

## **Foreword**

This publication summarises our current approach to the management of academic standards and quality at Anglia Ruskin University.

It is designed to provide all academic staff and appropriate administrative staff (including staff at our UK and international partner institutions) with an overview of the key elements of our current approach. It has been prepared in recognition that a number of quality assurance and enhancement processes have been introduced and developed in the period 2004-07 to reflect the major changes to our academic organisation, curriculum management structures and Support Services.

Full details of the quality assurance and enhancement processes summarised in this overview document are available on the homepage of the Academic and Quality Systems Office (AQSO) website:

<http://web.anglia.ac.uk/anet/academic>

Further copies of this publication are available on request from the Academic and Quality Systems Office.

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September 2007

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## **Quality Assurance and Enhancement at Anglia Ruskin University: an Overview**

### 1. Introduction

1.1 At Anglia Ruskin University we have developed an integrated and systematic approach to the management of academic standards and quality, adopting a range of quality assurance and enhancement policies and procedures, designed to:

- establish, maintain, monitor and review the academic standards of our awards
- enhance the quality of learning opportunities and the student experience at all delivery points, including collaborative provision in the UK and overseas.

1.2 Our approach to quality assurance and enhancement is subject to continuing development in response to internal and external changing needs and priorities, including the emerging national focus on quality enhancement.

### 2. Quality Assurance and Enhancement: key principles

2.1 Our approach to quality assurance and enhancement is underpinned by the following key principles:

- the primary and ultimate responsibility of the Senate, supported by its Standing Committees, for the management of academic standards and quality
- a commitment to promote an ethos of continuous improvement in curriculum delivery and management and the learning environment
- engagement with students and, wherever possible, employers through appropriate representation, consultation and feedback mechanisms
- the use of appropriate external and internal reference points, including the QAA's Academic Infrastructure and the requirements and expectations of professional, regulatory and statutory bodies (PSRBs)
- the use of management information (quantitative and qualitative) from a variety of external and internal sources to support our quality assurance and enhancement processes
- the use of external peers in the approval and periodic review of the curriculum
- recognition that primary responsibility for curriculum delivery and management rests with Faculties and their constituent departments. Faculty Boards are assigned clearly defined responsibilities for the management of academic standards, and the quality assurance and enhancement of all educational provision within their remit, including research degree programmes
- an integrated approach to collaborative provision in which Faculties are responsible for overseeing delivery of a franchised curriculum by partner institutions in both the UK and overseas *[NB Special arrangements for a non-franchised curriculum apply to Norwich School of Art and Design].*

### 3. Quality Assurance and Enhancement: processes

3.1 Our quality assurance and enhancement processes are summarised below. They are designed to focus on:

- maintaining academic standards in curriculum design, content and management and the delivery of taught pathways
- maintaining academic standards in our research degree portfolio
- enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities for undergraduates and both taught and research postgraduates.

#### 3.2 Approval (of taught pathways)

The initial approval process is designed to ensure that:

- Anglia Ruskin's subject-specific academic standards for taught pathways are benchmarked against both national standards, as defined in the subject benchmark statements published by QAA, and, where appropriate, PSRB requirements
- module learning outcomes collectively contribute to student achievement of pathway learning outcomes (the latter ultimately define the academic standards for the pathway as a whole)
- high quality educational support is provided to enable students to achieve the academic standard set for the pathway
- the teaching team is committed to continuous improvement in curriculum delivery.

External panel members, including those appointed by PSRBs, undertake a critical role in evaluating the benchmarking and mapping of academic standards at the approval stage.

#### 3.3 Annual monitoring (of taught pathways)

Annual monitoring, undertaken at Programme level, is designed to ensure that:

- the academic standards set for each pathway within a Programme are maintained in its delivery through a process of reflective evaluation by the teaching team
- an appropriate level of educational support has been provided to enable students to achieve those standards
- the teaching team has demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement in curriculum delivery.

A SMART action plan is prepared to ensure that action either has been taken or is planned to improve curriculum delivery and to correct any identified weaknesses. Good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment is identified and endorsed by the appropriate Faculty Board for dissemination to a wider audience e.g. through Heads of Department, Programme Subcommittees within Faculties, and conferences/workshops arranged by INSPIRE.

### 3.4 Periodic review (of taught pathways)

Periodic review, as currently defined, provides the opportunity to undertake a strategic overview of past delivery of all taught pathways assigned to a Programme and to express a strategic vision for the future direction and delivery of those pathways.

Focal points in the review process are the maintenance of academic standards, the quality of educational support and a commitment to continuous improvement in curriculum delivery.

As with annual monitoring, good and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment is identified and endorsed by the appropriate Faculty Board for dissemination to a wider audience.

External panel members, including those appointed by PSRBs, undertake an important role in evaluating the comparability of curriculum delivery and student achievement in relation to similar pathways delivered by other UK higher education institutions.

Periodic review will be reviewed in Spring 2008 and revised with effect from 2008-09 to strengthen the quality enhancement aspect of the process and to ensure that the activity is not solely driven by a curriculum review of the pathways assigned to a Programme.

### 3.5 External Examiner System

Anglia Ruskin's External Examiner system is designed to ensure that the academic standard for each Anglia Ruskin award and its component parts is set and maintained at the appropriate level, as demonstrated by student achievement in assessed work. It also enables Anglia Ruskin to compare the standards achieved by its students with those achieved at other UK higher education institutions.

Our External Examiners are appointed, on behalf of the Senate, to both tiers of the assessment process. They make a significant contribution to all assessment periods (i.e. each semester or trimester and all re-assessment points) by approving proposed assessment tasks, moderating assessed work and contributing to Departmental Assessment Panel and Awards Board deliberations and decisions. They work closely with Anglia Ruskin academic staff, providing advice and guidance where applicable.

Each External Examiner submits a formal written report annually which provides assurance to the Senate of the academic standards of Anglia Ruskin's awards. The reports also generate the opportunity for reflection by Anglia Ruskin's teaching teams, leading to the enhancement of future delivery and the continued maintenance of academic standards through identification of good practice in learning, teaching and assessment which is disseminated throughout the wider academic community.

### 3.6 Quality Enhancement Audit

A primary purpose of this new quality assurance activity is to investigate whether existing internal policies and procedures designed to enhance the student experience in terms of curriculum delivery and management and

learning opportunities are working consistently and effectively in practice at all delivery points and are consistent with external reference points.

Quality Enhancement Audit provides an opportunity to monitor, evaluate and review on a University-wide basis a particular aspect of curriculum delivery and management (including delivery of our research degree programmes) and to disseminate across Anglia Ruskin and its partner institutions good practice in relation to that topic.

The theme for each Quality Enhancement Audit is normally triggered by one of several processes or activities, including the annual monitoring and periodic review of taught pathways, or student consultation/representation systems. The Forward Programme for Quality Enhancement Audit is sufficiently flexible to facilitate the addition of a particular issue to the list of audits if it requires urgent attention.

*[NB: A pilot audit with Module Guides as its theme was conducted in June-September 2007. The Forward Programme for 2007-08 includes audits on Module Evaluation and Communication with Students].*

### 3.7 The quality assurance of research degree programmes

Descriptors, defining the academic standards of research degrees awarded by Anglia Ruskin University, and the related assessment criteria are set out in the Research Degrees Regulations. They reflect QAA's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), thereby ensuring that the academic standards of our awards are comparable to those of other UK higher education institutions.

Anglia Ruskin University operates the following procedures for monitoring the academic progress of our research degree students:

- each student's research proposal is initially approved by the appropriate Faculty Research Degrees Subcommittee (FRDSC) and each supervisory team is approved by the Senate's Research Degrees Committee (RDC)
- the academic progress of all students is monitored throughout the year at each meeting of the appropriate FRDSC
- a formal annual monitoring process is conducted at the end of the academic year. This includes consideration of an annual monitoring form for each student by the appropriate Faculty Annual Monitoring Panel (which is independent of the supervisory team) and production of both Faculty and University-level Annual Monitoring overview reports and SMART action plans.

Anglia Ruskin provides both a generic, University-level research training programme and subject specific elements at Faculty level, all of which are benchmarked against the Joint Statement from the Research Councils on Skills Training Requirements for research students. Students are required to maintain a Research Development Portfolio to include their Skills Diagnostic, a Personal Development Plan and a record of meetings with their supervisory team.

In supporting supervisors, attendance at the two-day training session for new supervisors is a formal requirement. Further support sessions are available throughout the year for all supervisors, including an annual conference.

Nominations for the appointment of an examining team are considered by RDC against published criteria. These include a limit on the number of times any one External Examiner may act. The Panel for an oral examination must contain at least one External Examiner. An independent chair from another Faculty is appointed to all Panels to ensure consistency in the conduct of the oral examination across Anglia Ruskin University.

### 3.8 Institutional Approval/Institutional Review of partner institutions

The former Institutional Review and Audit process has recently been split into two separate activities, Institutional Approval and Institutional Review, each with distinctive but complementary methodologies designed to ensure fitness for purpose. The primary focus for each activity is an evaluation of a partner institution's capacity to manage effectively and to a high level of competence the academic standards and quality of educational support for pathways leading to an Anglia Ruskin award. For a new partner the Institutional Approval process is predicated on the satisfactory outcome of appropriate legal and financial due diligence processes conducted before the formal approval process.

### 3.9 Student Experience Visits

The purpose, structure and outcome of Student Experience Visits to UK partners was formalised in October 2006. The visits, undertaken annually to each UK partner, are designed to monitor the quality of learning opportunities at each partner with particular reference to the threshold level of student experience defined in Annex 3 to the Academic Agreement signed by each partner institution.

For each annual visit a particular pathway or group of pathways is identified as a reference point for discussion with students and staff.

The outcome report contains examples of good and innovative practice and, where appropriate, areas where action is required to improve curriculum delivery or to correct identified weaknesses. The report is formally considered by the relevant Faculty Board(s) and Senate's Student Experience Committee.

The formalisation of Student Experience Visits with effect from 2006-07 reflects Anglia Ruskin's integrated approach to collaborative provision under which Faculties are responsible for overseeing delivery of a franchised curriculum by partner institutions.

#### 4 Quality Enhancement: approach

- 4.1 In the ongoing development of Anglia Ruskin University's quality assurance processes we seek to achieve an integrated, systematic, and coherent approach to quality enhancement. We have established a set of processes (some of which are at an early stage of development) designed to create and maintain "an ethos which expects and encourages the enhancement of learning opportunities" (QAA Handbook for Institutional Audit, para 49).
- 4.2 Our approach to quality enhancement involves the systematic collation, analysis and use of management information (quantitative and qualitative) from a variety of external and internal sources to support a range of activities including:

<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• annual National Student Survey (E)</li><li>• annual Student Experience Survey (I)</li><li>• student module evaluations (I)</li><li>• statistics for annual monitoring of curriculum delivery (e.g. module level performance, student continuation and completion rates, awards classifications) (I)</li><li>• statistics for periodic review, including data on gender, ethnicity (I)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• External Examiner reports (E)</li><li>• reports on PSB visits (E)</li><li>• Faculty overview reports on annual monitoring (I)</li><li>• outcome reports on periodic review (I)</li><li>• student module evaluations (I)</li><li>• employer engagement mechanisms (I)</li><li>• outcome reports on Student Experience Visits (I)</li><li>• outcome reports on Quality Enhancement Audit (I)</li><li>• student consultation/representation systems</li></ul>

E = externally generated

I = internally generated

- 4.3 A diagram summarising these processes is attached (Appendix 1).
- 4.4 Underpinning the quality enhancement of learning opportunities in terms of curriculum delivery is our substantially revised Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy: 2007-10. Through a series of Precepts and Principles the strategy defines our approach to curriculum delivery, including an emphasis on "curriculum development and review to maintain a current and relevant student experience . . . reflected in references to employability, employer engagement, internationalisation and national and global issues".

## 5 Reference points

- 5.1 In developing an integrated and systematic approach to quality assurance and enhancement the following policy documents have been prepared in hard copy and electronic format and have been widely disseminated throughout Anglia Ruskin University and its partner institutions:
- this **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Overview**, summarising the key elements and interrelationship of the current processes
  - the **Academic Regulations**, providing the regulatory framework for setting and maintaining the academic standard of all taught undergraduate and postgraduate pathways at all delivery points
  - the **Research Degree Regulations**, providing an identical regulatory framework for all research degrees
  - a series of **Senate Codes of Practice** (and associated Procedural Documents) through which, in conjunction with other mechanisms, the Senate assures itself that academic standards are maintained, monitored and enhanced
  - a **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy: 2007-10** in which our approach to curriculum delivery is defined through a series of Precepts and Principles.
- 5.2 The homepage of the Academic and Quality Systems Office (AQSO) website is the single, accessible, definitive reference point for these quality assurance policy documents. It provides user-friendly links to the related Curriculum and Research Degrees websites.
- 5.3 Senior management oversight of all quality assurance and enhancement activity within Faculties is undertaken through twice yearly **Quality Evaluation** meetings between the Pro Vice Chancellor (Quality and Enhancement), Deans of Faculties and senior quality assurance managers in Faculties. These meetings provide an opportunity to evaluate and review local implementation of Anglia Ruskin's quality assurance policies and to discuss any specific issues that may have arisen at the implementation stage.



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