ACADEMIC ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT POLICY

leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Revised October 2018

Introduction

1. Leeds Beckett University's vision is "*To be an excellent, accessible, globally engaged university contributing positively to the northern economy*". Teaching excellence is at the heart of our culture and academic practice focusing on the provision of an excellent education and experience for our students. Our mission is "*To ensure we use our knowledge and resources to make a positive and decisive difference to people, communities and organisations*". This University strategic planning framework 2016-2021, together with our Education Strategy 2016-2021, sets out strategic objectives for an excellent education and experience, leading research and academic enterprise, a community of great people, and sustainable resources, together with associated strategic objectives and key performance indicators. These together underpin and inform our University's approach to the academic quality and standards of the higher education we provide.

2. This Policy for Academic Assurance and Enhancement sets out our University's approach to providing, maintaining, enhancing and assuring the academic quality and academic standards of our higher education provision and the University's Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework we use for this (Appendix 1). This Framework explains the way in which the University monitors and maintains oversight of the academic quality and standards of our higher education provision and how through evidence informed reflective practice and continuous improvement we enable systematic enhancement of our provision in partnership with our students.

Aims of Policy and Purpose

3. The overall aim of this policy for academic assurance and enhancement is to provide an effective approach to the way in which the University sets and maintains robust academic standards and assures the provision and the continuous and systematic improvement of our higher education provision.

4. This Policy and Framework provides a concise statement of our University's approach, the principles that guide us and the mechanisms that we utilise for the effective assurance and enhancement of academic standards and the quality of our higher education provision, aligned with UK sector expectations, regulatory and legislative requirements including the Office for Students '(OfS) Conditions, the UK Quality Code and Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It sets out the respective roles and responsibilities for implementation and the way in which this is overseen and assured.

5. It explains our wider institutional context, Strategic Planning Framework and our Education Strategy which provide the strategic and operational context for our approach to academic quality, standards, assurance and systematic enhancement.

6. Academic Regulations, Academic Governance and the Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework enables evidence-informed monitoring and reporting, with Academic Board's and Board of Governors' oversight of the quality and standards of the University's awards and the way in which this is being managed. This supports the Board in its fulfilment of institutional monitoring and oversight of academic standards and quality and in its deliberations and responsibility. Evidence is provided to support annual assurance of ongoing compliance with our regulator 's registration conditions that:

(a) Academic Board and the Board of Governors have received and discussed reports and an accompanying action plan relating to the academic standards, quality and continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes;

(b) The methodologies used as a basis to assure and improve the management of academic standards and quality for taught provision, the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate;

(c) Our university is responding to any issues or concerns arising from the outcomes of our processes or from the analysis of associated data with action plans in place for the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and outcomes;

(d) The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained and our University's periodic review processes involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review;

(e) The evidence presented supports continued alignment with the Office for Students' conditions of registration B1-B6 and the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

7. This Academic Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Framework forms part of our strategic management of higher education provision which is implemented through effective University structures, policies, regulations and processes and which include mechanisms for oversight by the University's Board of Governors, external examiners and other external stakeholders (e.g. professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, external quality assessment bodies).

Scope

8. This Policy and Framework applies to all our taught provision, delivered on campus, off site or via online/distance learning and provision delivered in partnership with collaborative providers.

9. All credit bearing courses and pathways are subject to the University's Academic Regulations which have been approved by Academic Board. The University Academic Regulations take precedence over any other regulations, including those of external or professional bodies, unless variation is specifically permitted and approved.

University Context for Academic Assurance and Enhancement

10. This University Policy and Framework summarises our approach and the mechanisms adopted to enable our University to continue to assure the academic quality, standards and ongoing enhancement of our taught provision and its alignment with relevant sector expectations and legislative requirements including the Office for Students' Registration Conditions, European Standards and Guidelines, the UK Quality Code, the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications and the revised external quality review arrangements and expectations introduced by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

11. The Office for Students' regulatory framework provides the overarching expectations for our University as a registered approved (fee cap) provider. The OFS stipulates conditions of registration with which our University must comply including specific conditions relating to Quality, Reliable Standards and Positive Outcomes (B1-B6).

12. Not only should providers have in place quality processes that comply with *Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015* (*ESG*) but also a reporting mechanism that enables both the senior academic body within a provider (Academic Board) and the Board of Governors to be assured that those processes are effective, and that the provider is responding to any issues or concerns arising from the outcomes of those processes, or from the analysis of data informing them. Our Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework sets out how this operates (Appendix 1).

13. Our University's strategic and operational environment, policies, Academic Regulations and processes for the management of quality and standards (evaluated through a QAA Higher Education Review in April 2014 and Transnational Education Review for Hong Kong in 2018), fully meets UK expectations receiving commendations for employability and collaborative provision. The reports comment on the effectiveness of our regulatory frameworks and processes and our approach to the management of academic standards, quality and enhancement of our taught awards, including those delivered in collaboration with others. The 2014 report also commented positively on our approach to teaching excellence including deliberate steps taken to increase the number of staff with Higher Education Academy Fellowships or teaching qualifications and "to improve the quality of student learning opportunities". Our University's successful outcome of the external quality assessment undertaken by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Annual Provider Review and the University's Silver Teaching Excellence Framework award in June 2017 provides further evidence of our robust approach to academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement.

14. Our Education Strategy 2016-2021, Customer Service Excellence accreditation, embedded policies, people strategy and development, reward and recognition mechanisms ensure the recognition and reward of teaching excellence and the provision of an excellent education, experience and outcomes for all our students. These are evaluated against key performance indicators (e.g. student satisfaction, continuation, attainment, completion, highly skilled employment or further study) embedded across all Schools/subjects. The developments to the Learning Pathway, Student Support Framework and Academic Regulations and processes in line with the Education Strategy provide further assurances for ongoing enhancement of our students' education and experience and the ongoing maintenance of robust academic standards.

A Partnership Approach

15. Working in partnership with our students and the Students' Union, we have transformed our undergraduate student experience and our students' learning through excellent and innovative academic practice, personalised student support, significant strategic developments and major investments in our students' learning environment over the last decade, providing an excellent student experience and positive student outcomes. Student representatives are full members of University deliberative structures including our Board of Governors.

16. The University's Student Charter, developed in partnership with the Students' Union, sets out our joint commitment to working in partnership with our students to ensure that our University is an inclusive, safe and engaging learning environment which is conducive to study for our students and work life for its staff. Our Student Charter, alongside the University's Academic

Regulations for Engagement and Partnership with Students, Section 12, sets out how we aim to achieve this by working together to understand and fulfil our commitments to one another. The Student Consultation Framework, developed in partnership with the Students' Union sets our further commitments relating to student engagement, consultation and partnership.

University Values

17. Our university's values, student focus, excellence, inspiration, creativity, professionalism, enterprise, integrity, support the University's commitments to and culture of academic assurance and enhancement. These inform the way in which our community works in partnership and the way in which individual members enact responsibility for the assurance and enhancement of the education we provide and the delivery of our key performance indicators.

18. This policy statement and academic assurance and enhancement framework explains the various components and mechanisms of our University's approach and is published for our University's community and external stakeholders.

Principles for Academic Assurance and Enhancement

Education Strategy

19. The principles for the provision of an excellent education and experience are embodied in the University's Education Strategy through the design and development of:

    (a) The Learning Pathway: supporting our students' transition into, and through, our University and their sustained development across all levels of learning and their preparation for lifelong learning. Led by the Centre for Learning and Teaching, academic staff are supported through DEAP fora in the dissemination, adoption and development of excellent academic practice (DEAP) and in the acquisition of professional recognition and qualifications for teaching.
    (b) The Student Support Framework: providing a coherent support environment for our students which encompasses all aspects of their academic, and professional needs, as well as offering specialist personal support. Led by Student Services with
    (c) The Academic Regulatory Framework: through this regulatory and procedural framework the University assures the security of the standards of our awards, supports their academic assurance and enables enhancement of student learning opportunities, recognising academic responsibility and expertise. Led by Quality Assurance Services, excellent academic quality and standards practice is enabled through people development, support and guidance

Academic Regulations

20. The University's Academic Regulations constitute our regulatory framework and inform our associated procedures within which courses of study leading to awards of the University are designed, validated and approved; and the means through which the academic standards of University awards are assured and the quality of learning, teaching and assessment is enhanced. The principles of the Academic Regulations are set out in Section 1 of these regulations and include their primacy, parity, consistency, fairness and equity, rigour and standards, academic

judgements, information for students and responsibilities of students. They embody the following general purposes for academic assurance and enhancement:

   (a) They reflect national and international higher education expectations and legislation including the UK Quality Code and Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications and the European Education Area's Standards and Guidelines.
   (b) The Academic Regulations apply to all awards and courses of study of the University including undergraduate, postgraduate, professional, short course and continuing professional development provision and research degrees.
   (c) These regulations and related processes and procedures are reviewed annually and in response to external sector policy or regulatory expectations with approval of the Academic Regulations the responsibility of Academic Board.

Values embodied in the Academic Regulations

21. The overarching values derived from UK sector quality codes and expectations describe the characteristics with which our regulations and approach align:

   (a) Every student is treated fairly and with dignity, courtesy and respect.
   (b) Every student has the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of their learning experience.
   (c) Every student is properly and actively informed at appropriate times of matters relevant to their course of study.
   (d) All policies and processes relating to study and courses are clear and transparent.
   (e) Strategic oversight of academic standards and academic quality is at the highest level of academic governance of the provider.
   (f) All policies and processes are regularly and effectively monitored, reviewed and improved.
   (g) Sufficient and appropriate external involvement exists for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.
   (h) All staff are supported, enabling them in turn to support students' learning experiences.
   (i) Information we produce about the learning opportunities we offer is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Responsibilities for Implementation

Individual and Shared Responsibility

22. The responsibility for adherence to our Academic Regulations and this policy rests with all staff, students and collaborative partners in accordance with the specific regulations, roles and responsibilities defined in our Academic Regulations and supplemented by our University's associated policies and procedures (see section 1.10 of the University's Academic Regulations).

Executive Leadership

23. The Vice-Chancellor leads the strategic vision, mission and direction of the University and as Chair of Academic Board is responsible for the leadership and institutional oversight of the University's academic quality and standards of awards. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic

leads on academic matters and the University's Education Strategy and Academic Regulatory and Assurance Framework.

24. The University's strategic planning framework establishes a shared vision, mission, strategic objectives and key performance indicators that set the context for individual and shared responsibility.

25. The University's strategic planning framework, operational and financial planning process and annual accountability meetings with Schools and Professional Services provide the executive focus for the annual review of progress against our strategic objectives and KPIs. The University's strategic and financial planning/investment process is informed by the University's strategic objectives, University Strategies (e.g. Education Strategy, Research and Enterprise Strategy, People Strategy and Development, Estates, Finance) and School and Professional Services outcomes.

Senior Management

26. Senior management leadership for the implementation of this policy and framework is overseen by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic, supported by the University Registrar and our University's Quality Assurance Services.

27. Deans of School and Directors of Professional Services are responsible for local implementation of this policy, the effective implementation of the Academic Regulations within their School, the embedding of the Education Strategy within their School and the delivery of the University's strategic planning framework and KPIs as applicable to the School.

28. Academic Structures: The Dean of School retains formal management responsibility for the operational standards, quality and delivery of all a School's courses (including collaborative provision) and the execution of all matters contained within the University's Regulations. Where appropriate the enactment of day-to-day activity may be delegated to a nominee. The Dean of School is supported in this role by line management of Heads of Subject who have responsibility for a defined area of academic provision and staff teams. The Dean of School is responsible in their School for the effective operation and oversight of quality processes and School deliberative and executive governance structures. The responsibilities of Heads of Subject and Course Directors are agreed by our University. Heads of Subject and Course Directors provide academic leadership and course organisation, management and delivery and arrangements for the education and assessment of students. They are responsible with the wider course team for the operational implementation of academic standards and quality of the provision and its annual monitoring, review and systematic enhancement in the School.

29. Professional Services Structures: Academic and other Professional Services are led by the relevant senior manager/Director and support the provision of an excellent education and experience for our students working in partnership with Schools and the Students' Union. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic leads and manages Academic Services in our University.

30. Roles in relation to Collaborative provision partners (i.e. those organisations which contribute to the teaching, assessment or support of students studying on courses which lead to Leeds Beckett University awards) are in Section 15 of the Academic Regulations.

Academic Governance Structures

31. The University has a Board of Governors and an Academic Board. Academic Board has responsibilities defined in the University's Articles of Association. Academic Board (and its committees) is responsible for overseeing academic matters relating to research, scholarship, teaching and courses. It advises the Vice Chancellor in the related activities and resources required to support and enhance the quality of educational provision. The University committee structure is explained in section 1.9 of the Academic Regulations and our governance and committee structures published on our University's web pages.

32. These committees provide institutional oversight of academic standards and quality, contribute to the formulation, review and enhancement of policy and practice, and provide a forum for broader consultation involving staff and student representatives.

33. The primary responsibility for academic quality and standards rests with the Vice-Chancellor, with primary responsibility for institutional oversight via Academic Board with the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of this Board and of our University Executive Team.

34. Academic Board will take any reasonable action it considers necessary to protect the quality of courses of study and the academic standard of the University's awards. In approving the University Regulations, Academic Board has delegated the responsibility for the detailed operation, monitoring and review of these Regulations to its Committees. Final approval of the University Regulations is the responsibility of Academic Board.

35. The University's Academic Governance structures provide the formal deliberative committee structures for the monitoring, reporting and institutional oversight of academic standards and academic quality, and the review and enhancement of the quality of provision, specifically via Academic Quality and Standards Committee, Academic Board and the Board of Governors. These Committees receive academic assurance reports and a range of annual reports each academic year as part of the institutional academic assurance framework. School Academic Committees provide local oversight of the School's management of the quality and outcomes of the School's courses including KPI performance and the local action plans for continuous improvement, reporting to Academic Quality and Standards Committee. A cyclical effectiveness review ensures the oversight and effectiveness of the University's Academic Governance Structure.

36. The terms of reference for these committees are made publicly available set out on the University's web page for academic governance. Academic Quality and Standards Committee has delegated responsibility from Academic Board for the oversight of academic quality and standards, (and their ongoing enhancement), for the development of the Academic Regulations (supported by the Regulations Review Group) and for oversight of quality and standards matters considered by the School Academic Committees.

University Framework for Academic Assurance and Enhancement

37. This academic governance structure forms the basis for our academic assurance and enhancement framework. Fundamentally, academic assurance derives from common, or centralised, processes, which enable reporting and analysis of outcomes which can then be verified, discussed, and responded to, facilitating evidenced action planning which, itself, can be

monitored and reported upon. These processes, and the data which emanate from them, must themselves reference the core guidance available to all providers (see Appendix 1).

38. The outcomes of these processes are reported at different times of the year, and to different cycles. These inform reports which form part of the cycle of business for Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Where processes have a wide-ranging significance (especially in their relationship to standards or to the student experience at institutional level) then these are also reported to Academic Board for wider discussion and deliberation.

39. Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), maintain an ongoing AQSC Action Plan which focuses on actions for the enhancement of academic quality or the ongoing maintenance of robust academic standards. This is also reported to Academic Board and the Board of Governors.

Review

This Policy for Academic Assurance and Enhancement and the Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework will be reviewed annually as part of the annual review and updating of the University's Academic Regulations. This will be reported via AQSC and Academic Board and via academic assurance reporting to the Board of Governors.

Appendices - provided for internal implementation only

Appendix 1: Leeds Beckett University's Framework for Academic Assurance and Enhancement
Appendix 2: Leeds Beckett University's Education Strategy 2016-21: Key Performance Indicators and Measures of Success