![Queen Mary University of London logo]

Academic Governance Review

Outcome requested:	Council is asked to **consider** final report of the academic governance review, conducted in 2015.
Executive Summary:	Senate commissioned a review of academic governance in October 2014. The review was predominantly desk-based, with a number of interviews held with key individuals. The review focussed on an evaluation of the following: • Senate's effectiveness for exercising its responsibility for the academic activity of QMUL; • the extent to which the QMUL Academic Framework introduced in 2010 (included for reference) is reflected in current practice; • the capability of the governance structure to support QMUL's strategic aims; • the degree of alignment with the expectations of the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The report has been updated to include progress with the observations and recommendations made following its initial consideration by Senate in June 2015.
QMUL Strategy:	SA1, SA2., SA3,SA4, SA5
Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:	Aligns with: QMUL Strategy Quality Assurance Agency, *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* Office of the Independent Adjudicator, *Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals* Committee of University Chairs, *The Higher Education Code of Governance*
Strategic Risks:	2.01 Student Experience 7.01 Design and delivery of high quality portfolio of programmes 10.1 Partnerships 13.01 Maintain effective and constructive governance 14.01 Failure to develop and implement strategic development projects in support of the College's overarching strategy.
Equality Impact Assessment:	n/a

Subject to prior and onward consideration by:	Senate, June 2015, March 2016 QMSE June 2015, February 2016
Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA	No
Timing:	
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Date:	18 March 2016
Senior Management/External Sponsor	Professor Simon Gaskell, President and Principal

QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Introduction

1.	This is the final report of a review of academic governance arrangements at Queen Mary that was commissioned in October 2014 by Senate in order to evaluate:

	[a]	Senate's effectiveness at exercising its responsibility for the academic activity of QMUL;

	[b]	the extent to which the QMUL Academic Framework, introduced in 2010, is reflected in current practice;

	[c]	the capability of the governance structure to support QMUL's strategic aims;

	[d]	the degree of alignment with the expectations of the UK Quality Code.

2.	The review was predominantly a desk-based exercise, encompassing governance within schools and institutes as well as at the institutional level, but also included discussions with a selection of managers to test and expand on the emerging issues.

3.	The review did not look at academic quality assurance processes or the Planning and Accountability Review (PAR) process, except to consider how these interact with the governance structure. Assessment governance was also excluded from this review on the grounds that it has been the subject of a recent, dedicated review through the work of the Assessment Governance Task and Finish Group.

The QMUL Academic Framework

4.	QMUL introduced a new academic governance framework in September 2010, the aims of which were:

	[a]	to establish the Senate as the body responsible for the academic activity of QMUL with a particular emphasis on safeguarding academic standards and promoting academic freedom;

	[b]	to reduce bureaucracy and establish a clearer distinction between management and governance by making the Vice-Principals individually accountable for decisions and strategic delivery, consultation and communication in their areas of responsibility and for providing assurance to Senate through regular reports;

	[c]	to establish task and finish groups as required, and advisory groups for the Vice-Principals, in place of a number of standing committees;

	[d]	to identify individuals with responsibility for taught programmes and for research at the executive, faculty, and school and institute levels.

The relationship to corporate governance

5.   The Senate is nominated in the Charter as the body responsible for the academic activity of QMUL, subject to the general superintendence and control of Council. Council's oversight of Senate is regulated by its commitment, through the CUC Code of Governance, to the principles of collegiality and academic freedom. The responsibilities of Council in relation to academic governance are therefore:

[a]   to approve QMUL's strategy and oversee the educational character of the institution;

[b]   to assure itself that QMUL has an effective framework, overseen by Senate, to manage the quality of learning and teaching and to maintain academic standards;

[c]   to have oversight of all major academic partnerships involving significant institutional-level risks;

[d]   to assure itself that student complaints are addressed effectively, to encourage student engagement in academic governance and to make such provision as it thinks fit for the general welfare of students, in consultation with Senate.

6.   The review of Council's effectiveness highlighted a desire among Council members to engage more with these responsibilities and to strengthen the interaction between Council and Senate, while noting that Senate already provides Council with appropriate assurance in relation to academic risks. In order to address this, Council has received more expansive reports from Senate, together with summaries of student surveys, appeals and complaints processes and institutional performance in relation to academic strategies. Presentations from early career researchers have been well received by Council members and have also covered academic governance and associated areas to increase their awareness of developments in learning, teaching and assessment.

Observations

7.   Overall, QMUL has a comprehensive framework of academic governance that provides structured opportunities for staff and students to engage on issues at all levels of the institution and conforms to sector expectations. Some aspects of the framework have been clarified or strengthened following the initial report on the academic governance review. These enhancements are summarised below together with those areas that could benefit from further consideration.

8.   It is a widely expressed view that Senate meetings contain insufficient debate and that a significant proportion of time is devoted to formal business.

[a]   Senate did not regularly receive information about strategic issues in a way that stimulated debate and constructive challenge. The Vice-Principals now provide written reports in advance of meetings of Senate. These reports provide members with the opportunity to make a considered contribution to meetings.

[b]   Although the majority of Senate members are drawn from faculties, schools and institutes, their role is to act in the general interest of QMUL, rather than

to represent the view of any individual constituency within it. Some contributions in meetings are nonetheless perceived to be relatively parochial, which makes it more difficult for Senate to reach decisions through consensus and discourages debate and constructive challenge. Senate members will receive a briefing before their first meeting, and the Senate Handbook (to be available on QMPlus) will support members in their role.

[c]   In common with most UK higher education institutions, QMUL has had more comprehensive formal mechanisms for reporting to Senate on learning, teaching and assessment than on research and public engagement. The introduction of written reports from Vice-Principals provides a more complete agenda which aims to reflect the concerns of academic staff and facilitates the opportunity for members to take a strategic overview.

9.   The Academic Framework defines the route through which consultation and decision making takes place vertically within the institution by making the Vice-Principals individually accountable for strategic delivery and by creating roles with responsibility for teaching and research at the executive, faculty, and school and institute levels. The extent of the authority of Vice-Principals, Deans and Directors of teaching and research to make and implement decisions is not widely understood across the institution, however, and there is a tendency for decisions to be referred, rather than reported, upwards through the governance and management structure. This limits the visibility of decision making at the school and institute level and has the potential to reduce the overall capacity of the institution to drive strategic initiatives. The Directors of teaching and research are not all represented on the senior management groups of their schools, making it more difficult for them to communicate and implement initiatives that are being driven at the faculty and institutional levels.

10.   The practice of establishing fixed-term task and finish groups in place of standing committees has become well embedded. This has not led to there being evidently fewer meetings, in particular for staff working at the faculty and institutional levels, but it has ensured that meetings remain aligned with current requirements. The introduction of the QMUL Strategy 2015 will require consideration of how the governance structure should in future support the achievement of longer-term initiatives in internationalisation, public engagement and partnership, and cross-disciplinary curricular and educational developments, which are at the interface between institutional strategy and planning at the school and institute level.

Consideration by Senate

11.   Senate considered these observations at its meeting in June 2015. Senate is asked to consider the recommendations from the review in the attached annex.

Jonathan Morgan   Jane Pallant
Academic Registrar and Council Secretary   Deputy Academic Registrar
January 2016

ANNEX: Emerging Recommendations from the initial report (June 2015) with updates

1.   The role of Senate in debating strategic issues and providing constructive challenge to members of the executive should be strengthened.

   [a]   Brief written reports from the Principal and Vice-Principals should be circulated to Senate in advance of each meeting both to provide assurance in relation to their areas of responsibility and to invite comment from members on current issues and developments. The reports from the Vice-Principals' advisory groups should also be considered in this context to avoid duplication.

   This recommendation is partially complete with Vice-Principals having provided written reports on their areas of activity for the meetings of Senate in 2015-16. So far, these reports have been well-received by members and have enriched the business of meetings. The newly created advisory boards for the Vice-Principal (Public Engagement and Student Enterprise) and Vice-Principal (International) mean that each of the cross-cutting Vice-Principals has an advisory group and/or sub-board of Senate to support their work.

   [b]   Senate should consider whether it would stimulate more discussion to receive presentations periodically from the Vice-Principals on the progress of strategic initiatives.

   Senate received a presentation from the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) at its meeting in December 2015. The presentation provided a very useful means of briefing Senate members on a key strategic initiative, and the intention is that all Vice-Principals will be invited to present at future meetings.

   [c]   Work should continue to develop an induction and handbook for Senate members to clarify their role and the distinction between their responsibilities as members of Senate and as members of faculties, schools and institutes.

   The development of the Senate members' handbook is underway and members will be invited to comment on a first draft at the March 2016 meeting. It is anticipated that the handbook will be housed on QMPlus to ensure that it remains current and can link to additional resources that may be of interest to members.

   [d]   The annual schedule of Senate business should be reviewed to ensure that all areas of academic activity are adequately represented.

   The annual schedule of Senate business is reviewed at the start of each academic year and the indicative business plan will incorporate each area of academic activity.

   [e]   Formal reports from quality assurance processes should be refocused to highlight the key issues and recommendations requiring Senate's attention. The remit and membership of the new Education Quality Board, which undertakes detailed quality assurance work on behalf of Senate, should be kept under review in this regard.

   In previous years, Senate had received the detailed reports of quality assurance processes which did not lend themselves well to focused

discussion at meetings. From 2015-16, the Education Quality Board will consider these reports in detail and a summary of key issues and recommendations will be prepared following this initial consideration. It is anticipated that this summary report will also be of interest to Council.

2.   Where consultation and decision making processes have deviated from what is defined in the Academic Framework, they should be realigned.

[a]   The extent of the authority of Vice-Principals, Deans and Directors of teaching and research to make and implement decisions within the Academic Framework should be clarified.

QMSE and Senate agreed that the structure of the Academic Framework should be re-asserted, with key individuals/groups to provide a self-evaluation of how the structure is working from their perspective at the end of the year. To this end, the Academic Framework will be updated to reflect the current arrangement of advisory groups and boards of Senate, and will be circulated with details of the proposed evaluation process.

[b]   The Directors of teaching and research should be represented on the senior management groups of their schools, where they are not already, so that they can support effective communication and consultation on initiatives that are driven at the faculty and institutional levels.

QMSE and Senate agreed that the academic governance structures of schools and institutes should be monitored as part of the Planning and Accountability Review (this also relates to emerging recommendation 4). A template of the expected academic governance structures will be circulated as part of the PAR documentation; schools and institutes will be expected to confirm that their structures align with the template, highlighting any changes as appropriate.

[c]   Consultative processes should be planned and supported to give schools and institutes adequate opportunities to engage a broad range of staff. Consideration should be given in this context to providing schools and institutes with a written digest of current issues to be communicated and discussed at staff meetings.

QMSE and Senate agreed that the academic secretariat should collate a digest of key issues on which the views of schools and institutes are sought. This document will be provided to Deans and Directors of Taught Programmes and Research, Heads of School and Institute and Directors of Administration. The document will aim to provide details of priorities and timescales in order to support schools and institutes, with a view to easing the burden of responding to numerous separate requests for feedback and documentation. ARCS will discuss this initiative with the Faculty Operating Officers to agree the optimum format and frequency for this digest.

3.   The academic governance arrangements should continue to be strengthened and refocused as needed to support emerging strategic priorities.

[a]   The remit, membership and reporting lines of the Taught Programmes Planning Group should be renewed to ensure it can take a strategic overview

of the taught portfolio and the interface between curriculum developments and the administrative infrastructure.

The remit and membership of both the Taught Programmes Planning Group and the Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Group have been reviewed to ensure that their roles and reporting lines are clear.

[b]   The remit of the Partnerships Board and the interfaces it has with the Education Quality Board and the Vice-Principal (Research) Advisory Group should be kept under review as international and research strategies develop. Consideration should be given to expanding its remit further to include links with significant industry and NHS partners.

The Partnerships Board and the Education Quality Board have considered their respective remits at the start of the academic year. The Boards will remain alert to their roles within the academic governance framework in order to keep pace with strategic initiatives and the external landscape. It may be helpful to Senate to revisit the operation of its boards at the end of the academic year in order to enact any changes for 2016-17.

The interface between the Partnerships Board and the Taught Programmes Board is under review in order to ensure that the approval process for new initiatives is carefully managed by both Boards.

[c]   The process and timescales for approving major academic partnerships across academic and corporate governance should be clarified, and models governing the implementation of major collaborative projects should be developed that can be replicated efficiently in different schools and institutes.

Revisions to policy and procedure for collaborative provision is underway, with final draft documentation to be considered by the Partnerships Board and Senate in 2016.

[d]   The Vice-Principal (Research) Advisory Group should keep under review the new arrangements for maintaining oversight of the interface between developments in research and the administrative infrastructure.

The Vice-Principal (Research) Advisory Group has considered its remit at the start of 2015-16 and will continue to monitor the interface between developments in research and the administrative infrastructure.

4.   While differences in the composition of schools and institutes inevitably lead to variations in individual governance arrangements, Senate should ensure that those matters that it has formally delegated to schools and institutes are addressed in a consistent and transparent way. ARCS staff will arrange to meet with schools and institutes to explore governance arrangements in more depth, and to offer support to chairs and secretaries as appropriate.

ARCS staff have begun engagement with schools and institutes to offer support on governance arrangements. The formal Periodic Review process explores the individual governance arrangements of schools and institutes in more depth, and makes recommendations where any issues arise relating to effectiveness, consistency or transparency.