

The University's approach to quality management

The University of Bath has a reputation for excellence as a result of sustained success in learning and teaching and research over a number of years. A commitment to maintaining academic standards and to continually enhancing the quality of our provision is key to this success. As a self-governing academic institution, the University is responsible for ensuring that appropriate academic standards are being achieved and a good quality education is being offered to its students, and is also publicly accountable for the quality and standards of its provision.

The University's approach to quality management is underpinned by some core elements:

Reliance on **sound academic principles** in the design and delivery of inclusive learning and teaching. This can mean drawing upon general educational research to make the case for a particular approach to learning and teaching, or it can be about drawing upon the research within a discipline. The University sets out the institutional frameworks for quality management, but it also respects disciplinary difference where a well-underpinned case is made.

The importance of the **informed student voice**. The University recognises the role of students as active citizens in the academic community. Consequently, student representatives are members of a range of University committees, including Staff / Student Liaison Committees. Students also provide feedback via a range of institutional and national surveys, and participate in a number of quality management processes, such as periodic review (Degree Scheme Reviews or equivalent) and the development of programmes and units. The emphasis is upon the *informed* student voice – this isn't about treating students as consumers or focusing solely on student satisfaction, but rather about engaging with students as academic citizens to ensure they have opportunities to take an active part in shaping their own learning.

The importance of **peer review** from colleagues in other academic institutions, professional bodies, industry and commerce. Peer review is key to the University's approach to research and it is only natural that for a research-intensive institution like Bath, peer review should underpin our learning and teaching. We use peer review in a number of ways – in external examining, external input into programme approval and periodic review and through professional accreditation. There is also the peer review that is internal to the institution that comes through discussion of programmes with colleagues in Faculty/School/ or institutional committees or panels.

A **multi-stranded approach to enhancement**, which includes:

- **Major enhancement initiatives driven at institutional level** such as major policy reviews, continuous and structured development of the University's Quality Assurance Code of Practice statements. The choice of these initiatives will often be informed by University strategic priorities, national developments and changing sectorial practice, but prospective themes may also emerge from the University's ongoing dialogue with student representatives, the outcomes of the University's quality management processes, and good practice identified at Faculty/School/Department-level.

- **A commitment to the alignment of quality assurance and quality enhancement in the mechanisms for the management of the quality of our programmes.** As an institution with mature quality assurance mechanisms and a well-established reputation for the quality of its student experience, the University's focus is upon operating quality management structures that not only uphold academic standards, but also emphasise the process of self-evaluative reflection that supports ongoing enhancement and development. What this means in practice is that when looking at the main processes for quality management, such as External Examining or periodic review (such as Degree Scheme Review or equivalent), alongside the elements that emphasise assurance of minimum standards; there is always an emphasis upon ongoing improvement and development.
- **Recognition that high quality in learning and teaching is not confined to formal structures and processes but is also stimulated in a conducive environment and vibrant academic culture,** which is why we also seek to encourage the continuing professional development of staff, promote sharing of practice and reward contributions in learning and teaching, and emphasise engagement with students.

A commitment to quality management processes that are efficient as well as effective, to ensure that maximum levels of resource remain liberated for the continuing delivery of an excellent all round student learning experience. This is principally achieved through a proportionate and risk-based approach to quality management.

Overview of key documents and processes

The [Quality Assurance Code of Practice](#) is the key reference point that describes the academic processes and principles, roles and responsibilities through which the University develops and implements an effective and efficient quality management framework, assuring itself and external bodies of the quality and standards of its provision. It is also one of the channels of communication via which good practice in learning and teaching is encouraged and disseminated through the use of 'good practice boxes' throughout the Code.

It is where you will find the definitive version of key quality management processes, such as External Examining, Programme Approval, Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review. You will also find information about the location of responsibilities for each process. There are also a number of guidance documents and templates which support implementation of the QA Code of Practice.

It is dynamic document which is continuously evolving to ensure that the University remains at the forefront of good practice – see [Quality Assurance Code of Practice: Approach to Code Development](#).

In Annexes A and B to [QA3](#) which deals with the approval of new programmes, you will find an outline of the University's academic framework – essentially a summary of the decisions taken by Senate about the University's modular and credit frameworks.

All registered students are subject to [University Regulations](#). All the University's academic activity must conform to these Regulations unless a dispensation is received from Senate. The Regulations contain key information for staff, for example on admissions requirements, the conduct of academic appeals and student complaint procedures.

Assessment

- QA Code of Practice statement [QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback](#) provides commonly used definitions for assessment, and defines University expectations for marking, moderation and feedback to students.

- The University has procedures for the [Conduct of Examinations](#) laid out in the QA Code of Practice (QA28).
- A modular [framework for assessment](#) (the 'NFAAR') began in 2008/09 for new undergraduate entrants and now extends to most students on taught programmes.
- An additional section of the University's QA Code of Practice (QA53) sets out the University's processes for dealing with [examination and assessment offences](#) including plagiarism.

Monitoring and Review

- Through External Examiners' reports academic peers provide the independent view that offers assurance of the quality and standards of provision, advice on the future development of units and programmes, and contributes views to periodic review of programmes. These reports are scrutinised departmentally and institutionally (for [taught](#) provision).
- [Annual Monitoring](#) of taught units and programmes (including research degrees) draws upon data for key indicators (including student survey results, attainment data and graduate destination data). Reports are drawn up by Directors of Studies on a risk basis and scrutinised at Faculty/School level, with summary points being considered institutionally.
- Periodic review, such as [Degree Scheme Review](#) is the review process undertaken to provide assurance of the standards and continuing validity of taught programmes and professional doctorates, while also making recommendations on future enhancement and development. Outcomes are scrutinised and monitored at Faculty/School level and an evaluation of the process is considered institutionally, by the University Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee.
- Where programmes involve [collaborative provision](#), additional measures are put in place to assure quality of the student learning experience. Agreement will be reached as to the way in which staff who teach on the programme are appointed and developed; the first annual monitoring report for the programme is seen by the University Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee; and periodic review of the quality of partnership arrangements is also undertaken.
- The University is a registered provider with the Office for Students (OfS).
- The University was awarded [Gold](#) in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2017. This signifies that the university delivers consistently outstanding teaching, learning and outcomes for its students and that the university is of the highest quality found in the UK. The TEF panel highlighted the university's strong employment orientation, an embedded culture which values students as co-creators of learning, physical and digital resources of the highest quality, consistent and frequent engagement of students with developments from the forefront of research, and an embedded strategy that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching.

Student Learning Experience

The University has also established particular standards and principles relating to:

- [recruitment, selection and admission of students \(QA22\)](#);
- [support for international students \(QA31\)](#);
- [induction of students \(QA38\)](#);
- [placement learning \(QA6\)](#);
- [personal tutoring \(QA33\)](#);
- [careers education, information, advice and guidance \(QA55\)](#);
- [distance learners \(QA41\)](#)
- [continuing professional development \(QA56\)](#).

Student feedback and engagement

- Students are represented on key institutional committees, including Senate, the University Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee, the Courses and Partnerships Approvals

Committee, and the University Doctoral Studies Committee, and at Departmental and Faculty/School-level, with student representation on bodies such as Boards of Studies, Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees and Faculty Doctoral Studies Committees.

- The University works closely with the Students' Union. University officers, such as the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Learning & Teaching and Research), liaise regularly with Students' Union officers and staff, and the University works together with the Students' Union on a number of projects.
- [Staff / Student Liaison Committees](#) are a key mechanism for the dialogue between staff and students (including doctoral students) about all aspects of academic provision and the student experience. External Examiners' reports are shared with students via SSLCs and via a dedicated [web page](#)
- Students are vital participants in the periodic review of programmes.
- [Evaluation questionnaires](#) for taught provision are issued towards the end of each unit by academic departments. This feedback is then acted upon locally through Staff / Student Liaison Committees and the annual monitoring of programmes. The University undertakes a variety of other surveys of student opinion, in collaboration with the Students' Union.
- The University works in partnership with the Students' Union, with funding from the [Teaching Development Fund](#), to support student-led projects to enhance learning and teaching activity at the University. The Student Learning Associates project provides the support, training, funding, and reward opportunities to enable students to improve their experience.

Support for staff to fulfil their roles in learning and teaching

It should be noted that the following primarily apply to University of Bath staff members. As part of the agreement of any collaborative arrangement, responsibility for the approval and development of other staff who teach on University of Bath awards will be identified.

- [Staff development and performance reviews](#) of staff are undertaken on an annual basis.
- [Peer review of teaching](#) is undertaken with a view to improve the quality of teaching through the development of understanding and sharing of experiences of teaching.
- The University has established institutional expectations for the [development and recognition](#) of all staff and students who teach and support learning ([QA9](#)) and provides training and support for academic staff throughout their career at the University of Bath. New teaching staff are supported through the [Bath Course](#): a practical introduction to teaching and assessment strategies. Staff can also gain national recognition for their contribution to learning and teaching by applying for Fellowship of the HEA (Fellow, Associate Fellow or Senior Fellow) via the [Bath Scheme](#).
- The University is also committed to providing reward and recognition of staff engaged in learning and teaching, including promotion criteria that recognise contributions to learning and teaching as well as in research and leadership in the progression of academic staff. The University has established a number of [institutional awards](#) to recognise contributions in Learning and Teaching (including research supervision) and offers incentives for new developments and enhancement projects via the [Teaching Development Fund](#).
- Cross-institutional fora for the promotion and sharing of best practice, including the [Directors of Studies Fora](#) and the Placement Tutors Forum.
- Other institutional mechanisms to support staff in enhancing the quality of learning and teaching include events aimed at sharing ideas and building communities of practice, such as the regular LITEbox seminars which focus on learning technologies.
- A dedicated Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) team supports staff in understanding and developing their use of IT and related [technologies](#), including the use of Moodle, in their teaching and assessment strategies.

Authors

Academic Registry
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