



Anglia Ruskin  
University

# **Quality Assurance & Enhancement at Anglia Ruskin University**

## **An Overview**

Third Edition  
July 2016



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## **Foreword**

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

It is designed to provide all academic staff and appropriate administrative staff (including staff at our UK and international Associate Colleges) with an overview of the key elements of our current approach.

Full details of the quality assurance and enhancement processes summarised in this overview are provided in Anglia Ruskin's set of Senate Codes of Practice which are all available electronically at:

***[www.anglia.ac.uk/codes](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/codes)***

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 Anglia Ruskin University has 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 at Associate Colleges both in the UK and at international locations.

1.2 The 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.

1.3 Anglia Ruskin's approach to the enhancement of students' learning opportunities is ubiquitous and is driven at a strategic level by the Corporate Plan 2015-17 which is supported by the:

- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2015-17;
- Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2016-17.

This is managed through the deliberative (Senate) and executive (Corporate Management Team) structures.

## 2. Quality Assurance and Enhancement: Key Principles

Anglia Ruskin's 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, regulatory frameworks, policies and procedures, 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 *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* and the requirements and expectations of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs);
- 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;
- the use of data to inform and drive processes;
- the provision to increase the opportunity for people to access British Education, both in the UK (as part of an agenda to widen access to traditionally under-represented areas) and internationally, through a variety of franchised and validated arrangements with approved Associate Colleges.

### 3. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Processes

3.1 Anglia Ruskin's quality assurance and enhancement processes are summarised below. They are designed to focus on:

- maintaining academic standards in curriculum design, content, management and delivery of taught courses;
- 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 (Re)Approval of Taught Courses

The (re)approval process is designed to ensure that:

- Anglia Ruskin's subject-specific academic standards for taught courses are benchmarked against both national standards, as defined in the QAA's *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, and, where appropriate, PSRB requirements;
- module learning outcomes collectively contribute to student achievement of course learning outcomes (the latter ultimately define the academic standards for the course as a whole);
- high quality educational support is provided to enable students to achieve the academic standard set for the course;
- 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 Courses)

Annual monitoring is designed to ensure that:

- the academic standards set for each course 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 for dissemination to a wider audience eg: through Heads of Department, HE Co-ordinators at Associate Colleges and the annual Learning, Teaching and Assessment Conference.

### 3.4 Periodic Review (of Taught Courses)

The primary focus of periodic review is enhancement and development but not re-approval of the curriculum. The process provides the opportunity to undertake a strategic overview of past delivery of all taught courses assigned to a Department and to express a strategic vision for the future direction and delivery of those courses.

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 for dissemination to a wider audience.

The process culminates in the production of a Quality Enhancement Plan which details the Department's structured and considered intentions for the future development and quality enhancement of the curriculum and its delivery over the next six year period.

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 courses delivered by other UK higher education institutions.

### 3.5 External Examiner System

The 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 of other UK higher education institutions.

External examiners at Anglia Ruskin are appointed, on behalf of the Senate, to all tiers of the assessment process. They make a significant contribution to all assessment periods (ie each semester or trimester) by approving proposed assessment tasks, moderating assessed work and contributing to the deliberations and decisions of the various Departmental Assessment Panels and the Anglia Ruskin Awards Board. 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 the 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 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 Associate Colleges 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 courses, or student consultation/representation systems.

### 3.7 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 the QAA's *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, thereby ensuring that the academic standards of 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 candidates:

- each candidate's research proposal and supervision team are approved by the relevant Faculty;
- the academic progress of all candidates is monitored throughout the year by the appropriate Faculty Research Degrees Subcommittee;
- all research degree candidates are subject to an annual monitoring process;

- each Faculty produces an Annual Monitoring report and a SMART action plan. A university-level overview report is considered by the Research Degrees Subcommittee, Research Committee and the Senate.

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 Vitae Researcher Development Framework.

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 the Research Degrees Subcommittee 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 and Institutional Review of Associate Colleges

The Institutional Approval and Institutional Review processes have distinctive but complementary methodologies designed to ensure fitness for purpose. The primary focus for each activity is an evaluation of an Associate College's capacity to manage effectively, and to a high level of competence, the academic standards and quality of educational support for courses leading to an Anglia Ruskin award. For a new Associate College the Institutional Approval process is predicated on the satisfactory outcome of appropriate legal and financial due diligence processes conducted before the formal approval process.

## 4 Quality Enhancement: Approach

- 4.1 The on-going development of Anglia Ruskin University's quality assurance processes seeks to achieve an integrated, systematic, and coherent approach to quality enhancement. A set of processes have been established which are designed to create and maintain an ethos which expects and encourages the enhancement of learning opportunities.
- 4.2 Anglia Ruskin's quality enhancement strategy involves a systematic and co-ordinated approach to the collation, analysis and use of externally/internally generated quantitative and qualitative information to support a range of activities including:

Quantitative	Qualitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• annual National Student Survey (E)</li> <li>• Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (E)</li> <li>• Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (E)</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, award classifications) (I)</li> <li>• statistics for periodic review (I)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Examiner reports (E)</li> <li>• reports on PSRB visits (E)</li> <li>• Department and Associate College 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 Quality Enhancement Audit (I)</li> <li>• student consultation/representation systems (I)</li> </ul>

E = externally generated

I = internally generated

- 4.3 Underpinning the quality enhancement of learning opportunities in terms of curriculum delivery is the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy: 2015-17. Through a series of aims, strategies and milestones, it defines the approach to curriculum delivery under six headings: delivering teaching and facilitating learning; improving assessment and feedback practice; supporting and engaging students; using technology-enhanced learning; scholarship and applied research; and curriculum design and enhancement.

## 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 and its Associate Colleges:

- this **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Overview**, summarises the key elements and interrelationship of the current processes;
- the **Academic Regulations** ([www.anglia.ac.uk/academicregs](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/academicregs)), provides the regulatory framework for the academic standards of all taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses at all locations;
- the **Research Degree Regulations** ([www.anglia.ac.uk/researchregs](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/researchregs)) provides an identical regulatory framework for all research degrees;
- a series of **Senate Codes of Practice** ([www.anglia.ac.uk/codes](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/codes)) through which, in conjunction with other mechanisms, the Senate assures itself that academic standards are maintained, monitored and enhanced.

- 5.2 The homepage of the Academic Office website is the single, accessible, definitive reference point for these documents. It provides user-friendly links to other related sites.



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