



Annual Assurance Report from Senate 2019-20

<p><b>Outcome requested:</b></p>	<p>Council is asked to <b>consider</b> the Annual Assurance Report from Senate for 2019-20.</p>
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p>	<p>Senate's annual assurance report to Council for 2019-20 has a focus on the contingency arrangements that were put in place to manage academic standards and the quality of the student experience in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The annual assurance report is provided with the Council papers, together with a summary of the conditions of registration relating to academic quality and standards (Appendix 1). The summary of the conditions of registration explains how these are managed and monitored, together with any changes that were implemented during 2019-20.</p> <p>Detailed information on the contingency arrangements themselves, and on the review of these arrangements, is included in the background reading for Council members. These documents are listed below.</p> <p><b>Paper A</b> - Assessment, Progression and Award 2019-20: a summary of the arrangements put in place to manage the impact of Covid-19</p> <p><b>Paper B</b> – the report of the External Member of the Degree Examination Boards: the external member of the Degree Examination Boards provides commentary on issues of regulation, process, equity and consistency of approach.</p> <p><b>Paper C</b> and <b>Paper D</b> - redacted minutes of the Degree Examination Boards: these minutes contain extensive commentary from the Degree Examination Boards and the constituent Subject Examination Boards on the arrangements that were put in place during 2019-20.</p> <p><b>Paper E</b> – redacted minutes of the Degree Examination Board, Science and Engineering: these minutes contain extensive commentary from the Degree Examination Boards and the constituent Subject Examination Boards on the arrangements that were put in place.</p>
<p><b>QMUL Strategy: strategic aim reference and sub-strategies [e.g., SA1.1]</b></p>	<p>Education and the Student Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellence in education</li> <li>• Excellence in student engagement</li> <li>• Excellence in student employability</li> <li>• Excellence in the learning environment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:</b></p>	<p>The Office for Students Regulatory Framework Higher Education and Research Act 2017</p>

	UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Assurance Agency) The Higher Education Code of Governance (CUC)
<b>Strategic Risks:</b>	Aligns with strategic risks: 1. Greater student satisfaction 4. Remove student attainment gap 7. Improved student progression 16. Compliance
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	None required. Consideration of academic outcomes for different student groups is embedded in Queen Mary's academic quality assurance arrangements.
<b>Subject to prior and onward consideration by:</b>	Assessment, progression and award contingency arrangements were considered by Senate in June 2020. The review of the arrangements was considered by the Education Quality and Standards Board in September 2020 and by Senate in October 2020. Each of the processes and outcomes described in the report have been considered by Senate and its sub-boards during 2019-20.
<b>Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA:</b>	n/a
<b>Timing:</b>	n/a
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<b>Date:</b>	13 November 2020
<b>Senior Management/External Sponsor:</b>	Professor Colin Bailey, President and Principal



## Annual Assurance Report from Senate 2019–20

### 1. Overview

- 1.1 Senate is nominated in the Queen Mary Charter as the body with overall responsibility for the academic activity of the university, subject to the general superintendence and control of Council. In practice, Senate assigns individual responsibility to the Vice-Principals for the management of academic quality and standards in the faculties, as well as for the development of cross-cutting academic strategies. It also delegates responsibility for detailed scrutiny of certain issues—the quality of the academic experience; curriculum approval and review; postgraduate research; academic partnerships; and research ethics—to a small number of boards. Senate’s role is therefore to hold the Vice-Principals and the chairs of the boards to account, as well as to decide on matters of principle, while giving assurance to Council through regular reports that it is fulfilling its responsibilities effectively.
- 1.2 The boards of Senate that have responsibilities for academic standards and the quality of the student experience are:
- Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB), chaired by the Vice-Principal (Education), which establishes academic regulations and quality assurance mechanisms, considers the outcomes of reviews of the academic provision, and develops policies to improve the quality of the academic experience;
  - Taught Programmes Board (TPB), chaired by the Deputy Vice-Principal (Education), which scrutinises and approves the standards, content and arrangements for the delivery of new taught programmes;
  - Partnerships Board, chaired by the Vice-Principal (Policy and Strategic Partnerships), which judges the appropriateness of potential partner institutions in teaching and postgraduate research;
  - the Degree Examination Boards, chaired by senior academics appointed by Senate, which consider recommendations from schools and institutes on the academic progress and achievement of individual students in order to gain assurance that institutional procedures for setting and maintaining standards have been followed and that assessment regulations are being applied consistently and fairly;
  - Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board, chaired by the Head of the Doctoral College, which combines the functions of EQSB, TPB and the Degree Examinations Boards for postgraduate research.
- 1.3 The above arrangements are set out in the Academic Governance Framework and supported by the Academic Secretariat. Reviews of academic governance are conducted periodically alongside the corporate governance reviews. The review of academic governance in 2015–16, that was reported to Council, concluded that Queen Mary has a comprehensive academic governance framework that provides structured opportunities for members of staff and students to engage on issues at all levels of the institution and conforms to sectoral expectations. A full review of academic governance was due to take place in 2019-20, but this was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The review will now take place during 2020-21.
- 1.4 Sectoral expectations on how universities should manage academic standards and deliver a high-quality student experience are set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education provided by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the body designated by the Secretary of State to carry out the quality and standards assessment functions on behalf of the Office for Students (OfS). Queen Mary meets these expectations through

its academic regulations and a comprehensive set of institution-wide policies found on its website at <http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality-assurance/index.html>.

The arrangements include:

- policies and processes through which Queen Mary assures the standards, content and arrangements for the delivery of new taught programmes before they are offered to students;
- mechanisms for reviewing the 'health' of programmes on an annual basis, using information on student recruitment, progress and achievement, as well as feedback from students;
- mechanisms for reviewing local arrangements in schools and institutes on a six-year cycle;
- the involvement of students and student views in programme approval and review processes;
- the involvement of external specialists (who have been appointed through formal mechanisms to ensure their suitability and independence) in student assessment and programme approval and review processes;
- formal governance arrangements and the work of the Academic Secretariat to ensure that the arrangements are implemented.

- 1.5 From March 2020 onwards the priorities for academic standards and quality were focused on the development of contingency arrangements to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on student assessment, progression and award. The full detail of these arrangements is provided in the background reading for Council members. The principles and policies were developed by a dedicated group of colleagues involved in academic and standards and representatives from the Students' Union, led by the Deputy Vice-Principal (Education). The group met twice weekly in order to develop these contingency arrangements, reflecting on advice from across the sector and aligning with guidance from the Office for Students and the Quality Assurance Agency as this guidance emerged. The arrangements were also informed by the requirements of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), some of which amended elements of their requirements in the light of the impact of the pandemic on assessment.
- 1.6 The arrangements for 2019-20 were considered by both the Education Quality and Standards Board, and by Senate. Queen Mary is confident that the principles and policies were deployed effectively to protect academic standards while ensuring the best outcomes for students. Feedback on the arrangements was provided by external examiners at meetings of Subject Examination Boards, and by the external member of the Degree Examination Board. The Degree Examination Board makes academic awards on the recommendation of Subject Examination Boards and is supported in its work by an external member who provides commentary on the application of the academic regulations and the maintenance of academic standards. A report on the review of these arrangements was considered by both the Education Quality and Standards Board, and by Senate. It is also included in the background reading for members.
- 1.7 Appendix 1 contains a summary of the conditions of registration with the Office for Students and detail of the usual mechanisms for monitoring compliance with these, together with any amendments made during 2019-20. As noted, several aspects of the framework for monitoring academic standards and quality are under review during

2020-21, with the aim of refining our approach to programme review and reducing burden on academic colleagues, enabling effort to be targeted where it is needed most.

1.8 During the 2019-20 academic year Council has considered the following items in relation to academic assurance:

- a report following each meeting of Senate
- Reports on the National Student Survey
- Degree Outcomes Statement
- Reports on student surveys
- Annual Student Casework Report
- Presentations from the Vice-Principal (Education), the QMSU Executive Officers, and the Vice-Principal (Research).

Academic Registry and Council Secretariat  
November 2020

<b>Appendix 1</b> <b>Condition of registration with the Office for Students:</b> <b>B: Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students</b>	<b>Responsible body/mechanism</b>	<b>Changes or amendments during 2019-20</b>
<p>B1: The provider must deliver well designed courses that provide a high- quality academic experience for all students and enable a student’s achievement to be reliably assessed</p>	<p>Senate  Taught Programmes Board  Education Quality and Standards Board</p>	<p>Education 3.0 developed principles and policies to manage assessment, progression and award during 2019-20. These principles and policies were approved by Senate and endorsed by subject-specific external examiners and the External Member of the Degree Examinations Board and External Examiners.</p> <p>The process for approving new programmes of study was the subject of two dedicated workshops in 2019-20, led by the Deputy Vice-Principal (Education). The revised process will streamline programme approval while ensuring rigour with respect to the consideration of quality and standards, and that resource is appropriately aligned to support new initiatives.</p>

<p>B2: The provider must support all students, from admission through to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.</p>	<p>Student and Academic Services Admissions Policies Queen Mary Academy</p>	<p>The work of Education 3.0 was informed by expert staff from the Queen Mary Academy and from Student and Academic Services.</p>
<p>B3: The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.</p>	<p>Subject Examination Boards Degree Examination Boards External Examiners reports Engagement with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies Employer Advisory Groups</p>	<p>The principles and policies approved for use in 2019-20 were reviewed by external examiners and the external member of the Degree Examination Board.</p>
<p>B4: The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards.</p>	<p>Annual Programme Review Periodic Review Degree Outcomes Statement External engagement</p>	<p>Only one periodic review took place in 2019-20, and the process is currently under review to ensure constructive alignment of programme and module level learning outcomes, appropriate quality assurance mechanisms, and maintenance of standards. A new pilot system of Annual Programme Reviews took place in 2019-20. These pilot reviews were led by the Deputy Vice-Principal (Education) and it is expected that these in-depth reviews will be used as part of the programme review process for the future.</p>



<p>B5: The provider must deliver courses that meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications at Level 4 or higher.</p>	<p>External examiner engagement Academic Regulations Assessment Governance</p>	<p>The principles of assessment and design of assessment for 2019-20 were developed in order to ensure that provision continued to meet the academic standards as described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. The review of the assessment arrangements by external examiners and the external member of the Degree Examination Board indicates that the contingency arrangements were successful in safeguarding Queen Mary's Academic Standards.</p>
<p>C: Protecting the interests of all students C1: The provider must demonstrate that in developing and implementing its policies, procedures and terms and conditions, it has given due regard to relevant guidance about how to comply with consumer protection law.</p>	<p>Complaints Procedure Terms and Conditions Student Protection Plan</p>	<p>Students were involved in the groups described above to ensure that the student voice was reflected in, and assisted with, deliberations and decision making. Students were kept informed of any changes to their programme of study, including assessment changes for 2019-20 and any changes to provision for 2020-21.</p>

