



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY

Summary of Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement procedures for taught programmes

Queen Margaret University assures itself of the quality of its taught provision through a number of mechanisms, including:

1. Validation and periodic review
2. External Examiners
3. Annual programme monitoring
4. Committee scrutiny
5. Student feedback

The University also maintains academic quality through the operation of robust academic regulations and assessment procedures. These are aligned with the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education and regularly reviewed.

Programme Leaders are mindful of external benchmarks such as the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and professional body advice. QMU staff also maintain active links with the Higher Education Academy and engage with Enhancement Themes.

Enhancement is further promoted through institutional strategies, in particular, the Student Experience Strategy (2015-20). The Student Experience Strategy is concerned with the quality of the student learning experience, as well as those aspects of the student experience that support and complement student learning. It incorporates the former Quality Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (QELTA), which no longer exists as a stand-alone reference point. The Student Experience Strategy is agreed by the Student Experience Committee and includes an annual action plan with specific enhancement activities. It is available here: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/quality-enhancement-and-external-context/quality-enhancement/>

This strategy is agreed by the Student Experience Committee with an annual action plan, which identifies specific enhancement activities.

Detailed information on all procedures is available on the Quality website. See:

- <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/> - main Quality website
- <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/quality-a-z-index/> - index to information
- <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulations-policies-and-procedures/> - Quality Assurance procedures

1. Validation and periodic review

New programmes are approved through a process of peer scrutiny based on documentation and discussion with the programme team. At this stage the programme will be checked for alignment with external benchmarks and internal frameworks. The approval panel contains external members to ensure consistency with similar programmes elsewhere.

Approval is for a set period, normally five years. At the end of the approval period the programme is required to go through internal review and revalidation. A similar process of peer scrutiny is undertaken. The team are required to draw on evidence of external examiner, student and employer feedback and make recommendations for changes to the programme as felt desirable. The programme is assessed for its continuing relevance and alignment to external benchmarks. This process allows the University to ensure its provision remains up to date and innovative.

Programmes may be reviewed singly, jointly with a related programme, or as part of a School-wide review. The scope of review is decided in consultation with the Dean of School.

If, in between scheduled reviews, significant changes are proposed to the programme as validated, the original panel will be consulted to approve the proposed changes.

See <https://www.gmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/resources-for-validation-and-review/> for more information.

2. External examiners

Each programme has at least one External Examiner. Externals normally moderate all work which contributes towards the student's final award. In practice this means work at levels 3 and 4 in an undergraduate degree, or all work in a postgraduate degree, HECert or HEDip. Marks cannot be confirmed by the Board of Examiners without approval of the External Examiner.

Each External Examiner writes an annual report commenting on the curriculum, management of assessment and standards of student achievement. This report is copied to the Principal, University Secretary and Dean of School, as well as the Programme Leader, who is required to respond on behalf of the programme team. Responses are approved by the Dean of School to confirm any issues raised by the examiner have been addressed.

Reports are filed centrally by staff of the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement, who compile an annual review of External Examiner comments from across the University. This report is considered by the senior academic policy committee (Student Experience Committee).

See <https://www.gmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/resources-for-external-examiners/> for more information

3. Annual programme monitoring

Each Programme Leader is required to write a programme monitoring report every year. This report is enhancement led and reflective, asking programme leaders to

comment on the success of the programme and identify any examples of good practice. The report includes an annual action plan and an update on progress against the previous year's action plan.

Reports are submitted centrally to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement and copied to the Head of Division and Dean of School. The Dean of School then writes a composite report for consideration by the School Academic Board and Student Experience Committee. This process allows for escalation of significant issues to the appropriate level.

See <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/resources-for-programme-leaders/> for more information.

4. Committee scrutiny

QMU operates a committee structure which allows for collective scrutiny of key decisions affecting taught programmes, and for sharing of good practice with colleagues.

Each programme has a programme committee (several linked programmes may have a joint programme committee). The programme committee is formed of module co-ordinators and includes student representation. Minutes of the committee are submitted to the School Academic Board. The committee may recommend the following items of business to the School Academic Board:

- Changes to modules
- Changes to programme specific regulations
- Changes to programme structure
- Nomination of external examiners
- New programme proposals / withdrawal of existing programme

The School Academic Board has authority to approve changes, including module alteration and amendments to programme structure. External Examiner appointments and proposals for new programmes are remitted to the central University committee structure for approval on behalf of Senate.

School level scrutiny allows for full consideration of all the possible implications of proposed changes, especially where these may affect more than one programme.

Assessment decisions are ratified by a Board of Examiners which considers student performance and makes decisions on progress in line with the University's academic regulations. No marks can be confirmed without the approval of the Board of Examiners.

The key institutional committee with responsibility for the academic quality of taught programmes is the Student Experience Committee.

See <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulations-policies-and-procedures/> for more information.

6. Student feedback

Collecting and responding to student feedback is an essential mechanism for assuring and enhancing programme quality. The University has a number of avenues through which students may bring up issues for discussion. Students are encouraged to raise points of concern, but also to report on good practice, i.e. positive experiences.

- **Module evaluation.** Programme Teams are required to conduct module evaluation every time a module is run. Standard forms are available, which can be administered in paper format or via the Hub. A brief report on the outcomes of module evaluation should be considered either by the Programme Committee or a sub-group thereof. Issues and actions arising from module evaluation must be indicated in the annual programme monitoring report.
- **Class Representatives.** Each programme should identify Class Representatives for each cohort. The Representatives may raise issues on behalf of their colleagues by liaising directly with Module Co-ordinators or the Programme Leader.
- **Student-Staff Consultative Committees.** Each programme is required to hold a Student-Staff Consultative Committee once per semester. The agenda for this meeting is set by the students and more students than staff should be present. Where possible, a student should chair the meeting and another student should take minutes. Minutes are submitted to the Programme Committee and key points included in the Annual Monitoring report.
- **Students' Union Representative Structure.** Students also have the opportunity to be involved in the Students' Union Representative Structure. The key representative group for Class Representatives is the Academic Council, which is chaired by the Student President. This forum gives Class Representatives a chance to hear about any news and developments regarding the teaching and learning experience at QMU. They can also raise issues, which they consider might affect students across the University, as well as helping each other resolve programme specific issues and sharing examples of successes on their programme.
- **Student Surveys.** Various annual surveys are administered on an institutional level to gather student feedback. Since 2011, QMU has participated in the National Student Survey (NSS), which is open to final year undergraduates only. Other students on taught programmes (undergraduate levels one to three and postgraduate) are eligible to participate in the annual QMU Student Survey (QSS), which follows the same format as the NSS.

See <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/resources-for-programme-leaders/> for more information.

Information on surveys is available here: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/feedback/>

Further information

Further information is available at the links throughout this document. Queries about any aspect of quality management of taught programmes can also be directed to Dawn Martin, Assistant Secretary, Governance and Quality Enhancement: dmartin1@qmu.ac.uk