated to it by Senate and Council, confers awards of the University, and reviews the awards conferred and their classification following the end of each session.

The Committee noted that that the proportion of 1st class degrees awarded in 2018/19 was similar to that of 2017/18 and that an initial institutional-wide analysis of data at school level does not indicate a consistent and discernible pattern to the increase in the proportion of students attaining 1st class degrees. Through the Annual Review and Enhancement process, Schools will be asked to comment where there has been a notable change in the proportion of students attaining good degrees or, in a few cases, where there have been issues raised by external examiners.

External Examiners

We have adopted and offered the Advance HE course on the professional development of external examiners, which received excellent feedback from participants. We expect to run the course on two further occasions in 2019/20.

Section 5: Student Engagement and Experience

Development of a singular framework for student survey management

The review into student experience undertaken by Professor Nicholls Review in 2018 outlined the need for the University to address key challenges to ensure a more consistent student experience. Recommendations included the development of a single education data service and the need for clear action-planning cycle, with an agreed University wide framework for survey management. A new survey management framework has been implemented, aligned with the Annual Review and Enhancement process (ARE), which provides the University with a robust process by which survey mechanisms for listening and reacting to the student voice are designed, constructed, promoted and acted upon.

NSS

NSS results showed an improvement in Overall Satisfaction to 84.4%, which remains within benchmark. The University has also seen an increase in the percentage of programmes scoring 100% satisfaction (to 15% of our eligible portfolio), with a further 22 programmes scoring above 90% satisfaction. In addition, there were an excellent set of sector results including 1st in UK for Linguistics, Celtic Studies and Physical Geography and Environmental Science, the University now has a further five subjects in the top 10 in the UK.

There were significant improvements made by the two subject areas highlighted as of concern by HEFCW last year, Architecture and Nursing and it is noted that no subject area falls beneath the threshold of 70% satisfaction over a two-year period.

The University has shared with HEFCW the actions we are taking to improve the NSS satisfaction scores. HEFCW subsequently advised that the action plan and the NSS results were considered by its Quality Assessment Committee and advised that the action plan:

“... was appropriate, and demonstrated an improvement on previous years. Members welcomed that the institution was taking the issues seriously, and was taking action to address systemic issues.”

Assessment and Feedback

Overarching NSS results for Assessment and Feedback remain relatively stable at around 70% and we have not seen the desired improvement. There are a series of actions identified for improvements during the 2019/20 academic session, including: the design of a delivery plan to transform Assessment and Feedback (A&F Taskforce) across the University, with clear governance structure ; and, actions that have been identified as part of the Partnership Project on Assessment Literacy. However, as there has been no significant improvement in this satisfaction score in 2018, the status of the risk assessment remains as ‘red’.

Examination Paper Errors

A Rapid Improvement Event was held in April and May 2019, which focussed on reducing examination paper errors. It brought together the collective experience and

expertise of School and Central professional services staff, academic colleagues and students to undertake a detailed review of the full end to end process.

A number of initiatives were identified and actions are being taken, including the electronic upload of exam papers, allowing more time for staff to prepare papers and check examination papers. The outcome of the actions being taken is to ensure that there are processes in place to identify errors earlier, thereby, reducing the number of examination paper errors for students.

As there are a clear set of actions being taken, and as the overall percentage of errors has fallen during 2018/19 session, the risk status has been changed from 'red' to amber'.

Section 6: Student Cases

The policies and procedures for Academic Appeals, Unfair Practice, Fitness to Practice, Discipline Cases and Student Complaints continue to meet the requirements to fully meet the expectations and practices set out in the revised [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). In addition, they have been mapped to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator [Good Practice Framework for handling complaints and academic appeals](#) as this is a baseline requirement of the [Quality Assessment Framework for Higher Education in Wales](#).

The OIA's annual statements recognise each year the University's positive engagement with the OIA and that we engage with its outreach programme. The outcomes of cases received by the OIA, those partially justified and settled, are not out of line with the band median and the OIA confirms that the University has complied with "student-centred" recommendations in all cases.

Whilst the work undertaken in 2018/19 to review and revise policies and processes will streamline some areas of work for 2019/20, the volume of work within this area has significantly increased, mainly due to the rapid and significant increase in the number of student behaviour and student complaint cases but also because of the introduction of the online disclosure response scheme.

The impact of the increase in the volume of work has been a delay in concluding and responding to student cases and, consequently, the risk has been raised from 'amber' to 'red' to reflect this. A number of targeted actions are being taken to address issues which have been identified and additionally stabilisation actions and investment is being sought to ensure that there is prompt action to address this increased risk for student cases.

Table 1: Summary of Quality Processes Risk Assessment Status

Activity Name	Red	Amber	Green	Change since 2017/18
Academic Regulations		Amber		=
Admissions			Green	=
Annual Review and Enhancement		Amber		=
External Examining			Green	=
Programme Approval Policy		Amber		=
Collaborative Provision Policy			Green	↓
Periodic Review			Green	↓
Accreditation by Professional Bodies			Green	=
The Student Experience		Amber		=
Curriculum Design and Enhancement		Amber		=
Assessment and Feedback	Red			=
Examination Paper Errors		Amber		↓
Publication of Results		Amber		=
Student Cases	Red			↑