Queen Mary
University of London

HEFCE Annual Assurance Return – Part 2: Academic Assurance

Outcome requested:	Council is asked to **approve** the annual academic assurances to HEFCE on the recommendation of Senate.
Executive Summary:	At its meeting in October 2016, Council considered a summary of evidence to support assurances on the student academic experience, academic quality and standards, that it is asked to give to HEFCE through the Annual Accountability Return in December. Although the requirement to give these assurances is new, the issue of Council's role in academic assurance has been a more frequent topic of discussion since the Council Effectiveness Review in January 2015, which identified a need to provide Council with greater insight into the work of Senate.

This paper defines Council's role in academic assurance and the foundations on which assurance can be given. It also summarises the reports, presentations and development sessions that Council has received since January 2015 to provide it with greater insight into this area.

Senate discussed the assurances that Council is asked to give to HEFCE at its meeting in October 2016 and recommends that full assurance can be given. |
| **QMUL Strategy: strategic aim reference and sub-strategies** | Strategic Aim 3: to provide all our students, wherever based, an education that is judged internationally to be of the highest quality, and which exploits innovations in teaching, learning and assessment. |
| **Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:** | HEFCE Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability
Quality Assurance Agency, *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*
Committee of University Chairs, *The Higher Education Code of Governance* |
| **Strategic Risks:** | Aligns with strategic risks:
2.01 High quality student experience throughout the student life cycle.
7. 01 Design and delivery of high quality portfolio of programmes.
9. 01 Reputational development and external relations
10.01 Partnerships
13.01 Maintain effective and constructive governance. |
| **Equality Impact Assessment:** | None required. Consideration of academic outcomes for different student groups is embedded in QMUL's academic quality assurance arrangements. |

Subject to prior and onward consideration by:	Senate, 13 October 2016
Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA	No
Timing:	For assurances to be given by 1 December 2016.
Author:	Jonathan Morgan, Academic Registrar and Council Secretary
Date:	10 November 2016
Senior Management/External Sponsor	Professor Simon Gaskell, President and Principal

ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY

1.   At its meeting in October 2016, Council considered a summary of evidence to support assurances on the student academic experience, academic quality and standards, that it is asked to give to HEFCE through the Annual Accountability Return in December. Although the requirement to give these assurances is new, the issue of Council's role in academic assurance has been a more frequent topic of discussion since the Council Effectiveness Review in January 2015, which identified a need to provide Council with greater insight into the work of Senate.

2.   This paper defines Council's role in academic assurance and the foundations on which assurance can be given. It also summarises the reports, presentations and development sessions that Council has received since January 2015 to provide it with greater insight into this area.

The assurances and Council's role in academic accountability

3.   The assurances on academic accountability are as follows. Throughout this document, evidence that supports one or more of the assurances is highlighted by reference to the relevant letter.

   [A]   The governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This included evidence from the provider's own periodic review processes, which fully involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review.

   [B]   The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.

   [C]   The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.

4.   Senate is nominated in the QMUL Charter as the body responsible for the academic activity of QMUL, subject to the general superintendence and control of Council, which is itself regulated by its commitment, through the CUC's Higher Education Code of Governance, to the principles of collegiality and academic freedom. Through the QMUL Academic Framework, Senate delegates the implementation of some of its responsibilities to the Vice-Principals (for the management of academic quality and standards in the Faculties, and for the development of cross-cutting academic strategies) and to a small number of formal boards (dealing with the academic standards of awards, the quality of the academic experience, curriculum approval and review, postgraduate research, academic partnerships, and research ethics) (see attached organogram). Senate's role is therefore to hold the Vice-Principals and the chairs of boards to account, as well as to decide on matters of principle, whereas Council's role is to seek assurances that Senate is performing its role effectively.

The foundations on which assurance can be given

5.   As required under the CUC Code, an Academic Governance Review was undertaken in 2015, following the Council Effectiveness Review, to assess the effectiveness of Senate. This included a review of the QMUL Academic Framework and the delegation of responsibilities to Vice-Principals, Deans and Heads of Schools. The Academic Governance Review, which was reported to Council in April 2016 after being discussed at QMSE and Senate, concluded that Senate and the arrangements for managing academic quality and standards, and the student experience generally, are operating effectively. **[B**

and C] The report included recommendations which are being taken forward to update the QMUL Academic Framework (provided to Council as additional reading in October 2016), to support consultative processes in the Faculties and to monitor the implementation of committee structures within schools and institutes. In his report to Council in May 2016, the President and Principal subsequently updated Council on the assurances Council would be asked to give in December 2016, providing a positive assessment of whether these could be given on the basis of the information that Council had received.

6. Senate approves and monitors Academic Regulations and a comprehensive Quality Assurance Framework, which together define the processes through which Senate maintains oversight of academic quality and standards, and the student experience. While Senate is ultimately responsible for monitoring the implementation of its regulations (and reports regularly on this activity to Council), the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat also plays a significant role in safeguarding the Academic Regulations and ensuring that procedures are implemented consistently across QMUL. Some of the key features of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Framework include:
   - arrangements through which academic programmes must be approved to ensure that they comply with QMUL's requirements and meet national academic standards; **[A, B and C]**
   - arrangements through which academic programmes, schools and institutes are kept under regular review to ensure that they are operating effectively and comply with QMUL's requirements; **[A, B and C]**
   - requirements to involve external discipline specialists in developing and reviewing academic programmes, schools and institutes, and in ensuring the student assessment processes are conducted fairly and in accordance with national academic standards; **[A, B and C]**
   - requirements to involve students in developing and reviewing academic programmes, schools and institutes, and to gather and act upon feedback about the student academic experience. **[A and B]**

Summary of other evidence provided to Council since January 2015

7. The Council meeting in October 2015 opened with a development session, led by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning), the Academic Registrar and Council Secretary and the Deputy Academic Registrar, covering Council's responsibilities for academic governance under the QMUL Charter and the CUC Code. The session provided an overview of the arrangements through which Senate exercises oversight of academic quality and standards, and the student experience. **[A, B and C]**

8. The Annual Stocktake Report, last considered by Council in November 2015 and due to be considered again in November 2016, updates Council on progress towards meeting the aims set out in the QMUL Strategy. Strategic Aim 3 includes specific targets on the standard of teaching space, the ratio of informal study space to student headcount, and student satisfaction with learning resources reported in national surveys, all of which are considered in the Annual Stocktake Report. **[A and B]**

9. Each year the President and Principal reports to Council on PAR Outcomes and Alignment with the Strategy. This paper triangulates investment decisions made by QMSE with QMUL's strategic aims and data from the Annual Stocktake Report. The papers considered by Council in May 2015 and June 2016 covered a range of topics, including:
   - investment in academic space, audio-visual equipment and learning technology; **[A]**
   - enhancements to Wi-Fi provision across all campuses; **[A]**
   - improvements to the Mile End Library; **[A]**
   - additional staff to support the teaching recognition project; **[A, B and C]**
   - additional staff to support student and programme administration in schools and institutes; **[A, B and C]**
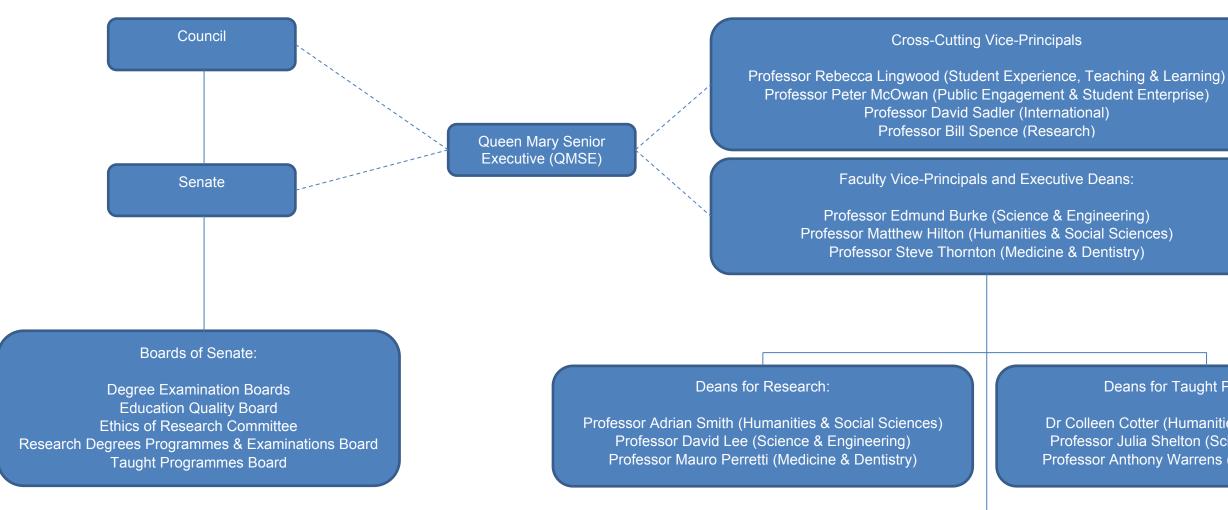
- initiatives to integrate international students into student life; **[A and B]**
- increases in the QMSU annual block grant. **[A]**

10. The seven Reports from Senate considered by Council since January 2015 have been progressively expanded and refocused, as recommended by the Council Effectiveness Review, to improve Council members' knowledge of academic affairs and the work of Senate, thereby improving Council's engagement with issues of academic assurance and the educational character of the institution. Senate's remit is broad, but the following subset of issues highlighted in the reports in particular provide evidence to support the assurances Council is asked to give to HEFCE:
- the approval and monitoring of education strategies (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning Strategy; Engagement, Retention and Success Strategy; Widening Participation Strategy; Research Strategy; International Strategy); **[A and B]**
- the establishment of the Education Quality Board to undertake more detailed oversight of academic quality and standards, and the student experience; **[A and B]**
- the outcomes of a review of assessment governance, including proposals to harmonise assessment penalties across all schools and institutes; **[B and C]**
- a report on research integrity, including postgraduate research, and the approval of new policies on research ethics and research undertaken with the NHS; **[B and C]**
- the approval of policies on student surveys, the oversight of collaborative provision, fitness to study and lecture capture; **[A and B]**
- the approval of academic regulations for taught and research degree programmes, and regular reports on how they are operating in practice; **[B and C]**
- the outcomes of student discipline, appeals and complaints processes, including the annual letter from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator; **[A, B and C]**
- the outcomes of periodic reviews of schools and institutes (the full reports were provided to Council members as additional reading); **[A, B and C]**
- the implications of consumer protection legislation for the applicant and student experience. **[A]**

11. There are regular reports and presentations from the Vice-Principals and others at meetings of Council and at the residential conference, providing assurance on the delivery of the Strategy and the responsibilities given to them in the QMUL Academic Framework. The following presentations in particular provide evidence to support the assurances Council is asked to give to HEFCE:
- a presentation in May 2015 from the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) on the outcomes of the QMUL Student Survey and progress with the Student Experience, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and the Engagement, Retention and Success Strategy (the ERS Strategy and the SETLA Risk Register were included in the additional reading for Council); **[A and B]**
- a presentation with additional reading in February 2016 from the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) comparing the outcomes across various student surveys and describing the action being taken in response; **[A and B]**
- a presentation in February 2016 from the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) covering a demographic breakdown of data from recent student surveys, the teaching recognition project, language learning scholarships, the QMUL Model; plans to introduce the grade point average at QMUL, learning resources, learning gain and degree apprenticeships; **[A and B]**
- a presentation in April 2016 from the Academic Registrar and Council Secretary on the outcomes of student discipline, appeals and complaints processes over the past year; **[A, B and C]**
- a presentation in May 2016 from the Vice-Principal (Science and Engineering) covering plans to improve the experience of students in the Faculty and to build international collaborations in teaching and research; **[A]**

- a presentation in May 2016 from the Head of Student Engagement, Retention and Success showing how data are being used to monitor and improve student progress and achievement. **[A, B and C]**

Recommendation

12. Senate discussed the assurances that Council is asked to give to HEFCE at its meeting in October 2016 and recommends that full assurance can be given. Council is invited to confirm this on the basis of the evidence and explanations provided above.

Jonathan Morgan
Academic Registrar and Council Secretary
10 November 2016

Council

Senate

Queen Mary Senior Executive (QMSE)

Cross-Cutting Vice-Principals

Professor Rebecca Lingwood (Student Experience, Teaching & Learning)
Professor Peter McOwan (Public Engagement & Student Enterprise)
Professor David Sadler (International)
Professor Bill Spence (Research)

Faculty Vice-Principals and Executive Deans:

Professor Edmund Burke (Science & Engineering)
Professor Matthew Hilton (Humanities & Social Sciences)
Professor Steve Thornton (Medicine & Dentistry)

Boards of Senate:

Degree Examination Boards
Education Quality Board
Ethics of Research Committee
Research Degrees Programmes & Examinations Board
Taught Programmes Board

Deans for Research:

Professor Adrian Smith (Humanities & Social Sciences)
Professor David Lee (Science & Engineering)
Professor Mauro Perretti (Medicine & Dentistry)

Deans for Taught Programmes:

Dr Colleen Cotter (Humanities & Social Sciences)
Professor Julia Shelton (Science & Engineering)
Professor Anthony Warrens (Medicine & Dentistry)

Heads of Schools and Directors of Institutes

Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Adrian Armstrong, Languages, Linguistics & Film
Professor Alison Blunt, Geography
Professor Frances Bowen, Business & Management
Professor Markman Ellis, English & Drama
Professor Adam Fagan, Politics & International Relations
Professor Julian Jackson, History
Professor Valsamis Mitsilegas, Law
Professor Spyros Maniatis, Centre for Commercial Law Studies
Professor Sujoy Mukerji, Economics & Finance

Science & Engineering
Professor David Arrowsmith, Physics & Astronomy
Professor Boris Khoruzhenko, Mathematical Sciences
Professor Richard Pickersgill, Biological & Chemical Sciences
Professor Wen Wang, Engineering & Materials Science
Professor Geraint Wiggins, Electronic Engineering & Computer Science

Medicine & Dentistry
Professor Mark Caulfield, William Harvey Research Institute
Professor Mike Curtis, Institute of Dentistry
Professor Jack Cuzick, Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine
Professor Graham Hitman, Blizard Institute
Professor Nick Lemoine, Barts Cancer Institute
Professor Anthony Warrens, Institute of Health Sciences Education