Teaching Quality Handbook

Part 2

Management of Academic Quality and Standards
(June 2017)

Part 2 outlines the internal structures for the management of academic quality and standards within the University.

Version Control

Version	Created by	Date approved by Academic Board	Summary of changes
June 2017	Asst Registrar QAE	17/07/2017	Changes to reflect organisational restructuring

Part 2: Management of Academic Quality and Standards

1. Introduction

1.1 Overall responsibility for academic quality rests with the Academic Board of the University, the membership and remit of which is detailed in this document.

1.2 The Board delegates responsibility for the operational oversight of teaching and learning activities and the student experience to the Education Committee (EC) and the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance of the quality of those standards to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).

1.3 The Board delegates responsibility for the oversight and management of research and knowledge exchange activities to the Research Committee (RC).

1.4 The EC, AQSC and RC may in turn delegate specific management responsibilities to an approved subcommittee to assist with the effective administration and implementation of the quality assurance and enhancement of the student learning experience. The membership and remit of these subcommittees can be found in subsequent sections of this document.

Contents

2. Academic Board

Membership	**Senior Management** • The Vice Chancellor (Chair) • The Director of Education and Academic Development • The Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange **Academic Staff** • The Heads of all Academic Subject Centres • The Head of Academic Quality & Standards • The Director of Educational Enhancement • The Head of Student Experience • The Disability Officer • The Academic Lead for Sustainability • Senior Admissions Tutor / Academic Lead for Widening Participation • All other members of Academic Staff of the University **Professional Services** • The Academic Registrar • The Assistant Registrar, Quality Assurance & Enhancement **Students** • The Chairman of the RAU Students Union • Two elected student representatives: one undergraduate and one postgraduate
In attendance	• Any other member of RAU staff consistent with the specific business of the Board
Secretary	A member of Academic Registry Staff
Quorum	A minimum of ten members, to include at least one Senior Manager and at least 50% of Academic Subject Centre Heads. *Where departmental or centre leads are unable to attend, they are encouraged to arrange for an appropriate deputy to attend in their place – subject to prior agreement with the Chair*
Number of meetings p.a.	The Board shall meet at least three times each year at the University during term time. It shall have the authority to hold additional extraordinary meetings as necessary to address important strategic matters (for example immediately following the end-of-year examination boards).
Reporting to	Governing Council (for information)
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	To provide the strategic direction for, and maintain oversight of, the University's academic, research and knowledge exchange activities and for the development and implementation of the University's Strategic Plan.
Terms of Reference	The Academic Board shall exercise full responsibility for the academic activities of the University, and take such measures as it deems are in the best interests to ensure the sustainability of the University's academic and research activities and the quality of the

student learning experience. Subject to the University's Charter and Byelaws, the Academic Board shall have the following functions and powers:

(i)   To consider the development of the academic and research activities of the University, in line with the Corporate Strategy, and to advise the Vice-Chancellor and Governors thereon;

(ii)   To assume strategic responsibility for quality assurance and quality enhancement of all academic and research activities, ensuring these are in line with national expectations;

(iii)   To have oversight of, and monitor, strategies, policies, procedures and regulations associated with the academic activities of the University;

(iv)   To take responsibility for the regulations governing the exercising of University's Degree Awarding Powers and maintenance of University Title;

(v)   To have overall responsibility for the development, monitoring, review and amendment of academic policies and procedures, rules and regulations governing the academic activities of the University;

(vi)   To determine the membership of the constitutional subcommittees of the Board and to determine the powers and duties of such committees and establish, on such terms and conditions as it sees fit, such additional committees as it considers necessary for purposes enabling it to carry out its duties and responsibilities;

(vii) To review and recommend to Governing Council the establishment or abolition of academic management structures, their constitution and function and the modification or revision of the same;

(viii)   To receive and approve reports from sub-committees of the Board;

(ix)   To assume strategic responsibility for academic staff promotion;

(x)   To monitor and review University policy and practice for academic staff training and development;

(xi)   On what the Academic Board shall deem to be good cause, to deprive any person of any Degree or other award, honorary or otherwise, conferred on them by the University, and to revoke

	any Degree, Diploma or Certificate granted to them by the University; (xii) To approve the appointment of Honorary and Visiting Professors, Honorary and Visiting Fellows and other such honorary titles as the Board deems appropriate; (xiii) To approve partner institutions for the delivery of academic programmes, or part-programmes, leading to a University award; (xiv) To advise on such other matters as the Governing Council or the Vice Chancellor may refer to the Academic Board
Criteria for Chair's action	Chair's action may only be taken in situations where either: a. the Board has given clear prior approval for the action, and this is clearly stated in the minutes, including the extent of powers devolved to the Chair, or b. a matter requiring more urgent action occurs in advance of a scheduled Board meeting. Where the Chair does take action on a matter for which authority has been devolved from the Board, the outcome of the action must be clearly articulated, in writing, to the Board at the next available opportunity. Where the Chair is required to take action on an extraordinary matter in advance of a scheduled Board meeting, then s/he should normally circulate the matter to the Board members electronically, seeking comment, prior to making any decision. Any decision made must again be clearly articulated, in writing, to the Board at the next available opportunity.

3. Education Committee

Membership	• Director of Education and Academic Development (Chair) • Director of Educational Enhancement • Chair of Academic Quality & Standards Committee • Heads of Subject Centres • Head of Student Experience • Academic Lead for Sustainability in the Curriculum • Academic Registrar • Assistant Registrar: Quality Assurance & Enhancement • Head of Library Services • Head of IT • Disability Officer • Two Student Representatives • *NB: For certain agenda items it may not be appropriate for a student representative to be present. The Chair will identify these items in advance of the meeting and will work with the Committee Secretary to organise the meeting agenda and meeting papers accordingly.*
In attendance	Invited Staff as necessary to facilitate Education Committee activities
Secretary	A member of Academic Registry Staff
Quorum	50% of membership. *Where departmental or centre heads are unable to attend, they are encouraged to arrange for an appropriate deputy to attend in their place – subject to prior agreement with the Chair*
Number of meetings p.a.	Meetings will normally be held on a monthly basis throughout the academic year.
Reporting to	Academic Board
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	The Education Committee will have the following objectives: (a) To develop and maintain oversight of the University's Education strategy and associated strategies relating to the student experience and the recruitment, retention and ultimate success of the University's students (b) To promote innovation in teaching and learning as a means of enhancing the student experience and the attractiveness of the University's academic provision (c) To maintain strategic oversight of education planning, curriculum development and the provision of human, physical and other resources required to deliver high quality academic programmes in line with the Corporate Strategy
Terms of Reference	(i) To make decisions on educational priorities for the University in order to enhance the student experience (ii) To develop, review and evaluate the impact of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. (iii) To oversee the enhancement of the student experience, maintaining an oversight of curriculum review and associated

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<tr><td></td><td></td><td>teaching, learning and assessment practices in line with sector-wide good practice and to recommend the adoption of innovative approaches to continually enhance learning activities.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(iv)</td><td>To monitor and review academic standards, quality assurance and quality enhancement policies and procedures in line with University and national requirements and good practice guidance.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(v)</td><td>To consider the resources required to support the continual development of the University's academic activities and advise Academic Board and SMG of priorities for additional investment.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(vi)</td><td>To receive and make recommendations on proposals for new or amended programmes of study for both internal and collaborative programmes</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(vii)</td><td>To oversee all collaborative provision, as defined in the University's Policy for Collaborative Provision and with reference to the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Chapter B10 Management of Collaborative Arrangements (December 2012).</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(viii)</td><td>To intervene and ensure that appropriate action is taken in the case of modules or programmes that are at risk of having their quality or standards compromised.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(ix)</td><td>To establish and/or remove Boards of Examiners, internal and external examiners and to regulate all University examinations, including procedures for appeal against a decision of a Board of Examiners.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(x)</td><td>To monitor and review strategy, policy and procedures in respect of the student journey, including registration, student attendance, assessment schedules, examination schedules and the operation of appeals, complaints and student grievance procedures.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(xi)</td><td>To determine the formalities relating to the conferment of Degrees, Diplomas and other awards and to confer degrees and grant other academic distinctions to individuals who have followed an approved University programme and satisfied the regulations pertaining to the award.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(xii)</td><td>To regulate the requirements for admission of persons to programmes of study and to confirm grounds for the suspension or expulsion of students in accordance with published regulations.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(xiii)</td><td>To determine the strategy for the extra-mural academic work of the University</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(xiv)</td><td>To promote continual enhancement in learning, teaching and student research activities through the identification and dissemination of good practice</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>(xv)</td><td>To monitor and respond to student feedback relating to the quality of learning, teaching and assessment, and the wider experience at the University</td></tr>
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	(xvi) To recommend to the Academic Board the termination of programme validation or the need for a special review following concerns raised through annual monitoring procedures or student feedback.
	(xvii) To oversee the development of a lifelong learning relationship with alumni and the promotion of careers, sustainability, employability and enterprise across the University
	(xviii)To promote active student engagement in matters relating to the standards and quality of degree programmes and the academic experience of students at the University
	(xix) To coordinate, monitor and review academic staff development activities
	(xx) To establish working groups, as required, to examine and report on any aspect of the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment and the provision of related information resources and services within the University.
Criteria for Chair's action	Chair's action may only be taken in situations where either: a. the Committee has given clear prior approval for the action, and this is clearly stated in the minutes, including the extent of powers devolved to the Chair, or b. a matter requiring more urgent action occurs in advance of a scheduled Committee meeting. Where the Chair does take action on a matter for which authority has been devolved from the Committee, the outcome of the action must be clearly articulated, in writing, to the Committee at the next available opportunity. Where the Chair is required to take action on an extraordinary matter in advance of a scheduled Committee meeting, then s/he should normally circulate the matter to the Committee members electronically, seeking comment, prior to making any decision. Any decision made must again be clearly articulated, in writing, to the Committee at the next available opportunity.

4. Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)

Membership	• Head of Academic Quality and Standards (Chair) • Academic Quality Support Officer (Secretary) • Academic Registrar • Assistant Registrar, Quality Assurance and Enhancement • Collaborative Development Officer • Three nominated and agreed academic staff members *NB: The length of tenure of elected members shall be 3 years, renewable for further terms of 3 years.* • Student Representative • *NB: For certain agenda items it may not be appropriate for a student representative to be present. The Chair of AQSC will identify these items in advance of the meeting and will work with the AQSC Secretary to organise the meeting agenda and meeting papers accordingly.*
In attendance	Invited Staff as necessary to facilitate AQSC activities
Secretary	Academic Quality Support Officer
Quorum	50% of current membership *NB: Where staff representatives or the student representative are unable to attend they are encouraged to arrange, in conjunction with the AQSC Chair, for an appropriate alternate to attend in their place.*
Number of meetings p.a.	The Committee shall meet at least six times each year at the University during term time. It shall have the authority to hold additional extraordinary meetings as necessary to address important operational matters
Reporting to	RAU Education Committe
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	To have devolved executive responsibility for the assurance of quality and standards of learning, teaching and assessment practices leading to the award of a Royal Agricultural University qualification.
Terms of Reference	(i) To advise the Education Committee on all matters associated with the quality and standards of RAU awards. (ii) To oversee and monitor policies and procedures for programme validation and review, in line with national requirements, oversee implementation, review annually their effectiveness and, where appropriate, ensure corrective action is taken. (iii) To approve changes to programmes and programme documentation in between periodic reviews.

	(iv) To approve new modules and modifications to existing module titles, contact time, outcomes, assessment and major changes to content for delivery in between periodic reviews.
	(v) To call for a special review and revalidation of any programme in between periodic reviews in cases where significant changes have been proposed.
	(vi) To call for a special review and revalidation of any programme in between periodic reviews where there are significant concerns regarding the quality and standards of that programme.
	(vii) To recommend to the Education Committee, and subsequently to Academic Board, the termination of programme validation or the need for a special review in any circumstances not covered in vii and viii.
	(viii) To appoint and instruct subcommittees and/or working groups as deemed necessary and to manage and oversee their responsibilities. In particular the establishment of panels for the validation and re-validation of academic provision across the University and its collaborative partners.
	(ix) To monitor the accuracy, reliability and completeness of academic documentation.
	(x) To manage the University's arrangements for Annual Provider Review and periodic HEFCE Quality Assurance Review.
Criteria for Chair's action	Chair's action may only be taken in situations where either: a. the Committee has given clear prior approval for the action, and this is clearly stated in the minutes, including the extent of powers devolved to the Chair, or b. a matter requiring more urgent action occurs in advance of a scheduled Committee meeting. Where the Chair does take action on a matter for which authority has been devolved from the Committee, the outcome of the action must be clearly articulated, in writing, to the Committee at the next available opportunity. Where the Chair is required to take action on an extraordinary matter in advance of a scheduled Committee meeting, then s/he should normally circulate the matter to the Committee members electronically, seeking comment, prior to making any decision. Any decision made must again be clearly articulated, in writing, to the Committee at the next available opportunity.

5. Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

Membership	• Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange (Chair) • The Vice Chancellor (*ex-officio*) • Four members of academic staff, covering the research areas of the University • Research professors • The Link Tutor(s) from the institution(s) providing research degree validation • A representative of the consultancy work of the Business Development Centre • A research degree student representative • Secretarial support *NB: Members of the Research Committee must be research-active staff members and possess a research degree qualification and, desirably, a track-record of securing research grants and publications (with the exception of the representative of the consultancy work of the Business Development Centre).* *NB: Members shall normally serve for a period of three years, which is renewable.*
In attendance	Any other member of staff may be co-opted from time to time by the Committee to assist it to carry out its defined functions on behalf of the University
Secretary	Secretary to the Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange
Quorum	50% of current membership
Number of meetings p.a.	At least four meetings each year
Reporting to	Academic Board
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	The Research Committee reports to Academic Board and is responsible for advising upon and delivering the research strategy of the University, specifically: a. To promote and encourage research and scholarship, working closely with the Heads of Subject Centres. b. To advise Academic Board and University on all matters relating to research, including the research strategy and its implementation. c. To consider and advise on all aspects of University policy relating to postgraduate research students
Terms of Reference	i. Be responsible for the monitoring and updating of the University's Research Strategy. ii. Receive and approve applications for registration of postgraduate research students. iii. Monitor and report as appropriate on the training and progression of postgraduate research students, including the liaison with the degree awarding institution.

	iv.	Manage such funds for the support of research made available to the Committee by the University.
	v.	Encourage and assist University staff in the development of their research.
	vi.	Encourage and assist in the recruitment and management of postgraduate research students.
	vii.	Liaise with the Business Development Centre particularly with regard to consultancy and knowledge exchange work by the University.
	viii.	Prepare the University's submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
	ix.	Oversee the University's progression to the achievement of research degree awarding powers (RDAP).

6. Validation and Review Panels

Membership	• A Chair: a member of senior academic staff appointed by AQSC • An independent External Advisor appointed by AQSC • A member of senior academic staff from a different subject centre • A Student representative • Quality Support Unit (QSU) representative
In attendance	Subject to the approval of AQSC, additional members of academic or learning support staff may be invited to participate where specific subject or operational knowledge is deemed to be required.
Secretary	A Serving Officer: normally appointed from Academic Registry
Quorum	Minimum of three University staff plus External panel member
Reporting to	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	Validation is the process through which the University establishes that a new or existing programme is academically viable, that academic standards have been appropriately defined and that it will offer students the best opportunity to learn. It is about assuring quality but must also be able to promote best practice and adding value by enhancing the quality of the proposal.
Terms of Reference	The AQSC has set the following terms of reference for the Validation and Review Panels. These will be reviewed annually by the AQSC and altered as required. The Validation and Review Panels will take into account the following general criteria in reaching their conclusions: i. The appropriateness of the programme aims, and the programme and module learning outcomes stated, including their level. ii. The distinctive nature of the programme in relation to others currently offered. iii. The evidence of demand for the programme from prospective students, past graduates from the programme and employers of graduates. iv. The appropriateness and relevance of the curriculum of programmes in relation to the learning outcomes. The Validation and Review Panel will review all programme modules as part of the (re)validation process to ensure each module is fit for purpose within the programme structure. v. Advice from relevant stakeholders within the institution on the amount and quality of resources required and identified as available. vi. The admission and assessment procedures. vii. External reference points including the Framework for Higher Education (FHEQ), other relevant qualification descriptors, relevant subject benchmark statements and any requirements

	of professional/statutory bodies and, where appropriate, employers. Full details and guidance for validation panels is provided in the RAU 'Guide to Validation for Panel Members' available from the QSU.

7. University Examinations Committee (UEC)

Membership	• The Director of Education & Academic Development (Chair) • The Heads of Academic Subject Centres • Programme Managers or their representatives • The Academic Registrar or their representative • The Institutional External Examiner *NB: where a head of subject is unable to attend then they must make arrangements for a suitable alternate, in consultation with the Chair, to attend in their place*
In attendance	Registry staff in support of student records and MIS operations
Secretary	A member of Academic Registry
Quorum	50% of eligible membership
Number of meetings p.a.	Normally two times per year, in June and September
Reporting to	Academic Board, The Education Committee and AQSC
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	To ratify decisions and recommendations of individual subject boards prior to publication of individual student results.

Terms of Reference	a. To oversee the assessment of candidates for all University awards.
	b. Oversee the work of individual Subject Examination Boards.
	c. Receive and ratify the minutes and recommendations of all Subject Examination Boards.
	d. Ensure that the regulations, as approved by the Education Committee, for:
	
	  i. the assessment, progression and awards,
	  ii. the organisation and invigilation of examinations, and
	  iii. the conduct of candidates in examinations
	
	  are properly promulgated and observed and to propose to the Education Committee such amendments and deletions as necessary.

Criteria for Chair's action	Chair's action may only be taken in situations where the Committee has given clear prior approval for the action, and this is clearly stated in the minutes, including the extent of powers devolved to the Chair. a. Where new information is provided after the UEC meeting in respect of any candidate, it must be supported by the Head of the relevant Subject Centre, as Chair of the Subject Examinations Committee, and must be presented to the UEC

Chair through the Registry office, such that a clear audit trail is maintained.

b. Where the UEC Chair is required to overturn a previous decision of the UEC that materially affects a candidate's progression opportunities or final degree classification, the Chair must consult with the Academic Registrar on the appropriateness of the new award in relation to the published regulations. In cases where the final outcome is not clearly defined within the regulations, the Chair should also seek the views of the External Examiner for the award, or the University's Institutional External Examiner (IEE).

c. Where the Chair does take action to confirm or overturn a decision of the UEC, this must be clearly articulated, in writing, to the Committee at the next available opportunity, clearly stating:
   i. The original decision.
   ii. The new information provided to the Chair.
   iii. The new decision.

d. In situations where the Chair is unable to reach a consensus in respect of a change to a final award, then the final decision will be suspended pending an extraordinary UEC meeting, attended by an External Examiner, in order to reach a final decision.

8. Subject Examination Boards

Membership	- Head of Subject Centre - Programme Managers - Module Leaders - All academic staff responsible for student assessment within the relevant programmes and modules - At least one duly appointed External Examiner - The Academic Registrar or their nominee
In attendance	Registry staff in support of student records and MIS operations
Secretary	A member of Centre Administration
Quorum	50% of School Staff involved in relevant student assessment
Number of meetings p.a.	Normally a minimum of one meeting per annum
Reporting to	University Examinations Committee
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	The function of a Subject Examination Board is to consider the results of all examinations and assessments and make recommendations on progression and awards for each individual student to the University Examinations Committee
Terms of Reference	

9. Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP)

Membership	- Head of Academic Quality and Standards (Chair) - Secretary (Academic Registrar) - Two senior members of academic staff not involved in the initial student assessment
In attendance	Student Support if requested by student
Secretary	Academic Registrar
Quorum	Minimum of three panel members
Number of meetings p.a.	As required to address alleged academic misconduct
Reporting to	Education Committee
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	To investigate all allegations of academic misconduct relating to both coursework and examinations, in line with published University policy, and determine what penalties, if any, are to be applied to the assessment in question.
Operating Procedures	The Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP) will: i. Receive all information relevant to the case in question in advance of the meeting. ii. Accept both written and verbal evidence directly from the student(s) and staff involved in the alleged offence. iii. Remain impartial at all times. iv. Reach an agreed decision in all cases. v. Apply the University's regulations for Academic Misconduct consistently and in an appropriate manner, giving due regard to all evidence received. vi. Communicate its decisions, and penalties to be imposed, in writing to the individuals involved in each case. vii. Produce an annual report of its activities for presentation to the Education Committee.

10. Examination and Assessment Appeals Committee

Membership	• Head of Academic Quality and Standards (Chair) • Academic Registrar (secretary) • A Head of Subject other than that of the appellant • A member of the academic staff of the University who has not taken part in the current assessment of the appellant's work
In attendance	Student Support if requested by student
Secretary	Academic Registrar
Quorum	Three members plus secretary
Number of meetings p.a.	As required, subject to receiving written appeals based on solid, acceptable evidence.
Reporting to	Education Committee and Academic Board
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	The Appeals Committee is a subcommittee of the Education Committee with responsibility for dealing with appeals against Examination Board decisions.

Operating Procedures	i. The Appeals Committee shall meet within 14 days of receipt of the appeal, to hear the appellant in person, with or without a supporter, and/or consider any representations made by the appellant or a friend speaking on the appellant's behalf. The panel may invite other persons as appropriate to provide verbal or written information relevant to the appeal. If the Appeal Committee finds that the appeal is well-founded it shall either:
	
	    a. Determine the case there and then;
	       OR
	    b. Refer the case back to the relevant Examination Board for reconsideration, with or without recommendations.
	
	ii. In either case, if the appeal decision results in the granting of an award, the Chair of the University Examinations Committee shall have the power to approve the award on behalf of the University. Minutes of Appeal Committee meetings and any documents or other evidence submitted shall be confidential, and members of the Committee shall respect the confidentiality of both papers and oral statements in the interests of both the appellant and the University.
	
	iii. The Chair of the Appeals Committee shall report annually on the activities of the Appeals Committee to the Education Committee.

11. Subject Centre Committees

Membership	• Subject Centre Head • Relevant Programme Managers and module leaders • All subject teaching staff • Dean of Education and Academic Development (ex-officio)
In attendance	Representatives of key University departments, such as Marketing, Registry and Commercial Enterprises, may be invited to attend to discuss matters of relevance to the Centre.
Secretary	Member of Centre Administration Services
Quorum	50% of current membership
Number of meetings p.a.	Each Subject Centre is expected to meet at least once a term, preferably on the last day of each term, to review the term completed. An additional pre-sessional meeting must be held in September to address any matters prior to the start of the new academic year and to introduce any new members of staff. Part-time members of staff and visiting lecturers are expected to attend pre-sessional meetings and are encouraged to attend the other termly meetings.
Reporting to	Education Committee and AQSC where appropriate
Key purpose / overview of role of committee	To maintain an oversight of all academic programmes within the Centre and support the Head in the management of the Centres' academic activities
Terms of Reference	i. To monitor each programme of study within the Centre in relation to application numbers, progression and success criteria, and to report to the Education Committee on areas of concern ii. To review staff and physical resource requirements and make representation for additional resources to support high quality teaching, learning and assessment iii. To identify new opportunities for module, programme and curriculum development to further enhance student experience and opportunity iv. To review end of year performance of students and plan for, and implement, changes for continual enhancement v. To receive and respond to External Examiner reports vi. To review and act upon student feedback for the modules and programmes within the Centre