Quality Assurance and Enhancement Documentation

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1.0   Introduction

1.1   Over time there will be many forms of documentation that individuals and groups will have to prepare. This section provides further information on standard format and the content required for the documents listed below. Where appropriate, links to other sections of the Quality website are included.

- Programme Approval Form: used to agree that a proposed new award can go forward for validation;
- Validation Documentation: submitted to the Panel for peer scrutiny in advance of a validation event;
- Definitive Document: completed post validation this defines the curriculum and arrangements for programme management;
- Programme Specification: a summary document detailing key points about the Programme (NB: All Programme Specifications are publicly available on the Quality website);
- Major Change Document: submitted to the Panel where substantial changes are put forward between five yearly review events;
- Annual Monitoring Report: completed on Programme and School levels to maintain oversight of provision and ensure continued effectiveness;
- Review Documentation: submitted to the Panel for peer scrutiny in advance of a review event;
- Formal Collaborative Agreement: required for each partnership with an external organisation leading to an award of QMU or a joint or dual award;
- External Examiner's Report: submitted annually for each programme leading to a QMU award;
- Response to the External Examiner: sent to the Examiner annually, detailing actions planned or taken in response to his or her feedback.

1.2   For most of the above documents there are standard forms and/or guide templates available, which should cover the relevant areas. In some cases Programme Leaders

may prefer not to use the guide template. Where that is the case, guidance should be sought from the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement. Further, it is important that alternative formats cover the same areas as the guide template. Where an area is not applicable, it should be noted as such with an explanation, as appropriate. Every document should follow the standard format described in paragraph 2.0 below.

1.3   It is important that every document states the date submitted to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement on the title page. This is especially useful for Validation and Review to avoid confusion over versions submitted prior to the event, as part of the response to conditions, and the Definitive Document for the programme.

2.0   Standard Format

Note that the majority of documents are submitted electronically and that hard copies are only necessary when explicitly requested by staff of the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

Paper
Standard white: colour is occasionally possible to highlight certain items but is must be a light shade to ensure that it can be photocopied.

Type
Arial, 11 point required. The same font should be used throughout the document.

Margins
$1^{1/2}$ inch on left (for binding) and 1 full inch on other 3 sides.

Pagination
All pages, including tables/figures and appendixes must be numbered consecutively.

Layout
Title page/cover with date of submission.
Table of contents
Body
Appendices

Binding
Black Comb

3.0   Programme Approval Form

3.1   The standard form must be used. This consists of three parts. Parts one and two require consideration and agreement from the Portfolio Development Group, after which Part three is presented to the School Academic Board for approval. In the first instance, only Part one need be completed. Thereafter, and subject to agreement from PDG, Part two can be completed. Part three is completed only after PDG has agreed that the proposal can proceed.

3.2   Proposals for new collaborative programmes require submission of appendices to Parts one and two as follows: Due Diligence Check; Risk Evaluation Report; Site Visit Report; Costing. Guidance on these appendices is available from the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

4.0   Validation Documentation

4.1   The documentation listed below is required as a minimum for every validation and must be submitted to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement no later than four weeks before the event.

- Validation Document, including all Module Descriptors;
- Programme Specification;
- Student Programme Handbook;
- Placement Handbook (if appropriate).

The following documentation must be available for scrutiny no later than the day of the validation, and preferably in advance:

- Full set of staff CVs

Other documents to be discussed and agreed with the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement may include:

- Placement/Work-based Learning Handbook
- Dissertation Handbook

4.2   The focus of the Validation Document should be the curriculum and student experience. A template which may be used for guidance is available from the Validation and Review section of the website.

4.3   Validation Document

4.3.1   The principal requirements of the Validation Document are summarised below. Note that a Validation Document is also required for review (see paragraph 10.0 below). Therefore, the following list explicitly highlights some requirements that apply only to those programmes that are already running.

Programme Name, Rationale, Demand and Design

- Programme title and SCQF level of award;
- Subsidiary exit points;
- Nature and purpose of the programme;
- Intended student numbers;
- Any relationship or overlap with existing programmes delivered by QMU;
- The relationship of the programme with comparable awards delivered by other higher education institutions in the UK;
- A statement on how the programme compares with similar provision in other countries;
- The place of the programme within the University's strategic plan;
- Any professional or statutory body recognition;
- The use of external reference points including QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and professional body standards;
- The use of internal reference points including the University's Student Experience Strategy and generic Graduate Attributes;
- Consultation on programme design: External Examiners, students, potential employers, professional associations;
- A list of members of the Programme Team.

Market Research

Evidence (in a summarised form) of the consultation process for the development of the programme should be provided. This should include details of: those consulted; the means of consultation; the information those consulted received on which to base an opinion (normally the draft programme proposal or a summary); and a summary of their opinions. It is important to remember to discuss both student and employer demand.

Consultation should take place with the following groups:

- Professional and statutory bodies as appropriate;
- External Examiners or Examiners on related programmes or other assessors;
- Students currently on the programme (reviews only) or related programmes;
- Recent graduates from the programme (reviews only) or related programmes;
- Potential employers;
- Service users, where possible;
- Others, as appropriate.

The Validation Document should also include details of marketing strategies.

Programme Characteristics

The Validation Document sets out the essential characteristics of the programme in a narrative format. Programme Characteristics are also included in the Programme Specification, which is produced separately and submitted with the documentation.

- Mode of study and programme length;
- Educational intentions (programme aims);
- Learning outcomes in terms of the attainment of knowledge, understanding, skills, experience and, where appropriate, professional development;
- Learning and teaching strategies (including learning and teaching methods and the notional hours of student effort);
- Measures in place to adapt learning and teaching methods where required to promote inclusion (for instance adaptations for disabled students, students from different cultural backgrounds);
- Provision for supervised work experience or placement if applicable;
- The curriculum and its component parts (including relationship to educational intentions and learning objectives);
- The distinction between core and optional elements and a statement of any prerequisites;
- Sequence of progression between programmes/levels.

Methods of Assessment

- Methods of assessment with relevant weightings, and appropriateness to the learning outcomes and the level of the programme;
- Measures in place to adapt assessment methods where required to promote inclusion;
- Arrangements for formative assessment;
- Policy on exemptions (where appropriate);
- Board of Examiners arrangements, including the involvement of External Examiners in the assessment process.

The Validation Document should also include a draft assessment schedule with indicative submission dates for individual assessment components.

Student Support

- Support for study skills;
- Arrangements for Personal Development Planning;
- Support for students from the full range of diverse backgrounds;
- Personal Academic Tutors;
- Opportunities for student involvement in quality processes, e.g. through the Student-Staff Consultative Committee or other regular meetings with tutors;
- Strategies for development of an inclusive learning community;
- Careers advice.

Arrangements for Admission, Progress and Transfer

- Entrance requirements;
- Recognition of Prior Learning/experiential learning, where appropriate;
- Arrangements for admission with advanced standing;
- Scope for students to transfer into the programme;
- Scope for students to transfer to other programmes;
- Progress requirements and criteria for success;
- Transitional arrangements for students affected by changes to the programme (reviews only);
- A statement on accessibility of the programme for students from all backgrounds, including disabled and international students (including any restrictions imposed by professional bodies);
- A statement on any measures taken to improve recruitment to the programme from previously under-represented groups.

Resource requirements

- Teaching and support staff;
- Teaching and learning accommodation and equipment;
- Learning resources;
- Others (please specify).

This section should also cover arrangements for staff development to ensure staff are kept up to date with developments in the discipline and learning, teaching and assessment methods.

Management of the Programme

Management arrangements including: constitution and terms of reference of the Programme Committee and Student-Staff Consultative Committee; and the role of the Programme Leader, Module Co-ordinators and the Personal Academic Tutor. Normally, these will be consistent with QMU regulations. In this case it is appropriate to cross refer to relevant sections of the Quality website, in particular Programme Management

Quality Assurance Procedures

Quality assurance arrangements for the management, operation and monitoring of the programme, including student feedback arrangements, evaluation mechanisms, provision for student representation and student support. The documentation should identify any areas where the programme deviates from the standard University quality assurance procedures, citing the reasons, such as professional and statutory body requirements. This section should also be used to highlight any innovative approaches to quality assurance either planned or in operation.

Regulations

Draft regulations should be submitted with the documentation, where necessary. In most areas the Programme Team will use the standard University regulations. It will be sufficient to state that the programme conforms to QMU regulations where this is the case. Validation and review Panels will evaluate the validity of any specific regulations for the programme(s) in question. It is recommended that Pogramme Teams wishing to introduce programme specific regulations consult the School Manager before submitting the Validation Document to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

Module Descriptors

Electronic copies of the module descriptor forms and instructions for completion are available on the Quality website (Programme design forms). It is important to ensure that they are completed in full and in a standardised format.
Particular attention should be paid to ensure the following:

- Module descriptors are complete (including the SCQF level and ECTS credit value) and standardised;
- Texts cited in module descriptors are reviewed and updated;
- Pre- and co-requisites have been included;
- Notional hours of student effort have been included, and add up to 10 x the credit value of the module;
- Weighting of different elements of assessment is included, making clear whether individual elements must be passed separately or can be compensated for within the regulations.

Programme teams are strongly encouraged to seek advice from the Centre for Academic Practice on the completion of module descriptors.

Distance Learning

Additionally, for distance learning programmes, documentation must make explicit and demonstrate reasoned coherence between the:

- Aims and intended learning outcomes and the strategies for teaching at a distance;
- Scope of the learning materials and the modules and criteria of assessment.

The documentation must also specifically:

- Identify the means of student representation as required by the University on various boards and committees;
- State how the programme articulates with relevant external reference points including SCQF level descriptors, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and professional and statutory body regulations and guidance;
- Provide distance learning materials for at least one module, and a schedule for the production of further materials;
- Identify which teaching media would be most suitable to the programme, considering the aims and learning outcomes of the programme, the accessibility of students to the teaching media and the relative cost to providers and students;
- Identify the characteristics and situation of students projected to study through this system of distance learning;
- Demonstrate plans to test the forms and lines of communication to be utilised by all parties;
- Identify the structure through which to support these distance learning students, including the methods that will be used such as electronic (including telephone), postal and/or local support centres;
- Provide the schedule for activities and assessment, particularly if outside the usual University timetable;
- Provide projections on the updating and enhancement of learning materials and ensure that the School and Centre for Academic Practice can incorporate this;
- Identify within the module descriptors the learning approach to be adopted for distance learning students. If the modules to be delivered by distance learning are already approved, descriptors should be amended with particular consideration of how group skills, role-play, peer group assessment and other similar activities in the fact-to-face delivery will be addressed;
- Provide procedures to validate the integrity of student's work;

- Provide the information to be given to students;
- Explain the means for collecting feedback on the students' experience of distance learning through paper bases or electronic questionnaire as appropriate.

4.3.2 If the validation is successful, the Validation Document may act as a foundation for the development of the Definitive Document. However, they are not the same, as the Validation Document must include background information and detail that may not be needed in the Definitive Document. This is necessary to provide the Panel with sufficient information to appreciate the validity of the programme and the ability of the Programme Team to deliver the curriculum.

4.4   Other Documents for Validation (Student Handbook; Placement Handbook; Staff CVs)

4.4.1 There are currently no standard templates for Student and Placement Handbooks. However, guidance on both may be sought from the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement. In the case of Placement Handbooks, it is essential to refer to the particular requirements of any professional or regulatory body to ensure compliance.

4.4.2 Staff CVs are required for members of the teaching team only. The standard CV template is preferred, and a consistent format is also requested. CVs should not be unduly long and need only provide sufficient information to enable the Panel to come to an informed decision on suitability to deliver the programme. Therefore, excessively long publication, conference attendance and PhD supervision lists are to be avoided. Personal details, especially home addresses and telephone numbers, must not be included in CVs.

5.0   Response to Conditions

5.1 Where a Panel sets conditions of approval, these must be met by the specified date before the programme can run. Usually, the response takes the form of a summary paper setting out briefly how each condition has been addressed. Supporting evidence is provided separately as appropriate, for example module descriptors.

5.2 Whilst recommendations are advisory rather than mandatory, a response is nevertheless required. As with conditions, the response takes the form of a summary paper indicating any actions taken or planned as a result of the recommendations. Where no actions are planned, it must be demonstrated that the Team has reflected on the recommendations and that there are appropriate reasons for the decision not to act.

5.3 If the response to conditions and/or recommendations includes a large number of changes that are embedded in a longer text, for example the Validation Document or Student Handbook, it is usual and useful to submit a 'marked up' version using 'Track Changes'. This allows the Panel to see, at a glance, where the response differs from the original submission.

6.0   Definitive Document

6.1 All programmes which lead to a University award are required to have an up-to-date accessible record of the curriculum. This is the Definitive Programme Document. The Definitive Document is expected to be available to students, prospective students, professional bodies and such other bodies or authorities that need to know about the programme. The purpose of this document is to provide a full and factual description of how the programme is run. This can be used as a reference point for a new Programme Leader taking over or to provide evidence for a professional body or employer seeking detail of the content of a qualification.

6.2   The following represents the minimum information to be provided in a definitive document:

- The full programme title or titles;
- The host Division for the programme;
- The award or awards to which the programme leads:
- The normal length of time which it is planned a student would spend on the programme (or limits thereto), and the mode or modes of attendance;
- The patterns of attendance on the programme including structure of periods of placement or professional training and duration of placement periods, or the nature of part-time or mixed-mode study (this should include a statement on the use of Library and IT resources);
- The aims and outcomes of the programme;
- The regulations for admission of students, and the criteria for exemptions and admission with advanced standing;
- The regulations for progression through the programme, including the regulations governing the choice of a programme of studies (e.g. specification of core subjects and options required);
- The regulations for assessment, progression and award, and the assessment schedule;
- The curriculum (i.e. the subjects or fields of study included in the programme, any modules into which the programme is divided and the formal relationships between the subjects or modules), and the balance of teaching and assessment methods to be used for each module;
- Module descriptors;
- A clear statement defining the cohorts of students to which the document refers.

6.3   Each student enrolled on the programme has a right to receive the above information, and the document prepared for students may also serve as a formal statement of the programme. The information supplied to students may contain additional matters, e.g. teaching methods, booklists for the year, study notes, information on membership of professional bodies, etc.

6.4   Staff are required to inform students at the start of each year of the detailed basis of the continuous assessment to be used in each subject. The Student Handbook for the programme can serve as the vehicle for the provision of such information.

6.5   The Definitive Document should be finalised after all conditions of validation have been met. Any changes made to the Validation Document as a result of the response to conditions must be incorporated into the Definitive Document. Sections of the Validation Document relating to market research and rationale may be removed. The final version should be marked as Definitive Document with the date of most recent editing and submitted electronically to the Secretary to the validation Panel.

6.6   The Programme Leader is responsible for ensuring any necessary revisions are made to copies of the Definitive Document held by the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement when programme changes are approved.

7.0   Programme Specification

A Programme Specification is required for each Programme leading to an award of the University and for each collaborative Short Programme (single module or group of modules). The Programme Specification should be completed using the standard template. Most of the information can be copied from the validation document. Guidelines for completing the form are available from the Centre for Academic Practice.

8.0   Major Programme Change Documentation

The required documentation for major change will depend largely on the type of change and impact on the student experience. However, as a minimum, the following will be required. Staff of the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement can advise on additional requirements.

- A summary of proposed changes, including the rationale for presenting major changes between review events;
- Evidence of consultation with students and other stakeholders;
- A statement on transitional arrangements for continuing students;
- Supporting documents, for example, module descriptors.

9.0   Annual Monitoring Report

Important Note: The Annual Monitoring Process is currently under review. This Section will be updated during 2017-2018 to reflect changes to requirements.

9.1   Programme Reports

9.1.1   Programme Annual Monitoring Reports are designed to evaluate the performance of the programme over the previous year, drawing on key sources of information such as External Examiner reports, survey feedback and committee discussion. This evaluation ultimately leads to action and enhancement of the student experience. It is therefore not intended that reports should be descriptive of the way the programme operates. Instead, they are self-reflective and provide a balanced account of positive developments and challenges.

9.1.2   Programme Annual Monitoring Reports will, as a minimum, contain the following information relating to the monitoring of provision over the previous academic session and the planning of future provision arising from the monitoring exercise. A University template for the annual programme monitoring reports incorporating the following headings is available on the Quality website together with accompanying guidance notes. Annual reports should be concise, and a maximum length of five pages (plus appendices) is therefore recommended.

9.1.3   Programme Leaders are asked to produce reports under the following headings:-

Previous Annual Report and Action Plan
The actions listed in this table are taken directly from the final section of the previous year's Report. A note of progress or repositioning is requested, as well as an indication of the impact of the action and resulting enhancement of the student experience.

Review or Professional Accreditation
For programmes reviewed during the reporting period, a brief analysis of key changes and an indication of how conditions and recommendations were addressed should be provided. Some conditions and recommendations may require action over a longer period of time (for example, Panels may recommend that issues are addressed through Annual Monitoring). If this applies, details should be provided.

Response to Student Feedback
Key issues[1] arising through survey mechanisms should be included together with resulting actions. Student feedback may arise through a number of sources, including: module and programme evaluation; Student-Staff Consultative Committee meetings, and the QMU annual survey of student opinion.

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[1] Note that 'issues' need not be negative and that teams are also encouraged to reflect on positive comments

Feedback from other Stakeholders

Key issues (see footnote) identified by other stakeholders should be included together with resulting actions. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to: employers; advisory panels; members of staff teaching on the Programme; visiting lecturers; and External Examiners.

Equality and Diversity

Issues identified and action taken relating to the accessibility of the curriculum should be included, for example: issues affecting disabled students or students with childcare responsibilities. Any measures taken to ensure compliance with relevant legislation should be outlined.

Performance Indicators

Relevant cohort statistics will be provided for each programme each year. The report need not include all these statistics, but should comment on the pertinent ones. The statistics provided, in respect of the reporting period, will include:

- number of applicants profiled by gender, age on entry and fee group;
- enrolments profiled by gender, age on entry and fee group; and by entry level;
- entry qualifications of cohort;
- cohort progression rate;
- student withdrawals;
- programme completion profiled by awards achieved.

Good practice and innovation

Examples of good practice or innovation that have enhanced the quality of the student experience over the past year are invited. These might include examples of innovative assessment techniques, approaches in learning and teaching, use of new technologies or student support mechanisms. The examples need not be major interventions. The guiding principle is that they can be shared usefully with colleagues. Examples that align with the Student Experience Strategy and QAA Enhancement Themes are particularly encouraged.

Action plan

Prioritised actions for the new (current) academic session can be included in the table at the end of the Report. In some cases actions may have been implemented before submission of the Annual Monitoring report, for example over the summer period. In this section it is important that timescales are identified and responsibilities clearly assigned. Expected enhancements arising from actions should also be identified and included in the column provided for that purpose.

Issues to highlight to the School or University

This section provides an opportunity to highlight actions for the attention of the School or institutional committees, including resource related matters impacting on the student experience.

9.2   Composite Reports

9.2.1   All Programme Annual Monitoring Reports will be passed to the Dean of School and School Manager who will compile a composite report for the School. This is the composite report that brings together key issues arising from Programme Annual Monitoring Reports for the School. It will highlight any objectives/aims established for the previous year that were achieved or advanced during the session under discussion, and the reasons for non-achievement of any which were not advanced. It is appropriate for the composite report to consider broad areas such as implementation of the Student Experience Strategy, response to Enhancement Themes and management of the student experience. A template is provided by the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

10.0   Review Documentation

10.1   The required documentation for review includes all the documents required for validation (assuming the programme is being put forward for re-approval) plus a review document, evaluating the effectiveness of the programme over the previous period of validation.

The principal requirements of the review document are listed below:

- A statement on conditions and recommendations from the previous validation or review event and the Team's response;
- A statement on the operation of the programme during the most recent period of validation, including the extent to which it has met its aims and objectives;
- Critical appraisal of the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning methods;
- Detailed information relating to any changes during the period;
- Annual Monitoring Reports for the previous two academic sessions, including a summary of progression statistics and data on graduate employment;
- External Examiners' reports and the Programme Team's response for the previous two academic sessions;
- A statement on feedback from employers, service users and other stakeholders and the Programme Team's response;
- A statement on feedback from staff and the Programme Team's response;
- A statement on mechanisms for gathering student feedback, any issues raised by students during the previous two years and the Programme Team's response;
- A statement of any resource implications that have arisen since the most recent validation or review event;
- A clear statement of proposed changes to the programme.

10.2   A template which may be used for guidance is available from the Validation and Review section of the website

11.0   Collaborative Provision (Memorandum of Agreement)

11.1   There are a number of quality assurance and enhancement documents that are pertinent only to collaborative provision. Several of these relate to selection and approval procedures. Others govern the ongoing quality management of partnerships leading to an award of the University, or a joint or dual award. Full details are available on the Partners Section of the Quality website.

11.2   A Memorandum of Agreement, signed by the Principal, QMU, and a senior staff representative of the partner institution, is required for each collaborative programme leading to an award of the University, or a joint or dual award.

The Memorandum will normally include details of, inter alia:

- The type, scope and limit of the collaborative arrangements;
- The responsibilities of all parties, including those concerning: the admission and progress of students, and the retention of student records; student assessment; conferment of awards and issuing of certificates; financial arrangements and provision of resources;
- Quality assurance arrangements, including those relating to: programme development, monitoring and review; the formal and informal contact between students and staff and Queen Margaret University; appointment and remuneration of the External Examiner/s;
- Rules concerning information, publicity, public relations and promotion of the partnership link by the partner institution;
- Explicit procedures for the resolution of any difficulties between the signatories;
- Arrangements for the review, updating and termination of the link.

Memoranda are drafted by the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement using agreed templates.

12.0   External Examiner's Report

12.1   External Examiners are required to report annually to the Principal on the conduct of assessment just concluded and on issues related to assessment, including:

- The adequacy of information supplied on the programme, including its aims and learning objectives and methods of assessment;
- Whether the aims and programme structure meet the need of students;
- Whether the stated learning objectives for the programme are appropriate to the subject matter, the level of the programme and the students;
- Whether the examination, together with any other forms of assessment used, adequately covered the learning objectives;
- Whether he/she is satisfied with the methods of assessment;
- Whether he/she is satisfied with the details of the assessment process, including, where appropriate, the marking schemes and allocation of marks, the criteria for degree classification and schemes for the award;
- Whether the teaching and learning methods are appropriate to the programme;
- The administration of the examination and any form of assessment used, including such matters as time available for scrutiny of scripts and other student work, the format of the information provided on the marks awarded by internal examiners, and the impartiality with which the process was conducted;
- Whether the marking by internal examiners is broadly appropriate in terms of standard, consistency and internal moderation;
- The standard of students' work associated with the various degree classification or pass/fail borderline(s) in comparison with other institutions of which he/she has knowledge;
- The overall performance of candidates, including pass rates and honours degree classification profiles;
- The procedures followed at the meeting(s) of the Board of Examiners;
- Whether or not he/she has been consulted in the last year by the department on proposed changes to courses or on the introduction if new courses;
- The programme's areas of strength, and areas that require to be further developed;
- Strengths and weaknesses of knowledge, understanding and skills demonstrated by students;
- The accessibility of the curriculum for disabled students;
- The programme's professional and vocational relevance.

12.2   The External Examiner's report form must be used.

For reasons of data protection, students should not in any circumstances be individually named in external examiner reports. Reports naming students will be returned to External Examiners for amendment.

13.0   Response to the Examiner

13.1   Programme Leaders are required to respond annually to the Examiner's report. The response must fully and adequately address each of the points raised by the Examiner. This does not mean that the Programme Team is required to act in accordance with the Examiner's wishes. However, where a recommendation is not implemented, an explanation must be provided.

13.2   The response may take the form of a letter to the Examiner. Alternatively, Teams may use the standard Response Report Template.