Chapter 6
Quality Assurance of Learning and Teaching

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the University's approach to the quality assurance of learning and teaching and is aligned with the Office for Students' (OfS) Regulatory Framework[1], specifically the B Conditions of Registration for Quality and Standards. The following B Conditions have particular relevance to learning and teaching, in that providers must:

B1 - Deliver well designed courses that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.

B2 - Provide all students, from admission through to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

This chapter is also informed by the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA[2]) UK Quality Code's supporting Advice and Guidance on Learning and Teaching (November 2018)[3].

The calibre of academic staff and the quality of their practice are pre-conditions for the assurance of quality and standards in higher education. The **Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework** (TEF)[4] aims to incentivise excellent teaching beyond minimum baseline expectations of quality. The OfS uses this Framework to recognise providers that can demonstrate commitment to, and success in, maximising student satisfaction, attainment and employability. The **Statement of Findings**[5] from the **University's TEF Gold award** of June 2017 specifically acknowledged the "professional experience of teaching staff" and a "strategic and embedded institutional culture that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching, as exemplified by the appointment of University Learning and Teaching Fellows, annual student-led staff awards and the celebration of exceptional teaching at degree ceremonies".

Academic staff are responsible for improving and enhancing their own practice, i.e., the teaching and academic support of students. Academic managers are also accountable to the University for ensuring that the monitoring, review and development of academic staff, both individually and collectively, operate comprehensively, consistently and in an effective way.

[1] https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/.
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk//en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/learning-and-teaching.
[4] See Government White Paper Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice, Department for Business Innovation & Skills (May 2016).
[5] *"Teaching Excellence Framework Year Two: Statement of Findings - Edge Hill University"* (June 2017) www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/#/tefoutcomes/provider/10007823.

Academic departments support their staff to experience and deliver good practice through engagement with staff development and appropriate externality, for example membership of academic subject and professional communities, achievement of Higher Education Academy Fellowship[6] and applying for external examiner positions with other higher education providers.

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHING STAFF

The recruitment, selection and appointment of staff including associate (part-time) tutors is governed by the University's human resources policy and procedures[7].

Responsibilities

- **All staff** engaged in delivering programmes of study share responsibility for maintaining academic standards and enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities.
- **Heads of Department** (HoDs) and **Programme Leaders** are accountable to PVC Deans of Faculty for developing and implementing local arrangements for assuring teaching quality.
- **PVC Deans of Faculty** are accountable to the Academic Board[8] for their implementation and ensuring that staff are adequately supported.

Faculties and their departments determine the most appropriate systems and processes for managing their provision, which may include designated programme and module leaders, and these arrangements are tested at validation. The following functions are typically associated with 'programme leadership':

a) Monitoring student recruitment, retention and progression at award level.
b) Providing programme-level guidance and support to module leaders and tutors.
c) Ensuring appropriate communication with students including during pre-entry and induction, and guidance for their transition between academic levels/years.
d) Ensuring programme assessment is conducted appropriately and securely, including internal and external moderation and submission of module marks to assessment boards.
e) Ensuring all modules within the programme have appropriate external examiner coverage.
f) Operation of programme and module surveys, programme boards and Student-Staff Consultative Fora including course-level student representation.
g) Overseeing arrangements for personal tutoring[9] and Personal Development Planning.

[6] www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/professional-development/edge-hill-university-cpd-scheme-ukpsf/.
[7] https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/humanresources/Forms%2C+Policies+and+Documents.
[8] Via its committees for Learning and Teaching and Academic Quality Enhancement - see Chapter 8.
[9] See CLT Wiki page for more information Personal Tutoring Policy, Staff Guide and Training.

h) Advising students on module options, careers information and guidance and procedures for personal circumstances[10], deferral of assessment, re-assessment, interruption of studies and appeals.
i) Point of contact for programme-related complaints.
j) Producing programme handbooks and reviewing and updating module and programme specifications and handbooks to reflect curriculum modifications (minor and major).
k) Contributing programme-level evaluation to departmental annual monitoring and Critical Review submissions for periodic review.

Where no single programme leader is in place and the functions of programme leadership are distributed among staff holding specific department-wide responsibilities, e.g., for teaching or the student experience, (a) to (k) should be met collectively by the programme team. Staff participation in department-level committees and workgroups enables good practice to be identified and shared, while Faculty and University committees, the University learning and teaching fellowships and associated staff development activities provide vehicles for wider dissemination and exchange.

Staff qualifications and experience

The University acknowledges the strengths of teaching teams and how their collective qualifications and experience support teaching and the student experience. When considering the profile of programme teams at validation, panels will expect to see a 'critical mass' of individuals with appropriate academic qualifications and previous teaching experience. There is a general expectation that teaching staff are qualified to at least the same level as the qualification they are teaching, if not a level higher. In addition to academic qualifications, it is expected that they will hold a Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship[11], either through completion of the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education[12] or the Institution's HEA-accredited CPD Scheme. Staff may also possess relevant professional qualifications and/ or industry experience which can be a valuable supplement to teaching. For programmes delivered with academic partner organisations, Faculties via their departments are responsible for approving all individuals who teach on modules or programmes that lead to the award of Edge Hill University credit or qualifications[13].

Research and scholarly activity

The Statement of Findings from Edge Hill's TEF Gold award of June 2017 recognised the University's 'consistent student engagement with developments at the forefront of

[10] Formally Extenuating Mitigating Circumstances (EMC).
[11] The HEA is now part of 'Advance HE', along with the Equality Challenge Unit and Leadership Foundation, however Fellowships will retain HEA in their titles.
[12] www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/professional-development/.
[13] See Chapter 5.

scholarship and practice through research-informed curriculum design'[14]. Staff delivering on programmes leading to Edge Hill awards are expected to maintain their knowledge and understanding of subject-related scholarship and research commensurate with the level of teaching in which they are engaged. For delivery at **FHEQ[15] levels 4 and 5**, teachers will have relevant knowledge of, and maintain a close and professional understanding of, current developments in subject-related scholarship that inform curriculum design and directly enhance their teaching. Examples of this may include:

- Familiarity with current subject-based and/or pedagogic research literature.
- Engagement with QAA's subject benchmark statements.
- Engagement with relevant professional body standards (where applicable).

At **FHEQ levels 6 & 7**, teachers will have relevant knowledge of, and maintain a close and professional understanding of, current developments in subject-related research and advanced scholarship that inform curriculum design and directly enhance their teaching. While not every teacher will engage in original research, teams engaged in delivery at levels 6 & 7 should be able to evidence some scholarly outputs that generate and disseminate academic knowledge and understanding.

Examples of this are as detailed at levels 4 & 5 (above) and may additionally include:

- Membership of academic subject associations.
- Membership of professional bodies.
- Contributions to publications and/or conferences.

Induction, supervision, mentoring and development

Academic departments establish their own arrangements for the induction, supervision and mentoring of teaching staff which:

- Include the supply of handbooks and other relevant documentation.
- Provide for supervision, which may extend beyond the probationary period, of staff who are inexperienced in teaching, supporting and assessing students.
- Ensure individuals' engagement with the University's central staff induction programme.

Managers facilitate new teachers' engagement with the University's Higher Education Academy-accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education which also delivers HEA Fellowship (D2). For more established staff, an HEA-accredited CPD Scheme[16] offers the opportunity to acquire Fellowship through demonstration of knowledge,

[14] *"Teaching Excellence Framework Year Two: Statement of Findings - Edge Hill University"* (June 2017) www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/#/tefoutcomes/provider/10007823.
[15] Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (QAA, 2014).
[16] www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/professional-development/edge-hill-university-cpd-scheme-ukpsf/.

understanding and experience mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) Dimensions of Practice[17]. Staff with demonstrable experience of educational leadership may seek Senior (D3) or Principal (D4) HEA Fellowship, and Edge Hill staff currently include several National Teaching Fellows (NTF)[18]. All staff have access to professional development activities including seminars and conferences hosted by the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT)[19]. Academic departments make appropriate arrangements for the induction, supervision, mentoring and development of associate (part-time) lecturers.

Teaching Observation and Peer Review

Observation of teaching is a key mechanism for ensuring that students experience the best possible opportunities to learn and succeed in their chosen subject. It provides a means to:

- Identify good practice for wider dissemination[20].
- Identify poor practice and facilitate its improvement through opportunities for support, challenge and professional development.
- Identify excellent practitioners with potential for further professional development including application for internal Learning and Teaching Fellowship and National Teaching Fellowship and solicit their input to the development of other staff through delivery of CPD seminars and contribution to staff conferences and Learning and Teaching Days.
- Provide evidence to the OfS, QAA, Ofsted[21] and other external agencies including Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies of the University's commitment to enhance learning, teaching, assessment and other practices linked to students' learning.

Observation of teaching is invariably most productive when it is carried out in a developmental fashion by academic peers. It is also most effective in achieving the above aims if it includes all of those who teach students, which may include staff in appropriate learning support roles. It is important that observers have the necessary knowledge and skills to make sound judgements about the quality of teaching and be able to give high-quality and developmental feedback; wherever possible, teaching observation should be constructive with areas of commendation or improvement highlighted. It is not the reviewer's role to tell staff how to teach or to impose their own working methods, but rather to engage in developmental dialogue before and following observation. To make this process effective, training and guidelines should be available to all staff involved in peer review activity.

[17] www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf.
[18] www.heacademy.ac.uk/recognition-accreditation/national-teaching-fellowship-scheme-ntfs.
[19] www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/professional-development/.
[20] In the first instance this may be through a departmental committee but may also be referred to Faculty or University committees, e.g., the Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC) for wider internal dissemination. Opportunities for external dissemination may typically include professional associations, journal publication and conference attendance, etc.
[21] www.ofsted.gov.uk/.

HoDs are ultimately responsible for teaching quality and staff development. Consequently, their receipt of teaching observation records is valuable both for the advancement of taught provision within the department and for the individual and collective development of staff. **To protect the quality of the students' learning experience**, HoDs use feedback from programme/module evaluations, programme/module surveys, external examiner reports[22] and other consultative processes to identify potential risk/s in teaching practices and to initiate a plan of remedial action. HoDs should observe the teaching of all staff, including the compulsory observations required as part of the probation of new staff. All staff teaching or facilitating learning, including associate lecturers and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), should be involved in teaching observation within the department. To satisfy the University of the quality of teaching undertaken by academic partners (e.g., franchise arrangements[23]), Faculties/departments should routinely review academic partners' teaching observation processes to ensure they remain sufficient or whether additional review mechanisms are required.

Faculties determine their own processes for the operation of teaching observation, however **as a minimum** they must:

a) Have a clear rubric for observation and feedback.
b) Provide access to local or central training for observation.
c) Published timetable for observations so that the process may be monitored by managers.
d) Have systems for capturing the outcomes of the observation and for reporting these to the HoD, with a particular focus on good practice and dissemination.
e) Have mechanisms for reporting generic and specific professional development needs for action by the CLT where they cannot be easily provided locally, or where collaborative support is required.
f) Have processes for disseminating good practice.
g) Have documented arrangements for supporting teachers whose teaching is deemed to be unsatisfactory, which clearly links to the University's performance review process[24].

All staff are contractually obliged to participate in **the University's performance review process**, which is informed by outputs from observed teaching. Managers and academic staff should also ensure that full attention is given to the longer-term imperatives of supporting engagement with their wider academic communities (other HEIs, subject associations, professional bodies, etc.) and the research and scholarly activity that necessarily underpins their responsibilities for learning and teaching, and for curriculum development.

It should be noted that teaching observation, with this core focus on the peer review dimension, may include broader aspects of academic practice such as use of the Virtual

[22] See Chapter 2.
[23] See Chapter 5.
[24] See 'https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/humanresources/Forms%2C+Policies+and+Documents.

Learning Environment (VLE), planning for teaching, assessment and feedback and personal tutoring[25], all of which make valuable contributions to the enhancement of teaching for learning. Further advice and guidance on the development and operation of teaching review is available from the CLT on request and from Senior Learning and Teaching Fellowship Leads and Senior SOLSTICE Fellowship Leads (see below).

Learning and Teaching Fellowship and SOLSTICE Fellowship

The Learning and Teaching Fellowship and SOLSTICE Fellowship schemes[26] are designed to:

- Recognise and reward excellence in teaching and supporting learning;
- Promote the effective implementation of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy[27]; and
- Enhance the learning of students and staff.

To this end they contribute to the achievement of the six (inter-related) key objectives of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy:

1) The provision of quality learning opportunities, and guidance and support for students/ learners;
2) The improvement of teaching and learning facilitation activities.
3) The continued development and strengthening of learning support services and the learning infrastructure.
4) The monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching to identify, support and disseminate good practice within the Institution and within the wider community.
5) Research into the identification of new learning technologies and the evaluation of their potential to support teaching and learning.
6) Enhancement of student learning through 'research-informed teaching' in relation to the formal curriculum, academic practice, and the components of the broader student experience that impact upon learning.

Fellowship activity is supported and monitored by the CLT. Fellowship Leads are expected to:

- Lead on or participate in staff development sessions and dissemination activities on topics related to learning and teaching;
- Support course teams by providing expert advice on curriculum design and development prior to validation; and,
- Support the work of the CLT.

[25] See CLT Wiki page for more information Personal Tutoring Policy, Staff Guide and Training.
[26] www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/fellows/.
[27] www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/about/strategies-and-policies/.

Categories of Fellowship

Senior Learning and Teaching and Senior SOLSTICE Fellowship Leads are expected to follow Faculty-defined lines of development and scholarly activity during their tenure which are described in their application[28] and related to the foci specified below which may include reference to:

- The University Learning and Teaching Strategy and/ or Information Strategy[29].
- Faculty/Department/ Learning Services teaching and learning/ learning support development.
- An area/s of interest germane to their individual teaching/ learning support practice context.

Senior Fellowship Leads develop capacity and capability within their Faculties, identifying and contributing to professional development opportunities in relation to learning and teaching for individuals and groups, both formally and informally as appropriate. They also:

- Liaise with and advise Associate Deans on relevant quality management and enhancement processes, e.g., the Learning and Teaching Strategy action plan and delegated validation, monitoring and review activities.
- Share information and best practice on developments and approaches via the University's deliberative structures (committees).
- Identify and realise opportunities to engage learners and other stakeholders in feedback and evaluation of learning and teaching activities.
- Lead and encourage support for learning and teaching research, scholarship and knowledge transfer activities, including support for Fellowship project activities, dissemination of research and participation in developments related to learning and teaching.
- Present University learning and teaching developments, research and evaluation of projects and developments at regional, national and international conferences and events concerned with learning and teaching, and publication of articles in relation to the above as appropriate.
- Take a lead on identification of external funding opportunities and coordination of consultancy-related knowledge transfer activities.
- Mentor Fellows, and work alongside them, to advocate and embed the *Taught Degrees Framework*[30] in the University through application, communication and dissemination.
- Liaise regularly with the CLT team to keep abreast of new learning and teaching practices and to ensure synergy between Faculty developments and University-wide plans.

[28] Applications for both Fellowship schemes are invited annually in December and considered by an academic panel.
[29] www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/about/strategies-and-policies/.
[30] http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/taught-degrees-framework/

- Represent the University at regional, national and international conferences and events concerned with teaching and learning as appropriate.
- Contribute to the Digital Learning Strategy Group and other institutional fora as appropriate.

External Examinerships

Higher education providers recognise the importance, and mutual benefit, of the work undertaken by many of their staff as external examiners for other institutions. The appointment of University staff as external examiners helps maintain HE sector standards and promote quality enhancement, both for the appointing institution and for the University. Staff, and ultimately the University, benefit from exposure to wider sector practice. The University encourages staff to seek such opportunities and provides specific development[31] for those seeking external examiner positions.

[31] See also www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/external-examiners/.

APPENDIX: Framework for Quality Assurance of Blended and Fully Online Study

Aims

- To support colleagues in designing TEL processes
- To assist assembly of curriculum and to support validation and review processes, particularly where e-learning and/or other technology are essential, integral components of the student learning experience.
- To provide an articulation of the University's position maintaining the security and protection of delivery systems in supporting the student learning experience, including contingencies for failures related to technology.

This document is not exclusively aimed at a specific VLE platform. It relates to various technologies including those that may emerge in the future. Course teams are advised to exercise caution when considering the use of externally hosted social networking technologies, particularly if they are to be essential to the curriculum and learning.

Note: This document should be considered alongside the University's *Baseline: Deployment of Online/Digital Tools to Support Student Learning and Success* and the 'Toolkit' *Moving teaching, learning and student support online* (*https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/articles/conference_contribution/Moving_teaching_learning_and_student_support_online/1258225*)

Content

This document sets out Benchmarks & Foci for reflection when planning, validating and reviewing curricula.

- **Curriculum design teams** should consider section 1 during the journey to validation; and,
- **Panels** should use section 1 when considering the validation documentation. This can be achieved through 'interrogation by exception', thus focusing on the aspects of the benchmarks, that may not be clearly articulated in the documentation.

Benchmarks & Foci for reflection

Benchmark 1	Foci for Reflection	Response
Students should have access to: • Documents that set out the respective responsibilities of the awarding Institution and the programme presenter for the delivery of a blended or fully online programme or element of study; • Descriptions of the component units or modules of the programme or element of study, to show the intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the unit or module; • A clear schedule for the delivery of their study materials and for assessment of their work.	1) In what way has the programme of study been communicated to the student? 2) What information is available to encourage the students to make informed decisions in choosing the blended or fully online approach? 3) Can this programme be undertaken by a student who does not have access to the technology? What arrangements will be made to ameliorate this issue?	What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark? Are there gaps that need consideration?

Benchmark 2	Foci for Reflection	Response
The awarding Institution should ensure that students can be confident that: • Any blended or fully online programme or element offered for study has had the reliability of its delivery system tested, and that contingency plans would come into operation in the event of the failure of the designed modes of delivery; • The delivery system of a blended or fully online programme or element of study delivered through e-learning methods is fit for its purpose, and has an appropriate availability and life expectancy; • The delivery of any study materials direct to students remotely through, for example, e-learning methods or correspondence, is secure and reliable, and that there is a means of confirming its safe and receipt; • Study material, whether delivered through staff of a programme presenter or through web-based or other distribution channels, meet specified expectation of the awarding Institution in respect of the quality of teaching and learning support	1) How have the blended or fully online systems been evaluated to eliminate risk of any 'downtime'? 2) Is there full alignment with the University's position in the event of system failure to ensure continuation of the students' learning? 3) Has checking the security and protection of the student within the blended or fully online systems been undertaken? 4) How has / will the quality of materials be measured in line with the University's aspiration of high quality of teaching and learning? 5) How has the programme been reviewed in its development and what processes are in place for review of online teaching and learning?	What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark? Are there gaps that need consideration?

Benchmark 2	Foci for Reflection	Response
material for a programme or element of study leading to one of its awards and are accessible to those with disabilities; • The educational aims and intended learning outcomes of a programme delivered through blended or fully online arrangements are reviewed periodically for their continuing validity and relevance	6) Are there any deviations from the University's position on this benchmark? If so, why?	

Learner Support

Benchmark 3	Foci for reflection	Response
Prospective students should receive a clear and realistic explanation of the expectations placed upon them for study of a blended or fully online programme or elements of study, and for the nature and extent of autonomous, collaborative and supported aspect of learning.	1) How are the expectations of the mode of study communicated up front to students? 2) How are students inducted to the mode of learning? 3) What approaches are used to adequately prepare the student for degrees of autonomous learning? 4) Are the students made aware of their involvement in any collaborative learning? How?	What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark? Are there gaps that need consideration?

Benchmark 4	Foci for reflection	Response
Students should have access to: • A schedule for any learner support available to them through timetabled activities, for example tutorial session or web-based conferences; • Clear and up to date information about the learning support available to them locally and remotely for their blended or fully online programme or elements of study; • Information that sets out their own responsibilities as learner, and the commitments of the awarding institution and the support provider (if appropriate) for the support of a blended or fully online programme or element of study.	1) How is student support provided? 2) In what way is the learner's responsibility communicated? 3) How is the institution's responsibility mapped out for the student?	What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark? Are there gaps that need consideration?

Benchmark 5	Foci for reflection	Response
Students should have: • From the outset of their study, an identified contact, either local or remote through email, telephone, or other electronic means, who can give them constructive feedback on academic performance and authoritative guidance on their academic progression; • Where appropriate, regular opportunities for inter-learner discussions about the programme, both to facilitate collaborative learning and to provide a basis for facilitating their participation in the quality assurance of the programme; • Appropriate opportunities to give formal feedback on their experience of the programme.	1) What arrangements are made to monitor and feedback to students on their progress? Who are the key contacts and how will this be operated? 2) How do learners' feedback to the programme team about their experience?	What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark? Are there gaps that need consideration?

Benchmark 6	Foci for reflection	Response
The awarding institution, whether or not working through a support provider, should be able to ensue that students can be confident that: • Staff who provide support to learners on blended or fully online programmes have appropriate skills, and receive appropriate training and development; • Support for leaners, whether delivered through staff of a support provide or through web-based or other distribution channels, meets specified expectations of the awarding institution for a programme of study leading to one of its awards.	1) Has the programme team been in receipt of appropriate training and development or has experience which demonstrates its ability to provide a blended or fully online programme? 2) Does student support for blended / fully online learners differ in any way from present in person? If so, why and what support is available? How does this benchmark with support for present in person learners in terms of equity?	What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark? Are there gaps that need consideration?

Assessment of students

Benchmark 7	Foci for reflection	Response
Students should have access to: • Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the	1) Are the relevant module/programme handbook and regulations	What evidence is available to meet

Benchmark 7	Foci for reflection	Response
relative weighting of units, modules or elements of the programme in respect of assessment overall; • Timely formative assessment on their academic performance to provide a basis for individual constructive feedback and guidance, and to illustrate the awarding institution's expectations for summative assessment.	made available to students, including details of assessment and associated criteria? 2) How will information on academic performance/feedback be communicated in a timely way? 3) What opportunities for formative and informal feedback will be included?	the above benchmark? Are there gaps that need consideration?

Benchmark 8	Foci for reflection	Response
The awarding institution, whether or not working through a programme presenter or support provider, should ensure that students can be confident that: • Their assessment work is properly attributed to them, particularly in cases where the assessment is conducted through remote methods that might be vulnerable to interception or other interference; • Those with responsibility for assessment are capable of confirming that a student's assessed work is the original work of that student only, particularly in cases where the assessment is conducted through remote methods.	1) How is secure exchange of assessed work and feedback achieved with due respect of confidentiality? 2) How is student work authenticated? 3) Are there any deviations from the University's position on this benchmark? If so, why? 4) How have any technology-supported systems outside of core and supported systems for exchange of student work and feedback been evaluated for security and robustness?	What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark? Are there gaps that need consideration?