

Edge Hill
University



The Quality Management Handbook 2023-24

A Guide to Edge Hill University's
Academic Quality Framework

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Chapter 1

The Quality Strategy: Management of Quality and Standards

Updated October 2023

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SCOPE

The Quality Management Handbook (or QMH) describes the University's strategic approach to the management of quality and standards including the operational procedures used to:

- Set and maintain the standards of its taught qualifications and awards; and,
- To enhance the quality of the student experience.

The QMH is owned and managed by the [Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit](#) (GQASC), with principal oversight by Academic Board's Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC)¹.

PURPOSE

This handbook is the product of years of debate and experimentation within the University. The processes and procedures described in chapters 2 - 9 are continuously evaluated against current regulatory conditions and sector best practice. Alongside other Institutional policies and procedures, it enables the Institution to remain compliant with the Office for Students' (OfS) Ongoing Conditions of Registration contained within the [Regulatory Framework for Higher Education \(HE\) in England](#), specifically the B conditions for quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students (see Figure 1).

On a practical level it assists staff in developing a detailed and contemporary understanding of the Institution's approach to setting standards and managing quality and the specific operational processes with which they are required to engage.

EXTERNAL REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

The Office for Students

The OfS is the independent regulator of HE in England. OfS's primary aim is '*to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers*' ([OfS Strategy 2022 to 2025](#)).

All publicly funded HE providers in England are required, in accordance with section 4(5) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA), to register with the OfS by demonstrating their compliance with a set of [Conditions of Registration](#). Edge Hill University was entered into the Register of HE Providers in England in 2018.

¹ **Note:** Principal responsibility for the quality assurance of postgraduate research degrees including PhD, Professional Doctorate and Masters by Research programmes resides with the Graduate School, with principal oversight by the Academic Board's Research and Innovation Committee - see Chapters 8 & 9.

The OfS's approach to regulation is based on a set of minimum expectations, referred to as the 'regulatory baseline'. The regulatory baseline is a set of expectations that represent the minimum performance to which students and taxpayers are entitled. Regulatory expectations are primarily expressed through a set of Ongoing Conditions of Registration, contained within their [Regulatory Framework](#). These are the primary tool by which providers' performance is continually monitored and assessed.

The Regulator's approach to monitoring and intervention is **risk-based and proportionate**, meaning their focus is on providers considered to be 'at risk' of falling below the regulatory baseline in terms of performance. Those not perceived to be at risk i.e., those who continue to meet the conditions of registration '*will find a supportive regulator that ensures success and innovation happens with little interference*' (OfS Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20, June 2020²).

The conditions relating to Quality and Standards (the 'B conditions') are listed in Figure 1. The OfS's overall approach to regulating quality and standards is '**principles-based**', rather than prescriptive. This means that providers have the autonomy to establish their own internal quality assurance processes, pursue excellence as they see fit and deliver value for money (VfM) for their students.

Value for Money

The OfS expects all HE providers to deliver value for money for students and for taxpayers (see [OfS Strategy 2022 to 2025](#)). It is up to individual providers to determine how they will deliver value for money for their students, however the key areas most pertinent to academic quality are:

- improving teaching quality;
- protecting students as consumers; and
- securing positive employment outcomes.

The processes and activities described within this Handbook are aligned to the key areas above and therefore support the University in delivering value for money for our students. Details of the specific processes, activities and sources of evidence can be found on the key documents page of GQASC's Wiki page under '[Value for Money](#)'.³

good practice framework for programme review processes in England. The framework aims to build on the work already undertaken by universities in reviewing courses and bringing more consistency. It aims to strengthen how universities ensure that all courses provide good value and outcomes for students, while meeting the changing needs of employers and the economy.

² [Office for Students Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20](#), published June 2020.

³ Additionally, and in line with UUK's [Framework for programme reviews: ensuring the value of courses](#), the University will be publishing a statement, on its website, on how it conducts programme review.

Figure 1: The ongoing conditions for Quality (B1 – B4 & B6) and Standards (B5)

B1	<p>The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high-quality academic experience. A high-quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring that each higher education course:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is up-to-date; 2. provides educational challenge; 3. is coherent; 4. is effectively delivered; and 5. requires students to develop relevant skills.
B2	<p>The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students registered on a higher education course receive resources and support to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a high quality academic experience for those students; and b. those students succeeding in and beyond higher education; and 2. effective engagement with students to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a high quality academic experience for those students; and b. those students succeed in and beyond higher education.
B3	<p>The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.</p>
B4	<p>The provider must ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students are assessed effectively; 2. each assessment is valid and reliable; 3. academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible; 4. academic regulations are designed to ensure effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner that appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; and 5. relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.
B5	<p>The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. any standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; and 2. awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.

Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

The [Teaching Excellence Framework](#) (TEF) is a scheme run by the Office for Students (OfS) that aims to encourage HE providers to improve and deliver excellence in the areas that students care about the most: teaching, learning and achieving positive outcomes from their studies. As part of the TEF exercise, the OfS assesses and rates providers' excellence above the minimum baseline expectations for quality and standards. Providers receive an overall rating as well as two underpinning ratings – one for the student experience and one for student outcomes.

The ratings reflect the extent to which a provider delivers an excellent experience and outcomes for its mix of undergraduate students and across the range of its undergraduate courses and subjects. There are three ratings categories – Bronze, Silver and Gold. Where there is an absence of excellence beyond baseline expectations, a TEF rating is not awarded. Assessment takes place every 4 years.

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

Ofsted regulates and inspects Higher Education Institutions that provide education and training services in England. While ultimate responsibility for the quality assurance of Initial Teacher Education programmes resides with AQEC, operational arrangements for external Ofsted inspection are managed by the Faculty of Education, with oversight by the Education Faculty Board.

Additionally, Ofsted, in conjunction with other bodies⁴, is responsible for the oversight of apprenticeship provision. They inspect the quality of apprenticeship training that is delivered by training providers to ensure it is high-quality and meets the needs of employers and apprentices; this includes higher apprenticeships (level 5) and degree apprenticeships (level 6) which are also regulated by the Office for Students. Ofsted is responsible for inspecting the quality of apprenticeship training provision and publishing the outcomes of these inspections. Where an apprenticeship training provider is registered with the OfS they will also share relevant information with Ofsted to inform its inspection activity and its regulation of providers on its Register.

In addition to full inspection activity (due within 24 months of a monitoring visit), Ofsted carries out monitoring visits to all new apprenticeship providers. The University's Ofsted Working Group for Apprenticeships (which reports to the Institutional Apprenticeship Group) oversees preparations and operational support for inspection visits. The University's full inspection of apprenticeship provision is now anticipated to take place during 2023/24.

Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

The Institution has a strong track record in developing degree programmes that integrate academic study with professional competencies resulting in registered practitioner status in teaching⁵ and health professions⁶. Accreditation by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) is also available on several other degree programmes, for example Law (recognised by the Solicitors Regulation Authority and Bar Standards Board) and Psychology

⁴ See the Apprenticeship Accountability Statement for details of the various bodies involved in apprenticeship system oversight in England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-accountability-statement>

⁵ Regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

⁶ Including regulation by the General Medical Council www.gmc-uk.org/, Health and Care Professions Council www.hcpc-uk.co.uk/, Nursing and Midwifery Council www.nmc.org.uk/ and Social Work England www.socialworkengland.org.uk/.

(accredited by the British Psychological Society). Accreditation may extend professional body membership to our graduates or, as in Accountancy, provide exemptions from some professional examinations. Processes for the approval, monitoring and review of PSRB-regulated provision are described in Chapters 3 and 4 of this Handbook, and a [Professional Accreditations Register](#) is published on the University's website.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT EDGE HILL

Our Quality 'Culture'

The OfS's principles-based approach to regulation requires providers to demonstrate a level of maturity. Our 'quality culture' is based on the concept of **shared responsibility** in which all parts of the organisation are accountable to each other through the Institution's [executive management and governance structures](#). This handbook therefore describes the roles and expectations of individuals, groups, panels and committees (which may include students and external stakeholders) in assuring standards, identifying and managing risk and enhancing quality.

Threats to standards and quality may be generated by internal or external conditions and are either exacerbated or mitigated by how the Institution responds to them. Managers at all levels are expected to promote a 'no blame' culture in which staff:

- Have the confidence to identify and highlight potential threats to quality and standards; and,
- Are empowered to formulate and take mitigating action when needed.

Assessing and Managing Academic Risk

Whether or not academic provision is deemed to be at risk depends on the interaction between the threats identified and our ability to manage them. A department operating in a high-risk environment may be regarded as medium or low *net risk* based on its ability to effective control measures put in place. Where net risk is deemed to be high, additional scrutiny measures⁷ are put in place to support the department in managing it. Quality assurance systems and processes must therefore reflect an appropriate balance of rigour and flexibility, i.e., proportionate to the level of net risk.

The **academic planning** and **validation** (curriculum approval) processes, as set out in chapter 4 of this handbook, enable the management of risk associated with developing new provision, new modes of delivery and/or entry into new markets, as well as changing market and regulatory conditions. **Monitoring and review** processes (see chapter 3) facilitate the identification and management of risks that arise during programme delivery and any associated impact on quality and standards.

⁷ E.g., a Departmental Risk Assessment or Thematic Support Panels – see Chapter 3.

Setting and Maintaining Standards and Enhancing Quality

The University is responsible for setting and maintaining academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student experience. These responsibilities are discharged through staff engagement with:

- The [Academic Regulations](#) which govern programme structures and the award of qualifications and credit;
- The [Curriculum Strategy](#) which provides a framework for which proposals for new curriculum may be measured against and the Institution's academic portfolio may be reviewed.
- The [Taught Degrees Framework](#) which contains practical guidance on programme design and delivery in the context of the Institutions' graduate attributes; and
- The **Quality Management Handbook (QMH)** which describes the operational procedures for curriculum design and approval, monitoring and review.

The processes, as set out within this handbook, aim to deliver *threshold* judgements on academic quality and standards in line with minimum baseline expectations and to establish areas of potential excellence *above threshold* for the purpose of quality enhancement.

Academic standards are set at validation in line with Condition B5, i.e., consistent with [Sector Recognised Standards](#) as defined within the FHEQ. When designing and developing programmes, other non-mandatory reference points are also used, specifically the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education's](#) (UKQCHE) [Advice and Guidance](#), [qualification characteristics statements](#) and [subject benchmark statements](#). Once set at validation, external examiners (see chapter 2) judge whether threshold standards are being achieved at module and qualification award level. Beyond threshold (pass) standard, awarding bodies classify degrees according to their own academic regulations, using marking criteria which demonstrate clear alignment with the mandatory Degree Classification Descriptors (See [Sector Recognised Standards](#)) and external examiners judge whether these are applied consistently as well as commenting on the comparability of standards with similar provision elsewhere in the sector. Alongside this, every registered HE provider in England publishes a [Degree Outcomes Statement](#) (DOS)⁸ which describes:

- The relationship between the Institution's degree outcomes and entry qualifications, student characteristics, subject mix and sector benchmarks.
- How degree outcomes address sector reference points e.g., the FHEQ and any relevant professional standards.
- The Institution's degree classification algorithm and how it is applied and reviewed.
- The role of committees and externality in assuring assessment outcomes.

⁸ The University's DOS can be viewed [here](#).

- Academic staff development for assessment, and how assessment practice is evaluated and good practice shared.

The Institution remains responsible for setting standards in relation to curriculum delivered by, or with, an academic partner organisation. Such responsibilities may never be delegated. However, partners contribute to the maintenance of standards through engagement with our partner-specific monitoring and review processes (see chapter 5).

Academic standards are either met or not, it is a binary judgement. Assessing **quality** is more challenging. The Regulatory Framework provides minimum baseline expectations for the quality; however, quality goes beyond minimum expectations as acknowledged in the TEF guidance. Quality is subjective and can be enhanced. External reference points for quality enhancement are:

- The UKQCHE's and its supporting Advice and Guidance is a useful reference point for enhancement beyond the minimum baselines; and,
- The [Competition and Markets Authority](#) (CMA) guidelines, and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) [Good Practice Framework](#) provide reference points for consumer and student protection.

Quality Enhancement and effective quality assurance are inextricably linked (see Figure 2), and the Institution is fully committed to '*doing things better*' - assuring quality so that it always exceeds baseline expectations; and '*doing better things*' - harnessing creativity and integrating and applying knowledge and practice to enhance quality⁹. Our strategy for quality management therefore extends beyond simple assurance and the mitigation of risks, to celebrating successes and identifying and sharing good practice.

Routine quality assurance activities identify potential good practice with dissemination via Academic Board committees. The University's Centre for Learning and Teaching evaluate its transferability to other settings and contexts, and it is used to inform staff professional development activities. Enhancement, however, is more than a collection of examples of good practice. It originates through an embedded, high-level cultural awareness of the need for continuous improvement.

Whilst a systematic approach to enhancement requires a degree of central coordination this does not necessitate a uniform or 'one size fits all' approach, and the most effective systems are those that supplement formal structures and processes with informal networks and communication chains formed across and between Institutional stakeholders.

The Institution's approach to enhancement, therefore, comprises an array of different processes, tools and activities (developed and implemented across faculties and departments) that share the following eight aims:

⁹ 'Learning and teaching enhancement: doing things better and doing better things', Schofield M., NEXUS Journal of Learning & Teaching Research Volume 1, January 2009, pp. 166-185.

1. To embed a culture and commitment to enhancement in the University's mission, policies and strategies.
2. To use formal and informal mechanisms to identify potential good practice wherever and whenever it is occurring within the student lifecycle, from pre-enrolment to completion and beyond
3. To evaluate and confirm that it is good practice and capable of being transferred to other settings and contexts.
4. To identify or develop vehicles for dissemination within and between departments, Faculties and support services (and externally) which are workable and sustainable and do not add additional burden.
5. To apply said practice in new settings and (ideally) improve upon it.
6. To monitor and evaluate its impact, engaging students in co-creating and evaluating good practice and sharing or cascading the outcomes.
7. To benchmark against best sector practice and use this to enhance the quality of learning opportunities for Edge Hill students.
8. To undertake ongoing reflection on (and enhancement of) our enhancement processes themselves as they evolve further

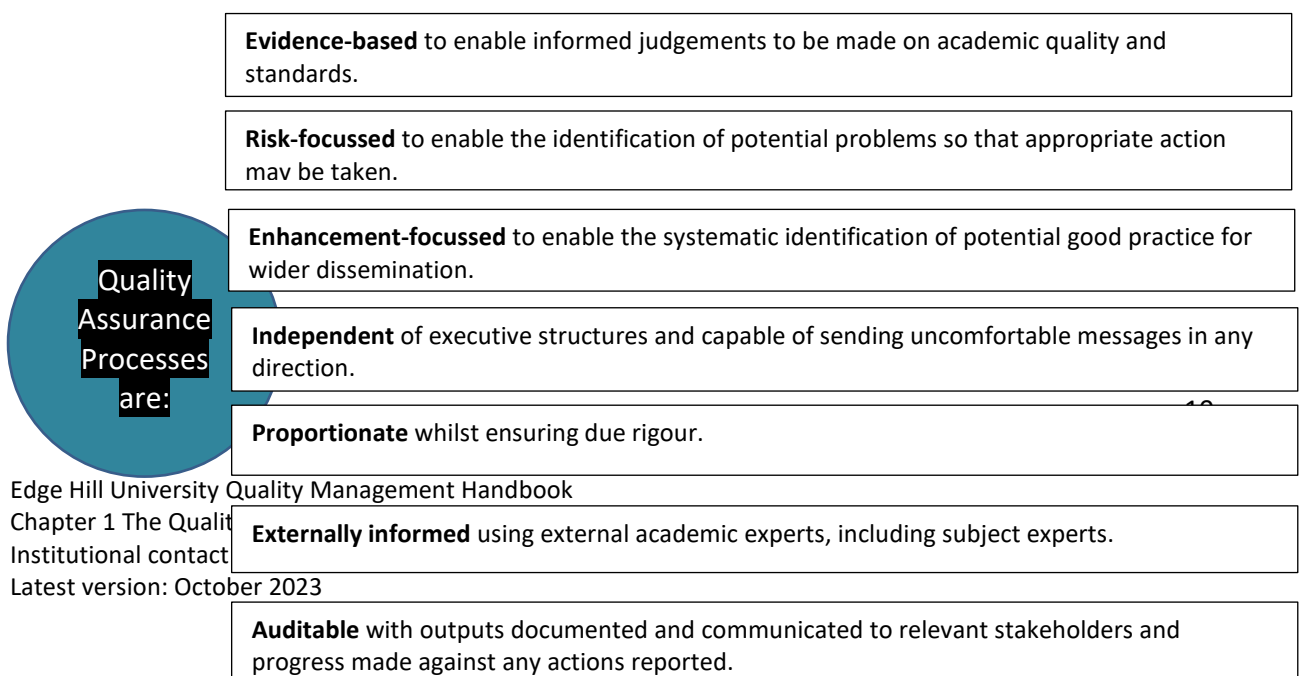
Designing our Quality Assurance Systems

All quality assurance systems and processes in place must add value to the Institution by contributing to one or more of the following measures of value:

- Secures academic standards through alignment with the FHEQ, any relevant professional standards and requirements of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSBRs);
- Enhances the student experience (either indirectly or directly);
- Assists in demonstrating ongoing compliance with the OfS's Regulatory Framework; and/or,
- Contributes to the achievement of a strategic aim.

To this end, all processes are designed and evaluated against the 7 principles presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Process Design Principles



The QA processes currently in operation are shown in Figure 3. More details on each of these processes, including the supporting evidence used to inform them, can be found in the forthcoming chapters, 2 – 7.

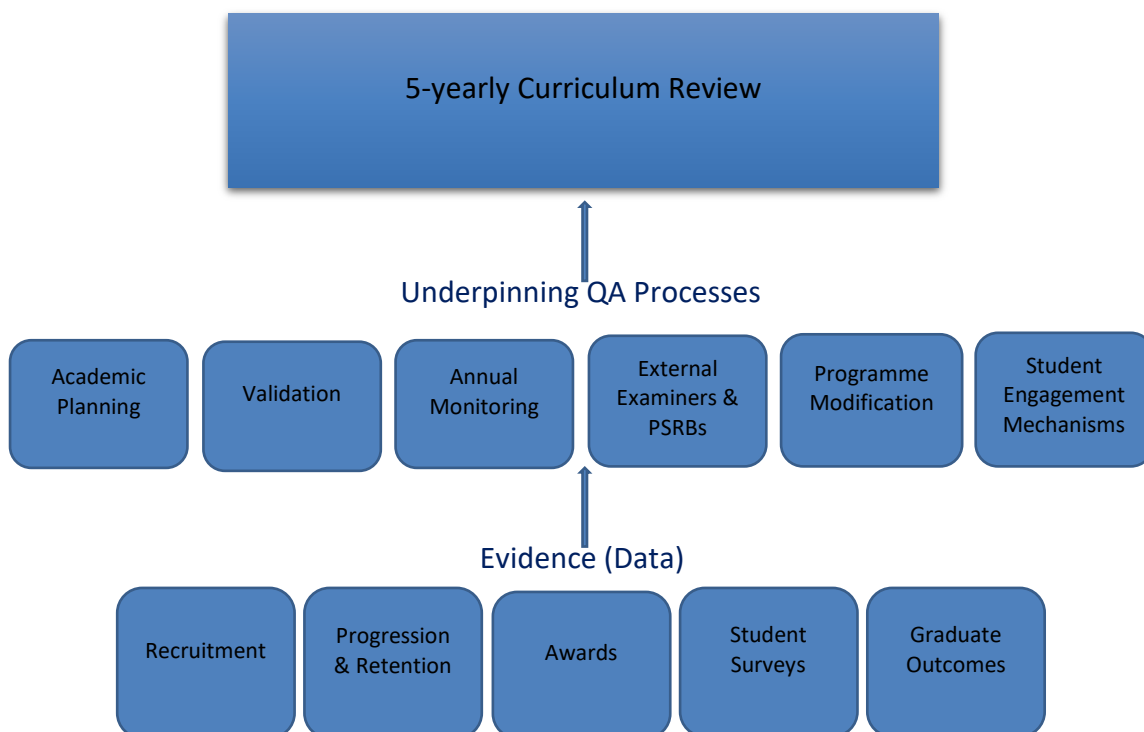


Figure 3: Quality Assurance Process Chart

Evaluating our Quality Assurance Systems

The operation of the quality strategy is monitored and evaluated using direct feedback from Faculties and academic-related support services and the membership of AQEC. The **Annual Process Review (APR)** provides the opportunity to propose procedural changes for implementation in the next academic year. APR planning and preparation commences at the

Quality Operations Group¹⁰ and discussions inform the production of a preliminary scoping document which is received by AQEC in Spring. Following a period of consultation, the final APR is approved by AQEC in summer, prompting revisions to this Handbook. A revised edition of this Handbook is considered for approval by AQEC at its first meeting of the academic year.

AQEC may occasionally be asked to approve minor in-year procedural amendments in response to internal (strategic) or external market or regulatory changes. Chapter 10 of this Handbook, titled *New Procedures*, provides a 'holding area' for approved in-year changes which are then reviewed and incorporated within the relevant principal chapter when the Handbook is re-published the following year.

Faculty Academic Quality Statements

The University's quality management strategy permits the delegation of certain quality assurance responsibilities to Faculties. Each Faculty produces a [Faculty Academic Quality Statement](#) that describes the operational processes for executing the responsibilities that have been delegated to it. The purpose of the statements is to assure the University (via AQEC) that the arrangements adopted by Faculties remain consistent with the Institution's overarching quality management strategy, remains fit-for-purpose and are being carried out effectively.

Faculty Academic Quality Statements specify how the following delegated responsibilities are operationalised:

Chapter	Ref.	Delegated Responsibility
2	a)	Any arrangements for direct engagement between external examiners and students.
2	b)	The process by which students are informed of the name, position and home institution of their external examiner.
2	c)	The process by which the Faculty communicates the addition or replacement of modules within external examiners' approved programme remits and communicates these to the External Examiners Administrator and/or updates the institutional External Examiners' Database.
2	d)	The process by which the Faculty approves the addition or replacement of modules assigned to external examiners outside of their approved programme remit and communicates these to the External Examiners Administrator and External Examiners Sub-Committee (as 'Changes to Academic Provision Coverage').
2	e)	The process for reviewing actions taken in response to issues raised by external examiners and surfaced in the Faculty's annual Summary of External Examiners Reports and Departmental Responses.

¹⁰A forum for the exchange of information to enable quality practitioners located within Faculties and the GQASC unit to fulfil their responsibilities for quality management in a cohesive way.

Chapter	Ref.	Delegated Responsibility
2	f)	(Other than via programme boards) The process by which students may access external examiner reports and departmental responses.
3	a)	Consideration of actions from Department Annual Monitoring that have been directed for the Faculty's attention, including matters raised by Heads of Department in their departmental Quality Enhancement Plans (action plans).
3	b)	Annual monitoring of modules and programmes within departments and how the Faculty is assured of its consistency and rigour.
3	c)	Operation of programme boards and Student-Staff Consultative Fora (SSCFs); to include the consideration of external examiner reports and departmental responses; annual monitoring and review reports; Student Pulse Surveys; and (where practicable) Applications for Development Consent and initial proposals for programme modifications.
4	a)	Planning of new programmes, including the use of Market Analysis Reports and the approval of Applications for Development Consent to proceed to the University's Academic Planning Committee (APC).
4	b)	Faculty approval of new programmes to proceed to Institutional validation, including the setting and enforcement of Faculty conditions and/ or recommendations.
4	c)	Faculty approval of new modules and the re-approval of existing modules.
4	d)	Faculty approval of minor modifications to existing modules or awards.
4	e)	Faculty process for monitoring minor programme modifications to ensure that the credit threshold for such modifications is observed.
4	f)	Faculty approval of the addition of STEM, Sandwich and Year Abroad routes to existing validated undergraduate degrees.
4	g)	Faculty approval of new joint honours and major/ minor combinations where the contributing single honours programmes are already in validation.
4	h)	(Other than via programme boards) How students are engaged in the planning and development of new, and the modification of existing, programmes.
4	i)	Arrangements for the review of programmes that have not recruited for two successive years prior to enrolment of students re-commencing.
4	j)	The process for approving non-credit bearing provision.
4	k)	Approval of requests for module-sharing from other Faculties.
4	l)	The process by which changes of (and to) modules are notified to all affected programmes including those hosted outside the home department and/or Faculty.
5	a)	Faculty approval, monitoring and closure of placements and student exchanges (Category 'A' academic partnerships) and the Faculty processes that support them.
5	b)	Faculty approval, monitoring and closure of UK-based learning venues (Category 'B' academic partnership) and the process that supports them.
6	a)	The process for submission, consideration and approval of claims for Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning and how RP[E]L applicants obtain feedback.
7	a)	Faculty process for approving Student-Initiated Credit.
-	-	How the Faculty periodically reviews and evaluates its quality assurance processes in the context of the Institution's Quality Management Strategy.

Faculties are responsible for determining the precise format of their Quality Statements, however they should, **as a minimum**, contain:

- A brief description of processes used for each of the above responsibilities, including reporting lines and timescales where appropriate.
- Highlighted sections to denote where processes have changed since the previous Statement, along with a brief explanation of the change.

Faculty Academic Quality Statements are approved by Faculty Boards or delegated Faculty Board committee, prior to their receipt by AQEC.

All academic programmes must be hosted by a Faculty for the purpose of quality assurance and the management of assessment; for this reason, AQEC will occasionally assign quality management responsibilities to Faculties for programmes delivered outside their own departmental structures¹¹. This typically entails those programmes being subject to Faculty processes for programme and module approval and modification; monitoring and review, including external examining; and the operation of programme and assessment boards including RP[E]L approval panels. Such programme teams are responsible for the design, development and delivery of the curriculum and for operational arrangements for activities such as student enrolment and induction; student support, including personal tutoring, Personal Development Planning and student academic progress reviews; marking and internal moderation; managing extensions, extenuating mitigating circumstances and interruptions of study; and the operation of Student-Staff Consultative Fora and managing student feedback including complaints. However, this is wholly dependent on such local arrangements being:

- fully consistent with University policies and regulations; and,
- notified to the responsible Faculty at the beginning of each academic year, typically through receipt of the latest Programme Handbook.

¹¹ For example, the Edge Hill Language Centre (Faculty of Arts and Sciences) hosts quality assurance of the cross-faculty Fastrack programme, while quality assurance of the PGCert Teaching in Higher Education is conducted via the Business School (Faculty of Arts and Sciences).

Chapter 2

External Examiners

Updated September 2023

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INTRODUCTION

Degree-awarding bodies are responsible for the quality of their educational programmes and the standards of the awards to which they lead, and the external examiner system within UK higher education is one of the principal means for assuring both. Once set at programme validation, external examiners judge whether [Sector Recognised Standards](#) (FHEQ) and subject benchmark statements are being demonstrated at module and qualification award level. Beyond threshold (pass) standard, awarding bodies classify degrees according to their own academic regulations and external examiners provide judgements on whether these are applied consistently as well as commenting on the comparability of standards with similar provision elsewhere in the sector.

External examiners are expert assessors whose authority is derived from their knowledge of, and qualifications in, their subject disciplines and their experience of teaching and assessing students at higher education level. The external examiner is also an independent assessor whose judgement will not be compromised by any prior association with the programme team or by some reciprocal arrangement with their home institution.

The University's external examiner system addresses the OfS's Ongoing Conditions of Registration¹ as specified in Figure 1 and is informed by the QAA Advice and Guidance on the use of external expertise in academic quality assurance².

External examiners are engaged by the University and added to its External Examiners Register in accordance with the criteria set out in this chapter (see 'Criteria for Engagement'). External examiners are assigned to all modules / programmes that lead to the award of credit at FHEQ level 5 and above³. Except for dissertation, project and 'shell' modules, where a range of subject expertise may be required, no module is normally assigned more than one examiner. Exceptions are permitted where the number of students registered to a module makes sampling too large for a single individual. In such cases, examiners work together to ensure parity and consistency of moderation decisions. A single programme delivered across multiple sites, e.g., by different academic partner organisations is normally assigned the same examiner to enable standards to be compared. Examiners produce an annual report on the programmes/ modules to which they have been assigned and attend the relevant assessment boards⁴ where access to complete student profiles enables the confirmation of standards at qualification award level.

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/conditions-of-registration/>

² www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/external-expertise. Further guidance is provided in External Examiners Handbook (Advance HE, 2019) available via [Teaching Resources - external examining](#).

³ Examiners are also assigned Levels 3 and 4 where prescribed by professional bodies or approved at validation, for example level 3 Fasttrack and level 4 Foundation degrees that contribute to classification of the learner's award.

⁴ See also 'Roles and Responsibilities', below.

Figure 1: The ongoing conditions for Quality (B1 and B4) and Standards (B5) pertinent to the external examiner system.

The provider must:	
B1	<p>The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high-quality academic experience. A high-quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring that each higher education course:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is up-to-date; 2. provides educational challenge; 3. is coherent; 4. is effectively delivered; and, 5. requires students to develop relevant skills.
B4	<p>The provider must ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students are assessed effectively; 2. each assessment is valid and reliable; 3. academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible; 4. academic regulations are designed to ensure effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner that appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; and, 5. relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.
B5	<p>The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. any standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; and 2. awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.

This chapter provides information and guidance on:

- The nomination and engagement of external examiners.
- The external examiner's role and responsibilities.
- The production and consideration of annual reports.
- Access to internal and external concerns procedures.
- Arrangements for ending an external examiner's engagement.

Information on the appointment of University staff as external examiners by other HEIs is provided in Chapter 6 of this Handbook.

All communications with external examiners in relation to their nomination and engagement, including any subsequent changes to it, must be done using the approved templates which are available on the **External Examiners Wiki**⁵. Where requested, the **External Examiners**

⁵ <https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/External+Examiners>.

Mailbox externalexaminers@edgehill.ac.uk should be copied into such communications to enable Institutional records to be updated.

NOMINATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Criteria for engagement

External examiners are typically academic staff of other UK HEIs and are **academically qualified to at least the level of the qualification in the subject to be examined**. The academic and professional criteria used by the University ensure that examiners are capable of exercising impartial, independent and expert judgement to confirm ongoing alignment with [Sector Recognised Standards](#) and the University's Academic Regulations⁶, as well as confirming the comparability of standards with those of other HEIs. The engagement of external examiners complies with the University's statutory and legislative responsibilities in relation to the employment of casual workers. Individuals seeking to become external examiners of the University are expected to demonstrate appropriate evidence of:

1. **Competence and experience** in the fields covered by the module/ programme of study to which they will be assigned.
2. **Sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience** within their discipline to be able to command the respect of academic and, where appropriate, other professional peers.
3. **Knowledge and understanding of the UK sector agreed reference points** for the setting and maintenance of academic standards (FHEQ, Degree Characteristics Statements and Subject Benchmark Statements) and familiarity with the standard to be expected of students in relation to their award.
4. **Knowledge and understanding of the standards and/or requirements of Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies** (PSRBs) that govern students' awards (where applicable).
5. **Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of programmes** in their subject including competence in and experience of designing and managing assessment.
6. Current employment status including **eligibility⁷ to work in the United Kingdom** and (where relevant) **PSRB registration**.
7. **Fluency in the English language⁸**.

'Standing, credibility and breadth of experience' may be indicated by:

- The individual's present post and place of work (as 6, above);

⁶ Available via [Academic Regulations](#)

⁷ Evidenced by a physical inspection of the individual's passport in line with HM Government's requirements – see 'An Employer's Guide to Right to Work Checks' (Home Office, June 2018), [Right to work checks: an employer's guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ **Note:** Edge Hill University's Academic Regulations do not permit delivery and assessment in languages other than English (Academic Regulations C1.5).

- The range and scope of their experience across higher education/ other relevant professions;
- Current and recent active involvement in research/ scholarly/ professional activities in the relevant field of study.

While a nominee's standing and credibility may be determined in part by their seniority within their home institution, this does not preclude the nomination of other appropriately qualified individuals. Where they have no previous experience of external examining, candidates' nomination should be supported by evidence of:

- other types of 'externality'⁹; and/ or
- significant experience of internal moderation or verification of assessment within their home institution; and/ or
- other relevant and recent experience likely to support them in their duties, e.g., participation in their home institution's validation, monitoring and review activities.

Mentoring for External Examiners

Where possible, individuals without previous experience either join an experienced team of examiners and/ or are **mentored** by an experienced examiner in the same or cognate subject area. Where an examiner's engagement is conditional on them being mentored, Faculties identify a current external examiner and outline to both parties the expectations of the mentoring relationship. Where an external examiner ceases to be employed by a HEI, consideration should be given to whether a mentor should be assigned.

The mentor should:

- Discuss relevant University processes and procedures.
- Highlight the approaches to moderation including sampling and consistency of marking.
- Advise on the Assessment and Award Board procedure and the role of the external examiner within this process.
- Support familiarisation and understanding of the UK sector-agreed reference points for the setting and maintenance of academic standards (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Qualification Characteristics Statements and subject benchmark statements)
- Provide advice and guidance on writing the annual report and on programme review.
- Discuss current issues in Higher Education and the discipline area which may be relevant to external examining.

Mentoring duties would be specific to the actual examining work. All regulatory and procedural issues would continue to be communicated as currently.

⁹ For example, association with a PSRB.

Requirements for a mentor:

- Currently be an examiner at the University;
- Have submitted at least one annual report to the University;
- Have recent experience of working in Higher Education in the UK.
- Can mentor up to three mentees

Mentor arrangements

A mentor should be indicated at the approval stage of the external examiner nomination process and may be referred back to the department if they are not identified. If a nomination form is submitted to the External Examiners Sub-Committee without a named mentor, then it will be a condition of approval and an action will be placed on the Faculty to identify a suitable mentor for a new examiner.

Once an appropriate mentor has been chosen, the department will approach them to establish if they are happy to take on the extra responsibility. **If agreed, the *mentee* will be provided with the contact information for the *mentor* and will be expected to initiate contact.**

The types of queries could include dealing with draft examination papers; moderating and commenting on assessment; offering advice to the Progression and Award Boards; completion of the annual report; as well as general discussions about external examining experiences and common scenarios that may arise. If there are any issues that cannot be answered, the relevant academic department or Academic Quality Officer (located in the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit) should be contacted.

The Academic Quality Officer will provide the contact information to the mentee and communication will generally take place via phone, email or videocall.

Feedback

Feedback will be collected annually to review and enhance the process. Faculties may be asked to provide periodic reports on the mentoring process on request from the University's External Examiners Sub-Committee.

Fees

If a mentor fulfils the role, they can claim up to 7.5 hours per academic year, per mentee, at the hourly rate of pay.

Current or previous associations

Departments and Faculties supported by the Academic Quality Officer (located in the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit) are responsible for ensuring that nominations adhere to the University's rules governing external examiners' engagement.

External examiners should not be involved in:

- The delivery of any modules and/ or programmes of the University,
- Advising students about their modules and/ or programmes of study,
- Examination and/or assessment,
- The programme/s development¹⁰ (as an external consultant) within the last three years.
- Other conflicts of interest, including **any** of the following:
 - a professional, contractual or close personal relationship with Edge Hill staff or students.
 - Engagement in substantive collaborative research with a member of Edge Hill staff.
 - Membership of the University's governing body; or
 - Employment as a member of University staff or at one of its academic partner organisations, including Erasmus or other overseas partner institutions.

Note: Previous examination of a PhD viva at Edge Hill does not count as a conflict of interest and therefore does not exclusively, prevent a nominee from becoming an external examiner of our taught provision. Taught degrees and research degrees are governed by separate and equally robust Regulations. Acting as an examiner to a PhD viva does not provide opportunity to influence our taught provision.

Reciprocity and other restrictions

Reciprocity occurs **only** where staff of two HEIs hold external examiner positions in each other's home departments. Academic staff are responsible for checking for potential reciprocity when seeking external examiner positions with other providers.

In addition to the 'current or previous associations' described above, other restrictions include:

- a) Reciprocal arrangements¹¹ with other HEIs.
- b) Engagement of multiple or consecutive examiners from the same department of another provider.
- c) Engagement of former Edge Hill staff or students as examiners, until five years have elapsed since their exit or after all students taught by or with them have completed their studies (whichever is the longer).
- d) Ineligibility to work in the United Kingdom.

Restriction (b) may be relaxed in *exceptional* circumstances, e.g., discipline areas that are small and specialist where the pool of potential examiners is extremely restricted and/ or limited to a very small number of HEIs – this should be specified clearly in the nomination

¹⁰ This applies specifically to individuals who have provided advice to course teams in their preparations for programme approval (validation). Previous external members of Institutional validation panels may seek engagement as external examiners for a limited term of three academic sessions (years). External examiners appointed in these circumstances are not eligible to remain on the register past the initial three academic sessions.

¹¹For additional guidance, please consult the Academic Quality Officer (GQASC).

form and the measures already taken to engage a suitable individual described in the previous section.

Criteria for Chief External Examiners

Where more than one examiner has been appointed to oversee several cognate or related awards, Faculties may engage a chief external examiner to provide an additional layer of oversight and to co-ordinate moderation activities (See 'The Role of Chief External Examiners' below). In addition to the standard nomination criteria described above, nominees should:

- Be an existing member of the external examiner team for the provision.
- Be an experienced external examiner with an academic and/or professional reputation esteemed by other examiners already engaged in the area academic provision.
- Ideally, have Senior or Principal Fellowship of Advance HE and/or have successfully completed the Advance HE Professional Development Course for External Examiners.
- Not exceed the maximum period of engagement as an existing examiner.

Nomination Process

Faculty Quality Officers alert academic departments when an external examiner is required for new provision¹² and provide sufficient notice of when an existing examiner's period of engagement is about to end¹³. By instruction of the University's Directorate, all nominations must normally have been approved before the start of the academic session in which the individual is due to commence work, typically October for undergraduate programmes or January for some Masters programmes. Where in-year engagement is unavoidable, for example to cover for resignations or terminations, appointments are back-dated to the start of the academic session which counts towards the standard four sessions for which examiners are normally engaged.

Heads of department complete and submit to their Faculty a **Nomination Form for a New External Examiner**¹⁴ accompanied by a **Curriculum Vitae** detailing the nominee's employment history, academic and/ or professional qualifications and any previous and current research and scholarly activity. Heads of department ensure that the proposed workload of the examiner does not exceed normal Institutional expectations¹⁵. Nominations must contain sufficient information to allow a judgement to be made. Missing or incomplete information may delay the nominee's confirmation. Nominations are authorised in the first instance by the PVC Dean or Associate Dean of the relevant Faculty before being submitted to the Academic Quality Officer (GQASC).

¹² Normally at FHEQ level 5 and above, however certain level 3 and 4 provision including some PSRB-regulated programmes may be assigned a requirement for external examination at Institutional validation.

¹³ EESC receives regular reports from Faculties confirming external examiner coverage and highlighting current or imminent vacancies.

¹⁴ Available from [Template Documents - External Examiners](#)

¹⁵ Based on the estimated time for moderation and other activities contained within the University's workload model for external examiners – see 'Edge Hill University External Examiners Workload Model', below.

Where a department believes there is a need for a chief external examiner to provide additional oversight across a number of awards, a short business case should be submitted to the EESC. If approved, the Department should complete a **Changes to Academic Provision Coverage Form**¹⁶ for faculty consideration and approval. Faculties submit approved Coverage Forms to EESC for information only.

Institutional Approval

All nominees must have received both **Committee Approval** and **Personnel Approval** prior to undertaking any work for the University (see figure 2).

- **During Committee Approval**, EESC considers¹⁷ nominations and confirms suitability. The Academic Quality Enhancement Committee is informed of all confirmations via the EESC Minutes.
- **Personnel Approval** considers all HR-related requirements including pre-engagement checks.

Committee Approval and Personnel Approval run concurrently. On completion, the Academic Quality Officer notifies the outcome to the nominee and proposing Faculty (see figure 2).

Period of engagement

External examiners are typically placed on the External Examiners Register for a period of four academic sessions (years). In certain circumstances an examiner may be retained on the Register for a longer period. For example, where a closed programme is being 'taught out' and there is no more than one academic session remaining; or where efforts to secure a replacement have been exhausted¹⁸. Departments complete a **Permission to Remain on the External Examiners Register Form**¹⁹ which is considered and approved by EESC.

If an examiner's period of engagement is interrupted, e.g., through long-term sickness or maternity leave, they are not be prohibited from resuming and completing the typical four academic sessions. **Where an examiner ceases to be employed**²⁰ **by a recognised HEI** during their period of engagement, they should notify the University and may remain on the Register for a maximum of two further years if they have not resumed relevant²¹ HE employment in the meantime.

¹⁶ Available at [Template Documents - External Examiners](#)

¹⁷ Nominations may exceptionally be approved by EESC Chair's Action outside the cycle of scheduled meetings, e.g., to fill current or imminent vacancies. Where the nomination is from the same Faculty as the Chair of EESC, Chair's Action will be taken by the Deputy Chair of EESC.

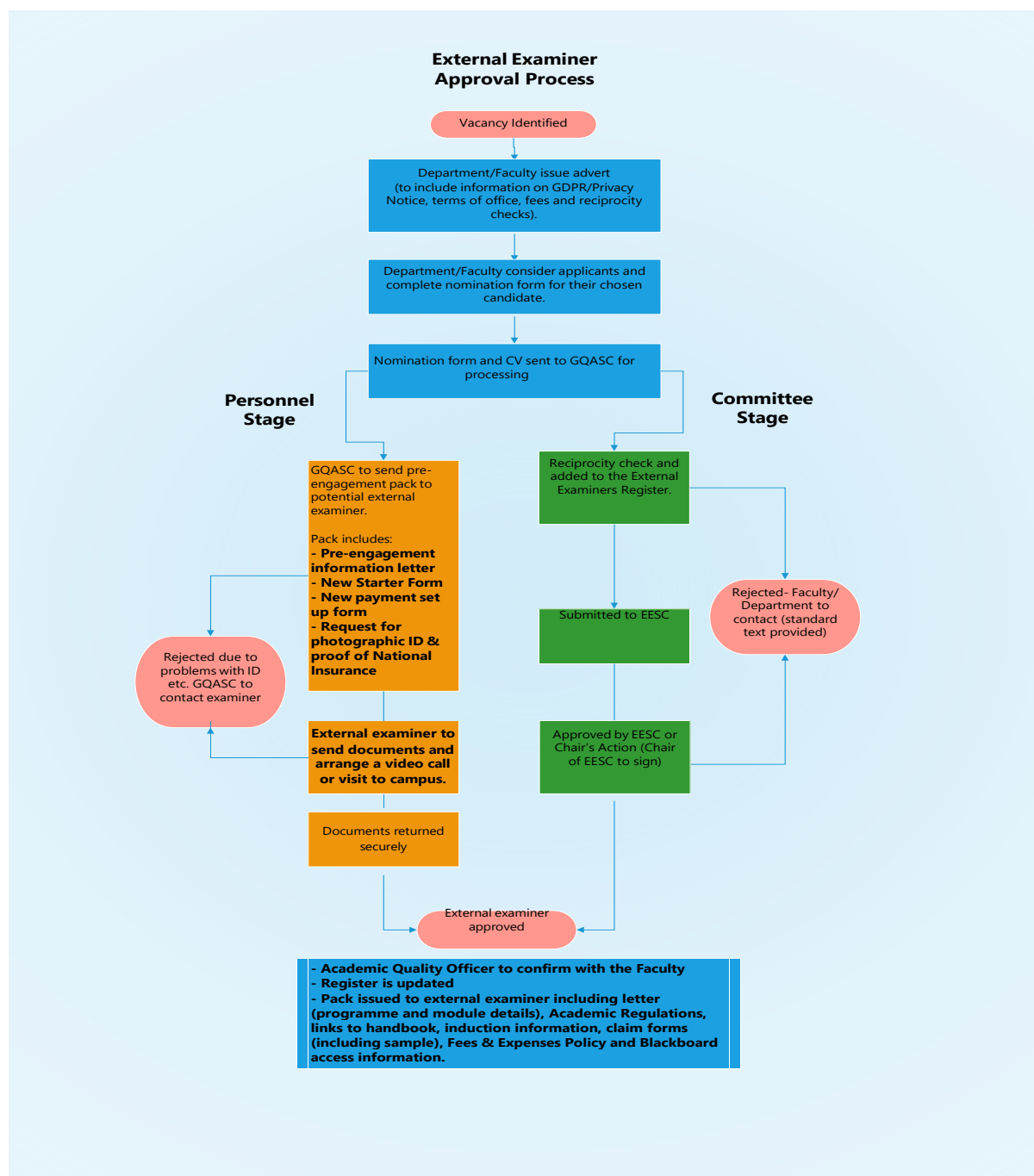
¹⁸ External examiners that have been appointed to a limited term of office of three academic sessions, are not eligible to be considered to remain on the register.

¹⁹ Available at [Template Documents - External Examiners](#)

²⁰ This would include retirement and redundancy.

²¹ Relevant employment in this case would constitute appointment to another academic position in the same discipline area.

Figure 2: The External Examiner Approval Process



Where a serving external examiner is offered employment by Edge Hill University, the head of the appointing department notifies the Faculty and Academic Quality Officer at the earliest opportunity and takes immediate steps to nominate a suitable replacement examiner or

arrange cover by another examiner in the same or cognate subject area (see 'Changes to assigned modules or programmes', below).

Induction

The University ensures that all examiners are informed about its organisational procedures and practices with specific relation to assessment and the regulations that govern it. New examiners receive written confirmation of the programmes/ modules to which they have been assigned, in addition to:

- A copy of the University's Academic Regulations.
- A hyperlink to the External Examiners Handbook²² incorporating the guidance contained in this chapter with accompanying information on fees, operation of assessment boards and key institutional contacts.
- A copy of the Privacy Notice for External Examiners²³ which advises how their data is used and handled in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

New external examiners are advised to inform their employer of their engagement with the University and are encouraged to visit the campus in advance of taking up their duties. An annual Induction event is held in January and provides an opportunity to meet with host departments and to network with other examiners. Induction sessions cover the role of the external examiner in UK higher education, use of national reference points (FHEQ and QAA subject benchmarks) and practical workshop-style activities.

External examiners familiarise themselves with and observe the University's policies on data protection²⁴ and information security²⁵. Any information passed between the University and its external examiners, e.g., students' names and grades, is kept strictly confidential.

Changes of assigned modules or programmes

Where an external examiner has been assigned to modules that combine to form a programme or 'portfolio' of cognate subject modules, the **replacement or addition of modules** within the programme/ portfolio does not require further Institution-level approval. Faculties describe their own process for approving such changes in their Faculty Academic Quality Statements²⁶, ensuring that:

- Any substituted or additional modules are within the external examiner's subject expertise (where they are not, the Faculty will nominate an additional examiner for approval by EESC in the normal manner);
- The examiner's workload remains sustainable such that the totality of provision assigned to them will receive sufficient academic scrutiny and does not exceed normal Institutional expectations²⁷. Moderation activity resulting from changes of assigned

²² Available at <https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/Key+Guidance+Documents>.

²³ <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/privacy-notice-for-externals-for-validation-and-review/>

²⁴ www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/data-protection-policy/.

²⁵ www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/information-security-policy/.

²⁶ Available at <https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/Faculty+Quality+Processes+and+Responsibilities>.

²⁷ For further details see below section on 'Edge Hill University External Examiners Workload Model', below.

modules should not exceed an additional 3.75 hours per year and Faculties will consider this when evaluating the totality of an examiner's workload.

Changes of assigned modules are confirmed with the external examiner via the appropriate template email and copied to the External Examiners Mailbox externalexaminers@edgehill.ac.uk to enable updating of the External Examiners Register.

Where, by mutual agreement, an external examiner is asked to assume responsibility for an **additional programme** - typically following the re-validation or replacement of an existing programme, or to fill a programme vacancy in the same subject area - the Faculty ensures that:

- The programme is within the external examiner's subject expertise (where it is not, the Faculty will nominate another examiner for approval by EESC in the normal manner); and,
- The GQASC unit are notified through receipt of a Faculty-approved **Changes to Academic Provision Coverage Form**²⁸. Coverage Forms are received by EESC for noting only (in agenda Section C).

Depending on its relationship to the examiner's originally assigned programme (typically characterised by any module sharing or simultaneous phasing in/ out of modules), the additional programme may be either:

- absorbed within the examiner's existing remit, in which case the totality should be sustainable within their contracted hours and any additional moderation activity does not exceed +3.75 hours per year; or
- treated separately from their existing remit with a full annual allowance of hours and fees for the programme that has been added.

Note: Faculties confirm the terms of adding a programme to an examiner's remit with the Academic Quality Officer before commencing any formal discussions with them.

Changes of examiners' circumstances

Examiners are requested to indicate any changes to their current employment status or PSRB registration during their period of engagement to the Academic Quality Officer at externalexaminers@edgehill.ac.uk. Examiners will carefully consider the impact of taking on additional external examiner appointments during their term of engagement with Edge Hill.

²⁸Available at [Template Documents - External Examiners](#).

Published Information for Students

Students are informed²⁹ of the name, position and home institution of their external examiners and advised that entering into direct correspondence with them is prohibited³⁰. Examiners are requested to forward any direct communications from students to their departmental contact and/ or the Academic Quality Officer at externalexaminers@edgehill.ac.uk. External examiners' reports and department responses are shared with student representatives at the next available Programme Board and made available to all students via the programme area of the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment and/ or Student Information Hub Wiki.

Research Degrees

Research degrees including PhD, professional doctorates and Masters by Research (MRes) awards are assessed by dissertation viva panels. Panels include at least one independent external examiner. Such examiners are nominated by the academic department and approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies. Arrangements for the external examination of research degrees are described in chapter 9 of this Handbook.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The GQASC unit, Faculties, academic departments and programme teams are jointly accountable in ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to support examiners in discharging their responsibilities. Programme teams provide their examiners with the specific information they need to perform their duties.

Examiners normally visit³¹ the University at least once a year to moderate assessed coursework and examination scripts although further mid-year visits may be required for programmes with a performance, practical or professional element, or for cohorts with variable/ multiple intakes or non-standard completion times. External examiners attend Module Assessment Boards where the detailed discussion of academic standards takes place. In the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Faculty of Education, Progression and Award Board examiners ensure the rigour of the process underpinning the conferment of awards through the Board's application of the Academic Regulations. In the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine, where Module and Progression and Award Boards are conflated, all examiners are in attendance and access complete student profiles to confirm standards at award level.

In producing their annual reports (see below) external examiners comment on the fairness and consistency of assessment boards' decisions and their adherence to the University's regulations. If in highly exceptional circumstances, examiners are unable to attend any of the assessment boards they are requested to be available using a video conferencing solution.

²⁹ Via module or programme handbooks and/ or the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment.

³⁰ Students who wish to raise an academic issue or concern are directed to the relevant University systems and procedures, e.g. personal tutors, programme boards and Institutional processes for complaints and academic appeals <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/departments/support/gqasc/student-casework/>

³¹ Subject to government advice. For example, travel restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic, in which case alternative arrangements are made.

In specific relation to **re-assessment**, external moderation of students' work is normally unnecessary and internal moderation provides the necessary confirmation of standards. However, an external examiner presence is required at Progression and Award Boards to oversee the application of the Academic Regulations (which may be the Award Board Examiner, Chief Examiner or a representative programme examiner).

Primary role of External Examiners

External Examiners' main responsibility is to confirm that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained. This is carried out by:

- Reviewing and approving examination papers that contribute to a student's final award, and any other assessment material as agreed between themselves and the programme team for which an annual time allowance is provided³².
- Moderating samples³³ of student work that have been marked and internally moderated³⁴ in order to be satisfied that students have been graded fairly in accordance with Intended Learning Outcomes, marking criteria and the University's Academic Regulations.
- Reviewing and approving the content, learning outcomes and assessment of negotiated learning modules leading to the award of Student Initiated Credit³⁵.
- Sampling the assessment of portfolios that accompany claims for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)³⁶.
- In their annual reports (also see 'Reports' below):
 - Confirming that sector recognised standards (FHEQ) are being met or exceeded, content is in broad alignment with other external reference points (e.g., Subject Benchmark Statements) and that students have achieved the Intended Learning Outcomes for the award of credit and qualifications.
 - Beyond threshold attainment, providing advisory comment on the comparability of standards (grades and degree classifications) with other programmes of the same subject/ level.
 - Providing advisory comment on the standard of marking and moderation and quality of written feedback for programme teams, departments and Faculties to act upon.
 - Providing advisory comment on assessment processes including the operation of assessment boards for the University to act upon.

³² For further details see below section on 'Edge Hill University's External Examiner Workload Model'.

³³ For moderation sample sizes see 'Marking and Moderating Assessed Work' ([Assessment and Feedback Policy](#), 2023-26). Where a programme/module is delivered across multiple partners, samples for external moderation must include all partners for a programme and this should be clearly labelled to allow comparability between cohorts. However, the overall sample should not exceed the sample size as defined in the policy.

³⁴ See 'Marking and Moderating Assessed Work' [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#), 2023-26)

³⁵ See Chapter 7.

³⁶ See Chapter 7.

In addition to samples of assessed student work and written feedback, programme teams supply their examiners with the relevant programme and module handbooks, coursework specifications, examination papers, marking criteria and a record of marks for each assessment item. **External moderation should not replicate internal marking and moderation but rather verify that the latter are operating fairly and consistently.** Programme teams arrange for external examiners to receive or view students' work in good time before assessment boards. External examiners are provided with, or given access to³⁷, all the internally moderated work³⁸ from each module as the basis for conducting their own sampling sufficient to establish that, in their judgement:

- **Internal moderation, and by extension first marking, have been broadly effective and resulted in fair assessment decisions in line with the published marking criteria** – other than at the boundaries of grade classifications, a difference of opinion between internal markers and moderators of +/-2 marks will not normally warrant specific comment.
- **Assessment feedback is of high quality and developmental, and aligned with Intended Learning Outcomes, marking criteria and the grades awarded to students.**

Any work likely to be the subject of discussion at a Module Assessment Board should be made available to the examiner in advance of the board having already been assessed by no fewer than two internal markers. Where there is a significant difference of judgement between first and second markers it is expected that programme teams should have taken steps to resolve this internally, although examiners may request additional samples where any inconsistency persists.

External examiners of practice-based programmes, typically in Initial Teacher Education are requested to visit placement settings (schools) to meet with students and mentors for which additional time is allocated. Otherwise, there is no general expectation that examiners meet with students, although they may do so on specific request to the Programme Leader. Faculties determine, and ensure examiners are aware of, the arrangements by which they may engage directly with students. Such arrangements are formally documented in Faculty Academic Quality Statements³⁹ and communicated formally to the EESC.

Secondary role of External Examiners

In addition to their principal duties, external examiners are also requested to assist programme teams and the University by being available to:

- Comment on the continuing currency of programmes and modules and any proposed modifications to them⁴⁰.

³⁷ Including via the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment.

³⁸ While only internally moderated work is provided to external examiners as standard, other assessed work may be accessed on request to the Programme Leader.

³⁹ Available at <https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/Faculty+Quality+Processes+and+Responsibilities>.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 4. See also [Template Documents - External Examiners](#) for a template document for External Examiner comments on re-validation, major modification or an articulation.

- Be consulted about any proposed changes to assessment strategies, programme structures (e.g., the addition of new modules and other programme modifications⁴¹) or the regulations for the provision to which they are assigned.
- Review curriculum mapping for any proposed external articulation route⁴² delivering advanced entry to the programme/s within their remit.

The Role of Chief External Examiners

The Chief External Examiner is responsible for maintaining oversight of the operation of a group of cognate or related awards, and alerting the University to any themes, risks, or concerns across the suite of academic provision. For example, the University currently utilises a chief external examiner to coordinate the moderation activities of profession and field-specific examiners for its Integrated Masters in Nursing and Social Work, as agreed with the relevant professional bodies.

In addition to their role and standard responsibilities as an external examiner, the Chief External will:

- Liaise with all other external examiners responsible for an aspect of the designated provision.
- Comment on the conduct of progression and award boards and institutional procedures, the extent to which the Academic Regulations have been applied fairly and consistently across the provision they are responsible for and whether discretion was used appropriately.
- Comment on the above in their annual report; in addition to making comments and confirming academic standards for programme/modules/themes or years of study that they may ordinarily be responsible.⁴³
- Where appropriate, attend re-assessment boards to oversee the application of the Academic Regulations on behalf of the subject-based externals.

End Point Assessment Organisation External Examiner

The External Examiner for End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAO) for integrated higher/degree apprenticeship is required to review and ensure that the EPAO has a robust approach to maintaining and improving the validity and quality of End Point Assessments for Higher/degree apprenticeships. This is part of External Quality Assurance (EQA) in line with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) standard assessment plan, while also ensuring compliance with the Education and Skills Funding Agency rules and the QAA quality code, degree characteristics and benchmarking and the Designated Quality Body monitoring requirements. IFATE has set out the EQA principles that underpin policies, practices, behaviours and actions.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See Chapter 5.

⁴³ Chief external examiners are not required to produce a separate and additional annual report.

The external examiners for EPAO are required to attend Gateways boards, quality assure internal processes, and complete external examiner reports. They are also required to take the role of 'external assessor' as required by the DQB which involves visiting the EPAO at least once per year per apprenticeship, reviewing evidence, action plans and submitting a report based on IFATE lines of enquiry.

The EPAO is responsible for recruiting the external examiner, and there may be more than one external examiner depending on the size and complexity of the provision. It is permitted for the external examiner to be the external examiner for both the programme and the EPAO, as long as they are up to date with industry experience in order to EQA the EPAO. All external examiners must have up to date occupational competence and assessment skills, CPD, credible industry experience and have processes in place to declare conflict of interest with apprentices, employers and providers.

Edge Hill University External Examiners Workload Model

Except for annual reports, which are paid separately, all duties are paid at an hourly rate⁴⁴ in accordance with the time allocations defined below. Claims that exceed the time allocated for a specific activity, without the prior consent of the Director of Governance and Assurance (or nominee), will usually not be accepted.

Fees and expenses should normally be claimed within 30 days of any external examiner duties undertaken.

Annual Reports:

- Writing and submission of the annual report is allocated 7.5 hours. This includes all preparatory activity including the production of any interim or module reports completed during the academic session/ year. Where an examiner is responsible for collaborative provision, they should complete a single report which compares the provision across each partner.

Moderation:

- External examiners are allocated 15 hours for moderation of assessed work per academic year. This allowance is based on the typical volume of moderation per external examiner which is confirmed by the External Examiners Sub-Committee at the point of engagement.
- If an external examiner accepts additional moderation responsibilities during their engagement which significantly increases their workload, then additional hours can be claimed for. If this is queried by the Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance, the department will need to provide evidence of this.

⁴⁴ For current rates see 'External Examiners' Fees and Expenses Policy' at <https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/Fees%2C+Workload+and+Expenses>.

- External examiners may claim hourly for “real-time” moderation activities e.g. live performances, Observed Structural Clinical Examinations and observed teaching practice in schools.

Where a programme is non-modular, the programme team will review the moderation and assessment workload to ensure that it remains within the workload model.

Attendance at Assessment Boards and Induction activities:

- Attendance at assessment and award boards may be claimed in hours dependent on the precise length of the activity.
- Up to 7.5 hours may be claimed per academic session/ year for attendance at the External Examiners’ Induction event.

Other duties:

- Up to 7.5 hours per academic session/ year may be claimed for mentoring a new external examiner at the formal request of the University.
- Up to 3.75 hours per academic session/ year may be claimed for external verification of draft coursework briefs and examination papers contributing to a student’s final award, typically at FHEQ level 5 and above.
- Up to 3.75 hours per academic session/ year may be claimed for providing written comments on proposals for new modules, or for module or programme modifications.

REPORTS

External examiners’ reports are an important source of direct evidence of academic standards, as well as indirect evidence of the quality of teaching, and the University gives full and serious consideration to them. External examiners complete an online annual report⁴⁵ on the provision for which they are responsible. Faculties must ensure that new examiners receive their predecessor’s final report accompanied by the relevant departmental response when commencing their term of office.

In their reports, examiners provide informative comment and recommendations on:

- Whether the University is maintaining the academic standards it has set⁴⁶ for its awards in relation to national threshold standards defined by the FHEQ level descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements, and the University’s Academic Regulations⁴⁷.
- Beyond threshold, the comparability of the University’s academic standards and student achievement with other UK higher education institutions (HEIs).
- The rigour, equity and fairness of assessment of Intended Learning Outcomes.

⁴⁵ The link to the online external examiner report form is at [External Examiner Annual Reports - Edge Hill University](#)

⁴⁶ I.e., at Institutional validation through the approval of Intended Learning Outcomes at module and programme level – see Chapter 4.

⁴⁷ See [Academic Regulations](#).

- The quality of summative written feedback to students.
- The conduct and transparency of assessment processes including marking, internal moderation and the operation of assessment boards.
- Evidence of good practice and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment, and opportunities to enhance the quality of learning opportunities provided to Edge Hill students.
- Any modules that in their judgement would benefit from early review and modification/ re-validation.

Where programmes are delivered at more than one site, e.g., at different Edge Hill campuses or by multiple academic partners, examiners differentiate these explicitly to identify any standards-related issues or good practice pertaining to the specific instance of delivery. Where an examiner's duties are spread across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, separate annual reports are submitted for which additional payments are made.

Examiners confirm that sufficient information and evidence was made available to them to fulfil their role and that issues raised by them in previous reports, including those of their immediate predecessors, have been responded to.

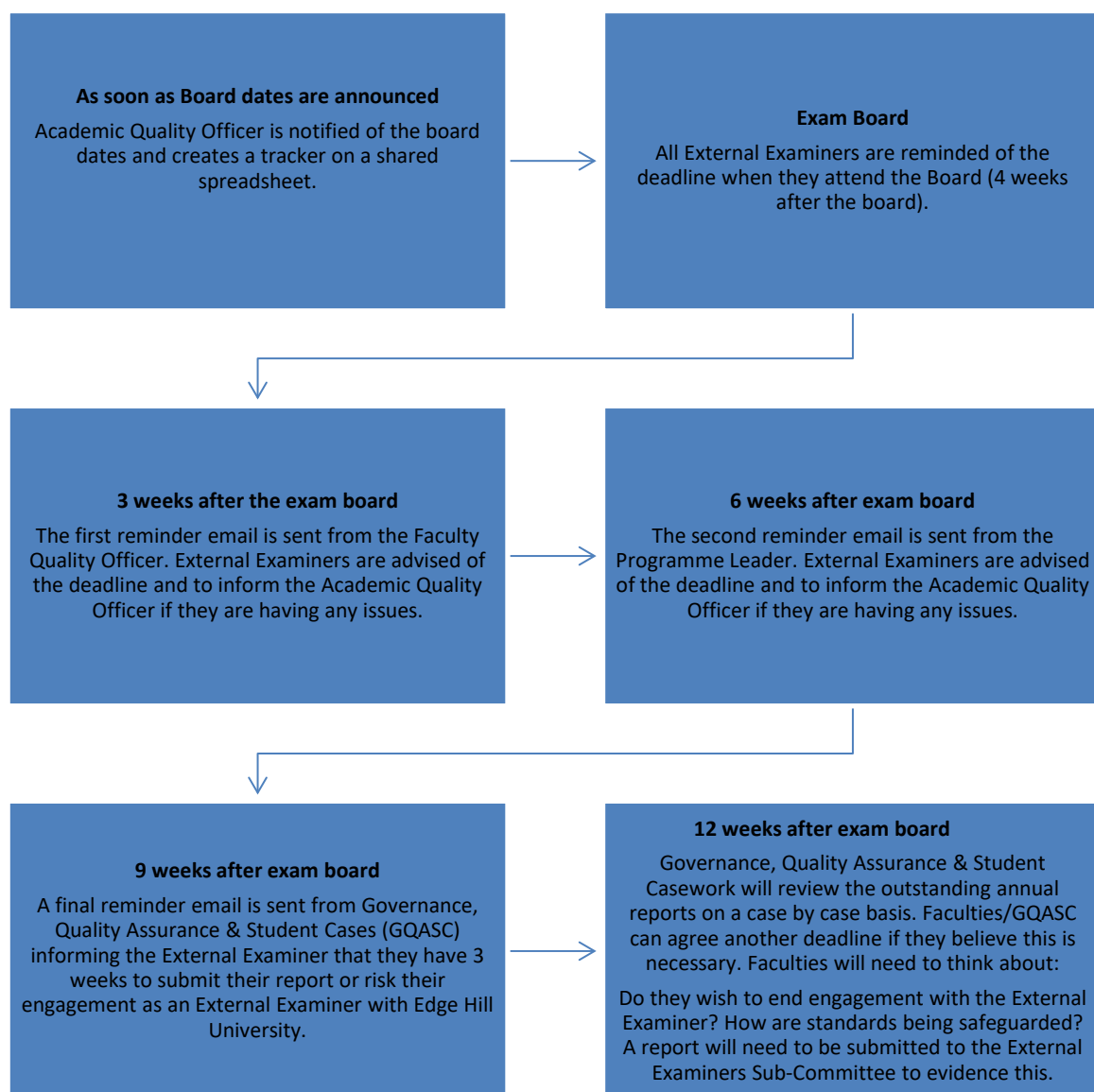
Examiners refrain from identifying individual students and staff in their reports, however references to staff roles e.g., 'the Programme Leader' are acceptable. Barring mitigating circumstances which should be discussed in advance with the Academic Quality Officer (GQASC), examiners submit their reports within four weeks of the relevant assessment board. Where following appropriate reminders an external examiner's report has not been received within 12 weeks of the relevant assessment board, alternative arrangements for (repeat) moderation will be made⁴⁸.

Where an external examiner has not submitted their annual report, and the Annual Report Escalation Process has been exhausted, the Faculty is required to reassure the university that academic standards have been safeguarded. This is typically undertaken through the production of a written report from the Associate Dean to EESC. As a minimum, this report must confirm:

- that all modules have received appropriate external moderation prior to the relevant boards;
- any alternative arrangements made by the Faculty to ensure that moderation has been satisfactorily undertaken.
- whether the Department intends to end its engagement with the external examiner for the effected provision.

⁴⁸ See also 'Ending an External Examiner's Engagement', below.

Figure 3 'Edge Hill University Annual Report Escalation Process'



Programme teams are required to provide formal and timely responses to external examiners' reports outlining any action to be taken as a result of their recommendations (or the reasons for not taking action). Faculties ensure that responses are accurate and of appropriate quality and reflect current University policy on assessment.

Responses to external examiner reports are considered for approval at the next available Faculty Board (or delegated committee). Approved responses are dispatched to examiners within seven business days or, in the event of referral back to the host department, seven days following Faculty Chair's Action. Where significant time is expected between receipt of an examiner's report and the response via the Faculty Board or relevant committee, Faculties contact examiners to advise them of the estimated wait-time.

Institutional Overviews of External Examiner reports

The Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (GQASC) produces an initial 'risk-based' overview of key issues from external examiner reports for the early consideration of Faculties and EESC⁴⁹; Faculty Associate Deans subsequently produce more detailed evaluations⁵⁰ which also describe the good practice surfaced by examiners. Overview reports bring to the attention of EESC and, through its minutes, AQEC any recurring or potentially systemic issues around assessment practice or regulation that may require consideration at University level, e.g., through the Regulations Review Sub-Committee (RRSC)⁵¹.

'CAUSES FOR CONCERN' PROCEDURES

External examiners are asked to refer any standards-related concerns to the Programme Leader and/ or Head of Department in the first instance with the aim of finding a resolution. However, examiners also have the right to escalate any continued serious concerns to the Vice-Chancellor, via a confidential written report to which a considered and timely response is provided. In the unlikely event that internal University procedures have been exhausted and examiners remain concerned about an actual or potential failure in standards, they may notify the OfS⁵². In the case of PSRB-regulated programmes, examiners use their knowledge and understanding of professional codes and standards to inform any decision on escalation to the relevant professional body.

ENDING AN EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S ENGAGEMENT

The University is committed to the maintenance of academic quality and standards and therefore reserves the right to make alternative arrangements for the external examination of its awards if necessary. A Faculty may seek to end its engagement with an external examiner through a formal written recommendation to the Chair of EESC. Where the external examiner is responsible for provision in the same Faculty as the Chair of EESC, this should be directed to the Deputy Chair of EESC. While neither exhaustive nor prescriptive the following are indicative of reasons for ending an external examiner's engagement:

- Failure to disclose a relationship, contractual or otherwise, which may impair the integrity of the examination process and their own independence as external examiner.
- Persistent failure to attend meetings, respond to communications and/ or present the required reports by the stated deadline without prior agreement, and/ or the submission of identical reports and/ or failure to return students' work following moderation.

⁴⁹ At its November meeting

⁵⁰ Using Form EE1 'Faculty Summary of External Examiner Reports and Department Responses', available at <https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/Template+Documents>. Faculty summaries are typically received by EESC in February or March.

⁵¹ See Chapter 8.

⁵² <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/ofs-and-students/notifications/>.

- Persistent and deliberate failure to use the relevant national academic and/ or professional benchmarks to support judgements on academic standards and Edge Hill students' attainment of them.
- For clinical and other professional programmes, failure to maintain professional body membership or professional registration where this is a requirement of being an external examiner, or disbarment from professional practice which may impair the integrity of the examination process or the individual's standing as an external examiner.

Such matters will normally be dealt with in accordance with the University's Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures, details of which may be found on the HR wiki⁵³. Where the proposal to end engagement is approved, the examiner is notified in writing of the University's decision. The outcome is noted by AQEC via receipt of the EESC minutes.

Occasionally, a programme may be closed before the end of the external examiner's period of engagement and in such cases the individual will be formally notified⁵⁴ and AQEC informed as part of the process for Programme Closure⁵⁵. Any external examiner may choose to end their engagement with the University by writing to the Chair of EESC to advise of their intention.

⁵³ [Forms, Policies and Documents - Human Resources - GO Spaces \(edgehill.ac.uk\)](#)

⁵⁴ By the Academic Quality Officer acting on advice from the relevant Faculty.

⁵⁵ See Chapter 4.

Chapter 3

Monitoring and Review

Updated October 2023

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the overarching processes that the University adopts to ensure the continuing standards and quality of its academic provision the University – **Annual Monitoring, Curriculum Review and Internal Audit**.

The University recognises that effective, risk-based monitoring and action planning activity takes place on an ongoing basis and is not limited to annual processes. The University therefore employs a continuous Monitoring Framework (see Figure 1) to ensure the continuing standards and quality of its academic provision. The processes described below form part of this overarching framework and fully aligned with the Quality and Standards [Conditions B1 to B5](#) of the Office for Students' (OfS) [Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England](#), which includes the mandatory [Sector Recognised Standards](#)¹. Processes are informed by the [Framework for Programme Reviews: ensuring the value of courses](#) (Universities UK, 2022).

Annual Monitoring is the capstone process through which the University ensures the continuing standards and quality by taking a holistic look at performance data at a fixed point each year and identifying any emerging trends. The annual monitoring process considers comprehensive quantitative and qualitative evidence on programme performance and the students' academic experience and alerts the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC) - and through it, the Academic Board - to any internal or external factors that could place academic provision, including academic partnerships, at risk.

It also enables the identification of good practice for wider dissemination within the University for the purpose of quality enhancement². Outputs from departmental annual monitoring are used to inform the University's academic planning³ and budget-setting processes.

Curriculum review is five-yearly review of an academic department's taught degrees at both programme and module-level (or year of study if non-modular). The purpose of Curriculum Review is to establish that the curriculum is being actively refreshed and remains up-to-date and coherent; and to confirm that each programme's award title, aims and learning outcomes remain valid and achievable. Successful curriculum review confers continuing approval of the programmes until the next scheduled review.

The purpose and process of **Internal Review** varies according to particular requirements and may *risk-focused*, or *enhancement-focused*, as required.

¹ The 'Framework for Higher Education Qualifications' (QAA 2014) as adopted by the OfS.

² See Chapter 1.

³ See Chapter 4

Planning cycle:	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Key Reporting Milestones		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Planning Overview report from each faculty to AQEC [quality enhancement] and APC [academic development / business planning] 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Monitoring Update Report to Academic Board. Annual Retention Report and Institutional Action Plan to Academic Board. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on programmes closed in the previous academic cycle to APC. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Examiner Report & Response Overview to EESC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Malpractice and Degree Outcomes Data (AQEC) Autumn Monitoring Overview Report (AQEC) Academic Assurance Report (Academic Board) Annual report on degree outcomes (Academic Board). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Assurance Report to Governors
Principle Institutional Monitoring and Review Functions [process owner]	Spring Planning [Faculty]	Budget Setting [Finance]						Autumn Monitoring & Enhancement [GQASC]				
Faculty/Department Action Plan Updates			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> APP - gap analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progression Metric - Graduate Outcomes analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSS - analysis 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation and completion data 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-year retention analysis 	
Institutional Steering Group			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> APP Steering Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Outcomes Steering Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Experience Steering Group 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Outcomes Steering Group 					
Local Programme Monitoring	In-year withdrawals, Student attendance (Quarterly), Module modifications log updates,											
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Voice Survey (course & modules) 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of module curriculum (expiry). Programme Responses to external examiners. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Voice Survey (course) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Voice Survey (modules) 		
Ad hoc enhancement, intervention and review. ¹	Development Enquiry (Enhancement); Thematic Support Panel (Targeted Intervention and Support); Risk Assessment Meeting (Risk Mitigation)											
Fixed Point Potential Triggers (surveillance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HESA Non-continuation data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Voice Survey (course & modules) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OIA Annual Complaints Statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Development Plans Hot modules Graduate Outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Examiner comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation Completion Overall Module Pass rates 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Voice Survey (course) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Malpractice Degree Outcomes Student Voice Survey (modules) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HESA Degree Outcomes analysis 	
Ongoing potential Triggers (surveillance)	OFS Notification, Student Complaints (Serious), Withdrawal rates, Changes to Subject-Benchmark-Statements / PSRB requirements / Sector-recognised Standards.											

Figure 1: University Monitoring Framework

THE UNIVERSITY MONITORING FRAMEWORK

The University's Monitoring Framework is based on the premise that:

- Staff at all levels of the Institution are responsible and accountable for maintaining standards and enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities.
- Shared responsibility and accountability require frank and open exchanges between departments, Faculties, support services and the University (Directorate).
- The processes by which both opportunities and threats to standards and quality are defined, identified and assessed should draw fully on a range of expertise and experience from within and outwith the University's executive and deliberative structures

Key features of the Monitoring Framework (see Figure 2) are that it is:

- **Evidence-based** – a feature of the Monitoring Framework is a new data dashboard, designed to enable academic departments to engage with key performance indicators for Academic Quality and Standards on an ongoing basis. The dashboard brings together various sources of quantitative data including module pass rates; internal progression,⁴ retention,⁵ and withdrawal data, degree outcomes,⁶ the [National Student Survey](#) (NSS), Graduate Outcomes,⁷ and OfS B3 Data. The Monitoring Framework also draws upon a range of qualitative data sources including staff and student feedback (e.g. module leader reports, Student Pulse Surveys, minutes of Programme Boards and Student-Staff Consultative Fora (SSCFs)⁸ and other evidence of feedback as appropriate); reports of external examiners⁹ and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- **Risk-based**¹⁰ - drawing upon the experience and expertise of staff and other stakeholders¹¹ to identify and evaluate potential opportunities and threats, and to propose targeted and proportionate actions to *mitigate* risk. In helping AQEC to form a view about a department's ability and capacity to manage risk, Monitoring plays an important part in confirming confidence in the University's managers and staff.

⁴ The **Internal Progression Rate** is the % of students who 'pass' the year and are eligible to progress to the following year, or who have completed the programme (if they are finalists). Any students who do not have a result yet because they have interrupted, or are referred or deferred, are excluded from the calculation.

⁵ The **Internal Retention Rate** is the % of students registered on the programme who returned to the University the following academic year (however briefly), including those who are repeating the year, interrupting or transferring to another programme. This measure is not meaningful for finalists so it is only calculated for non-finalists.

⁶ **Internal Completion** is where a student has finished a programme of study and been awarded a university qualification.

⁷ Graduate Outcomes Progression Rate is the proportion of graduates in professional employment, further study, or who are retired, travelling, or caring. www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk.

⁸ See Chapter 6.

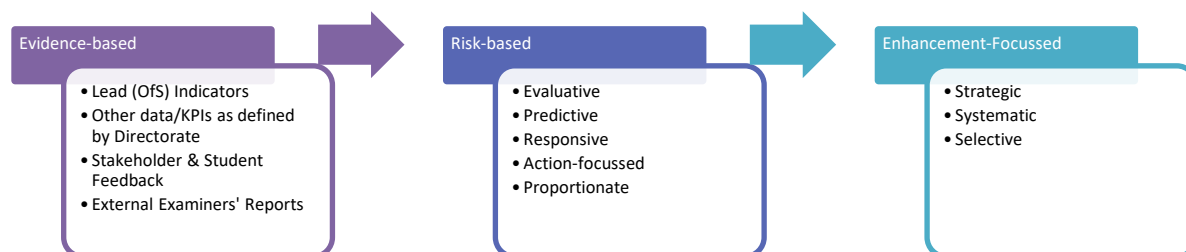
⁹ See Chapter 2.

¹⁰ For a more detailed description of the University's approach to academic risk management see Chapter 1.

¹¹ Who may include: relevant academic and professional communities; external examiners; regulatory bodies; collaborative partners; employers; service users and carers; and graduate alumni.

- **Enhancement-focused¹²** – enabling the systematic identification and evaluation of good practice that is suitable for general dissemination for the purpose of enhancing quality across the Institution.

Figure 2: Key Features of the University's Monitoring Framework



ANNUAL MONITORING

The Annual Monitoring process described in this chapter is focused primarily on academic departments, however the engagement of Faculties and academic-related professional support services enables full and holistic consideration of issues affecting academic standards and quality at Institutional level; for example, outputs from Annual Monitoring can be used to inform Directorate decisions on academic strategy and resources. The minuted discussions of Faculty Boards (or their sub-committees) and AQEC help assure staff and students that issues raised by them during Annual Monitoring have received appropriate consideration.

While fixed-point Annual Monitoring provides a clear focus for identifying and resolving risks, monitoring itself is continuous¹³. To this end, all staff are made aware of their responsibility to alert managers to any issues affecting standards and quality that require the immediate attention of the Directorate, PVC Deans of Faculty, the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit, AQEC or other relevant Academic Board committees.

Monitoring of modules¹⁴ and programmes

Academic departments are responsible for the detailed evaluation of module performance and holistic consideration of issues affecting standards and quality at programme level. Faculties have oversight of module and programme monitoring occurring within departments¹⁵ - **as a minimum**, this considers:

¹² For further details of the University's approach to quality enhancement see Chapter 1.

¹³ For example, programme performance data is made available to academic departments via Tableau and AQEC receives updates on progress against departments' Quality Enhancement Plans during the academic year, typically through the receipt of Faculty quality committee minutes.

¹⁴ Programmes in Health, Social Care and Medicine that follow a non-modular structure consider this evidence as it relates to each Year of Study.

¹⁵ See Chapter 1.

- Module first-time and overall pass rates¹⁶;
- Student Voice Survey data¹⁷ and module and programme evaluations;
- Retention, progression and degree outcomes data disaggregated by relevant protected characteristics, where appropriate¹⁸;
- External examiner reports and programme teams' responses¹⁹
- Any instances of malpractice and/or complaints.

Departmental Annual Monitoring

Departmental Annual Monitoring is informed by programme-level monitoring and assesses an academic department's ability and capacity to manage risk associated with academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities. The annual monitoring process at department level is managed centrally by the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit and consists of an Annual Monitoring Enhancement Report for all departments listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Departmental Planning Units (updated October 2022)

Faculty	Planning Unit	
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business School 2. Department of Biology 3. Department of Computer Science²⁰ 4. Department of English and Creative Arts 5. Department of History, Geography and Social Sciences 6. Department of Psychology 7. Department of Sport and Physical Activity 8. Language Centre 9. School of Law, Criminology and Policing 	
Faculty of Health Social Care and Medicine ²¹	School of Nursing & Midwifery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department of Adult Nursing and Primary Care 2. Department of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Nursing 3. Department of Women's & Children's Healthcare

¹⁶ The first-time pass rate includes students who have passed a module in their first attempt at the final assessment point.

¹⁷ See Chapter 6.

¹⁸ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>.

¹⁹ External examiners confirm that the standards set at validation meet or exceed national threshold (pass) standards and are comparable with similar provision of other UK higher education providers - See Chapter 2.

²⁰ Note: A new Unit for Engineering is expected in 2024. Engineering provision is currently housed in Computer Science.

²¹ During the 2023-24 Academic year, the Faculty will be monitored at School level.

Faculty	Planning Unit	
	School of Allied Health, Social Work & Wellbeing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department of Social Work and Wellbeing 2. Department of Allied Health Professions
	Medical School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department of Undergraduate Medicine 2. Department of Postgraduate Medical Education
Faculty of Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department of Early Years Education 2. Department of Primary and Childhood Education 3. Department of Secondary and Further Education 	

A factual **Annual Monitoring Report** (AMR) summarising the Department's performance during the previous academic year is prepared in partnership with the Head of Department and a representative from the Strategic Planning and Policy Unit (SPPU).

In confirming that standards remain secure, the AMR will consider:

- academic and professional benchmarking;
- alignment with sector-recognised standards.
- PSRB Reports (where applicable and available)
- external examiners' reports.

In assessing indicators of quality the report reviews data against Key Performance Indicators²² for:

- Enrolments;
- A list of Programme modifications undertaken in the preceding year;
- Instances of academic malpractice and student complaints;
- Student academic outcomes (e.g., module pass rates (first-time and overall), progression, retention and degree outcomes);
- Student support – National student survey, Student Services data and internal survey data;
- Student satisfaction – National Student Survey and internal survey data; and,
- Graduate Outcomes – employment, highly skilled employment or further study.

In assessing departments' ability and capacity to manage risk, the report considers:

²² Key Performance Indicators are defined by the Office for Students as well as the University's Directorate (senior management team).

- The content of the department's 'strategic-level' Quality Enhancement (action) Plan, separated by programme as necessary, based on the department's evaluation²³ of the above indicators of Quality.
- A progress update on the previous actions.

Affirmation of Standards and Quality

Annual Monitoring Enhancement Reports contain a judgement on threshold Standards and Quality²⁴ as well as the Department's ability to manage associated risks. Reports are required to affirm, based on consideration of the evidence, that the Department is able to manage its responsibilities in relation to the ongoing conditions for Quality (B1 – B4) and Standards (B5), as follows:

Table 1: The ongoing conditions for Quality (B1 – B4 & B6) and Standards (B5)

B1	The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high-quality academic experience. A high-quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring that each higher education course: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is up-to-date; 2. provides educational challenge; 3. is coherent; 4. is effectively delivered; and 5. requires students to develop relevant skills.
B2	The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students registered on a higher education course receive resources and support to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a high quality academic experience for those students; and b. those students succeeding in and beyond higher education; and, 2. effective engagement with students to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a high quality academic experience for those students; and b. those students succeed in and beyond higher education.
B3	The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.
B4	The provider must ensure that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students are assessed effectively; 2. each assessment is valid and reliable; 3. academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible; 4. academic regulations are designed to ensure effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner that appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; and 5. relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.
B5	The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider

²³ Heads of Department are provided with detailed datasets disaggregated by relevant protected characteristics to enable a full evaluation of their portfolio.

²⁴ I.e., whether programmes have met or not met the national Expectations for Standards and Quality as set out in the OfS's Regulatory Framework.

	(whether or not the provider is the awarding body): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. any standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; and 2. awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.
--	---

Data Review Meeting

Data Review Meetings provide departments with the opportunity to review and discuss the Tableau data informing the AMR process, to check the accuracy and interpretation of the data prior to report template being populated. Convened by GQASC, Data Review Meetings are Chaired by a representative from the SPPU with the Head of Department, Department Administration Manager and a GQASC representative²⁵ in attendance.

It is expected that Head of Department, and Departmental Administrator, review the Tableau areas indicated in the brief, in advance, and come to the meeting with any questions and data discrepancies noted. The department is required to identify a note-taker, normally the Department Administration Manager²⁶, to record all actions that emerge from the meeting.

The data reviewed at the meeting will give an indication of the current data state informing the monitoring process. It is important to note that the data which informs the production of the AMR report may differ slightly depending on the day the data is extracted. The AMR report will indicate the date it refers to.

Annual Monitoring Enhancement Meeting

Annual Monitoring Enhancement Meetings²⁷ provide an opportunity for the Head of Department to discuss their AMR with their Pro Vice-Chancellor Dean of Faculty (or appropriately experienced senior representative) and a member of the GQASC team. Meetings are conducted in the spirit of appreciative enquiry, tailored to the needs of the department as determined by the evidence. Departments are required to identify a note-taker, normally the Department Administration Manager²⁸, to record all actions that emerge from the meeting.

Based on the evidence presented and the discussions with the Head of Department, at the end of the meeting, the Faculty is required to affirm that the department is compliant with Conditions B1-B4 (Quality) and B5 (Standards). The Pro Vice-Chancellor Dean of Faculty is asked to make one of the following **confidence judgements** regarding the Department's ability to manage its quality assurance responsibilities:

²⁵ Typically, an Academic Quality and Standards Manager, who is there to advise on process and any matters relating to quality and standards.

²⁶ The department may wish to bring an additional administrator to take notes.

²⁷ Convened by GQASC and are typically 2 hours in duration and are held face to face on campus.

²⁸ The department may wish to bring an additional administrator to take notes.

No significant issues identified in the evidence presented, and I am supportive of the enhancement activities identified by the Department.	Some areas highlighted for improvement and additional actions have been identified.	Significant issues identified within the evidence considered and there are concerns regarding the Department's action planning.
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Judgements are reached by triangulating external examiner reports and responses, PSRB reports (where available) and 'contextualised' performance data. Beyond threshold, comparisons are made between programme performance data and appropriate benchmarks. Any data which falls below benchmark is contextualised and commented upon by the Head of Department and actions are formally recorded in a Quality Enhancement Plan (below). Faculties are required to ensure that any actions emerging from the meeting have been met prior to the paperwork being signed off by the PVC Dean of Faculty²⁹.

Quality Enhancement Plans

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is divided into two sections:

1. Agreed actions in response to indicators of Standards and Quality (performance data); and
2. A summary of good practice linked to evidenced improvements/ exemplary performance against Institutional benchmarks.

In part 1 of the QEP, Heads of Department state concisely what is being done and / or will be done to improve performance (in the spirit of SMART action planning). This means that actions are linked directly to programmes or areas where performance has fallen below the benchmark set by the University. Actions are set at an appropriate, departmental level and need not contain operational details.

The QEP acknowledges that each Department is required to produce a separate Access & Participation Plan, a Retention Action Plan, and an NSS Action Plan earlier in the University's Monitoring Framework cycle. While departments are not required to duplicate actions between plans, it is expected that Heads of Department will provide brief updates on the actions in the body of the AMR where appropriate.

Part 2 of the QEP provides a summary of specific features of good practice with the potential for wider dissemination across departments and/ or Faculties. Good practice citations are linked to external examiners' reports, previous validation and/ or review reports, evidenced improvements in performance data between academic years or programmes/ subject areas which show exemplary performance against Institutional benchmarks.

Faculties consider if the issues raised by the data have been addressed sufficiently within the report and in the QEP. Where this is deemed not to be the case, reports and / or plans are

²⁹ Or nominated alternate.

referred back for further work. Completed reports (including the QEP) are submitted to the GQASC for 'in principle' approval. Final approval is granted by AQEC³⁰.

Part 1 of the QEP is considered a live document which can be updated by departments at any time during the academic year when data becomes available, or progress has been made. Faculties monitor progress against the actions contained within part 1 of the QEP. Faculties receive updated plans for discussion, exploring where updates have not been provided or if updates require more detail. All progress updates are expected to be completed by the end of the academic year. The Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit (GQASC) uses the final versions of the QEPs as part of the evidence for the next Annual Monitoring round.

GQASC produces an overview document which highlights key themes from departmental annual monitoring. As well as providing the basis of discussion by AQEC³¹, this overview also informs production of the University Annual Monitoring Update Report (below).

Faculty Monitoring of Non-Credit Bearing Provision

It is expected that all non-credit bearing provision is monitored by Faculties as part of continuous monitoring, implementing their own processes to monitoring such provision which is detailed in their respective Faculty Quality Statement. This information will be drawn upon as part of the annual monitoring round each Autumn, to review the status of such provision.

Detailed guidance on the approval of non-credit bearing provision is outlined in Chapter 4 of this Handbook.

Annual Monitoring for PSRBs

Programmes that are regulated by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) may be required to submit external monitoring reports to meet their specific requirements. These will normally be received for approval by Faculty Boards (or their committees) but should be referred for additional consideration by AQEC where any issues requiring University level attention are identified.

For further details on the annual monitoring process, please contact the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit. For specific queries on the quantitative data used, please contact the SPPU.

Annual Review of Academic Partnerships

Edge Hill University develops academic partnerships with a wide range of third-party organisations, from UK-based employers, colleges and awarding bodies to overseas higher education providers, for the delivery of modules or programmes leading to the award of

³⁰ Normally at the February meeting.

³¹ At its February meeting.

University credit or qualifications; or the provision of student learning opportunities including work placements, international exchanges and arrangements for entry with advanced standing (articulation). The Annual Review of Academic Partnerships operates in conjunction with Departmental Annual Monitoring but is a separate process reflecting the level of risk associated with partnership working. Full details are provided elsewhere in this Handbook³², however for partnerships in Category C and above including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships this entails the completion of an **Annual Review Form** at the start of each new academic year for any provision delivered in the previous academic year. This is usually completed by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor with support and input from the Faculty Partnership Lead, and supporting evidence includes external examiner reports, retention and other performance data, and student feedback. Annual Review may also revisit current programme Delivery Plans, due diligence, online marketing materials and staffing arrangements. Completed forms receive Faculty-level scrutiny and approval³³ prior to their submission to AQEC³⁴, which:

- assesses, on the basis of the evidence provided, the ability and capacity of the partner organisation (working with the University) to identify and manage academic risk;
- provides feedback to Faculties, departments and partners or, where necessary and appropriate, requests additional information from them; and
- considers any additional scrutiny and/ or support for a partner or host University department that may be indicated by the Annual Review Form or other relevant evidence.

GQASC produces an overview document³⁵ which highlights key themes from annual monitoring of academic partnerships. As well as providing the basis of discussion by AQEC³⁶, this overview also informs production of the University Annual Monitoring Report (below).

University Annual Monitoring Update Report

The University Annual Monitoring Update Report, which is received by AQEC³⁷ and approved by the Academic Board³⁸, provides an update on the actions identified during the monitoring process. Drafted by GQASC on behalf of the PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary³⁹, the University AMR highlights issues for attention by the Academic Board, Faculties and professional support services, giving particular emphasis to the longer-term and strategic implications of its assessment of risk in the context of external market and regulatory conditions. The University AMR is a key mechanism in promoting a culture of mutual

³² See Chapter 5.

³³ With representatives of partner organisations attending by invitation.

³⁴ At its February meeting.

³⁵ Jointly authored by the GQASC and Faculties.

³⁶ At its February meeting.

³⁷ At its June meeting.

³⁸ At its July meeting.

³⁹ Also the Chair of AQEC.

accountability for the maintenance of standards and enhancement of quality and in so doing addresses the following audiences:

- **Academic departments and academic partner organisations**, which expect to see the broad concerns raised by them through the Annual Monitoring process have been considered and responded to; and
- **AQEC and Academic Board**, which require assurance that the University's academic governance is being managed appropriately.

Academic Assurance Report

The Academic Assurance Report (AAR) is authored by GQASC on behalf of Academic Board and it is informed by the University AMR. It provides supporting evidence of the maintenance of standards and quality for the Board of Governors' annual accountability return to the Office for Students (⁴⁰OfS). The AAR maps current Institutional processes and outcomes to the OfS's General Ongoing Conditions of Registration, specifically Conditions B1-5 for Quality and Standards. A draft AAR is approved by Academic Board⁴¹ with the final version received for consideration by the Board of Governors.

CURRICULUM REVIEW

The purpose of Curriculum Review is to establish that all taught curriculum in a particular department or other cognate grouping of programmes (planning units⁴²) is being actively refreshed and remains up-to-date and coherent; and to confirm that each programme's award title, aims and learning outcomes remain valid and achievable. The review process also includes programmes delivered by or with third-party organisations (e.g., academic partners) for the purpose of continuing programme approval, however these are also reviewed individually as part of a separate five-year cycle of partner and delivery re-approval⁴³.

Curriculum Review is designed to complement existing processes contained within the monitoring framework; and other University processes such as academic planning (see chapter 4). Informed by direct engagement with key internal⁴⁴ and external⁴⁵ stakeholders, its primary focus is therefore on the evaluation and continuing approval of the curriculum at programme and module-level (or year of study if non-modular). Successful curriculum review confers continuing approval of the programmes and awards until the next scheduled review. Reviews are programmed on a five-year cycle, the schedule and any changes to it being confirmed annually by AQEC (see Table 3 below).

⁴⁰ For more detail on the Office for Students and associated sector regulation see Chapter 1.

⁴¹ At its November meeting.

⁴² See Chapter 4.

⁴³ See Chapter 5.

⁴⁴ For example, academic departments (including programme leads) and senior faculty managers.

⁴⁵ For example, students, employers, alumni and where applicable, service users and carers.

Reviews are conducted by the **Curriculum Review Group (CRG)**, members of which are drawn from the Validation and Audit Standing Panel⁴⁶. Except for representatives from the relevant Faculty's senior management team, who provide the panel with essential contextual information and Faculty knowledge, members of the CRG are independent from the department under review.

Curriculum reviews comprise a combination of desk-based work and focus group activity (led by Academic Quality and Standards Managers from GQASC) and culminate in a short event/meeting. The head of department and programme leaders are invited to attend part of the event. The CRG is responsible to AQEC for reviewing the programme and module/year of study specifications in the context of key pieces of supporting evidence (which will include direct engagement with stakeholders); and with reaffirming the continuing currency of the curriculum for 5 years. Between reviews, existing modification processes, as described in chapter 4 of this handbook, enable established curricula, which is in delivery⁴⁷, to be refreshed or otherwise adjusted between formal review points to enhance the learner experience and maintain currency and continued alignment with academic subject benchmarks and professional standards.

Departments undergoing review are required to evaluate all current modules⁴⁸ in advance of the review meetings. On reviewing their modules and/or years of study, departments will submit lists of modules/years of study that:

- a) require minor modification,
- b) will remain unchanged, and
- c) will require archiving on E-VAL.

The CRG will only consider proposals for **minor changes** to modules. More substantial changes to programmes must follow the university's established major modification or revalidation processes (see chapter 4).

The curriculum review process focusses on consideration of the following pieces of evidence:

- External Examiners Reports (previous 5 years) [supplied by GQASC]
- The latest Annual Monitoring Report [supplied by GQASC]
- The latest Academic Planning Report [supplied by the Faculty]
- The latest PSRB report (where relevant)
- Focus Groups with students and employers/alumni [convened by GQASC in liaison with DAMs]
- Current programme and module / year of study specifications [supplied by GQASC]
- Revised draft programme specifications (if required) [supplied by Faculty]

⁴⁶ See Chapter 4, also <https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/VASP+Membership>.

⁴⁷ Only exceptionally, will validated programmes be modified prior to their first delivery.

⁴⁸ I.e., modules with an 'open' status on E-VAL. Departments receive lists of modules to review directly from GQASC.

- Revised draft module specifications (if required) [supplied by Faculty]

Curriculum Review reports are received by AQEC where the review panel's recommendations are considered and continued approval of all validated programmes normally confirmed, although individual programmes may be referred to the host Faculty for modification or re-validation before the next student intake.

Departments that have completed a whole portfolio revalidation in the year prior to their scheduled review will be exempt and will not be required to take any further action. Continuing currency will be reaffirmed via the monitoring process in the year that the scheduled review would have ordinarily taken place. **Departments scheduled for whole portfolio revalidation in the same year as their scheduled review** will be exempt unless the revalidation is postponed. If this is the case, the circumstances surrounding the postponement will be considered and either a review will be arranged, or a Departmental Risk Assessment (see below), based on the latest annual monitoring report, will be undertaken to extend approval by one year⁴⁹. Departments who plan to revalidate their entire portfolio the year after their scheduled review will be required to undergo the exercise and use it to inform their portfolio developments.

NOTE: For Departments that have revalidated part of their academic portfolio in the previous year; or, are due to revalidate part of their academic portfolio in the same year as their scheduled review: In these circumstances the scope of the curriculum review will be determined by the number of the programmes that have not received, or not due to receive VASP scrutiny⁵⁰. If a small minority of programmes have not been reviewed, the monitoring process may be used to support continuing programme approval⁵¹. In all cases, GQASC will liaise with the Faculty to agreed the scope of the review.

In exceptional circumstances, application may be made to AQEC for **deferment of a scheduled Curriculum Review**. This is normally supported by a Departmental Risk Assessment. Reviews may be deferred for one year only.

Programme Transfers between Departments

Where programme transfer between departments creates the risk of individual programmes not being reviewed within a five-year period, the monitoring process, carried out at the next available fixed point, supports continuing programme approval.

⁴⁹ To be determined by GQASC. Final approval of any extension will be by AQEC.

⁵⁰ To be determined by GQASC. Final approval of any extension will be by AQEC.

⁵¹ To be determined by GQASC. Final approval of any extension will be by AQEC.

Table 3: 'Edge Hill University Curriculum Review Cycle' (updated October 2023)

Year no. in cycle	Academic Year	Faculty	Unit of review
1	2023-2024	FAS	Edge Hill Language Centre ⁵²
		FAS	Psychology
		FHSCM	Social Work and Wellbeing
		FHSCM	Allied Health Professions
2	2024-2025	FHSCM	Adult Nursing and Primary Care
		FHSCM	Women's and Children's Health Care
		FHSCM	Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Nursing
3	2025-2026	FAS	English and Creative Arts
		FAS	Sport and Physical Activity
		FOE	Secondary and Further Education
4	2026-2027	FAS	History, Geography and Social Sciences
		FAS	Computer Science
		FAS	Engineering
		FHSCM	Undergraduate Medicine
		FHSCM	Postgraduate Medical Education
		Institution	Taught Degrees Framework ⁵³
5	2027-2028	FAS	Biology
		FAS	Business School ⁵⁴
		FAS	The School of Law, Criminology and Policing
		FOE	Early Years Education
		FOE	Primary and Childhood Education

ONGOING MONITORING AND REVIEW MECHANISMS

In addition to the routine monitoring and review activities described above, the following section describes ongoing surveillance mechanisms designed to gain assurance about how the quality strategy is being implemented at department and / or programme level (see Table 4). These mechanisms are designed to:

- Capture good practice for the purposes of quality enhancement.
- Identify any emerging risks as soon as possible to allow the University to put in place credible improvement plans.
- Provide targeted support to departments and programmes, when required,
- Assess departments' preparedness for inspection.

⁵² Credit-bearing provision comprises the University Foundation Certificate Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Stem Foundation Year, the level 3 Fastrack programme, and foreign Language Study modules.

⁵³ Using a variation of the process for Internal Audit – see Quality Management Handbook Chapter 3.

⁵⁴ To include the PGCert Teaching in Higher Education

Table 4: Ad-hoc monitoring and review mechanisms

Mechanism	Purpose	Commissioned by:
Internal Audit	<p>Assurance: The role of internal audit is to provide independent assurance that the University's risk management, governance and internal control processes are operating effectively. Assignments to review the quality of the University's academic provision and governance arrangements feature throughout the annual Internal Audit Plan.</p> <p>Audit assignments are conducted by the University's Internal Auditors in line with timescales agreed the Audit Committee.</p>	Audit Committee – in liaison with Senior Managers and the University's Internal Auditors
Dip Testing	<p>Assurance: The role of Dip Testing is to provide central assurance that the quality strategy is being operationalised as described within the chapters of this handbook at department and / or programme-level. This may also include assessment of how effectively Faculties delegated responsibilities for setting standards and maintaining quality are being executed as defined in their Faculty Quality Statements.</p> <p>The dip-testing process adopted, and the accompanying evidence base, varies according to potential risk. The scope of the exercise and the process adopted are prescribed by GQASC in consultation with AQEC and the relevant Faculty Committee.</p>	GQASC (on a cyclical basis) in liaison with AQEC and Faculty Senior Managers.
Developmental Enquiry	<p>Enhancement: Thematic and enhancement-focused by nature, Developmental Enquiries (DEs) explore specific aspects of the learner experience; recent DEs have focused on cross-Faculty approaches to managing placement-based learning, the joint honours student experience and developing students' assessment literacy. Written and oral evidence is taken from key Institutional stakeholders and the report, which is normally received by LTC, contains recommendations for development as well as highlighting good practice for wider dissemination. LTC decides upon any action to be taken in response to the report's recommendations and progress is monitored through separate update</p>	Learning and Teaching Committee

Mechanism	Purpose	Commissioned by:
	reports, the timing and frequency of which are determined by the committee. Developmental Enquiries are serviced by GQASC. Timescales are agreed by LTC.	
Thematic Support Panel	<p>Targeted support: Thematic Support Panels may be convened to provide a rapid response to an emerging issue or when a department or collection of departments require external support to deal with a strategic challenge. Panels are designed to be supportive, and solution focussed – with external expertise brought in to share relevant experience and provide ‘critical friend’ challenge.</p> <p>Panels will normally be comprised of at least two individuals that are external to the department(s), who will meet with the Head(s) of Department and relevant staff in a roundtable discussion setting. Membership will be based on the area of weakness being considered, for example - support to boost graduate level employment would likely include the Head of Careers.</p> <p>Panel membership and timescales will be set by the body commissioning the panel. Actions from the meeting will be recorded by the academic department. Where multiple departments are involved, each department will record the actions that are relevant to them.</p>	Directorate (either directly, or at the request of the relevant Head of Department) or Learning and Teaching Committee
Risk Assessment Meeting	<p>Risk mitigation: A Risk Assessment Meeting may be convened at very short notice and enables a rapid response to a specific presenting issue, incident or set of circumstances, for example an adverse external examiner’s report. An Institutional panel chaired by a senior manager is convened and considers written and oral evidence with a report submitted to AQEC and the Directorate within two to six weeks of commissioning.</p> <p>Risk Assessment meetings are normally serviced by GQASC.</p>	
Risk Assessment	Risk mitigation: Departmental Risk Assessments normally comprise the department’s most recent	

Mechanism	Purpose	Commissioned by:
Report [desk-based]	<p>Annual Monitoring Report and updated QEP, accompanied by the reporting officer's summary estimation of net risk.</p> <p>Whether or not academic provision is deemed to be at risk depends on the interaction between the internal or external threats to which it is exposed and its owner's capacity to manage these, resulting in an evaluation of net risk; thus, a department operating in a high-risk environment may be assigned a rating of medium or even low net risk based on its perceived ability to manage those risks. Departmental Risk Assessment Reports are a useful tool for confirming the continuing academic health of a department or programme, enabling swift conclusions to be drawn and any immediate support needs identified.</p> <p>Risk Assessment Reports are conducted by GQASC. Timescales are set by AQEC.</p>	

Chapter 4

Programme and Module Approval and Modification

Updated October 2023

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of **programme approval** is to ensure the academic standards and quality of student learning opportunities within a proposed programme of study leading to the award of an Edge Hill University qualification. **Module approval**¹ ensures the appropriateness of module content and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment for the award of academic credit. **Programme and module modification** enable validated curricula to be refreshed ahead of their next formal review/ re-validation.

The University's processes for the approval and modification of programmes and modules are fully aligned with the Quality and Standards [Conditions B1 to B5](#) of the Office for Students' (OfS) [Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England](#), which includes the mandatory [Sector Recognised Standards](#)². Processes are informed by the supporting Advice and Guidance on [Course Design and Development](#) contained within the [UK Quality Code](#) (2018).

The University operates a standard cycle for programme development and approval which is also described below.

ACADEMIC PLANNING

Edge Hill University's primary strategic aim is to remain a highly valued and financially-sustainable organisation that provides an exceptional student learning and living experience. A crucial factor in securing the Institution's future sustainability and success is the attractiveness, quality and effectiveness of its prospectus. This means that we must continually strive to achieve enhanced levels of forward-planning, communication and collaborative working across Faculties and professional services, underpinned by an effective, holistic and flexible academic planning process.

Academic Planning is based on two overarching principles:

- Faculties reflect upon their objectives and priorities in the context of the Institution's vision, strategic aims and priorities, and external drivers.
- Faculties and professional support services support the Institution's development by working together to facilitate systematic, appropriate and constructive collaboration and communication.

¹ Or Year of Study Approval for non-modular curriculum (Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine) – see 'Module Approval and Modification', below.

² The 'Framework for Higher Education Qualifications' (QAA 2014) as adopted by the OfS.

Table 1: 'Academic Planning: Principles'

Principle 1: Faculties maintain an awareness of sector and industry developments relevant to their academic areas to inform portfolio changes and identify clear markets for all individual proposals.

Principle 2: Faculties ensure all proposals align appropriately with institutional strategies, particularly the Strategic Plan, Curriculum Strategy, International Strategy and Employability Strategy.

Principle 3: Faculties consider initial budgetary implications of planned developments including staffing, physical resources, and, where appropriate, service area priorities.

Principle 4: Faculties remain cognisant of how planning decisions may impact our compliance with the OfS ongoing conditions of registration, including student protection, financial viability and quality and standards.

Departmental Academic Planning Meetings

Faculties typically convene Academic Planning Meetings³ with each of their departments during the spring term. During these meetings, detailed discussions take place about how departmental objectives and priorities, as outlined in their Quality Enhancement Plan⁴ are being progressed, operationalised and measured. Additionally, Faculties also:

- Reassess the department's academic portfolio in the context of external drivers, in-year performance data and the Faculty's Strategic Plan (see below).
- Evaluate the department's current position, for example its capacity and capabilities including staffing and resources to support current and new provision.
- Identify and prioritises potential new programme developments for the medium to long-term for inclusion in the Faculty's Academic Development Plan (Faculty Strategic Plan, appendix 1).
- Provide feedback on any proposed new programme developments that will not be taken forward for validation.
- Identify any current provision that may require modification, replacement or closure.
- Consider the department's research strategy and identifies any support needs.
- Consider any implications for financial planning and uses this to inform preparation of the Faculty's annual budget submission.
- Identify any requirements for additional central support that may impact on professional support services' own planning.

³ The constitution of departmental planning meetings is determined by the PVC Dean of Faculty (Chair) or delegated alternate and may include representation from other Faculties and support services. Department representation is agreed with the Faculty and typically consists of the Head of Department and members of their senior management team, e.g. Assistant Head(s) and/ or programme leaders.

⁴ See Chapter 3.

Table 2: 'Departmental Planning Units' (updated October 2023)

Planning Unit	Department
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biology 2. Business School⁵ 3. Computer Science⁶ 4. English and Creative Arts 5. Edge Hill Language Centre⁷ 6. History, Geography and Social Sciences 7. Psychology 8. School of Law, Criminology and Policing 9. Sport and Physical Activity
Faculty of Health Social Care and Medicine	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adult Nursing and Primary Care 2. Allied Health Professions 3. Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Nursing 4. Postgraduate Medicine 5. Social Work and Wellbeing 6. Undergraduate Medicine 7. Women's & Children's Healthcare
Faculty of Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary and Childhood Education 2. Early Years Education 3. Secondary and Further Education

The outputs from the academic planning process are:

1. A revised **Faculty Strategic Plan** (where appropriate);
2. An updated **Faculty Academic Development Plan** (appended to Faculty's strategy); and,
3. The Faculty's budget submission.

⁵ Also includes the PGCert Teaching in Higher Education delivered out of the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

⁶ A new Unit for Engineering is expected in 2024. Engineering provision is currently housed in Computer Science.

⁷ Current credit-bearing provision comprises the University Foundation Certificate Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Programme, the Stem Foundation Year, the level 3 Fastrack programme and foreign Language Study modules.

Faculty Strategic Plans

Faculty Strategic Plans are refined each year using the intelligence gained from departmental planning meetings, however they are expected to remain relatively stable unless required to respond to government regulatory or funding initiatives.

Strategic Plans represent each Faculty's agreed position in relation to:

- Learning and teaching;
- Research;
- External engagement and enterprise; and
- Academic (curriculum) development, including any academic partnership activity, and its alignment with the University's [Curriculum Strategy](#).

Strategic Plans are informed by:

- The University [Strategic Plan](#) and its key underlying strategies;
- External drivers that are likely to impact the Institution;
- Individual departmental strategies for learning and teaching, and research;
- External engagement; and
- Staff development.

Each Strategic Plan includes a **Faculty Academic Development Plan (ADP)** which, as a minimum:

- Describes the Faculty's plans for curriculum development, thereby providing an indication of the anticipated size and shape of the future portfolio.
- Contains a prioritised list of medium and longer-term developments.
- Clearly identifies any programmes to be validated, modified or closed during the next academic session.

Faculty Strategic Plans are received by Academic Planning Committee (APC)⁸ which reviews them in the context of Institutional strategy and identifies any potential for additional cross-Faculty collaboration or curriculum exchange, where appropriate. Informed by further discussion with the University's Directorate, APC compiles and approves the **University's Academic Development Plan**⁹ which is presented to the final meeting of Academic Board in July.

Applications for Development Consent

Applications for Development Consent (ADCs) are outline programme proposals, usually individual to each programme and produced¹⁰ by the proposing department, describing:

⁸ Usually at its April meeting.

⁹ Typically, at its June meeting.

¹⁰ The ADC template can be found on the E-Val database which is accessed via www.edgehill.ac.uk/services/E-Val/.

- The proposed programme - its academic and vocational rationale, target market and its alignment with the University's Curriculum Strategy.
- The intended award and any alternative (exit) awards.
- Location and mode of delivery: Edge Hill University campus and/ or academic partner organisation; full-time/ part-time¹¹; classroom/ hybrid/ online/ blended¹².
- Professional body accreditation (where applicable).
- Indicative programme content.
- Staffing and resource requirements based on projected recruitment¹³.
- How internal / external consultants will be used during programme design and development, including any specific support needs.

ADCs are usually accompanied by a Market Insight Report produced by a member of the Marketing team. Before proceeding to Institutional scrutiny, ADCs and Market Insight Reports are considered at relevant Faculty committees (e.g., Programme Board and/ or Student-Staff Consultative Forum; Faculty Board or delegated Faculty committee) and approved at Faculty level. Such scrutiny also provides opportunity for consultation with, and input from, students.

The University has agreed a standard [curriculum development timeline](#) for the design, development and formal approval of new undergraduate programmes (Table 3, below).

ADCs for undergraduate programmes are normally received by the September meeting of APC, with validation the same academic year and delivery a year later. ADCs for Masters-level programmes are normally received by September APC with delivery the following September. ADCs for commissioned (closed) programmes or new partner-delivered/ co-delivered provision may be received at any time of year, with validation scheduled as required.

¹¹ Programmes are normally designated full-time when a student is required to attend the University or elsewhere (which may include online or blended learning) for a period amounting to **at least 24 weeks within the year** and during that time is expected to undertake periods of study, tuition, learning in the workplace or work placement which amount to an average of **at least 21 hours per week**. Full-time undergraduates will normally undertake a **minimum of 105 credits** (1,050 Notional Learning Hours) per annum, while full-time postgraduate students will normally undertake a **minimum of 150 credits** (1,500 Notional Learning Hours) per annum.

¹² University agreed definitions are: **Classroom** Programme designed to be studied through attendance on site with teaching and learning in person, and supplementary asynchronous and/or synchronous elements to add value; **Hybrid** Programme designed to be studied both in-person or synchronously online. The tutor delivers the session on campus and teaches the remote and in-person learners at the same time using technology; **Blended** Programme designed to be studied through a combination of both sustained online delivery and on-site learning. Patterns of study will vary but will be through a combination of online and on-site teaching and learning; **Online** Programme designed to be studied online, with teaching and learning consisting of both synchronous and/or asynchronous online learning activities.

¹³ Whilst noting any additional staffing or resources that may be associated with new programme proposals, APC does not authorise spending which is approved separately through the University's annual budget-setting process.

Table 3: The University's Curriculum Development Timeline

Month	Process
June - Sept 2023:	Application for Development Consent approved by APC
July – December 2023:	Programme design and development
January – April 2024:	Faculty approval to proceed and Institutional validation
June 2024:	Final approval by Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC)
September 2024:	Programme recruitment opens (UCAS)
September 2025:	Programme delivery commences

Development consent may occasionally be sought outside the normal schedule¹⁴ of APC meetings. In such circumstances the Chair will determine whether to:

- Convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee; or
- Circulate the ADC and Market Insight Report, and if applicable, the associated business case to members for comment by correspondence and subsequent approval by APC Chair's Action; or
- Approve the ADC by APC Chair's Action without further consultation.

APC Chair's Action is routinely reported to the next scheduled meeting where it is endorsed by the committee. Where Chair's Action has been used to give development consent, this is on the understanding that the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC)¹⁵ will consider the ensuing validation report in full session and in these circumstances the approval of the validation report by AQEC Chair's Action would normally be unacceptable.

Development consent is notified to key Institutional stakeholders via the Programme Validations and Modifications (PVM) email group¹⁶ whereupon departments proceed to detailed programme development. ADCs have a maximum shelf life and where validation is deferred by more than eighteen months following development consent a fresh ADC will normally be required.

Significant changes to proposals during programme development necessitate APC reapproval of the ADC. These include:

¹⁴ The Academic Board committee calendar can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁵ See Chapter 8.

¹⁶ Stakeholders typically comprise Faculties, GQASC, Academic Registry, Admissions, Careers Centre, Corporate Communications, International Office, Learning Services, Strategic Planning and Policy Unit and Student Recruitment.

- Changes of Delivery mode – for example, a change from full-time to part-time delivery (or vice versa), or from classroom to blended or online (or vice versa);
- Major changes to Programme Title(s) – for example, more than one or two words being changed or where the change may warrant market intelligence reports obsolete;
- Changes to the proposed Award Title(s) – for example BA/BA (Hons) to BSc/BSc (Hons), Joint Honours to Single Honours;
- Changes to Programme Aims – which may undermine or necessitate a change to the programme title, and;
- The addition of new pathways awards compared to what has previously been approved

VALIDATION

For a full description of the standard validation process and documentation, see Key Guidance Document [*“Preparing for Validation: A Guide for Panels and Course Teams”*](#) on the GQASC Wiki.

The University is ultimately responsible for the standards and quality of the qualifications it awards. All programmes of study which lead to the award of academic credit must be validated (approved). The validation process seeks to confirm that proposing teams have designed programmes of study that reflect [Sector Recognised Standards](#).

The University’s **validation schedule** is based on the University’s Academic Development Plan and individual Applications for Development Consent (see above). Responsibility for Institutional validation resides with AQEC through its [Validation and Audit Standing Panel](#) (VASP). VASP is a body of suitably experienced academic and senior support staff from whom Institutional validation panels are convened. Membership of the Standing Panel is by [application](#) to the Chair of VASP and additional criteria apply to the appointment of Panel Chairs. Standing Panel members receive appropriate training and development and all panels contain a majority of academic members.

Prior to Institutional validation, Faculties convene **Faculty Approval Panels** (FAPs) at which the programme documentation is reviewed in full and approved to proceed to validation. Panel constitution is determined by the Faculty, however panels must include an appropriate level of VASP representation which includes a VASP Chair. For proposals that include partnership arrangements, Faculties are advised to include a suitably experienced VASP member or co-opt another member of staff with experience of designing and/or delivering programmes in partnership.

As an exception, Faculties may adopt a **‘fastrack’ approach to Faculty approval** when they are required to be more responsive. Reasons for adopting this approach may typically include mitigation of potential academic risk, responding to changes in PSRB requirements

or to make best use of presenting business opportunities. Plans to make use of the 'fastrack' approval process must be reported to APC as part of seeking development consent.

As a minimum, fastrack Faculty Approval Panels must consider and formally record their confirmation of the following:

- that all submission documentation¹⁷ has been completed to a reasonable standard by the proposing team and made available to the panel in advance of the meeting.
- that proposals are compliant with the University's [Academic Regulations](#).
- that modules are appropriately mapped to Programme Learning Outcomes.
- that module content and its assessment strategy are appropriately aligned with the Module Learning Outcomes.

Regardless of the approach to Faculty approval, if FAPs conclude that any of the above have not been met, they may either:

- Refer the proposal back to the proposing team for further work and development support (i.e., where the breadth and depth of revisions are substantial); or,
- Set conditions of approval and / or recommendations. While recommendations are advisory, **conditions must be met in full** by the proposing team **and verified**¹⁸ by the Faculty prior to proceeding to Institutional validation.

Institutional Validation panels are convened by the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit (GQASC) and selected from the membership of VASP. External members (such as academic subject experts¹⁹, industry experts, PSRB representatives and, where applicable, Service Users and Carers²⁰) and students also participate in validation panels.

Panels consider programme documentation in detail and judge whether academic standards have been set correctly and learning opportunities of appropriate quality put in place. This includes evidence of programme teams' engagement with the [Sector Recognised Standards](#) and other national academic frameworks and benchmarks²¹ and/ or professional standards, the [Academic Regulations](#), and Institutional guidance on programme design located within the [Taught Degrees Framework](#)²². Discussion of staffing and resources is based on APC's

¹⁷ See – "[Preparing for Validation: A Guide for Panels and Course Teams](#)". For details of the precise paperwork requirements.

¹⁸ Ensuring also that only changes specified by the Faculty Approval Panel have been introduced into the document.

¹⁹ Normally senior academic subject experts of other HEIs, who have no direct association with the proposing team e.g., as a consultant or external examiner, research collaborator or validation panel member within the previous three years. For more details see Key Guidance Documents on the GQASC Wiki – "[Preparing for Validation: A Guide for Panels and Course Teams](#)".

²⁰ See '[Quality Assurance Handbook](#)' (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2019), para. 109.

²¹ Most notably, the [Degree Characteristics Statements](#) and [Subject Benchmark Statements](#) (see also 'Programme Learning Outcomes', below).

²² For example, the embedding of Graduate Attributes.

approval of the initial ADC, therefore any changes to projected intake numbers that have occurred since ADC approval should be clearly signposted.

Where an existing programme is proposed for delivery by an academic partner organisation²³ an abbreviated agenda²⁴ focuses on the partner's arrangements for student support, management of work-based learning (placements), staffing and learning resources, course organisation and quality assurance. Delivery approval is coterminous with 5-year partner approval, and partners/ programmes are subject to review and re-approval during their final year of approval.

Validation outcomes comprise unconditional approval; approval with conditions and/ or recommendations; or referral for further development by the programme team. Panels do not set conditions around resources but may highlight significant matters for attention by the host Faculty or Directorate as part of the University's annual budget-setting process. Institutional validation culminates in a recommendation to AQEC which confers final programme approval on behalf of the Academic Board.

RE-VALIDATION

Once validated, programmes normally remain in approval until their next scheduled Curriculum Review²⁵ which confers continuing approval on evidence that the standards set at validation are being maintained, and the quality of student learning opportunities enhanced. Between scheduled reviews, programmes are typically kept up-to-date using the formal modifications process described below (see programme modifications below). However, where more widespread changes are proposed, a standalone re-validation is necessary. Programme teams are required to revalidate their programmes when **more than two thirds of the credit derived from Core and/or Compulsory modules²⁶ (at any FHEQ level) is to be changed simultaneously.**

The re-validation process mirrors that for new programmes. For a full description of the re-validation process and documentation, see Key Guidance Document "[Preparing for Validation: A Guide for Panels and Course Teams](#)" on the GQASC Wiki.

Consultation/Consent Requirements

As with all programme modifications, **proposing teams are expected to consult with their external examiner(s) and with students.** In limited circumstances, student consent is also required (further details below).

²³ See Chapter 5.

²⁴ See Proforma Agenda for Partner and Delivery Approval at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/Template+Documents>.

²⁵ Curriculum reviews take place on a five-yearly cycle – see Chapter 3.

²⁶ Modules designated **Core** to a programme do not permit condonement (compensation) of marginal failure. Modules designated **Compulsory** permit condonement within the limits prescribed by the Academic Regulations, section H11.

Consultation with current students should start in the classroom, and at Student-Staff Consultative Fora and/ or Programme Boards where student representatives are in attendance, and later formalised by letter or email presented in a 'student-friendly' style. Written communication should include an overview of the proposed changes, the reason for making the changes and why they are beneficial to learners. In all cases, students should be allowed reasonable time to consider and respond to the proposed changes. Nil responses will usually be treated as tacit agreement, however, should a majority be achieved by this means the department will exercise caution and seek to obtain a more positive mandate for its proposals. **Validation panels expect to see evidence of the consultation and/or consent process undertaken by programme teams.** Typically, this includes letter or email correspondence explaining the change and any corresponding minutes capturing the subsequent discussion and decisions made.

When re-validating an existing programme, course teams should carefully consider the impact of any proposed changes on the balance between:

- Tutor contact time and guided independent study.
- Different types of learning activity including classroom-based and online learning, work placements, field trips; or,
- Different modes of assessment such as coursework, written examinations and practical skills tests.

Faculties/departments must remain alert to any significant shifts in the above, because these aspects of a programme of study are considered material to the choices made by students at the point of application, and to the contract entered into by them at entry for the lifetime of their programme.

Re-validated undergraduate programmes are normally 'phased in' commencing with the next level 4 intake, thereby not affecting current students, however simultaneous or 'block' implementation of two or more years / levels of study may occasionally be proposed. This typically affects current students, in which case written consent is also required as detailed below.

For block implementation (no change to award titles) - departments must evidence individual written consent by a simple majority of all affected students.

For block implementation (including a change in award title) - departments must evidence written consent from all affected students (100%).

Prospective students²⁷ are notified of changes through the University's designated communication channels²⁸. Where block implementation of a re-validated programme is being considered, departments must make this clear in the application for development consent, to enable APC to confirm any additional operational or regulatory implications.

INTENDED AND ALTERNATIVE (EXIT) AWARDS

Institutional validation panels are responsible for confirming the level and title of all University awards consistent with Section B of the Academic Regulations²⁹ and the [Sector Recognised Standards](#) - i.e., the national *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ). **Intended Awards** are promoted in the course prospectus and equate to completion of a full programme of study. **Alternative Awards** are available to students who exit their programme prematurely and have completed the requisite number and level of credits for an award, e.g. (for undergraduate degree programmes) a 120 credit Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE), 240 credit Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) or 300 credit Ordinary (non-Honours) degree; and (for Masters degrees) a 60 credit postgraduate certificate or 120 credit postgraduate diploma. Alternative awards are also available for in-programme transfer, e.g., between an Integrated Masters and associated undergraduate Honours degree, or for students on PSRB-regulated programmes who have achieved the requisite number/ level of credits but have not met the requirements for professional registration, e.g., 'BSc (Hons) Health & Social Care Studies' as an alternative non-professional award for students of pre-registration nursing and midwifery degrees. Titles of Intended and Alternative Awards include the following component information:

- Target award, e.g. 'FdA', 'BSc (Hons)', 'MA', 'MComp'³⁰.
- Named Award, e.g. 'Computer Science'.

Titles of Ordinary degree and DipHE alternative exit awards are usually consistent with the title of the associated Honours degree, nevertheless validation panels should confirm that these appropriately reflect the proportion of subject study undertaken at the exit stage of the programme. CertHE exit awards are normally unnamed unless specifically justified at validation.

²⁷ The term **prospective students** may describe (i) potential applicants; (ii) individuals who have applied and received an offer; or (iii) individuals who have applied, received and accepted an offer.

²⁸ Communication with (i) and (ii) is normally via the online prospectus which is updated frequently to reflect any material course changes – See Student Recruitment and Marketing Wiki - [Communicating with prospective students](#). Offer holders are notified by Admissions.

²⁹ www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic-regulations/.

³⁰ Target awards are approved by the APC as part of the process of Development Consent – see 'Academic Planning', above – and confirmed at validation. See Appendix 2 of the Academic Regulations, www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic-regulations/.

Programme Learning Outcomes: Using the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements

Programme Specifications define separate Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for each level of the FHEQ (levels 4-6 of an undergraduate degree, and level 7 for a Masters degree). PLOs are described under the following four headings:

- **Knowledge and Understanding**
- **Intellectual Skills** - e.g. skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation
- **Practical Skills** - subject-specific skills developed, for example, through lab or studio-based activity, fieldwork or placement
- **Transferable Skills** - general employability skills such as oral and written communication, literacy and numeracy, time management, and working independently and in teams.

In developing their PLOs course teams consult the relevant [FHEQ qualification level descriptors](#) and [QAA Subject Benchmark Statement\(s\)](#). While the FHEQ descriptors are *generic* – describing the types of understanding and skills that students will have demonstrated, irrespective of their subject discipline – Subject Benchmark Statements describe the *specific* knowledge and skills that a student should have acquired on completion of their named award. The content of Subject Benchmark Statements is comprehensive, reflecting the full range of subject delivery across higher education providers, and for this reason it is not expected that programme teams will adopt them wholesale. **Validation panels seek evidence³¹ of how subject benchmarks have been used critically and selectively to inform their curriculum choices.** Where applicable, teams also describe and illustrate their engagement with any relevant professional standards or other PSRB requirements.

Within Programme Specifications, PLOs are mapped by modules (or by ‘in-year learning outcomes’ where the curriculum is non-modular, e.g., medicine and nursing) to demonstrate how and where they are achieved. **Validation panels confirm that each PLO is mapped by at least one Core or two Compulsory modules which helps ensure that where condonement is applied, the relevant PLOs should still have been met.**

The description of PLOs within Programme Specifications is preceded by one of the following two generic statements:

- **(For undergraduate awards)** “The Programme Learning Outcomes shown here describe the knowledge, understanding and skills that students will have demonstrated on achievement of their intended qualification award. Students who do not complete their full programme of study may qualify for an alternative award and the validated exit awards for this programme are listed at the front of this Programme Specification. For an Honours degree, exit awards are available at level 4 (Certificate of Higher Education), level 5 (Diploma of Higher Education) and level 6 (Ordinary degree on achievement of 60 level 6 credits). The precise learning outcomes of an

³¹ For example, through a narrative statement and accompanying matrix that maps Programme Learning Outcomes to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and discussion with the proposing team.

Ordinary degree are determined by the modules taken and passed at level 6 and can be identified from the table below.”

- **(For postgraduate taught awards)** “The Programme Learning Outcomes shown here describe the knowledge, understanding and skills that students will have demonstrated on achievement of their intended level 7 qualification award. Students who do not complete their full programme of study may qualify for an alternative award and the validated exit awards for this programme are listed at the front of this Programme Specification. The learning outcomes of level 7 exit awards are determined by the combination of modules taken and passed and can be identified from the table below.”

Sandwich Year and Study Abroad routes

The University has validated generic one-year Sandwich and Study Abroad routes which can be incorporated within any undergraduate degree programme. The **Sandwich Year** is scheduled following the second year of normal full-time study (FHEQ level 5) and delivers 120 additional level 5 credits that contribute to the student’s degree classification³². Degree award titles do not typically reflect the sandwich year which is acknowledged within students’ transcripts, however some law and business-related programmes have adopted the nomenclature ‘BA/BSc (Hons) [X] [Sandwich]’ or similar in their award titles as justified at validation.

In respect of **Study Abroad**³³ including the Turing Scheme³⁴, undergraduate students may either substitute 60 level 5 credits (one semester) of their second year³⁵ with overseas study, or undertake an additional overseas year between their second and final year which delivers 120 supernumerary credits at level 5. Unlike the Sandwich Year, Study Abroad credit is ungraded and does not contribute to students’ degree classification but is recorded on their final transcripts.

The addition of Sandwich Year or Study Abroad routes to existing programmes is delegated to Faculties using approval processes described in their Faculty Quality Statements³⁶.

STEM and Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Foundation Years

The University has validated a generic one-year, level 3 STEM Foundation Year route and a generic one-year, level 3 Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Foundation Year which can be studied as part of any undergraduate STEM subject degree programme, or specified subject areas in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Students automatically progress to level 4 of their chosen STEM/Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences subject on successful

³² For the contribution of supplementary level 5 credit to degree classification see the Academic Regulations, section J3.10.

³³ For details of the approval process for Study Abroad, see Chapter 5.

³⁴ <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/>

³⁵ Subject to the programme structures facilitating semester 1 study abroad.

³⁶ Available at <https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/agqa/Faculty+Quality+Processes+and+Responsibilities>

completion³⁷. The addition of the STEM and Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Foundation Year routes to existing STEM and Arts, Humanities and Social Science programmes is delegated to Faculties using approval processes described in their Faculty Quality Statements.

COMBINED PROGRAMMES

The University will occasionally validate programmes comprising more than one academic subject, either as **Combined Honours (Joint or Major/ Minor)** or **Integrated Single Honours** awards. The difference between these is mainly one of credit structure (distribution) and all combined programmes require the contributing subjects to collaborate closely in relation to the following (which are scrutinised closely at validation):

- Programme design – culminating in a set of integrated Programme Aims and Programme Learning Outcomes.
- Programme organisation and management – overseen by a dedicated Combined Honours Tutor such that students may develop a sense of identity and ‘belonging,’ receive clear contact information and communications, and have access to support such as Personal Tutors and opportunities for Personal Development Planning.
- Administrative arrangements for student engagement and representation, Programme Boards and Student-Staff Consultative Fora³⁸.

When developing new Single Honours programmes course teams may wish to identify the modules that would be utilised in any future combined honours programme.

Joint Honours & Major/ Minor degrees

Joint Honours degrees are made up of modules from two different Single Honours degrees³⁹ in which each subject accounts for **precisely 50% of study**, i.e., 60 credits per FHEQ level⁴⁰. The contributing subjects are normally shown in alphabetical order⁴¹ in the award title, e.g., ‘*BA (Hons) Drama and English*’, and programme responsibilities relating to organisation and management, personal tutoring and the operation of Personal Development Planning usually reside with the first subject, i.e., Drama in the above example. The first subject is also responsible for providing the Combined Honours Tutor and for producing and maintaining the Programme Specification and managing programme modifications.

Major/ Minor degrees are usually derived from modules of two Single Honours programmes⁴² in the **ratio of 80/40 credits per FHEQ level**. Programme management

³⁷ The target award will only be available to students who successfully complete the year but choose not to progress to an undergraduate programme. Students who do progress to an undergraduate programme will have the STEM Foundation Year modules, or Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences modules added to their transcript.

³⁸ See Chapter 6.

³⁹ It is however possible to validate half of a Joint programme where there is no associated Single Honours programme.

⁴⁰ Tolerance for ‘free electives’ - 20 credits per level, provided there is approximately equal balance between the joint subjects across levels. See Academic Regulations C5.2.

⁴¹ Where it is intended to vary the usual order of subjects in the award title, this should be highlighted in the Application for Development Consent for consideration and approval by APC.

⁴² It is possible to validate a standalone Minor where there is no associated Single Honours programme.

responsibilities reside with the Major subject. Award titles use the formula '*BA (Hons) [Major subject] with [Minor subject]*' to reflect the balance of subjects/ credit. The Major subject is responsible for providing the Combined Honours Tutor and for producing and maintaining the Programme Specification and managing programme modifications.

Proposals to validate new Joint and Major/ Minor degrees require Faculty submission of an Application for Development Consent to APC. The validation process is summarised below:

For combinations derived from *two existing Single Honours degrees*:

- Application for Development Consent to APC.
- Programme Specification produced by the first subject (for Joint Honours awards), or Major subject (for Major/Minor awards).
- Validation delegated to Faculties using processes described in their Faculty Quality Statements. The normal requirement for externality in validation is waived because the contributing modules are already in approval.
- Faculty minutes of approval are received by the next available meeting of AQEC which confirms final approval of the award.
- AQEC Secretary notifies award approval via the PVM email group.

For combinations derived from *two Single Honours degrees where at least one of the subjects is new*:

- Application for Development Consent to APC.
- Programme Specification produced by the first subject (for Joint Honours), or Major subject (for Major/Minor).
- Standard Institutional validation process with report to AQEC and notification of approval via the PVM email group.

Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for Joint and Major/ Minor awards are 'mapped' by modules of both subjects and should as far as possible reflect their integration, particularly in the definition of Intellectual and Transferable Skills. Programme Specifications also contain integrated statements of programme aims, teaching, learning and assessment.

Faculties

- **Remain alert to the impact of modifications to the Single Honours programmes on which they are based.**
- **Ensure that proposals to modify joint and major/ minor awards do not distort the required balance of subject credit.**

Integrated Single Honours degrees

Integrated Single Honours programmes facilitate bespoke combinations of subjects at the point of design and are not constrained by the assignment of fixed credit values/ ratios to

each subject. The approximate balance of subjects is reflected in the award title, e.g. 'A' & 'B' (around half) or 'X with 'Y' where X is the lead subject and may be varied between FHEQ levels which should also be considered when determining the titles of any intermediate alternative (exit) awards. Integrated Single Honours programmes are approved using the standard processes for Development Consent and Institutional validation.

'Module Sharing'

Where appropriate and practical, programme developers may seek to re-use modules from different programmes, subjects, departments or even Faculties, or work together to develop new modules. As well as providing efficiencies in how programmes are delivered, module-sharing between different cohorts can enrich the overall student learning experience however the necessary permissions must have been obtained from the module 'owners' before their adoption in any new programme proposal. This is typically evidenced by the signatures of collaborating PVC Deans of Faculty in ADCs (see 'Academic Planning', above).

MODULE / YEAR OF STUDY APPROVAL AND MODIFICATION

Module approval

Modules exist both as standalone units of learning and as constituent parts of larger programmes of study. New modules may be approved either individually by a Faculty (see below), or through Institution-level validation as part of a complete programme/ award. In either case, module approval is governed by similar principles to programme approval on the basis that successful completion of a module:

- Demonstrates the achievement of Intended Learning Outcomes that lead to the award of academic credit; and
- In a programme context, demonstrates the achievement of one or more Programme Learning Outcomes that lead to a full qualification award.

The module approval processes, carried out by a Faculty or through Institution-level validation must therefore ensure that:

- Credit is assigned at the appropriate level (i.e., in relation to the national credit level descriptors - the [Higher Education Credit Framework for England](#)) and volume (in relation to learning and assessment activities and Notional Learning Hours⁴³);
- Module learning outcomes are described at the appropriate FHEQ level;
- Learning and teaching activities are described within the following categories: (i) scheduled learning activities, e.g., lectures, seminars and tutorials, including synchronous 'real-time' delivery of online learning activities; (ii) asynchronous online tutor-supported learning; (iii) external visits and Work-Based Learning; and (iv) guided independent study⁴⁴;

⁴³ Where one academic credit equates to 10 Notional Learning Hours.

⁴⁴ Further detail is provided in the Module Specification template at www.edgehill.ac.uk/services/E-Val/.

- An assessment strategy, mapped directly to the module learning outcomes enables them to be demonstrated by students. Assessment tasks are described within the following broad categories: (i) coursework, (ii) examination, and (iii) practical;
- Indicative module content and learning resources (including teaching staff⁴⁵ and up-to-date reading lists) are appropriate to the module's rationale and support students' achievement of the learning outcomes;
- Any pre- or co-requisites for study of the module are clearly stated⁴⁶;
- For joint and major/ minor awards, the addition of a new module does not undermine the required division of credit;
- (For a module contributing to an existing programme) There is sufficient evidence of appropriate consultation with students, typically via minutes from a Programme Board or Student- Staff Consultative Forum; and,
- (For a module contributing to an academic partnership) There is due consideration of any resources needed, including staff delivering the content, for delivery of the module with the partner. Any updates needed to the Delivery Plan⁴⁷ should also be considered.

New modules for standalone delivery, or for addition to an existing programme, do not require APC Development Consent; however, modules to be delivered as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)⁴⁸ must be notified to APC before proceeding to Faculty approval.

Technical Note for Modular Provision: The addition of a module to an existing programme, either as an option or in substitution for another module, will necessitate modification of the receiving programme. This is usually a **Minor Programme Modification**. The minor modification process is delegated to Faculties, therefore the approval of new modules resulting in a minor programme modification are often conflated within a single Faculty process. However, if the addition of a new module requires a change to the validated Programme Learning Outcomes, the proposal must be referred for **Major Programme Modification** (which is carried out centrally). Processes for Minor and Major Programme Modification are described in a later section.

⁴⁵ Appropriateness of staffing is confirmed via receipt and consideration of the module leader's CV.

⁴⁶ Which may include completion of an associated module at the same or a different level or Recognition of Prior Certificated or Experiential Learning. Note: pre-requisite modules identified at the point of module approval must be undertaken prior to students undertaking linked modules, however condonement of marginal failure remains available unless the pre-requisite has been specified as Core.

⁴⁷ A Delivery Plan is a systematic and comprehensive record of the responsibilities that are retained by the University and those that are delegated to another organisation in the management and delivery of partner-delivered provision. See Chapter 5.

⁴⁸ MOOCs are aimed at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the internet. Courses are typically free and tend not to offer academic credit. See Chapter 6.

Faculty Approval Panel Constitution

Where module approval takes place in Faculties, **Panels must include (as a minimum):**

1. An external academic subject expert⁴⁹ as follows:
 - *(For standalone modules or modules for use in new programmes or in new subjects)* an independent external subject expert⁵⁰; or
 - *(For a module contributing to an existing programme or portfolio of cognate subject modules)* the current external examiner.
2. An appropriate level of VASP representation which must include a VASP Chair.
3. One VASP member of another Faculty, typically as a standing member of a Faculty module approval panel.
4. *(For a module to be delivered in blended or online mode)* Internal specialist expertise in learning technologies⁵¹

For standalone modules delivered in partnership with other organisations such as NHS or private training providers, additional approval requirements⁵² apply and proposers should consult the Faculty's lead for academic partnerships.

On completion of the approval process, the module is:

- Approved unconditionally; or
- Approved with conditions and/ or recommendations; or
- Referred for further development by the proposing department.

A report is produced by the Panel secretary, which details the key considerations of the Panel (as noted in the previous section), the agreed outcome and confirmation that any conditions of approval have been met. The Chair's approved report is submitted to the Faculty Board (or designated committee), which retains oversight of the process on behalf of the Faculty. Institutional oversight is by AQEC through receipt of the relevant Faculty committee minutes. Module approval is notified by the Faculty via the PVM email group, and to partner organisations where applicable, and the module's status is changed from University Draft to Approved on the E-Val database⁵³. **Once approved, modules are subject to review and re-validation aligned with the Curriculum Review⁵⁴ of the host department's programmes.** If, by exception, Faculty approval is time-limited and a module's expiry date is before the next scheduled curriculum review, separate arrangements for review/ re-validation will be made by the Faculty. Any variations in approval period and arrangements

⁴⁹ Normally senior academic subject experts of other HEIs.

⁵⁰ Independent external experts have no direct association with the proposing team e.g., as a consultant or external examiner, research collaborator or validation panel member within the previous five years. For more details see Key Guidance Documents on the GQASC Wiki – [“Preparing for Validation: A Guide for Panels and Course Teams”](#). The subject expert would be eligible to later serve as an external panel member for any associated programme validation.

⁵¹ Typically, a University SOLSTICE Fellow www.edgehill.ac.uk/solstice/ or a Learning Technologist based in Learning Services, these may be existing VASP members or co-opted specifically for the event.

⁵² See Chapter 5.

⁵³ Accessed via www.edgehill.ac.uk/services/E-Val/.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 3.

for separate re-approval must be clearly recorded in the report and notified by the Faculty via the PVM e-mail group.

Year of Study Approval

Medicine, Nursing and certain other subjects in the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine utilise a non-modular structure in which student learning is developed thematically within 120-credit Years of Study. Year of Study Specifications contain In-Year Learning Outcomes which are mapped directly to assessments. Programme structures based on Years of Study, rather than modules, **must be approved through Institution-level validation** as part of a complete programme/ award.

Optional Modules

Optional Modules are offered within most programmes to provide an element of choice and variety and do not form part of the compulsory curriculum requirements for the award. Where they are available, students select their options annually for each academic year of study. Optional Modules may be either:

- **‘Defined Options’** – elective subject modules listed by name within Programme Specifications and **mapped by code to the Programme Learning Outcomes**. Where defined options include Core (unconsonable) modules, this should be flagged in the Programme Structure pathway column of the programme specification and explained within the Student ‘Learning Journey’ narrative.
- **‘Flexible Options’** – sourced from a ‘pool’ of modules that extends beyond the immediate subject area but has some affinity with it, for example a selection of Continuing Professional Development modules with general application to health and social care practitioners⁵⁵. **Flexible Options are not listed by name within Programme Specifications** and may be block-mapped to a generic Programme Learning Outcome related to the ‘enhancement of (professional) practice through the development of additional knowledge or skills’.
- **‘Free Electives’**⁵⁶ – up to 20 credits per FHEQ level, sourced from the same or another subject area in substitution for a Defined Option (above). At **level 4, choice is restricted to foreign language study modules** which may be defined in Programme Specifications and mapped to the main Programme Learning Outcomes⁵⁷. **Free Electives at levels 5 and 6 are not normally defined in Programme Specifications** due to the potentially wide choice available, and Programme Specifications contain a standard statement on the permitted number of credits that may be substituted. Students complete a **Free Elective Application Form**⁵⁸ which enables consideration of any pre- or co-requisites as well as other potential restrictions such as Disclosure and Barring Service clearance; issues with timetabling or non-standard delivery modes/patterns; impact on subject balance within combined honours programmes; timing of assessment boards, and availability of in-year re-assessment; or any PSRB-

⁵⁵ www.edgehill.ac.uk/health/cpd-modules/?tab=search-for-a-cpd-module.

⁵⁶ See Academic Regulations section C5.2.

⁵⁷ Typically, those associated with ‘employability’.

⁵⁸ Available from the Faculty Academic Governance and Quality Manager, or equivalent role.

related matters⁵⁹. Approval of a student's choice of Free Elective is normally the responsibility of their programme leader following consultation with the 'receiving' module leader.

Note: The availability of Optional Modules varies from year to year and is subject to achieving the minimum student numbers. This means that not all options may be available in any given year which is notified to prospective and current students in line with Competition and Markets Authority guidelines⁶⁰.

Minor Module Modification

Faculties may make minor modifications to existing modules using processes described in their Faculty Quality Statements⁶¹, which **as a minimum** will require:

- Supporting comments from the current external examiner (at FHEQ level 5 and above⁶²).
- (For a module contributing to an existing programme) Evidence of consultation with student representatives, typically via a Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum⁶³. This should include minutes capturing the subsequent discussion and decisions made.
- A report of the modification's approval to the Faculty Board (or designated committee).

Minor modifications to modules may include:

- a) A minor change to the module's title⁶⁴ (on condition that it remains appropriate to the module's rationale and learning outcomes); or
- b) Changes to module pre-/ co-requisites; or
- c) Changes to Intended Learning Outcomes; or
- d) Changes to the described teaching and assessment strategies, including individual assessment tasks.

The following changes normally require validation of a new module:

- Any change to the module's academic rationale; or

⁵⁹ For example, specific requirements pertaining to the assessment of PSRB standards and competencies or potential impact on PSRB-monitored Student-Staff Ratios (SSRs).

⁶⁰ See '[Consumer Law Advice for Higher Education Providers](#)' (2023).

⁶¹ See Chapter 1.

⁶² Also level 3 STEM and Arts, Humanities and Creative Arts Foundation Years, Fastrack: Preparation for HE, and level 4 of Foundation Degrees.

⁶³ Where no Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum is scheduled consultation with students should be undertaken through alternative means, e.g. by email or the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

⁶⁴ Requires a new module code, available from the Academic Registry. Changes of module title and code resulting from minor module modification do not count towards the credit threshold for triggering a Minor Modifications Review (see below) **except** where the module's academic rationale or intended learning outcomes have also changed such that the module could be considered 'new'.

- Change of FHEQ level and/ or credit value; or
- Significant change to the module's title, learning outcomes or teaching and assessment strategies such that the external examiner and/ or module approval panel deem this to warrant the validation of a new module⁶⁵.

Minor module modifications are notified by the Faculty via the PVM email group, and to partner delivery organisations where applicable, and the module's status on E-Val is changed from University Draft to Approved. Institutional oversight is by AQEC via receipt of the relevant Faculty committee minutes.

Note: The following changes do **not** require formal module modification:

- Names of module leaders and staff involved in delivery (recognising that beyond module approval, teaching staff allocations will change over time and be managed by the host department with appropriate Faculty oversight).
- Balance of scheduled learning activities, placement and guided independent study hours (**however** see 'cumulative impact of module changes', below).
- Indicative content (as long as it remains consistent with the module's academic rationale and learning outcomes).
- Books, journals and other learning resources (which are updated annually in module handbooks and/ or online reading lists, or when modules are next formally modified or re-validated).

Minor module modifications will normally have been completed before the end of the academic session (year) preceding their implementation, and module leaders should consult the University's timeline for curriculum development and modification and refer any queries to their Faculty Quality Officer. Only in exceptional circumstances⁶⁶ will Faculties consider in-year modifications to modules which in all cases must have been finalised no later than the end of the semester preceding the module's delivery.

Faculty approval panels consider the **cumulative impact of module changes** on the balance between different types of learning activities including classroom-based and online learning, work placements or field trips, and guided independent study; or different modes of assessment such as coursework, written examinations and practical skills tests. These aspects of a programme of study are considered material to the choices made by students at the point of application, and to the contract entered into by them at entry for the lifetime of their programme. Faculties remain alert to any significant shifts, particularly in the ratio of tutor contact time to independent study, a reduction or removal of placements, or increased use of assessment by examination, which are consulted on with current students and notified to prospective students through the designated communication channels (see footnotes 26 and 27 above).

⁶⁵ In the **Faculty of Arts & Sciences** all changes to module titles follow the process for new module approval as described earlier.

⁶⁶ For example, in response to external examiner recommendations.

Minor Modifications to Years of Study

The type and volume of change to a 120-credit Year of Study (YoS) can vary from minor to more substantial. Due to the amount of credit involved, delegated authority to make minor modifications is restricted.

Faculties may make selected minor modifications to Years of Study (YoS) using processes described in their Faculty Quality Statements⁶⁷. **As a minimum the process will include:**

- Supporting comments from the current external examiner (at FHEQ level 5 and above⁶⁸).
- Evidence of consultation with student representatives, typically via a Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum⁶⁹. This should include letter or email correspondence explaining the change and any corresponding minutes capturing the subsequent discussion and decisions made.
- A report of the modification's approval to the Faculty Board (or designated committee).
- Updating of the Year of Study Specification

The Faculty may carry out the following minor modifications to an existing Year of Study:

- a) A minor change to a YoS title⁷⁰ (on condition that it remains appropriate to the rationale and learning outcomes); or
- b) Simultaneous minor changes to the in-year learning outcomes of one YoS (on condition that the PLOs remain unaffected). Note: Except for the MBCHB⁷¹, this will be simultaneous changes to one FHEQ level; or
- c) Simultaneous minor changes to individual assessment tasks of one YoS (on condition that the PLOs remain unaffected). Note: Except for the MBCHB, this will be simultaneous changes to one FHEQ level;

The following changes normally require Institutional-level validation of a new YoS⁷²:

- Any change affecting the academic rationale of a YoS;
- Any change affecting the PLOs;
- A change of FHEQ level and/ or credit value;
- Significant simultaneous changes to the title, in-year learning outcomes, validated assessment tasks or teaching and learning strategies, such that the external examiner

⁶⁷ See Chapter 1.

⁶⁸ Also, level 4 of Foundation Degrees.

⁶⁹ Where no Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum is scheduled consultation with students should be undertaken through alternative means, e.g., by email or the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

⁷⁰ Requires a new year of study code, available from the Academic Registry. Changes to YoS title and code only do not count towards the credit threshold for triggering a Minor Modifications Review (see below).

⁷¹ MBCHB comprise two YoS at FHEQ level 6 totalling 240 credits.

⁷² Either a major modification or re-validation depending on the volume and type of change required.

and/ or faculty approval panel and /or the Head of Quality deem to warrant the validation of a new YoS;

Minor modifications to YoS are notified by the Faculty via the PVM email group, and to partner delivery organisations where applicable, and the YoS's status on E-Val is changed from University Draft to Approved. Institutional oversight is by AQEC via receipt of the relevant Faculty committee minutes.

Note: The following changes do **not** require formal YoS modification:

- Names of YoS leader/s and staff involved in delivery (recognising that beyond approval, teaching staff allocations will change over time and be managed by the department with appropriate Faculty oversight).
- Balance of scheduled learning activities, placement and guided independent study hours.
- Indicative content (as long as it remains consistent with the YoS's academic rationale and in-year learning outcomes).
- Books, journals and other learning resources (which are updated annually in handbooks and/ or online reading lists, or when YoS are next formally modified or re-validated).

Minor modifications to YoS will normally have been completed before the end of the academic session (year) preceding their implementation.

All YoS leaders should refer any queries relating to proposed changes to YoS to their Faculty Quality Officer at their earliest convenience, who will provide expert advice and liaise with GQASC regarding process, if required.

PROGRAMME MODIFICATION

Once validated, programmes/ awards remain in continuous approval until their next scheduled Curriculum Review (or standalone re-validation). Modification processes enable established curricula, which is in delivery⁷³, to be refreshed or otherwise adjusted between formal review points to enhance the learner experience and maintain currency and continued alignment with academic subject benchmarks and professional standards. **However**, such 'in-cycle' changes must also be monitored to ensure they do not compromise the validated programme aims and learning outcomes (sometimes referred to as 'incremental drift') or undermine the contract entered into with students at the point of entry⁷⁴. The University has categorised the modifications that may be made to a programme during its lifetime with associated approval procedures designed to safeguard the integrity of the validated

⁷³ Only exceptionally, will validated programmes be modified prior to their first delivery.

⁷⁴ See '[Consumer Law Advice for Higher Education Providers](#)' (2023).

qualification award. Faculties notify all material programme changes to current and prospective students through the designated communication channels⁷⁵.

Material Changes

The following aspects of a programme of study are considered material to the choices made by students at the point of application, and to the contract entered into by them at entry for the lifetime of their programme:

- Course title and final award
- Awarding body/ institution (normally Edge Hill University)
- (For prospective students) Entry standards or entry requirements (see also below)
- Course length
- Location and mode of study (Edge Hill University or academic partner organisation; delivery via classroom, hybrid, online or blended learning⁷⁶)
- Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body accreditation (where applicable)
- Core/ Compulsory modules
- Any advertised Optional modules⁷⁷
- Modifications to Years of Study (for non-modular curricula)
- Overall method(s) of course delivery including balance of face-to-face learning (lectures, seminars, tutorials), online learning, placements and guided independent study
- Overall method(s) of course assessment including balance of coursework, written examinations and practical skills tests

The following sections describe the processes for effecting changes to any of the above which are differentiated by (i) **locus of approval**, i.e., in Faculties or by an Institution-level validation panel; and (ii) **student consultation and, in limited circumstances, individual written consent** which must be evidenced before the modification may proceed to approval. In respect of major programme modifications or re-validations affecting current students, APC formally records the requirement for student consultation and/ or consent as described elsewhere in this chapter while Institutional validation panels receive explicit evidence and provide assurance of same via their reports to AQEC.

Entry Standards and Entry Requirements

Entry standards for admission to an undergraduate programme are defined typically by previous level 3 qualifications that applicants must have successfully completed prior to entry (A-level, BTEC National Diploma, Access to HE Diploma) and the UCAS entry points range agreed at validation by which offers are made to applicants during the standard UCAS recruitment cycle, i.e., prior to Clearing. Entry standards also comprise GCSE English Language at minimum Grade 4 (or equivalent level 2 qualification), and IELTS⁷⁸ scores for non-native speakers of English. **Changes to entry standards constitute major programme modifications**

⁷⁵ See footnotes 26 and 27 above.

⁷⁶ See footnote 11 above.

⁷⁷ See 'Optional Modules', above.

⁷⁸ International English Language Testing System www.ielts.org - see Academic Regulations F2.4.

which require summary approval by the APC. However, changes to validated level 3 qualification 'preferences' do not constitute a major modification.

Entry requirements for both undergraduate and taught post-graduate programmes are described in Programme Specifications, such as desirable⁷⁹ level 3 subject knowledge and skills, evidence of previous work-related learning, e.g., a portfolio, or additional admissions arrangements such as selection tests, auditions and interviews. These may be modified without reference to APC on condition that the Programme Specifications are updated to reflect them.

In line with age discrimination legislation the University makes no stipulation with respect to the age of candidates for entry, however the admission of students under 18 at the time of enrolment may be prohibited where it is a requirement of a professional body which is exempted under age discrimination legislation⁸⁰, or where a programme team exceptionally demonstrates at validation that the curriculum and/ or available support make it inappropriate. Any proposed age restriction should be clearly indicated in the Entry Requirements section of the Programme Specification and a detailed justification provided in the Programme Rationale section of the Part B validation document (to include a link to the University's under-18 policy⁸¹).

Minor Programme Modification – Modular Provision Only

Using processes defined in their Faculty Quality Statements, Faculties may make minor modifications to existing programmes/awards. Faculties may add new or existing modules to programmes or removal of Faculty processes for the approval of minor programme modifications will require **as a minimum**:

- An initial proposal containing a written justification (rationale) evidencing the demonstrable benefits of the modification to students and any associated drivers, e.g. changes to national subject benchmarks or professional body (PSRB) standards or feedback from students and/or industry or individual employers.
- Supporting comments from the programme's external examiner.
- Engagement of at least one VASP member of another Faculty, typically as a standing member of the Faculty's approval panel/ committee.
- Evidence of consultation with students, typically via a Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum⁸². This should include letter or email correspondence explaining the change and any corresponding minutes capturing the subsequent discussion and decisions made

⁷⁹ 'Desirable' or 'preferred' level 3 qualifications are validated by exception and only when accompanied by a strong rationale. Note: Applicants are equally as likely to be considered with or without these preferred subjects at Level 3.

⁸⁰ Academic Regulations F2.9

⁸¹ Appendix 5 of the Admissions Policy www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/admissions-policy/.

⁸² See Chapter 6. Where no Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum is scheduled, consultation with students should be undertaken through alternative means e.g., by email or the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

- A review of the current and draft revised Programme Specifications to explicitly confirm that:
 - the validated Programme Learning Outcomes will not be impacted by the proposed modification.
 - the validated Programme Learning Outcomes remain achievable (evidenced by reviewing the ‘mapping’ of modules (or years of study/validated assessment tasks for non-modular provision) to PLOs.
 - that modifications to joint and major/ minor awards do not undermine the required division of credit.
- A report of the modification’s approval to the Faculty Board (or designated committee).
- Updating of the Programme Specification.

Minor programme modifications are notified by the Faculty via the PVM email Group and where applicable to partner delivery organisations, and the status of the updated Programme Specification on E-Val is changed from Validation Draft to Approved. Institutional oversight is by AQEC via receipt of the relevant Faculty committee minutes. Once completed, Faculties notify prospective students of any changes to advertised modules using the designated communication channels⁸³.

Major Programme Modification

The process of Major Programme Modification is reserved for the consideration of proposed changes to:

- Programme title and award title(s)
- Programme aims
- Programme Learning Outcomes
- Mode of delivery⁸⁴
-

⁸³ See footnotes 26 and 27 above.

⁸⁴ For example, a change from full-time to part-time delivery, or from Present in Person (classroom-based) to blended or distance learning. Changes to *delivery pattern*, e.g., moving a module from one semester to another or changing the pace of module delivery from one semester to year-long do not require formal modification. For additional guidance, please consult GQASC.

- Entry Standards, i.e. any change to validated level 2 or 3 entry qualifications⁸⁵ (which includes UCAS tariff point ranges⁸⁶) or overall IELTS score⁸⁷
- For non-modular curricula⁸⁸:
 - Significant changes to the title, in-year learning outcomes and validated assessment tasks which will affect the PLOs;
 - Significant simultaneous changes to the title, in-year learning outcomes, validated assessment tasks or teaching and learning strategies such that the external examiner and/ or faculty approval panel and /or the Head of Quality deem to warrant the validation of a new YoS;
 - Except for Level 6 of the MBCHB⁸⁹, simultaneous changes to more than one YoS per validated programme;
- For Modular curricula:
 - Simultaneous replacement of between half and two-thirds of the Core/Compulsory credit at any FHEQ level⁹⁰.
- The addition of a new pathway award formed out of alternative modules that constitute no more than a third of the credit at any FHEQ level⁹¹.

The host department completes an Initial Proposal for Major Modification of an Existing Programme (IPM)⁹² which the Faculty submits to APC for approval to proceed to the next available Major Modifications Panel (MMP). Supporting documentation is dependent on the nature and scale of the modification and precise requirements will be advised by GQASC, however in all cases it should include:

⁸⁵ For example, those justified at validation in addition the minimum entry qualifications specified in section F2 of the Academic Regulations.

⁸⁶ **Entry tariff ranges**, in which offers can be made at any point in the UCAS cycle, are set at validation. Once validated, UCAS points ranges may require adjustment, for example to take account of current market conditions. Proposed changes to entry tariff ranges constitute a major modification requiring the approval of APC. Proposals to reduce entry points consider any implications for student induction and academic support, while increases are justified by a suitable market rationale. Heads of Department may use discretion to vary entry requirements during Clearing, based on (i) whether applicants are existing offer-holders requiring compensation or are entering via Clearing; and (ii) any additional support to be put in place by the department.

⁸⁷ Any proposed change (increase or decrease) to a validated overall IELTS score is a change to entry standards and therefore constitutes a major modification requiring the approval of APC (following the submission of a rationale and information on student support arrangements). No IELTS score can be lower than the minimum stated in Academic Regulations (see F2.4).

⁸⁸ Proposals for major modifications to Years of Study are triaged by the Head of Quality in advance of APC, and any requirement for an Initial Proposal determined on a case-by-case basis. APC is advised of the recommended process of approval which may include granting Faculties permission to carry out the modification and report the outcome directly to AQEC.

⁸⁹ MBCHB comprise two YoS at FHEQ level 6 totalling 240 credits.

⁹⁰ Proposals to change more than two-thirds of the Core/ Compulsory credit at any FHEQ level are managed through standalone re-validation – see ‘Re-validation’, above.

⁹¹ New pathways formed out of alternative modules that constitute **more than** a third of the credit at each FHEQ level require standalone re-validation – see ‘Re-validation’, above.

⁹² Via E-Val at www.edgehill.ac.uk/services/E-Val/.

- The IPM form, containing a justification (rationale) evidencing the demonstrable benefits of the modification to students and any associated drivers, e.g., changes to national subject benchmarks or professional body (PSRB) standards or feedback from students and/ or industry or individual employers.
- The current and draft revised Programme Specification – to confirm that the validated Programme Learning Outcomes remain achievable (typically evidenced by the ‘mapping’ of modules to PLOs).
- Any new or amended Module/Year of Study Specifications requiring approval as part of the Major Programme Modification.
- Supporting comments from the programme’s external examiner.
- Evidence of consultation with students through a Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum⁹³. This should include letter or email correspondence explaining the change and any corresponding minutes capturing the subsequent discussion and decisions made (see also below).

Consultation/Consent Requirements

Consultation with current students should start in the classroom, and at Student-Staff Consultative Fora and/ or Programme Boards where student representatives are in attendance, and later formalised by letter or email presented in a ‘student-friendly’ style. Written communication should include an overview of the proposed changes, the reason for making the changes and why they are beneficial to learners. In all cases, students should be allowed reasonable time to consider and respond to the proposed changes. Nil responses will usually be treated as tacit agreement, however, should a majority⁹⁴ be achieved by this means the department will exercise caution and seek to obtain a more positive mandate for its proposals. **MMPs will expect to see, upon request, evidence of the consultation and/or consent process undertaken by programme teams.** Typically, this includes letter or email correspondence explaining the change and any corresponding minutes capturing the subsequent discussion and decisions made.

Major modifications to undergraduate programmes are normally ‘phased in’ commencing with the next level 4 intake, thereby not affecting current students, however simultaneous or ‘block’ implementation of two or more years / levels of study may occasionally be proposed. This typically affects current students, in which case written consent is also required as detailed below.

For block implementation (no change to award titles) - departments must evidence individual written consent by a simple majority of all affected students.

For block implementation (including a change in award title) - departments must evidence written consent from all affected students (100%).

⁹³ Where no Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum is scheduled consultation with students should be by alternative means, e.g. by email or the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment.

⁹⁴ Where majority consent is required for multiple years/cohorts this is necessary for each year group rather than overall.

The MMP considers the proposed modification and its impact on the validated programme and either:

- Approves it unconditionally; or
- Approves with conditions and/or recommendations; or
- Refers back to the Faculty for further development. Where the extent of the modification is judged to have exceeded the scope of Major Programme Modification as defined above, standalone re-validation is likely to be advised.

A report of the MMP is produced by the Secretary and received for approval by AQEC at the next available meeting. Approval is notified by the AQEC Secretary via the PVM email group (and by Faculties to partner delivery organisations, where applicable) and the status of the revised Programme Specification on E-Val changed from Validation Draft to Approved. Faculties notify prospective students of any changes to the advertised programme/ award title, entry standards, modules/ year(s) of study, balance of learning and assessment activities⁹⁵, course duration or mode or location of study using the designated communication channels⁹⁶.

PROGRAMME WITHDRAWAL

The decision to withdraw a programme is ultimately an executive matter, guided by collegial and consultative processes and having due regard to the interests of current students. Programme withdrawal may legitimately be preceded by a period in which the programme remains 'live' but has been unable to recruit, or where recruitment has already been suspended⁹⁷.

The basis of proposals for programme withdrawal may typically be one or more of the following:

- A decline in student demand over a period of time to the point where the programme's continued viability is at risk;
- A reduction in funding or funded student numbers;
- Documented concerns over academic standards or quality that pose a long-term risk to the programme beyond any immediate action taken to mitigate them.

If the decision is taken to formally withdraw a programme, an application is submitted to AQEC for approval. Specific requirements for the closure of programmes delivered by or with academic partner organisations are detailed in Chapter 5.

⁹⁵ Any significant shift in the ratio of tutor contact hours to independent study, reduction or removal of student placements/ exchanges or increased use of assessment by written examination.

⁹⁶ See footnotes 26 and 27 above.

⁹⁷ Where recruitment has been suspended for two complete academic cycles the host Faculty instigates a review before enrolment can re-commence – see Chapter 1, 'Faculty Quality Statements'.

Formal applications to withdraw a programme typically initiate a 2-stage process consisting of:

- Stage 1: the cessation of recruitment while current students are supported to completion of their studies during a defined teach-out period.
- Stage 2: Programme closure, which only takes place once all students have completed on programme and it can be formally closed on University systems.

If provision is withdrawn while students remain on programme the University will apply a suitable 'teach-out' strategy. Applications must therefore include a detailed exit plan demonstrating how the continuity of study for affected students will be preserved and how the quality of the students' learning experience will be maintained. In its exit plan the Faculty must also include:

- Consideration of the University's [Student Protection Plan](#) and whether the circumstances of the proposed closure will trigger its implementation – where this is the case, the Faculty must provide a details of how the Plan will be implemented including relevant timeframes and student communication plans.
- An assessment of the likelihood of the University's Refunds and Compensation Policy being triggered.

Formal withdrawal procedures are not applied to a programme that is being replaced by new cognate provision (i.e., through revalidation of existing provision) which is identified clearly in the successor programme's ADC and confirmed at validation.

Procedure

- a) Completion of a Programme Withdrawal Request Form⁹⁸ by the Head of Department, containing:
 - Programme title and programme code.
 - Date of original validation.
 - Rationale for the programme's withdrawal.
 - Confirmation of the date from which the programme will be closed to recruitment.
 - Expected end-date, i.e., completion of the final cohort (full and/ or part-time)⁹⁹.
 - Evaluation of impact on the University's portfolio (where student choice is being reduced).
 - Description of measures to be taken to safeguard programme quality and standards during any teach-out period, including staffing and resources.
 - Evidence of student and staff consultation (see below).
- a) Wider consultation as necessary, e.g., with GQASC or Academic Registry.
- b) Consideration of the proposal by the Faculty Quality Committee and/ or Faculty Board with Chair's signature of approval.
- c) Consideration and approval of the proposal at a full meeting of AQEC.

⁹⁸ Available on the [Templates](#) page of the GQASC Wiki.

⁹⁹ Not including interruptions to study or repeat years without attendance.

- d) **Notification of the programme's closure to new admissions via the PVM email group.**
- e) Removal of the programme from the University prospectus and UCAS listings.
- f) Clear communication to current students of the decision to close the programme to new entrants and how programme standards and quality will be maintained during the teach-out period.

In order to permit sufficient discussion and consultation the minimum time that should elapse between (a) and (d) above is usually four weeks. In normal circumstances, a proposal to close a programme will not be made less than eighteen months before the date when recruitment is intended to cease so that the print prospectus reflects the University's position accurately. However, in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to propose closure of a programme within a shorter timescale.

Implications of closure on the external examiner's period of appointment. A programme may close before the end of an external examiner's period of appointment. In such cases, the examiner will be formally notified by the External Examiners Administrator, acting on advice from the relevant Faculty.

'Closed' programmes continue to undergo Annual Monitoring/ Curriculum Review during teach-out until the final cohort has completed, and Faculties ensure their continuing currency by enacting module or programme modifications as necessary. Where an assessment board has required that a student repeat a year without attendance and their programme has since closed, the relevant modules will remain available for assessment towards the student's intended award. Where a student repeats a year with attendance or returns to study following a period of interruption and their original modules are no longer in delivery, the Faculty ensures that suitable alternative modules¹⁰⁰ are available for the student to complete their intended award. **Faculties keep copies of all written communications about the closure sent to affected students.**

Closed programmes are removed from the University's List of Named Awards¹⁰¹ once the final cohort has completed. Where necessary, prospective students are notified of the programme's closure through the designated communication channels¹⁰².

PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

In certain circumstances validation panels are required to approve programme-specific operational procedures that are guided by, and consistent with, the Academic Regulations; for example, procedures relating to student registration, assessment and progression as described in the operational annexe to the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) Student Handbook. Such procedures will be included with the validation report and may subsequently be modified using the process described in the Faculty Quality Statement.

¹⁰⁰ Which may involve the use of Student-Initiated Credit – see Chapter 7.

¹⁰¹ See Academic Regulations Appendix 3.

¹⁰² See footnotes 26 and 27 above.

NON-CREDIT BEARING PROVISION

All credit-bearing programmes and modules are subject to the procedures for approval described elsewhere in this Chapter. The University may also seek to approve non-credit bearing provision, e.g. uncertificated bespoke training courses developed on behalf of employers. Faculties design and implement their own approval processes for such provision without reference to APC or AQEC, on condition that:

- The approval process is described in the Faculty Quality Statement;
- It contains explicit consideration of course content, aims and outcomes; teaching and learning; student support; staff and resources; organisation and quality assurance; and,
- The Faculty maintains a register of all non-credit bearing provision approved through this process.

HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Approval processes for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships do not differ significantly from those utilised for 'mainstream' degree provision as described in this chapter. However, in addition to national academic and professional reference points and the University's own Academic Regulations, apprenticeship programmes must also comply with the wider regulatory frameworks that govern them, most notably the relevant Apprenticeship Standards and Assessment Plan and requirement for independent End-Point Assessment (EPA). Detailed guidance on the approval of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships is provided in Chapter 5 of this Handbook.

Table 4: 'Processes for Module and Programme Approval (simplified)'

Approval of a new module	Minor Module Modification	Addition or replacement of a module(s) in an existing programme (Minor Programme Modification)¹⁰³
Initial proposal (Faculty)	Proposal for 'Minor Modification to an Existing Module' (Faculty)	Initial Proposal (Faculty)
Documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Specification • Module tutor CV(s) • External comments¹⁰⁴ 	Documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Specification • External examiner comments (level 5 and upwards)¹⁰⁵ • Evidence of consultation with current students¹⁰⁶ 	Documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module Specification(s) • Programme Specification • External examiner comments • Evidence of consultation with current students
Faculty validation	Faculty validation	Faculty validation
Final approval (Faculty) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Val updated • PVM email 	Final approval (Faculty) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Val updated • PVM email 	Final approval (Faculty) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Val updated • PVM email • Notification to prospective students

¹⁰³ Where a new module is being approved for addition to an existing programme the processes for (1) and (3) may be conflated.

¹⁰⁴ An independent subject expert for new provision, or the current external examiner where the module will contribute to an existing programme or portfolio.

¹⁰⁵ Also FHEQ level 3 for STEM and Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Foundation Years, Fastrack: Preparation for HE and level 4 of Foundation Degrees.

¹⁰⁶ Typically through a Programme Board or Student-Staff Consultative Forum attended by student course representatives. Where no Programme Board or SSCF is scheduled, consultation with students should be undertaken through alternative means e.g. by email or the Learning Edge Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Module re-approval	Approval of a new programme/re-validation of an existing programme	Major Programme Modification
Faculty review/re-validation	Application for Development Consent ¹⁰⁷ (Faculty to APC)	Initial Proposal for Major Modification (Faculty to APC)
Documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module Specification, including any proposed changes based on student and stakeholder feedback External examiner comments 	Documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part A Programme Specification; Part B Development & Delivery; Part C Module Specifications <u>Appendices - to include:</u> Staff CVs (all modules) Inventory of course-specific resources (where applicable) Mapping matrix of PLOs to Subject Benchmark Statement Evidence of student and employer involvement in development Sample Marking Criteria (For partner-delivered provision) Partner Audit Document; Delivery Agreement 	Documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Specification Module Specifications (if applicable) External examiner comments Evidence of consultation with current students
	Faculty approval	Faculty approval
	Institutional Validation (VASP)	Major Modifications Panel
Final approval (Faculty); E-Val updated, PVM Email	Final approval (AQEC); E-Val updated, PVM Email, Notification to prospective students.	Final approval (AQEC); E-Val updated, PVM Email, Notification to prospective students.

¹⁰⁷ Including (for re-validation) a written rationale, e.g. to align with changes to national subject benchmarks or professional standards, and justification of the benefits to students.

Minor Modification	Major Modification	Re-validation
Initial Proposal (Faculty)	Initial Proposal for Major Modification (Faculty to APC)	Application for Development Consent (Faculty to APC)
<p>Changes permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add or replace Optional Modules without limit; and/or Replace up to half of the credit derived from Core and Compulsory modules at each FHEQ level of the programme since its most recent scrutiny by VASP 	<p>Changes that trigger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme title and award title(s) Programme aims Programme Learning Outcomes Mode of delivery and delivery type Entry Standards <p>For modular curricula:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simultaneous replacement of between half and two thirds of the Core and Compulsory credit at each FHEQ level The addition of a new pathway award formed out of alternative modules that constitute no more than a third of the credit at any FHEQ level <p>For non-modular curricula:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant changes to the title, in-year learning outcomes and validated assessment tasks (each >50%) Significant changes to the teaching and learning strategies such that the Ext. Examiner and/ or Faculty approval panel and/ or Head of Quality deem this to warrant the validation of a new YoS 	<p>Changes that trigger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than two thirds of the Core and Compulsory credit at each FHEQ level is to be changed simultaneously

<p>Documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Proposal • Draft Part C Module Specification(s), including any proposed changes based on student and stakeholder feedback • Draft Part A Programme Specification • External examiner comments • Explicit evidence of student consultation 	<p>Documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Proposal for Major Modification (IPM) • The current and draft Part A Programme Specification(s) • Any new or amended Part C Module/ Year of Study Specifications • Supporting comments from the programme Ext. Examiner • Explicit evidence of student consultation 	<p>Documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part A Programme Specification; Part B Development & Delivery; Part C Module Specifications • <u>Appendices - to include:</u> • Report of Ext. Consultant to programme development • Evidence of student and employer involvement in development • Mapping matrix of PLOs to Subject Benchmark Statement • Sample Marking Criteria • Assessment Grid • Staff CVs (all modules) • Inventory of course-specific resources (where applicable) • Organisational chart for dept/ programme • Report of the existing external examiner • Provision replacement form • For all partner-delivered programmes additional paperwork is required as detailed in the Appendix Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals • For Higher Degree Apprenticeships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The relevant Assessment Standard and
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		<p>Assessment Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Matrix mapping the PLOs to the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours of the Apprenticeship Standard ● Faculty Approval Panel Report
Faculty approval	Major Modification Panel	Institutional Validation (VASP)
Final approval (Faculty); E-Val updated, PVM Email	Final approval (AQEC); E-Val updated, PVM Email, Notification to prospective students.	Final approval (AQEC); E-Val updated, PVM Email, Notification to prospective students.

Appendix: Validation and Audit Standing Panel (VASP)

Overseen by AQEC, VASP supports processes across the university's quality assurance activities such as validations, curriculum reviews and internal audits.

Eligibility to serve on the Standing Panel is through self-nomination supported by the Head of Department's¹⁰⁸ endorsement and subject to evidence of the following:

- (i) For academic staff, experience (at the University or elsewhere) of:
 - Curriculum development and programme management/design, and
 - Curriculum or teaching-related research and consultancy, and/or
 - Reviewing and enhancing the student learning experience, and/or
 - Operating quality assurance processes for taught academic provision.
- (ii) For academic-related support staff, experience (at the University or elsewhere) of:
 - Relevant management responsibility, and
 - Reviewing and enhancing the student learning experience, and/or
 - Operating quality assurance processes for taught academic provision.

VASP members are eligible to apply to become a Panel Chair following two years of practical experience as a VASP panel member or completion of two validation events (whichever is reached sooner) and on the additional demonstration of:

- Experience of academic quality assurance out with the University, typically gained by validation and review experience in another UK Higher Education Institution, appointment as an external academic reviewer, engagements with or on behalf of PSRBs, external examining or Ofsted inspection.

Applications are considered for approval by the Chair of VASP and those progressed are required to complete the following:

- Attendance at a Standing Panel Induction session, or appropriate Chair training.
- Observation at a validation event, or for prospective Chairs, shadow an existing Chair at an event.

The terms of membership of the Standing Panel are as follows:

- 1) The standard period of membership to the Standing Panel is two years.
- 2) All members of the Standing Panel are expected to actively engage and participate in validation and review activity for the duration of their membership. In practice, this entails making themselves available for a minimum two validation panels or one curriculum review panel per academic year.

¹⁰⁸ Heads of Department are expected to seek Standing Panel membership as part of their academic leadership role and continuing professional development.

- 3) Attendance at the annual Standing Panel Conference is not compulsory, however all members of the Standing Panel are expected to attend where possible to ensure that their knowledge of sector expectations and Institutional practice remains current.

Panels for validation and curriculum review are assigned by GQASC and are normally constituted as follows:

- Panel Chair – selected from eligible members of the Standing Panel on the basis of expressions of interest ensuring no conflict with the proposal under consideration.
- Secretary/Review Manager – Academic Quality and Standards Manager.
- 2 internal panel members - selected from eligible members of the Standing Panel on the basis of expressions of interest ensuring no conflict with the proposal.
- (For validation) One external academic subject expert who will be employed by a recognised UK higher education provider (see also below).
- (For curriculum review) Two external experts of whom at least one will be an academic subject expert employed by a recognised UK higher education provider and one may represent professional or employer interests.

Panels for validation, curriculum review or internal audits may be constituted according to specific knowledge and experience¹⁰⁹ and may also include internal co-options and external representation.

External panel members are nominated by proposing departments and approved by the Academic Quality and Standards Manager (on behalf of the Chair of VASP) on the basis of a written nomination which describes their employment and experience and affirms no conflict of interest with the proposal under consideration. Academic staff of Republic of Ireland higher education institutions may be considered on evidence of their knowledge and experience of the UK higher education system and familiarity with OfS's Conditions of Registration.

An annual update report of VASP membership and activity is provided to AQEC in order to fulfil its oversight responsibility for these processes and procedures.

Articulations Approval Panel (AAP)

The Articulations Approval Panel (AAP) is responsible to AQEC for:

- 1) Receiving and considering proposals for qualifications/programmes of external awarding organisations to be recognised for the purpose of providing articulation (entry with advanced standing) to Edge Hill University programmes according to procedures described in Chapter 5 of the University's Quality Management Handbook¹¹⁰.
- 2) Recommending approval of such proposals based on evidence of curriculum mapping and consideration of the external body's processes for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its own awards.

¹⁰⁹ E.g., experience of digital learning or academic partnerships.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/05-academic-partnerships.pdf>

Constitution:

- Chair – Chair of VASP
- Secretary – GQASC
- Up to three members of the Standing Panel - one from each Faculty of whom one may deputise for the Chair. At least two must have previous knowledge and experience of the approval of articulation arrangements.

A maximum of three AAP meetings per year are held, timed to report to the next available meeting of AQEC. Because entry with advanced standing is based on the principle of credit exemption rather than the award of credit, no externality is involved in the approval of articulation arrangements.

Curriculum Review Group (CRG)

The Curriculum Review Group (CRG) is responsible to AQEC for:

- 1) Establish that all taught curriculum in a department or other cognate grouping of programmes (planning units¹¹¹) is being actively refreshed and remains up-to-date and coherent by reviewing programme and module/year of study specifications in the context of key pieces of supporting evidence (which includes direct engagement with stakeholders); and,
- 2) Confirming that each programme's award title, aims and learning outcomes remain valid and achievable thus reaffirming the continuing currency of the curriculum for 5 years.

Constitution:

Panels for curriculum review are assigned by GQASC and are normally constituted as follows:

- Panel Chair – selected from eligible members of the Standing Panel on the basis of expressions of interest ensuring no conflict with the proposal under consideration.
- Secretary – normally an Academic Quality and Standards Manager.
- Senior Faculty representative – typically the Chair of the Faculty's Quality Committee or equivalent.
- 2 internal panel members - selected from eligible members of the Standing Panel on the basis of expressions of interest ensuring no conflict with the proposal.
- Two external experts of whom at least one will be an academic subject expert employed by a recognised UK higher education provider and one may represent professional or employer interests.

External panel members are nominated by proposing departments and approved by the Academic Quality and Standards Manager (on behalf of the Chair of VASP) on the basis of a written nomination which describes their employment and experience and affirms no conflict of interest with the proposal under consideration. Academic staff of Republic of Ireland higher

¹¹¹ See Chapter 4.

education institutions may be considered on evidence of their knowledge and experience of the UK higher education system and familiarity with OfS's Conditions of Registration.

Major Modifications Panel (MMP)

The Major Modifications Panel (MMP) is responsible to AQEC for:

- 1) Receiving and considering proposals for major modification of existing validated programmes according to procedures described in Chapter 4 of this Handbook.
- 2) Recommending approval of such proposals based on close scrutiny of programme specifications and other evidence to ensure that the standards set at validation are being maintained.

Constitution:

- Chair – selected from eligible members of the Standing Panel on the basis of expressions of interest ensuring no conflict with the proposal under consideration.
- Secretary – GQASC.
- Two members of the Standing Panel - selected on the basis of expressions of interest and ensuring no conflict of interest.

One MMP meeting will be held termly although this does not preclude the scheduling of further meetings to manage additional business. Externality is provided through the submission of written comments of external examiners.

Chapter 5

Academic Partnerships

Updated October 2023

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INTRODUCTION

Edge Hill University develops academic partnerships with a wide range of third-party organisations, from UK-based employers, colleges and awarding bodies to overseas higher education providers, for the delivery of modules or programmes leading to the award of university credit or qualifications, or the provision of learning opportunities including student work placements, international exchanges and arrangements for entry with advanced standing (articulation).

The University's procedures for managing the academic standards and quality of its academic partnerships are fully aligned with the Quality and Standards [Conditions B1 to B5](#) of the Office for Students' (OfS) [Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England](#), which includes the mandatory [Sector Recognised Standards](#)¹ and is informed by the Advice and Guidance on [Partnerships](#) contained within the [UK Quality Code](#) (2018).

Faculties develop academic partnerships in line with University's [Curriculum Strategy](#) and the [International Strategy](#) and ensure that planning proposals receive the required Faculty scrutiny, supported by due diligence and a business case as appropriate to the type (category) of partnership being considered. This chapter describes the principles associated with the approval, review and closure of different types of academic partnership. More detailed information on the operational processes and paperwork requirements can be found in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

Whilst the guidance within this chapter is most applicable to taught degrees, research collaborations where a partner organisation has any responsibility for the teaching, learning, assessment or supervision of an EHU research award, shall be categorised according to the partnership taxonomy. Processes for the approval, monitoring and management of such partnerships resides with the Graduate School and is governed by the research degree regulations.

THE TAXONOMY OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Academic partnership entails the delegation of certain activities normally conducted by the University to another organisation, most notably teaching, assessment and student support, although in all cases Edge Hill as the awarding body is ultimately responsible for academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities. The following categories of academic partnership have been established for which different approval, monitoring and review processes have been developed to mitigate the associated levels of academic and business risk:

¹ The 'Framework for Higher Education Qualifications' (QAA 2014) as adopted by the OfS.

Table 1: Taxonomy of partnership arrangements according to risk profile

Category		Sub-Category		Risk Level (Low, Medium, High; Variable)
A	Placements and Study Abroad²	A1	School-based training and other placements (ex. clinical) (UK)	L
		A3	Study Abroad and work placements (Overseas)	M
		A4	Clinical placements (UK)	V
		A5	Higher / Degree Apprenticeships	L
		A6	PGCE with Lead Partners	L
B	Outreach Learning Venues	B1	Outreach Learning Venues (UK)	L
		B2	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) venues	L
		B3	Outreach Learning Venues (Overseas)	L
C	Outreach Supported Learning Centres	C1	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)	M
		C2	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)	M
		C3	Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)	H
D	Credit-rating			M
E	Articulations	E1	Qualification recognition	M
		E2	Qualification recognition with a progression agreement	M
F	Delivery with a third party (including overseas delivery)	F1	Franchise (single modules)	H
		F2	Co-delivery	H
		F3	Franchise (whole programmes)	H
		F4	Validation	H
		F5	Joint awards	H

Modules or programmes delivered under a **franchise** arrangement (categories F1 or F3) are developed by the University for delivery wholly by a partner organisation. Modules or programmes within a **co-delivery** arrangement (F2) are developed by the University for joint delivery by the University and a partner organisation. Modules or programmes within a **validation** arrangement (F4) are developed and delivered wholly by a partner organisation but validated by the University, leading to the award of EHU credit and/ or qualifications

² Category A2 was formerly used for the management of ERASMUS partnerships and therefore is no longer in use.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities related to the development and support of Academic Partnerships. **Primary responsibility for partnerships resides with the relevant Faculties**, with expert input from other areas of the University as detailed below.

Table 2: Roles and responsibilities by partnership category

Category		Sub-category		Responsible Area(s)
A	Placements and Study Abroad	A1	School-based training and other placements (ex. clinical) (UK)	Faculties
		A3	Study Abroad and work placements (Overseas)	International Office / Faculties
		A4	Clinical placements (UK)	Faculties
		A5	Higher and Degree Apprenticeships	Faculties / Compliance Team
		A6	PGCE with Lead Partners	Faculties
B	Outreach Learning Venues	B1	Outreach Learning Venues (UK)	Faculties
		B2	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) venues	Faculties
		B3	Outreach Learning Venues (Overseas)	Faculties / International Office
C	Outreach Supported Learning Centres	C1	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)	Faculties / GQASC ³
		C2	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)	Faculties / GQASC
		C3	Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)	Faculties / International Office / GQASC
D	Credit-rating			Faculties / GQASC
E	Articulations	E1	Qualification recognition	Faculties / GQASC
		E2	Qualification recognition with a progression agreement	Faculties / GQASC
F	Delivery with a third party (including overseas delivery)	F1	Franchise (single modules)	GQASC / Faculties / International Office
		F2	Co-delivery	GQASC / Faculties / International Office
		F3	Franchise (whole programmes)	GQASC / Faculties / International Office
		F4	Validation	GQASC / Faculties / International Office
		F5	Joint awards	GQASC / Faculties / International Office

³ Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Case work team.

It is the responsibility of the proposing Faculty to identify an appropriate resource to support its academic partnerships, i.e. an Academic Partnership Lead based centrally within each Faculty, and individual Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors, based in the appropriate Department where each partnership is monitored and administered).

Faculty Partnership Lead

The role of the Faculty Partnership Lead, identified by the PVC Dean, includes the following:

- Determining processes for the approval, review and closure of category A and B partnerships and documenting them in the [Faculty Academic Quality Statement](#)⁴.
- Providing expert advice on partnership processes to academics developing partner provision and other colleagues as appropriate.
- Overseeing the operation of partnership provision in the Faculty, supporting Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors to fulfil their duties and arranging any training or advice as needed.
- Co-ordinating the required documentation for academic and business approval including arranging for the completion and signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.
- Co-ordinating the documentation required for delivery approval / validation events.
- Maintaining comprehensive records of all partnerships⁵, including any correspondence with partners or students and a record of current Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors.
- Negotiating with proposed partners in relation to their contract, with input from the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Faculty, or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC).
- Arranging the completion of relevant contractual documentation, including authorising signatures.
- Leading on the monitoring of partnerships, particularly through the Annual Review processes, identifying areas of risk and escalating or resolving these as appropriate.
- Supporting and organising Site Assessment and Site Visits
- Monitoring closure plans and associated actions, ensuring updates to the Faculty Quality Committee are submitted until all students complete.
- Supporting the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor to fulfil their role.
- Attending partner or delivery approval validation events where appropriate.

Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor

A role usually fulfilled by the relevant Programme Leader⁶, Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors (APLTs) are required for partnerships at category C and above and undertake the following responsibilities:

⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁵ Requirements to maintain a central record of partnerships are stipulated at the end of this chapter.

⁶ Except for category F4, where there is no equivalent EHU programme and therefore a separate Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor is required.

- Being the primary contact for liaison with the partner, fielding queries, resolving issues, ensuring that any course changes are communicated appropriately with the partner and ensuring that partner staff are informed of expectations for all aspects of delivery and assessment.
- Completing Site Visits and Site Assessment as required.
- Ensure delivery of the partnership provision remains appropriately aligned to the approved programme specification and Delivery Plan.
- Completing relevant documentation for initial approval and validation of a partner and any reapprovals and attending the relevant validation event.
- Completing the Annual Review form, in conjunction with other stakeholders and providing it to the partner for their comments.
- Completing the Closure Plan, negotiating a smooth and appropriate exit with the partner.
- Working closely with the Faculty Partnership Lead, seeking advice and support where necessary in the fulfilment of the role.
- Liaising with other relevant Programme Leaders where the partner's portfolio includes multiple programmes⁷.
- Where required, serving as a 'critical friend' to teaching staff, providing advice and support on University processes, teaching and assessment operations, student consultation and feedback, academic/ pastoral student support etc.

In the case of more complex or high-risk provision, an Internal Verifier may be appointed by the Faculty to support the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor and provide additional assurance. Where a subject is being delivered for which there is no direct equivalent within the University's portfolio, an External Verifier with appropriate discipline expertise may be appointed and remunerated by the Faculty (**Note:** this does not replace the requirement for an independent external examiner).

Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework (GQASC)

Oversight responsibility for the range of academic partnerships at the University resides with the Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Partnerships and Regulation) who is responsible for:

- Providing oversight of delegated partnership process responsibilities and operations in Faculties, particularly for those partnerships identified as presenting a higher risk.
- Advising on partnership quality assurance processes (category C+).
- Maintaining the [Register of Academic Partnerships](#).
- Supporting Site Assessment and Partner Visits as required.
- Organising a central repository for Academic Partnership documentation including contracts.
- Providing advice related to processes to support proposals brought forward for institutional approval, ensuring they align with institutional strategy.

⁷ Only one Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor is normally required per partner, with the expectation that they will liaise accordingly with other colleagues in the completion of the Annual Review paperwork.

- Co-ordinating the business and academic approval⁸ of category C+ partnerships.
- Reporting to Academic Board Committees and the Board of Governors with appropriate updates on the academic partnership portfolio.
- Producing the Institutional Annual Review Overview Report for Academic Partnerships⁹ to provide assurance regarding the ongoing quality and standards of partner provision, and to highlight any risks or institutional action required.
- Leading on the Annual Process Review¹⁰ for this chapter to determine any changes required to processes.

The International Office

The International Office, working in conjunction with Faculties, support the development and delivery of academic partnership provision and is responsible for:

- Managing the Study Abroad portfolio and all associated processes.
- Providing expert advice on international contexts, visas, contracts etc. to support the development of new partnerships and monitoring of existing partnerships.
- Production of country intelligence reports for overseas approval events.
- Completing initial due diligence checks for international partners, followed by more in-depth and comprehensive due diligence reports at a later stage which explicitly identify and categorise risks.
- Supporting Site Assessments as required.

The Compliance Team

The Compliance Team, based in Academic Registry, are responsible for supporting degree and higher apprenticeship provision (category A5). Their specific responsibilities include:

- Ensuring university compliance with the relevant central bodies, including the ESFA, Ofsted and the OfS, in relation to validated apprenticeship provision.
- Maintaining a central Register of Apprenticeship-Approved Employers.
- In conjunction with GQASC, overseeing the approval process for new apprenticeship-approved employers.
- In conjunction with GQASC, overseeing processes for the monitoring of apprenticeship delivery arrangements.
- Completing the appropriate due diligence checks for potential domestic partners, including approved Apprenticeship Employers.
- Supporting the Institutional Apprenticeship Group in its operation and implementation of the University Apprenticeship Strategy.

⁸ Submission to the DVC. Business approval is normally granted prior to any submissions to APC which form part of the formal academic approval (validation) process.

⁹ This is jointly authored by the Faculty Partnership Leads and the Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Partnerships and Regulation), and is received by AQEC for approval.

¹⁰ See Chapter 1.

- Arranging the completion of relevant contractual and delivery documentation with Approved Apprenticeship Employers.

CATEGORY A PARTNERSHIPS

A	Placement and Study Abroad	A1	School-based training, clinical and other placements (ex-clinical) (UK)
		A3	Study Abroad and work placements (Overseas)
		A4	Clinical placements (UK)
		A5	Degree and Higher Apprenticeships
		A6	PGCE with Lead Partners

This category covers placements, Study Abroad arrangements, including sandwich years and student exchanges, the delivery of degree and higher apprenticeships (including foundation awards such as the FDS Nursing Associate programme), and the lead partner route to achieve a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) with Qualified Teacher Status. Here the University delegates to a partner organisation limited responsibility for student learning, assessment and the student experience for which Faculties hold significant responsibilities. This generally takes place within a work-setting within designated parameters outlined in agreements with the employer. Responsibility for the determination of appropriate processes for the approval, review and closure of partnerships which fall under category A resides with the Faculties, International Team and Compliance Team.

Category A1-4 and A6 Processes

Placements

Placements form an important part of the University's curriculum and emphasis upon employability. Many awards provide curricular (credit-bearing) and/ or extra-curricular placements whereby students acquire knowledge and experience that help them to achieve the Programme Learning Outcomes and enhance their employability. Examples include:

- **Statutory placements** – trainee teachers and healthcare practitioners complete statutory placements as part of their professional training.
- **Placement Learning / Work-Based Learning (WBL)** – placements developed and delivered in association with employers, and one of the defining characteristics of some non-professional awards such as a Foundation Degrees¹¹.
- **Sandwich Years** – enable students to undertake at least 32 weeks of supervised work experience for which they receive academic credit that contributes to their final award. See [Academic Regulations](#) for further details. Sandwich years may be added to certain undergraduate degrees using the process described in Chapter 4 of this Handbook.

¹¹ See [Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement](#) (QAA, 2015). For Foundation Degrees, the University's Academic Regulations require at least a quarter of students' learning to be experienced in the workplace, either through discrete work-based learning modules or embedded across the curriculum.

Placement learning and work-based learning can be differentiated as follows¹²:

- **Placement learning** is where the learner might be considered as a student first, employee second; i.e. they came to the placement experience by virtue of their studies.
- **Work-based learning** is when the learner might be considered as employee first, student second; i.e. they came to the Higher Education experience by virtue of their employment or employer.

Despite the above distinction, for quality assurance purposes, placement learning and work-based learning are considered collectively as a category A placement, sharing the same approval, review and closure processes.

Study Abroad

Undergraduate students may undertake a period of study abroad, either through the university's exchange programme or as negotiated with an individual overseas provider. Study abroad is normally undertaken as an additional year located between levels 5 and 6 (i.e., third year of four) or exceptionally, a single semester replacing part of level 5. Where taken over one year, an additional 120 ungraded level 5 credits are awarded which appear on the student's transcript but do not contribute to their final degree classification. Where taken as a single semester, study abroad contributes 60 ungraded credits (to the required 120) and is excluded from the degree classification.

Faculties are responsible for developing appropriate processes for the consideration and approval of such partnerships. Processes are described in [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#) and consider:

- Student support arrangements; and,
- Curriculum alignment between the two HE Providers.

The International Office, as part of its own due diligence¹³, reviews students' chosen institutions to ensure that their individual learning needs will be met.

For study abroad within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the EHEA's [First Cycle qualification descriptor](#) provides a reference point for judging an overseas programme's equivalence to a UK undergraduate degree as defined within the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) (FHEQ). When selecting the modules to be taken abroad the academic department determines the stage of the overseas provider's programme that equates most closely to the FHEQ level at which the student is to be assessed (typically level 5) and the alignment of module content and learning objectives with the relevant Edge Hill programme aims and learning outcomes. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) enables direct transfer of credit from an EHEA awarding institution where 1 ECTS credit equals 2 UK

¹²'ASET Good Practice Guide for Work based and Placement Learning in Higher Education', ASET Work Based and Placement Learning Association, (2013), p.8 www.asetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ASET-Good-Practice-Guide-eWBPL.pdf.

¹³ This complements the standard due diligence completed by the EU before granting an institution's Erasmus Charter.

HE credits. **ECTS credit imported from study exchanges does not contribute to degree award classification which negates any requirement for the scaling of marks.** While the default position is to import ungraded ECTS credit directly into students' profiles, for those who have failed assessment at the partner institution and have since returned to the UK a series of validated 'shell' modules of different credit values is available as a vehicle for re-assessment at Edge Hill University. Because the credit gained through such exchanges is ungraded and excluded from the calculation of students' degree classifications, these shell modules are similarly excluded and will be assessed as 'Pass/ Fail only'. It is considered good practice for academic department to consult with the external examiner regarding the modules to select, but this is not a requirement.

Study Abroad (other overseas territories) (A3)

For study outside the EHEA, the proposing department assesses the suitability of the placement, accompanied by a health and safety audit. UK ENIC provides a service which compares overseas and UK higher education qualifications, and when selecting the modules to be taken abroad the academic department determines the stage of the overseas provider's programme that equates most closely to the FHEQ level at which the student is to be assessed (typically level 5), and the alignment of module content and learning objectives with the relevant Edge Hill programme aims and learning outcomes. In addition to level, the department establishes broad equivalence between the volume of learning and assessment to be undertaken and the Notional Learning Hours for which Edge Hill credit is to be awarded (where 1 credit = 10 NLHs). **Credit imported from study abroad exchanges does not contribute to degree award classification which negates any requirement for the scaling of marks.** While the default position is to import ungraded credit directly into students' profiles, for those who have failed assessment at the partner institution and have since returned to the UK a series of validated 'shell' modules of different credit values is available as a vehicle for re-assessment at Edge Hill University. Because the credit gained through exchanges is ungraded and excluded from the calculation of students' degree classifications, these shell modules are similarly excluded and will be assessed as 'Pass/ Fail only'. It is considered good practice for academic department to consult with the external examiner regarding the modules to select, but this is not a requirement.

Study Abroad - Agreements

Study abroad arrangements are supported by **signed agreements** that describe the roles and responsibilities of the University, overseas provider and EHU student; how the student will be taught, supported and assessed; and how complaints or disciplinary issues, that may arise while the student is abroad, will be managed. A standard agreement is used which is signed by a member of Directorate, additionally for specific relationships between institutions relating to student mobility, a separate learning agreement is also signed prior to students embarking on any exchanges. Where they occur, study abroad opportunities are evaluated within programme monitoring and as part of departmental annual monitoring and curriculum review.

PGCE with Lead Partners

The University operates PGCE provision with Lead Partners. The Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum is designed and accredited by Edge Hill University and the University is:

- accountable to professional bodies and external quality assurance
- will be the awarding body
- will make recommendations for Qualified Teacher Status

The ITE curriculum is delivered at the Edge Hill Ormskirk campus with a small number of context specific training events taking place with the Lead Partner.

Approval Processes

For partnerships within the sub-categories, partner and delivery approval are combined and responsibility for determining these processes resides mainly within Faculties¹⁴ with some responsibilities shared with the International Office. Approval of such arrangements may include:

- Due diligence checks; including legal and financial.
- Consideration of any relevant country or partner intelligence.
- Consideration of the business case and any appropriate costings.
- Completion of clear, signed agreements with the partner which confirm the responsibilities of each partner.
- Completion of an appropriate health and safety check or risk assessment of the setting.
- (Placements and apprenticeships only) Completion of 3-way learning agreements¹⁵ between the student, HE provider and employer, before placements commence.
- (Apprenticeships only) Consideration of the extent to which the proposed apprenticeship arrangement aligns with the University Apprenticeship Strategy.

Category A arrangements are approved for varying periods (between 1-3 years). See Table 3 below.

¹⁴ See [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#).

¹⁵ These typically cover:

- The roles, responsibilities and obligations of the University, the placement provider and the student.
- Employer's liability and compliance with statutory obligations e.g., concerning equality, data protection, freedom of information, health and safety, and environmental law.
- Ownership of copyright and intellectual property rights for work produced by the student while on placement.
- Provisions that enable the University or placement provider to suspend or withdraw from the agreement if any party fails to meet its obligations.

Table 3: Partner approval periods in category A arrangements

	Category	Sub-category		Period of Partner Approval
A	Placements and Study Abroad	A1	School-based training and other placements (ex. clinical) (UK)	Up to 3 years per provider
		A3	Study Abroad and work placements (Overseas)	1 year
		A4	Clinical placements (UK)	Ongoing but subject to 2-yearly review
		A5	Degree and Higher Apprenticeships	Ongoing - subject to annual review activity
		A6	PGCE with Lead Partner	Ongoing - subject to annual review activity

When approving programmes containing either work-based or placement learning, the following guidance may be utilised:

1. (Where the student is not already in relevant employment) The identification of placement opportunities which offer a learning experience that meets the needs and expectations of students and enables achievement of the relevant learning outcomes. Validation panels consider whether students will source their own placements (with support) or have placements provided for them and where such responsibility is located.

Possible questions:

- Who sources or organises the placements?
- What is the structure and duration of the placement?
- What is the purpose of the placement (e.g., to meet compulsory requirements of the programme; an employability opportunity; to develop certain skills/ to gain certain experience)?
- Is credit attached to the placement/ is the student assessed for competency?
- Details of potential placement partners, including any overseas arrangement.
- What funding is provided for the placement provider?

2. (Where the student is already in employment) How the appropriateness of the student's own work setting to the learning aims and outcomes is established.

Possible questions:

- Who has responsibility for identifying and organising placement opportunity?
- Who approves this?
- Who monitors and evaluates the placement?
- If overseas, is there clear process outlining the relationship between the International Team and Faculty?
- How do different role holders liaise and share information?
- Are there clear definitions of who has responsibility for different parts of the process?
- Is a risk assessment necessary? By whom is it conducted?

3. Quality assurance and risk assessment of placement settings and formal agreements with placement providers.

Possible questions:

- How are students prepared in advance of the placement commencing?
- What support is available to students during the placement, both from EHU and placement provider?

4. Preparation and support for students before, during and after their placements.
5. Assessment and evaluation of placements.
6. Recruitment, development and support of employer-mentors including their preparation for assessment (where this applies).
7. Arrangements for managing incomplete or unsatisfactory placement experiences¹⁶.

Possible questions

- How is assessment carried out? Who is responsible for this?
- How do the students evaluate their experience and articulate skills acquired?
- How is feedback gathered from the placement provider on the student?
- How is feedback gathered from the placement provider on Edge Hill's placement management?
- Does feedback go to a committee or panel?
- How is the feedback loop closed?
- How does this evaluation feed into planning for next year?

8. Managing student or employer complaints or disciplinary issues that arise whilst a student is on placement.

Review Processes for Category A1-4 and A6 Partnerships

Faculties are responsible for maintaining a database of approved placement providers and PGCE Lead Partners, whilst the International Team is responsible for maintaining a register of study abroad respectively. These records include their period of approval and expiry for review purposes. Faculties describe their processes for the review of these partnerships in their [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#).

The outputs of the review activity undertaken is considered by the relevant Faculty committee, the purpose of which is to identify any risk for discussion, and to provide assurance of the ongoing quality of category A arrangements.

Closure Processes for Category A1-4 and A6 Partnerships

Appropriate arrangements for the termination of placement arrangements, study abroad agreements and agreements with PGCE Lead Partners are determined by the Faculty or International Team, depending on who is responsible for the arrangement (see Table 2 above). These processes however must include consideration of the University [Student](#)

¹⁶ Where a substitute placement cannot be provided and an alternative mode of assessment is required, course teams describe this in the Additional Assessment Information section of the relevant Module Specification. In all circumstances, alternative assessment must be capable of testing the validated Intended Learning Outcome(s).

[Protection Plan](#), adherence to the Office for Students' [Conditions of Registration C1-3](#) related to student protection and any implications for the student experience during teach out¹⁷.

Category A5 Processes

Degree and Higher Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships integrate work and learning and typically lead to a qualification; some may also lead to recognition by one or more professional bodies. Apprenticeships are a key vehicle by which the UK is seeking to ensure that public and private sector employers can recruit and develop the workforce they need. Requirements and specifications for Apprenticeships are set out in Apprenticeship Standards¹⁸, developed by the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#) (IfATE).

Programmes for delivery as **Higher Apprenticeships** terminate in a FHEQ level 5 or 6 award, e.g., Foundation Degree or Graduate Certificate, whilst **Degree Apprenticeships** terminate at levels 6 & 7, i.e., Undergraduate and Masters Degrees. Under these arrangements, Approved Apprenticeship Employers work with the University to deliver an apprenticeship programme to their employees, who then become designated as apprentices. Delivery by the Approved Apprenticeship Employer is very limited to areas such as supervision within the workplace environment and limited involvement in some assessed elements. The University is responsible for all other aspects of the apprenticeship programme delivery.

The university utilises the QAA's [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (June 2022) as part of its design of new apprenticeship programmes; for more information, please see Chapter 4 of this handbook.

Approval of Apprenticeships

Programmes intended for delivery as **Higher Apprenticeships** and **Degree Apprenticeships** are validated using the approval processes described in Chapter 4 of this Handbook. However, in addition to the standard validation questions, panels also consider whether there is:

- Demonstrable alignment with the relevant Apprenticeship Standards through mapping of Programme Learning Outcomes and content (modules) to the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard.
- An appropriate balance of 'on-the-job' and 'off-the-job' learning¹⁹.
- An appropriate arrangement for programme monitoring and review that also considers the progress of individual learners.
- Evidence of employer involvement in programme design and development²⁰.

¹⁷ Including consideration of any potential implications of such a closure for compliance with Competition and Markets Authority guidance. See [UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law](#) (CMA, 2023).

¹⁸ Apprenticeship Standards, developed by Trailblazer groups made up of employers in a particular industry sector, specify the KSBs required to demonstrate full occupational competence in the relevant job role.

¹⁹ Most learning takes place 'on-the-job', however at least 20 percent of an apprenticeship must involve 'off-the-job' learning delivered through scheduled learning activities.

²⁰ Employers are situated as the main driver in the development process for apprenticeships that involve higher education qualifications. See ['Quality Assuring Higher Education in Apprenticeships: Current Approaches'](#), QAA 2nd edition, July 2018, section 3.1.

- Assurance that programme admission processes satisfy the entry requirements set within the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and the University's own minimum entry requirements, including any opportunity for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)²¹.
- Evidence of how programme delivery and assessment schedules will accommodate the circumstances of learners in the specific employment setting (in the 'Student Learning Journey' section of the programme specification), with a minimum of 20% 'off-the-job' learning.
- Compliance with the relevant **Apprenticeship Assessment Plan**²².
- A confirmed arrangement for an **End-Point Assessment** (EPA), in accordance with the relevant Apprenticeship Assessment Plan, i.e., *integrated* within the programme or *non-integrated*. The latter being conducted by a third-party End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), endorsed by the employer and supported by a separate agreement between the University and EPAO. Where EPA is non-integrated, proposers describe how students will be prepared and supported to undertake it. For programmes with integrated EPA, proposers evidence relevant practice-based expertise and experience among academic delivery staff and external examiners²³.

The approval of a new apprenticeship programme and its associated curriculum is subject to final approval by AQEC, as per standard validations. Following approval, the Compliance Team submits a completed **Higher Education Learning Aim Request Form** to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) accompanied by a letter, signed by the Chair of the Validation and Audit Standing Panel confirming that the qualification has completed internal validation and authorising it to be included within the **Learning Aims Reference Service** (LARS) for prescribed Higher Education qualifications.

Where an employer expresses an interest in having the University deliver its apprenticeships to their employees, this is detailed in an **Apprenticeship Proposal form**. This form provides details regarding the proposed employer, the apprenticeship programmes (and standards) for delivery, the timescales and rationale for the delivery with this new employer. Any risks or concerns identified from the Due Diligence Report shall also be included in this Proposal form. The Due Diligence Report and Apprenticeship Proposal form are submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for business approval before submission to the Chair of the Institutional Apprenticeship Group. The decision regarding where apprenticeship programmes shall be delivered and which employers wish to engage with the university on our apprenticeship programmes, resides with the Institutional Apprenticeship Group (most commonly via Chair's Action taken by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for External Relations). Once approved by the Chair, contracts and compliance activity will take place to arrange delivery with the employers.

²¹ Unless specifically prohibited by the relevant Apprenticeship Assessment Plan.

²² Apprenticeship Assessment Plans, devised by Trailblazer groups, outline how the KSBs are to be assessed through End-Point Assessment which is conducted at the final stage of the apprenticeship and includes at least two assessment methods, e.g., a work or practice-based project. Assessment Plans indicate whether EPA may be *integrated* within the programme or must be conducted through a standalone process (*non-integrated*).

²³ As stipulated by the relevant Apprenticeship Assessment Plan.

Any existing Approved Apprenticeship Employers who wish to add additional programmes to those they already receive from us are agreed through the same process described above. However, where additional cohorts are to be added to an existing apprenticeship programme, no separate academic approval process is necessary, although the Chair of the Institutional Apprenticeship Group must be consulted in advance and any additional Apprenticeship Programme agreements must be executed.

As referenced in Table 3, approval periods for apprenticeship partners are ongoing and this is refreshed through the annual review activity. This provides regular opportunity to identify any issues with the partnership or delivery with a partner which can then be addressed.

All apprenticeship delivery is underpinned by formal written contracts (agreements) between:

- The University (Provider) and the Approved Apprenticeship Employer;
- The Approved Apprenticeship Employer and the learner;
- The University and any EPAO; and,
- A tripartite agreement between the University, the Approved Apprenticeship Employer and the Apprentice (referred to as a **Commitment Statement**). These contracts run for a period of five years and will be renewed or terminated after this date.

A central record of all apprenticeship arrangements is maintained by the Compliance Team.

Reviewing Apprenticeship Programmes and Delivery Arrangements

Category A5 (degree and higher apprenticeships) are subject to a full review of the apprenticeship programme's performance and this includes delivery with the various approved Apprenticeship Employers. The **Apprenticeship Programme Review** forms provide an opportunity to assess the health of the partnership arrangement as well as the ongoing student experience for the learners. They collect programme-level information and evaluate the effectiveness of the apprenticeship programme through scrutiny of a host of data and evidence (as per standard partner Annual Reviews).

The content of the reviews ultimately informs the **Self-Assessment Review** and **Quality Improvement Plan** for Ofsted and serve to ensure compliance with ESFA requirements for an annual review of apprenticeships. These review forms are submitted to the Institutional Apprenticeship Group for discussion and approval, prior to submission to AQEC. AQEC considers any areas of institutional risk or concern regarding academic standards or quality and, if applicable, commissions appropriate action.

The annual review of apprenticeship programmes and their delivery with partners provides ongoing approval of the partnership, whilst contracts require review and resubmission every five years.

Terminating Apprenticeship Delivery

The decision to cease delivery with an Approved Apprenticeship Employer is agreed at the Institutional Apprenticeship Group in accordance with the **Withdrawal Process** and **Partnership Exit Strategy** detailed at the point of validation. Due consideration is given at this stage to the impact on any existing learners on programme, and discussions are held regarding teach-out arrangements to protect the student experience as the partnership comes to an end.

CATEGORY B PARTNERSHIPS

B	Outreach Learning Venues	B1	Outreach Learning Venues (UK)
		B2	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (UK)
		B3	Outreach Learning Venues (Overseas)

In this category all teaching, assessment and student support are provided by Edge Hill University staff and the responsibility of the external venue provider is limited to the supply of teaching accommodation, including basic IT and display equipment²⁴.

Approval processes

Responsibility for the approval of category B venues (and associated central record keeping) resides with Faculties and their approach is outlined in their [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#). The following documents require completion for the proposal of a new venue:

- [Academic Partnership Venue Proposal](#) form; normally completed by the Faculty Partnership Lead.
- [Health and Safety Checklist](#); normally completed by an appropriate health and safety representative (member of EHU staff such as a local health and safety representative). Advice can be sought from the central Health and Safety team. A visit to the venue is normally required to enable completion of this assessment, however virtual completion with input from the venue and others who have knowledge of the site may be acceptable. Any actions required as part of the risk assessment should be addressed and detailed in the Academic Partnership Venue Proposal form.
- A copy of the **Public Liability Insurance**; retained in the central Y Drive files.

The payment of any **fees** is the responsibility of the Faculty to arrange and record in the appropriate budget line.

The process for approval of new venues is as follows:

1. Proposal and documentation completed and submitted to the appropriate Faculty Quality Committee, which is responsible to Faculty Board and Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC).

²⁴ Where more extensive use of learning resources is required an Outreach Supported Learning arrangement may be more appropriate - see 'Category C', below.

2. An appropriate **Venue/Room Hire Agreement** is completed and signed by the relevant parties.
3. Notification should be made to the GQASC and central category B Register updated.
4. An annual list of all category B venues in approval shall be received by Academic Planning Committee (APC)²⁵, which has the responsibility for oversight of academic partnership activity.

Venues are reviewed annually by the Faculty in a process described in [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#). This normally includes reviewing the currency of the information in the Academic Partnership Venue Proposal form, along with the health and safety assessment. A revised copy of the public liability insurance should be received for the record. Faculties may determine an appropriate process to close or terminate their use of a venue, however most venues operate on a rolling annual approval.

All learning venues must have been approved prior to the start of a programme or module's delivery. As detailed in Table 4 below, venues are approved on a rolling annual basis and therefore do not require any formal closure process.

Table 4: Partner approval periods for category B arrangements

	Category	Sub-category		Period of Partner Approval
B	Outreach Learning Venue	B1	Outreach Learning Venues (UK)	1 year
		B2	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) venues	1 year
		B3	Outreach Learning Venues (Overseas)	1 year

Review processes

A list of the venues used within an academic year is part of the evidence base considered at Departmental Annual Monitoring²⁶. Venues are also subject to review and re-approval as noted above and these processes are described in [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#).

DEFINITIONS OF CATEGORY C+ PARTNERSHIPS

As the level of risk and business opportunity varies across the taxonomy of partnerships, different processes are in place for different categories and sub-categories of academic partnerships. This is to ensure they are proportionate to the potential opportunity for Edge Hill University whilst ensuring they are robust for partnerships which present a greater academic or business risk. The following sections provide additional information on the nuanced processes for the different partnership categories above the standard processes

²⁵ Normally at its first meeting of the academic year.

²⁶ See Chapter 3.

described in the earlier sections. More information on the approval processes and paperwork specifically can be found in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

Category C partnerships

C	Outreach Supported Learning Centres	C1	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)
		C2	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)
		C3	Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)

In this category Edge Hill University staff conduct all teaching and assessment elements of a programme or module, while the partner organisation provides the venue, learning resources and some support services subject to individual negotiation (in respect of Category C3, this may include in-country support for Edge Hill programmes delivered via Blended or Distance Learning). Support services may include academic or pastoral support, exam invigilation, lab supervision and more.

For new category C partners (or re-approval events) a Site Assessment must be conducted to inspect the partner facilities, learning resources, and safety regulations. These facilities and resources are inspected to provide assurance to the approval panel they are of an equivalent standard and quality to those of the University. However, external panel members on the approval panel shall be responsible for confirming the subject specific resources provided for the course are appropriate and broadly consistent with those at Edge Hill University campuses. More information on Site Assessments, including who completes them, is available in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

In the rare circumstance where a Site Assessment cannot be completed in advance of the approval event, virtual tours or similar may be considered however, normally delivery with a partner will not commence until a full, on-site visit has taken place to the satisfaction of the independent officer and/or the validation panel. Advice will be provided by the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team relating to the approval visit requirement following approval of any partnership proposals by the APC. In exceptional circumstances the validation event for a partner may be held at the partner's site to enable further inspection of facilities by the approval panel.

For category C partnerships undergoing Annual Review or re-approval, particular attention should be paid in the review to the quality and availability of the learning and support resources provided by the partner in the agreement, to ensure there has been no significant change from the original approved agreement. This is normally verified, in part, by a Partner Visit undertaken by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor.

Category D Partnerships

D	Credit rating
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This category typically covers short courses hosted by UK-based employers or non-educational training organisations and enables their recognition for the award of Edge Hill University academic credit through the approval of Intended Learning Outcomes appropriate to the required FHEQ level accompanied by a suitable assessment strategy. Assessment is subject to internal moderation by the host Edge Hill department and an external examiner is appointed to provision at level 5 and above.

Following business approval and initial approval by APC, validation is completed via the Faculty Module Approval process described in [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#), supported by the following documentation:

- Partner's course materials (in their original format) describing the course aims, learning objectives, indicative content and teaching strategy.
- [Partner Overview Document](#), with relevant sections completed.
- Draft Delivery Plan.
- A [Credit Rating Coversheet](#) completed jointly by the host department and partner, detailing:
 - The FHEQ level and credit volume to be assigned
 - Intended Learning Outcomes and assessment strategy (mapped by ILOs)
 - Supporting external examiner comments (level 5 and above)

The Module Approval process should give particular attention to the partner's preparedness to conduct assessment at HE level and the support to be provided by the host Edge Hill department over and above the standard provision of internal moderation. Final approval of Category D provision is via a recommendation (report or minutes) to Faculty Board or the appropriate delegated Faculty Committee.

Partnerships in this category are subject to the standard Annual Review led by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor. The purpose of these reviews is to assess the continued health of the partnership and to confirm that there has been no change to the partner's course content, assessment, learning outcomes or teaching strategy.

Category E partnerships

E	Articulations	E1	Qualification recognition
		E2	Qualification recognition with a progression agreement

Articulation arrangements are non-binding, non-exclusive agreements with other educational institutions or awarding bodies, including overseas, whose programmes or qualifications are recognised for entry to an Edge Hill programme after the normal start-point ('entry with advanced standing'), typically at level 5 or above. Articulation arrangements are based on credit exemption²⁷ as distinct from the importation of another organisation's credit or the award of Edge Hill credit.

²⁷ See Academic Regulations s. C7.4.

Category E1 provides recognition of an awarding body's qualification where no individual delivery instance, centre or cohort is specified, and anyone holding the recognised qualification may be considered for advanced entry to the Edge Hill programme to which articulation has been approved. Category E1 usually applies to (professional) qualifications of awarding organisations rather than the programmes/ qualifications of individual HE providers or institutions (see E2, below). Articulating students apply to Edge Hill individually and meet normal programme entry requirements including English language proficiency for international students.

Category E2 provides recognition of a programme or qualification for articulation by a specific cohort, eg students of University (X)'s diploma programme articulate into the final year of a specified Edge Hill degree. Category E2 arrangements may be accompanied by formal Progression Agreements, nevertheless students must meet all Edge Hill entry requirements including English language proficiency for international students.

In so far as an articulation arrangement recognises another awarding body or education provider's qualification for advanced entry, and no Edge Hill programme is being delivered or credit awarded, due diligence is likely to focus upon:

- any relevant regulation governing the external programme or qualification, typically Ofqual or the Scottish Qualifications Authority for UK-based awarding bodies, or national regulators of overseas providers.
- how the awarding body meets its regulator's requirements, particularly in relation to processes for marking and moderation including independent (external) verification²⁸ of assessment.
- (For category E2) The financial, legal and reputational standing of the organisation with which the University seeks to enter into an articulation agreement.

Following business approval and initial approval by APC, the proposed Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor completes the relevant paperwork submitted to the institutional Articulation Approval Panel. This panel is assembled from experienced members of the Validation and Audit Standing Panel who consider the paperwork, including detailed mapping, and make a recommendation to AQEC which is responsible for final approval of all validation and partner approvals.

For articulation partners, the Annual Review also serves as the verification process for the ongoing validity of the curriculum mapping. In these bespoke templates, particular emphasis is given to reflection on the continued appropriateness of the articulation route in the context of progressing students' attainment, and any curriculum drift which may impact on the mapping. Due to the nature of articulations and the timing of annual reviews, Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors will need to maintain close contact with the partner organisation in advance of recruitment windows and should confirm on an ongoing basis that there has been no curriculum change at the partner. Similarly, where minor module or programme modifications are progressed at Edge Hill and impact on the programme which has a live

²⁸ UK awarding organisations appoint external verifiers (moderators) to review marking and internal moderation undertaken in delivery centres, typically further education or private colleges.

articulation route, this should be a key consideration at the relevant Curriculum Approval Panel (Module Approval Panel).

An Annual Review is required even where no students have articulated, to provide confirmation of the route's continued appropriateness and viability. Routes which have not recruited for two academic years require review by the appropriate Faculty Quality Committee to verify that they remain viable from a business perspective and a decision should be taken for their continuation or closure. The review may identify actions to stimulate articulation and should the review confirm the continuation of the partnership, the partner expiry period is unaffected.

Where there have been changes to the curriculum at Edge Hill University or at the partner, the following action is required:

- When the **Edge Hill curriculum** changes, re-mapping is confirmed in the Annual Review form for the following academic year (please refer to the [Annual Review](#) section). Where these timings do not align, the Validation and Audit Standing Panel Chair (or representative²⁹) may receive a direct request to review the new mapping as a desk-based exercise. Where a desk-based review is judged to be unsuitable, the new mapping will be reviewed by the Articulation Approval Panel³⁰.
- When the **partner's curriculum** changes, an Academic Partnership Proposal form³¹ and curriculum mapping document may be submitted directly to the Articulation Approval Panel to consider³², bypassing the initial approval stage.

Category F partnerships

F	Delivery with a third party (including overseas delivery)	F1	Franchise (single modules)
		F2	Co-delivery
		F3	Franchise (whole programmes)
		F4	Validation
		F5	Joint awards

In this category, another educational organisation is approved to deliver Edge Hill modules or programmes under a franchise or co-delivery arrangement or brings forward its own provision for validation leading to the award of an Edge Hill qualification or credit. While significant responsibilities for managing academic standards and the quality of teaching, assessment and student support are delegated to the delivery organisation, ultimate responsibility for both remains with the University as awarding body.

²⁹ Typically, the Head of Quality Assurance.

³⁰ There is no requirement to complete an Academic Partnership Proposal form for APC.

³¹ This form does not need to be submitted to APC for initial approval and proceeds directly to the VASP articulation approval (via GQASC).

³² The Panel will still report a recommendation to AQEC which has ultimate authority for these partnership arrangements.

Each sub-category represents a nuanced approach to joint delivery of Edge Hill University credits with an academic partner either in the UK or overseas. Within all these sub-categories, Edge Hill University is the sole awarding body of credit, with the exception of F5 joint awards which may include dual or double degrees where the partner may also award credit.

The sub-categories can be defined as follows:

- F1 Franchise (single modules)

The delegation through formal agreement with a partner, to deliver entire Edge Hill University modules (taught or research) by staff within the partner or a third party. Responsibility for all elements of delivery, assessment, teaching and learning resources are designated to this partner, along with responsibility (with supervision) for the student experience.

- F2 Co-delivery

An agreement between Edge Hill University and a partner to jointly deliver teaching, assessment etc. of an EHU programme or module through a shared arrangement of responsibility.

- F3 Franchise (whole programme)

The delegation through formal agreement with a partner, to deliver entire Edge Hill University programmes (taught or research) by staff within the partner or a third party. Responsibility for all elements of delivery, assessment, teaching and learning resources are designated to this partner, along with responsibility (with supervision) for the student experience.

- F4 Validation

The recognition and formal validation (approval) of a partner or a third party's programme, which shall then receive Edge Hill University credits and ultimately, an Edge Hill University award, and the delivery of this programme by the partner. These programmes are generally established programmes delivered by the partner already and Edge Hill University shall have no input in its design.

- F5 Joint awards

Provision whereby Edge Hill University and one or more UK HE awarding bodies together design and/or deliver a programme leading to either single or multiple award made jointly or individually by all parties.

There are various models for joint awards and the term **joint degree** describes a collaborative arrangement in which two (or more) awarding institutions together validate³³ and deliver a programme of study which results in a single joint award of both (all) institutions. The development of such an arrangement requires detailed negotiation between the partner(s) and the development of a bespoke set of common regulations.

³³ To facilitate this, a Lead Partner may be nominated to host Institutional validation with other partners in attendance to include representatives of academic quality and registry functions.

Key characteristics of a joint degree are:

- The programme has one Programme Specification including a single set of Programme Learning Outcomes.
- Modules are delivered by different partners, and students may study at one or more of the institutions working together in relation to the joint programme.
- Completing students receive one degree certificate authorised by both (all) partners involved in its delivery.
- One external examiner is appointed for the degree.

Whereas the term **double degree** (or ‘multiple degree’ where there are more than two partners) applies to a programme otherwise conceived, designed and delivered as a joint degree but where local legal or regulatory conditions prohibit the award of a single certificate. In these circumstances, students receive separate certificates/ transcripts/ diploma supplements from each awarding body which reference the others’ existence and that students have completed a single, jointly conceived course.

Finally, the term **dual degree** describes a collaborative arrangement in which two awarding organisations design, validate³⁴ and deliver a course of study, however students receive separate degrees from both partners. Each is responsible for making its own award under its own regulations, however the programme’s components form a single package requiring elements of joint management and oversight.

Key characteristics of a dual degree are:

- The overall study period and volume of learning is typically greater than for a single degree but smaller than if the two degrees were studied separately.
- Each partner develops its own Programme Specification, including Programme Learning Outcomes.
- Modules are delivered by both partners, often at different stages (years) of the programme, however each will generally deliver a substantial proportion at the level of the qualification it awards.
- Completing students receive separate certificates from each partner under its own regulations.
- Each partner makes its own arrangements for external examination (or other independent verification).

Joint/ double and dual degrees should be developed with cognizance of the QAA’s [Characteristics Statement for qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body](#).

For new category F partners (or re-approval events) a Site Assessment must be conducted to inspect the partner facilities, learning resources, safety regulations, and to meet with relevant staff to discuss the partnership expectations and arrangements. Meetings with delivery staff for the programme provide a useful opportunity to discuss how delivery will work and provide

³⁴ In this arrangement, each partner is responsible for taking the programme through its own Institutional approval (validation) process.

assurance of these details to the approval panel. Facilities and resources are inspected to provide assurance to the approval panel they are of an equivalent standard and quality to those of the University. However, external panel members on the approval panel shall be responsible for confirming the subject specific resources provided for the course are appropriate and broadly consistent with those at Edge Hill University campuses. More information on Site Assessments, including who completes them, is available in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

In the rare circumstance where a Site Assessment cannot be completed in advance of the approval event, virtual tours or similar may be considered however, normally delivery with a partner will not commence until a full, on-site visit has taken place to the satisfaction of the independent officer and/or the validation panel. Advice will be provided by the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team relating to the approval visit requirement following approval of any partnership proposals by APC. In exceptional circumstances the validation event for a partner may be held at the partner's site to enable further inspection of facilities by the approval panel.

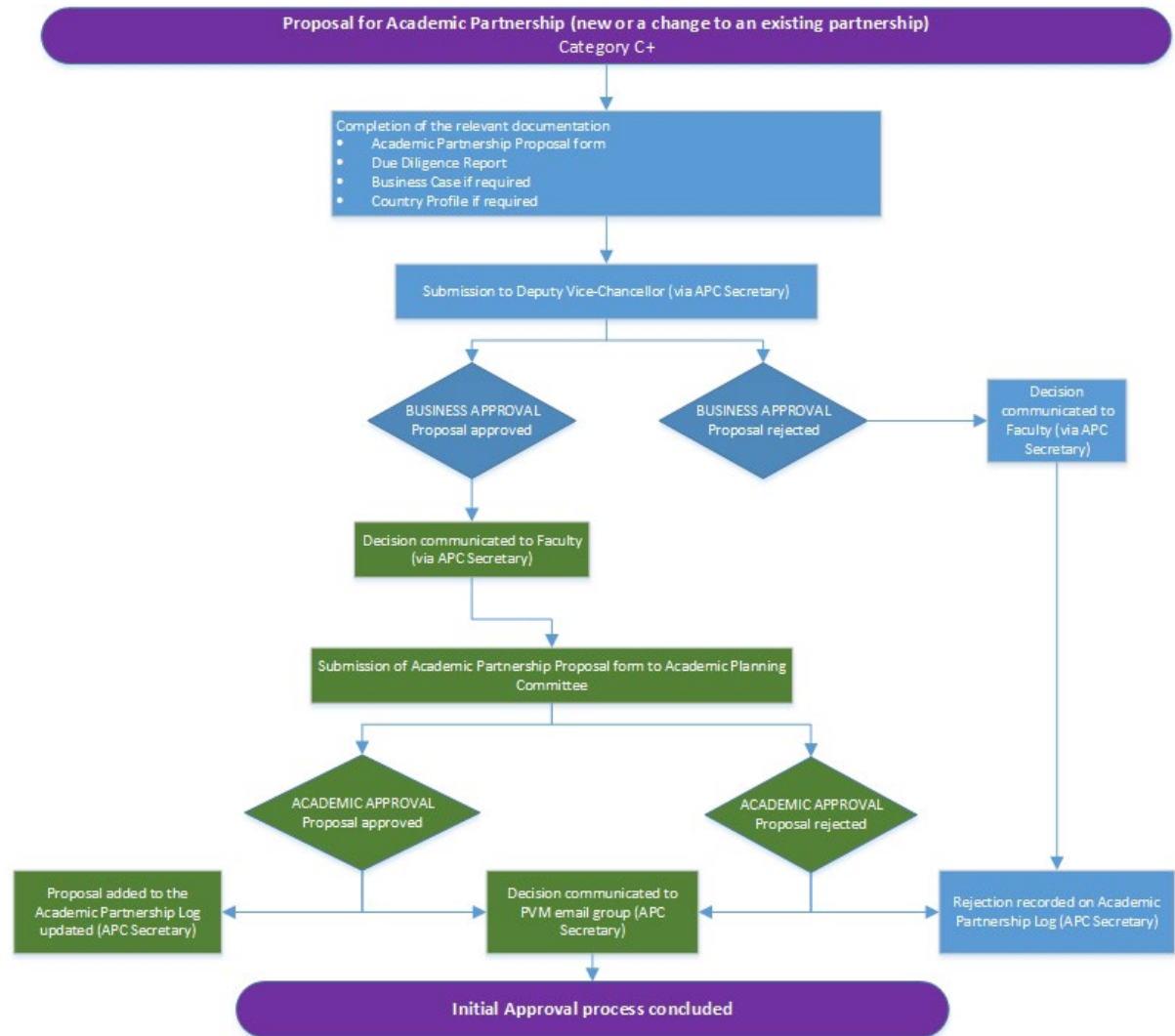
For category F partnerships the standard Annual Review process applies with the additional requirement to confirm staffing arrangements prior to delivery each year, with any new staff proposed for delivery of Edge Hill University credits being subject to approval by the relevant Faculty Quality Committee (through submission of their CV which details their experience and ability to deliver curriculum at the appropriate FHEQ level). Attention should be paid in the review to the quality and availability of the learning and support resources provided by the partner in the agreement, to ensure there has been no significant change from the original approved agreement. This is normally verified, in part, by a Partner Visit undertaken by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor.

Additionally, the external examiner appointed for category F programmes at FHEQ level 5 and above (level 4 for Foundation Degrees) may be asked to visit the partner to provide input into the Annual Review. As far as possible, external examiners allocated to partnership provision (category F) shall have experience of partnership delivery or transnational education in Higher Education. For category F partnerships, external examiners clearly differentiate between delivery centres and student cohorts in their annual reports and this is one piece of evidence used in the Annual Review. More information on external examining at Edge Hill University can be found in Chapter 2.

Category C+ Processes

Approval

For Category C and above partnerships which represent a higher level of risk for the university, the following approval process will normally apply.



Further details on the different categories and nuanced processes can be found later in this chapter.

Business Approval

Recognising the financial commitment and potential risk of entering into academic partnerships, some categories of partnership require business approval at the start of planning for a new partnership. This process applies to the following categories of partnership:

- A5- Degree and Higher Apprenticeships
- C1- Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)
- C2- Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)
- C3- Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)
- D- Credit-rating
- E1- Qualification recognition (articulation)
- E2- Qualification recognition with a progression agreement (articulation)
- F1- Franchise (single modules)
- F2- Co-delivery
- F3- Franchise (whole programmes)
- F4- Validation
- F5- Joint awards

Business approval is granted on request to the DVC or his delegate. The purpose of this stage is to provide early opportunity to identify risks (financial, reputational, legal or academic) and to consider the appropriateness of partnership and its business case. The following paperwork requires submission via the APC Secretary:

- Academic Partnership Proposal form.
- Initial due diligence report³⁵.
- Full business case³⁶ for any private sector providers (UK or overseas), any international partnership in category C or F, or as requested by the DVC.
- Country profile (for any international partnerships).

More information on paperwork, its purpose and who completes it, see the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

Where granted, business approval does not have an expiry date however proposals are normally expected to proceed to validation (delivery approval) within 12 months of business approval being granted.

Initial Academic Approval

APC is responsible for considering proposals for new category C+ delivery arrangements or re-approvals. It considers the fit with the University's International and Curriculum Strategies.

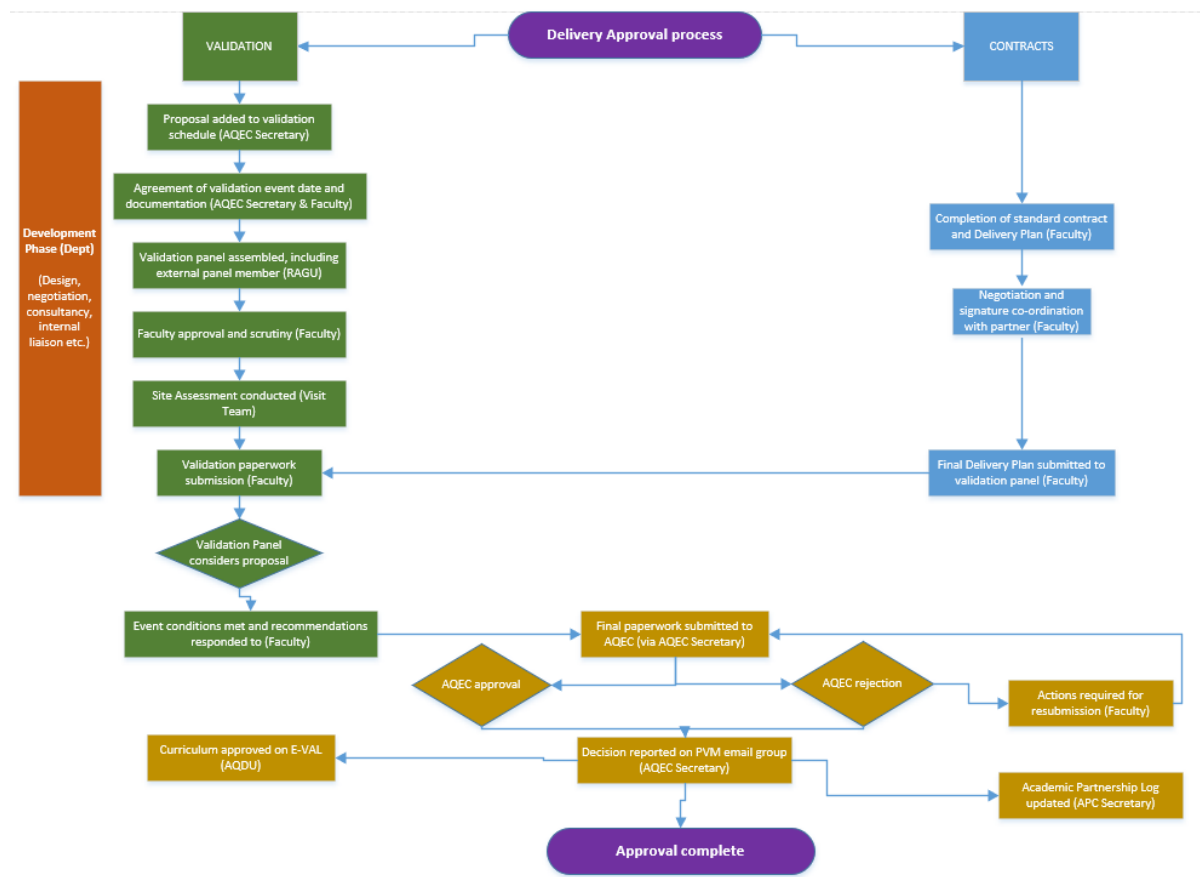
³⁵ A full due diligence report is completed during development of the partnership paperwork and any identified risks shall be escalated appropriately to Directorate to consider.

³⁶ The Academic Partnership Proposal form includes a section for the description of the business case for partnerships, however a more detailed business case with anticipated income and expenditure is provided on a separate template.

It may also outline areas for exploration by the Site Assessment Team or validation approval panel.

Delivery Approval

Delivery approval takes place after the initial approval process and the paperwork, timescales and process varies according to the category of partnership. The standard process for category C and F partnerships is shown in the flowchart below (different processes apply for articulations):



During the development phase the proposing team should ensure they consult closely with the different internal Departments and Services such as Library and Learning Services, Academic Registry etc. to ensure the design and delivery proposed is robust and achievable.

Processes are broadly based upon scrutiny of evidence of the partner's staffing and resources by an expert panel to ensure delivery can commence with partner to a high standard. An approval panel is assembled from the VASP membership which considers relevant paperwork from the proposing team. Site Assessments must be conducted for all category C+ partners and form a key part of the evidence base for the panel. No delivery with a partner may commence without the completion of a satisfactory Site Assessment. Paperwork requirements for the different categories of partner are detailed in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

Where a proposal is submitted to add additional provision at an approved partner where the category of approved provision is different, the highest category of partnership will have primacy in determining the required process. However, a proportionate approach to documentation and processes will be applied and should be discussed as early as possible with the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team.

Existing, approved partnerships may have additional modules added to their delivery portfolio and this can be done by Faculties in accordance with their module approval processes (see Chapter 4 of the Quality Management Handbook). In considering adding any provision to the partnership the appropriateness and availability of resources (including staffing) must be confirmed and the current Delivery Plan must also be reviewed to ensure it remains valid for the delivery of any new modules. However, minor programme modifications to franchise or co-delivery programmes should be considered carefully before progression and may require an institutional approval event (depending on the nature and scale of the change). Early advice should be sought from the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework to discuss changes to franchise or co-delivery programmes.

Re-approvals

The Annual Review process serves to renew individual delivery approval arrangements each year and includes the ongoing verification of resources as well as contract contents. All partners with Edge Hill University are approved for a defined period of time which, upon expiry, may be renewed. Standard periods of approval are detailed below, any changes to them requiring consideration via the Annual Process Review:

Table 5: Partner approval periods for category C + arrangements

	Category	Sub-category		Period of Partner Approval
C	Outreach Supported Learning Centres	C1	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)	5 years
		C2	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)	5 years
		C3	Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)	5 years
D	Credit-rating			5 years
E	Articulations	E1	Qualification recognition	5 years
		E2	Qualification recognition with a progression agreement	5 years
F	Delivery with a third party (including overseas delivery)	F1	Franchise (single modules)	5 years
		F2	Co-delivery	5 years
		F3	Franchise (whole programmes)	5 years
		F4	Validation	5 years
		F5	Joint awards	5 years
PGCE with Lead Delivery partnerships				5 years

Category C+ partners are approved for a standard five years and, at the point of renewal, may be extended and new contracts issued. Additional delivery approvals may take place at any point however (to add new provision to the partnership) and this extends the partner's

approval period by five years. Contracts should be reviewed at their original expiry and re-issued as appropriate but this should not change any agreed delivery arrangements as this would trigger a formal re-approval of the partnership.

Where changes occur to programmes or modules delivered with a partner, a delivery re-approval for individual partnership arrangements is required. A proportionate approach to documentation and processes will be applied and should be discussed as early as possible with the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team. Where no new delivery approvals have been granted, for category C and F only, these partnerships shall be subject to a standalone partner re-approval which looks at all provision delivered with that partner. Reapproval events include all standard documentation, with the addition of student feedback to inform the review.

Where a partnership programme does not recruit its first cohort within 2 years of the intended start date, or recruitment has been suspended for two consecutive cycles, re-commencement of delivery is subject to a formal review by the host Faculty of the Programme Specification and Delivery Plan to identify any changes that may affect delivery, particularly in relation to staffing and resources.

Contractual Arrangements

Final approval of category C+ provision is via panel recommendation to AQEC (validation report) and is contingent on the signing of a formal Contract between the University and partner organisation. For partnerships in category D and E, a straightforward agreement is produced following the approval panel's recommendation and AQEC sign off, to confirm the arrangements agreed for the partnership. A Memorandum of Articulation template is available for Faculties to use to issue to approved category E partners as standard.

For category C and F Partners and PGCE with Lead Delivery partnerships however, a full contract requires completion by Faculties and submission to the partner with relevant schedules. The contractual paperwork should be developed alongside the validation paperwork to ensure continual alignment and the appropriate Departments must be consulted in its development. This includes but is not limited to, Learning Services, Student Recruitment, Academic Registry, Admissions, GQASC and SPPU. Prior to sign-off by AQEC, the final contract and schedules which reflects the final version of documents from the approval event must be signed by all parties.

A standard **Contract** template and guidance for its completion is available on [GQASC Wiki](#). All partnerships must be accompanied by the relevant schedules to the contract. These schedules may be reissued annually or as required by changes without impact on the core contract terms. The Delivery Plan schedule provides the detailed division of responsibilities for each programme or module delivered in partnership and may be updated and reissued where required. Responsibility for co-ordinating the completion of an appropriate contract for academic partnerships resides with the Faculty Partnership Lead, with ultimate responsibility residing with the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Faculty.

Advice for Faculties to support the completion or negotiation of contracts can be sought from colleagues across Edge Hill University, including but not limited to:

Fees and financial terms or clauses	Director of Finance
Staff terms or support	Head of Human Resources
GDPR and data handling	Director of the Strategic Policy and Planning Unit
Curriculum, quality and standards	Director of Governance and Assurance
Learning resources or facilities	Director of Learning Services
Student record or award administration	Head of Academic Registry
Health and safety	Director of Facilities Management

Where internal expertise is exhausted in relation to a contractual query, bespoke legal advice may be authorised by the DVC on request.

Delivery operations

Primary responsibility for oversight of the ongoing success of the partnership and its delivery lies with the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor, in conjunction with the Faculty Partnership Lead. This includes troubleshooting any delivery issues and liaising closely with the partner. Where multiple programmes are delivered, multiple APLTs may be identified however they must work together and collaborate to complete Annual Reviews and Partner Visits.

Prior to the start of each academic year or term where appropriate, the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor should liaise with the partner and confirm delivery arrangements and details for the coming term. Any emergent issues from the Annual Review, student feedback, site visit reports or external examiner reports should be addressed as soon as possible and reported to the Faculty Partnership Lead. For category F provision the following must be confirmed with the partner prior to delivery each year:

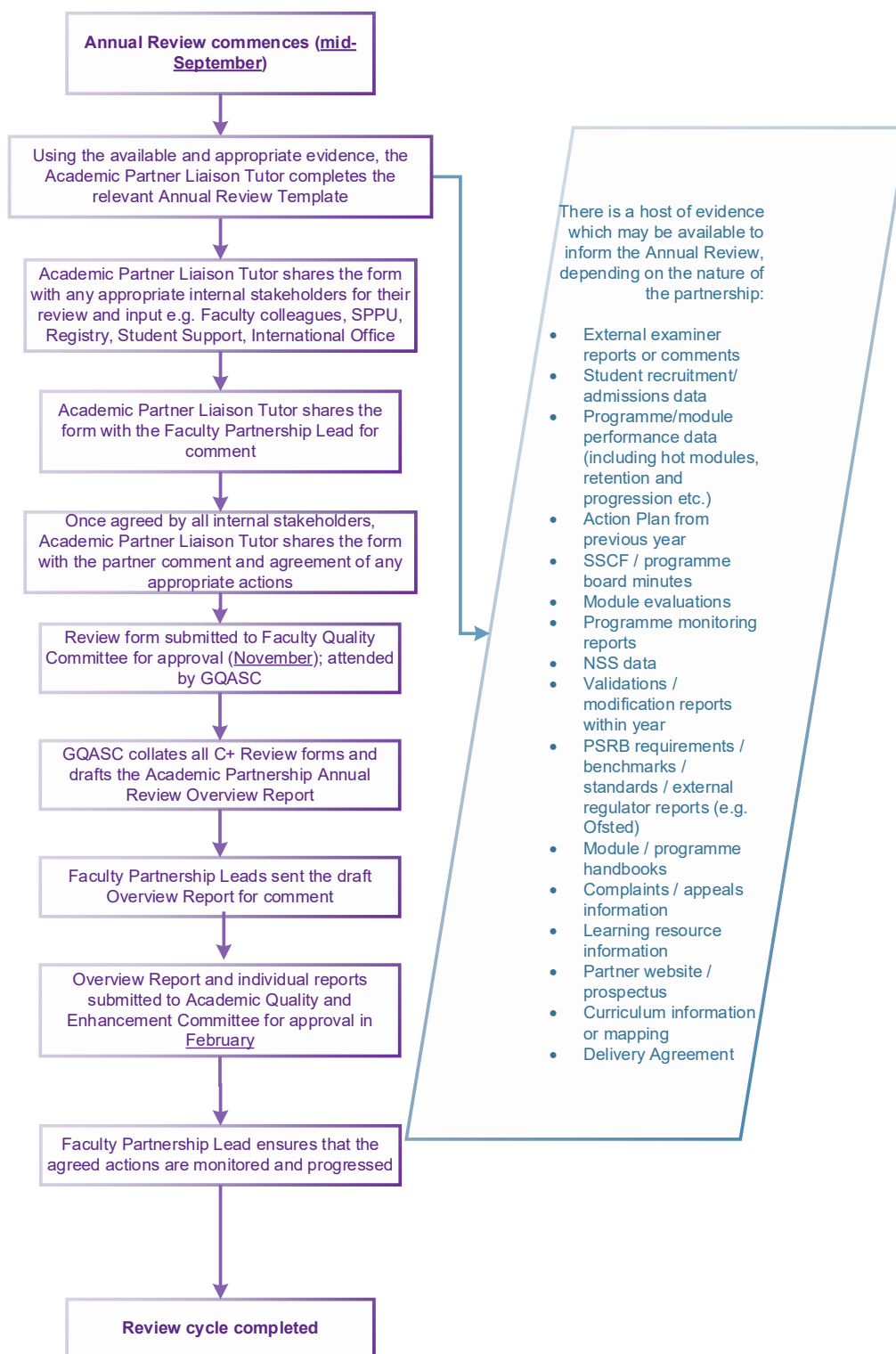
- Details of the teaching team e.g. names and CVs if these have changed (these will require approval by the Faculty Quality Committee)
- Any changes to the curriculum or assessments (the partner should be provided with all of the relevant course materials and specifications)
- Assessment procedures have been set up appropriately and there is clear mutual understanding of how they will operate
- Appropriate student enrolment and induction arrangements are in place

It is the responsibility of the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor to ensure the partner has all of the information they require, as discussed at validation, to deliver any agreed aspects of the Edge Hill curriculum or student experience. Determining processes to support them in this role are the responsibility of the Faculty Partnership Lead.

Annual Review

An Annual Review process operates for all approved partners at category C+ and is required regardless of whether any students have been recruited. The Annual Review of academic partnerships is an opportunity to review and monitor the currency and effectiveness of academic partners and their associated delivery of Edge Hill provision. It serves as a delivery re-approval for individual arrangements with each partner and is separate from the partner's overall approval period (normally five years), although new delivery approvals granted

extends the partner approval period in most cases. This process operates in conjunction with Departmental Annual Monitoring and programme monitoring but is a separate process. The Annual Review provides an opportunity to focus on the performance of both the academic partnership, and the provision delivered within it from the University's perspective and from a student experience and outcomes viewpoint. The process for reviewing category C+ partners is as follows:



The [Annual Review form](#) completed at the start of each new academic year considers any provision delivered in the previous academic year. This is usually completed by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor, with support and input from the Faculty Partnership Lead and any other related Programme Leaders who can provide peer support and review where required. The Annual Review requires the consideration of a host of available evidence as shown above, including external examiner reports³⁷, retention, recruitment and other performance data, student feedback (formal and informal) and evidence.

A Partner Visit by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor shall normally form part of the evidence for annual reviews and is an opportunity to confirm the ongoing currency of facilities as well as discuss performance of the partnership or potential developments.

The Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor should also use the Annual Review exercise to review the programme Delivery Plan to ensure its ongoing appropriateness. Any required changes can be made in agreement with the partner but must not affect the division of approved responsibilities; any major changes would require formal delivery re-approval.

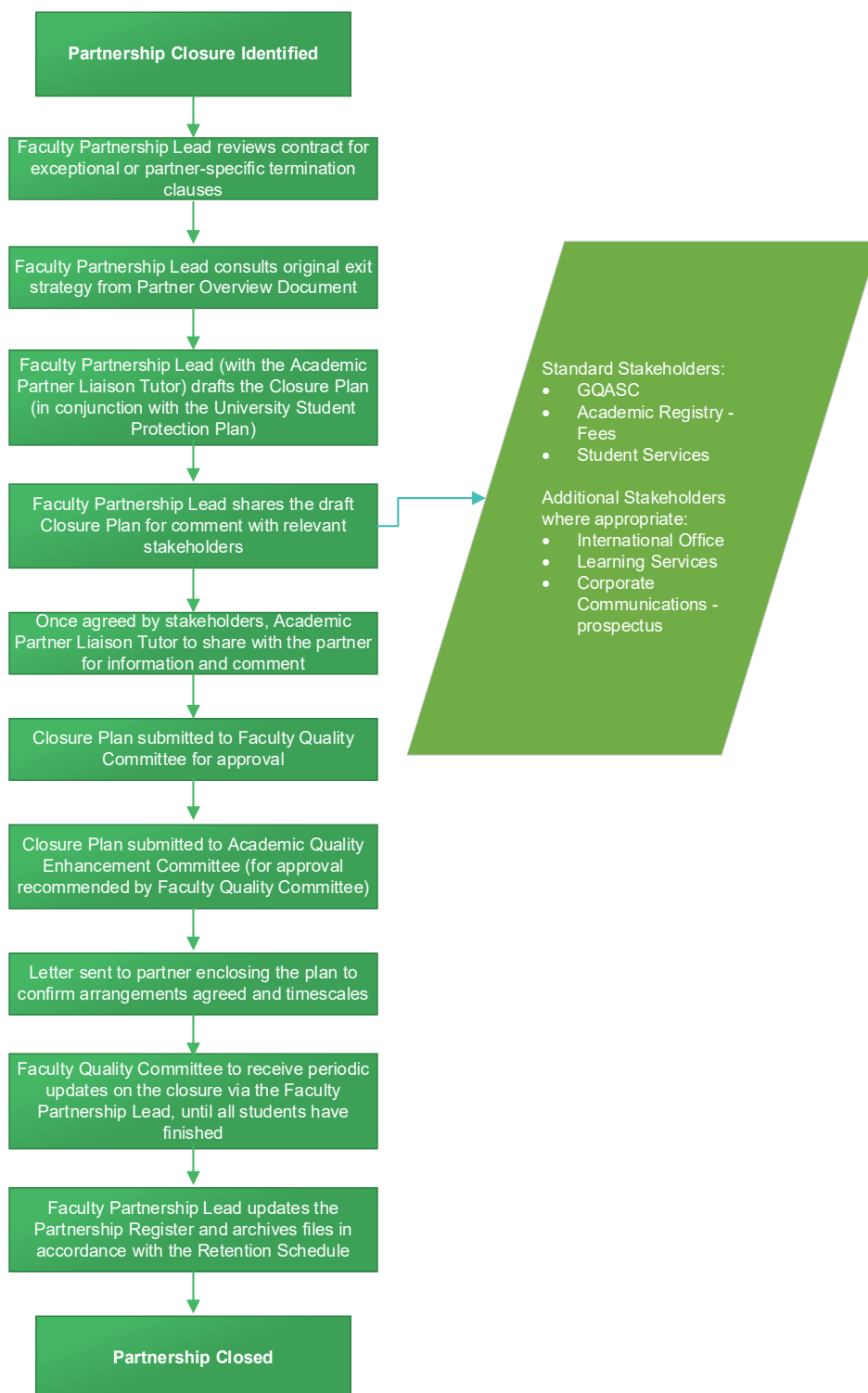
For category E arrangements, Annual Review serves as the verification process for the ongoing validity of curriculum mapping. The section on Category E partnerships outlines the action required when there have been changes to the EHU and/or partner's curriculum. For category F arrangements, the Annual Review also provides a trigger point to consider any partner staffing changes and confirm plans for the upcoming year. The CVs of any new partner staff must be submitted for approval to the relevant Faculty Quality Committee in advance of any delivery in this category.

Annual Reviews of more complex and involved arrangements for category F partners, for example those with overseas partners, should be completed collaboratively with key internal stakeholders. This might for example include Academic Registry for reflection on operational matters with the partner over the previous year, GQASC regarding curriculum matters or international strategy, and Learning Services for learning resources and engagement with the partner.

³⁷ External examiners are appointed to provision at FHEQ level 5 and above (level 4 for Foundation Degrees) and where a programme is being delivered on multiple sites external examiners differentiate clearly between delivery centres and student cohorts.

Closure

The standard process for a closure of a category C or F partner is described in the flowchart below:



Upon identification of a required closure of either a partnership (and all its associated provision) or specific provision delivered with a partner (where the partnership is to

continue), a **Closure Plan** requires completion for category C+ partnerships³⁸. This is normally undertaken by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor, with input from other stakeholders from across the University such as Learning Services. This plan is based upon the exit strategy information from the latest available version of the Partner Overview Document, updated with additional details where appropriate. The Closure Plans are developed with consideration of the University [Student Protection Plan](#), adherence to Office for Students' [Conditions of Registration](#) C1-3 related to student protection and due consideration of the impact on students.

Faculty Quality Committees are responsible for approval of the plan and the ongoing monitoring of any actions identified through closure and teach out (this should remain on the committee's agenda until the final student cohort has completed). The AQEC also receives the Closure Plans for approval, recommended from the Faculty Quality Committee.

Academic Partnerships which are in closure (i.e. teach-out is ongoing) still require completion of the Annual Review process until the final student cohort has completed.

Document Management and Retention

The **Faculty Partnership Lead** will maintain comprehensive records of all partnerships, including any correspondence with partners or students and a record of current Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors.

For category C+ partnerships, the Faculty Partnership Lead will ensure that the key documents are stored centrally on the University Y Drive (Academic Partnerships folder). These records include, but are not limited to:

- Business Case (financial) submissions, including the supporting spreadsheet (where applicable).
- Due diligence reports.
- Country profile (where applicable).
- Memoranda of Understanding.
- Contracts (aka Modular Agreements and Memoranda of Articulation).
- Delivery Plans (completed and signed).
- Partner Visit Reports.
- Closure Plan (as approved by AQEC and letter to the partner).

The GQASC team will ensure that the following documents are stored centrally on the University Y Drive for each category C+ partnership,:

- Business Approval decision.
- Annual Review Reports (as submitted to GQASC by the Faculty).
- Academic Partnership Proposal (as submitted to the APC)

³⁸ This Closure Plan is distinct from the standard closure proposal paperwork completed for non-partnership provision.

- All paperwork submitted to support articulation, validation and delivery approval events, including (where relevant):
 - Site Visit Reports
 - Partner Overview Document
 - Faculty Approval Panel report
 - Inventory of course specific facilities, resources and software
- Institutional level Partner Approval PVM.
- Institutional level Partner Closure PVM.

The University's central records documenting the formation and management of academic partnerships will be retained until six years following the end of partnership. The records will then review for archiving value.

Chapter 6

Quality Assurance of Learning and Teaching

Updated October 2023

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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](#), 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) UK Quality Code's supporting [Advice and Guidance on Learning and Teaching](#).

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) aims to incentivise excellent teaching beyond minimum baseline expectations of quality and standards. The OfS uses this Framework to recognise providers that can demonstrate commitment to, and success in, maximising student satisfaction, attainment and employability.

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.

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 Fellowship¹ 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](#).

¹ www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/professional-development/edge-hill-university-cpd-scheme-ukpsf/.

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 (see chapter 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 typically 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](#) and Personal Development Planning.
- h) Advising students on module options, careers information and guidance and procedures for personal circumstances, 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 curriculum 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) **must 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) Fellowship², either through completion of the University's [Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education](#) 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 (see chapter 5).

Research and scholarly activity

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 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.

² 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.

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](#) offers the opportunity to acquire Fellowship through demonstration of knowledge, understanding and experience mapped to the [UK Professional Standards Framework](#) (UKPSF) Dimensions of Practice. 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). All staff have access to professional development activities including seminars and conferences hosted by the [Centre for Learning and Teaching](#) (CLT). Academic departments make appropriate arrangements for the induction, supervision, mentoring and development of associate (part-time) lecturers.

Teaching Observation and Peer Review

There are two processes that facilitate the ongoing monitoring of teaching quality - Teaching Observation and Peer Review. They are key mechanisms for ensuring that students experience the best possible opportunities to learn and succeed in their chosen subject. These processes are driven by an underpinning commitment to the delivery of excellent learning and teaching and the continuous enhancement of teaching excellence. These processes align with the national expectation for high-quality teaching embedded within the OfS's Regulatory Framework and the TEF.

Teaching Observation and Peer Review provide a means to:

- Identify good practice for wider dissemination.³

³ In the first instance this may be through informal means and/or departmental committees 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.

- Identify excellent practitioners with potential for further professional development. This might include encouraging applications for internal Learning and Teaching Fellowship and National Teaching Fellowship and/or soliciting their input to the development of other staff through delivery of CPD seminars and contribution to staff conferences and Learning and Teaching Days.
- Identify poor practice and facilitate its improvement through opportunities for support, challenge, and professional development.
- Provide evidence of robust quality assurance to the OfS, [Ofsted](#) 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.

Teaching Observation

Formal teaching observation is linked to probation and performance review. HoDs are responsible for teaching quality and staff development and as part of the overall quality monitoring process. They should therefore ensure they have mechanisms in place to satisfy themselves of the quality of teaching in their department. This should, as a minimum include:

- **Probation:** HoDs or their designated representative should observe the teaching of all staff as part of their probationary assessment of new staff. All staff teaching or facilitating learning, including associate lecturers and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), should have their teaching observed within the department.
- **Performance Review:** To protect the quality of the students' learning experience, HoDs use feedback from programme/module evaluations and surveys, external examiner reports (see chapter 2) and other consultative processes to identify potential risk/s in teaching practices and to initiate a plan of remedial action. Teaching observation by the HoD or their designated representative is an essential part of this process and would be arranged, as appropriate, at local level. It can also be a vehicle for sharing good practices and celebrating success.

All staff must participate in the University's performance review process, which is informed by feedback on teaching. As part of this process, departments should have documented arrangements for supporting teachers whose teaching is deemed to be unsatisfactory, which clearly links to the University's [performance review process](#). 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.

To satisfy the University of the quality of teaching undertaken by academic partners (e.g., franchise arrangements), Faculties/departments should routinely review academic partners'

teaching observation processes to ensure they remain sufficient or whether additional review mechanisms are required (see chapter 5).

Peer Review

This focuses specifically on enhancement of teaching and learning, making it distinct from the quality assurance monitoring process detailed above. Review and enhancement of learning and 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, peer review of teaching should be constructive with areas of commendation or improvement highlighted. It is not the reviewer's role to tell colleagues how to teach or to impose their own working methods, but rather to engage in developmental dialogue before and following review.

To make this process effective, training and guidelines will be available to all staff involved in peer review activity. Training can be accessed via the CLT professional development series or locally, where appropriate, and Faculties will make all documents relating to the process available for guidance. HoDs are ultimately responsible for teaching quality and staff development and ensuring that staff engage with appropriate training. Consequently, their receipt of peer review records can be valuable both for the advancement of taught provision within the department and for the individual and collective development of staff.

Faculties determine their own processes for the operation of peer review and enhancement of learning and teaching, however **as a minimum** they must:

- a) Have a clear rubric for observation and feedback. This should include, but is not limited to, a focus on the following:
 - How engaging was the session overall?
 - How intellectually stimulating was the session?
 - How academically challenging was the session and how well were concepts/ideas/theories/tasks explained?
 - Were students given an opportunity to apply their learning and, if appropriate, was there evidence that students were building upon skills and knowledge?
- b) Provide access to local or central training for observation.
- c) Publish a 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 processes for disseminating good practice and commit to communicating disseminatable practice to the CLT.

- f) 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.

Further advice and guidance on the development and operation of teaching review is available from the CLT on request and from Faculty Teaching and Learning Leads, Senior Learning and Teaching Fellowship Leads and Senior SOLSTICE Fellowship Leads.

Learning and Teaching Fellowship and SOLSTICE Fellowship

The Learning and Teaching Fellowship and SOLSTICE Fellowship [schemes](#) are designed to:

- Recognise and reward excellence in teaching and supporting learning;
- Promote the effective implementation of the University's [Learning and Teaching Strategy](#); 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 Strategy as follows:

- 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.

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 application⁴ and related to the foci specified below which may include reference to:

- The University Learning and Teaching Strategy and/ or [Information Strategy](#).
- 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](#) 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.
- 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.

⁴ Applications for both Fellowship schemes are invited annually in December and considered by an academic panel.

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 CLT provides specific development for those seeking external examiner positions (also see Chapter 2).

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:	1) In what way has the programme of study been	What evidence is available to meet

Benchmark 1	Foci for Reflection	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>communicated to the student?</p> <p>2) What information is available to encourage the students to make informed decisions in choosing the blended or fully online approach?</p> <p>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?</p>	<p>the above benchmark?</p> <p>Are there gaps that need consideration?</p>

Benchmark 2	Foci for Reflection	Response
<p>The awarding Institution should ensure that students can be confident that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 material for a programme or element of study leading to one of its awards and are accessible to those with disabilities; 	<p>1) How have the blended or fully online systems been evaluated to eliminate risk of any 'downtime'?</p> <p>2) Is there full alignment with the University's position in the event of system failure to ensure continuation of the students' learning?</p> <p>3) Has checking the security and protection of the student within the blended or fully online systems been undertaken?</p> <p>4) How has / will the quality of materials be measured in line with the University's aspiration of high quality of teaching and learning?</p> <p>5) How has the programme been reviewed in its development and what processes are in place for review of online teaching and learning?</p> <p>6) Are there any deviations from the University's position on this benchmark? If so, why?</p>	<p>What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark?</p> <p>Are there gaps that need consideration?</p>

Benchmark 2	Foci for Reflection	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 		

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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How are the expectations of the mode of study communicated up front to students? How are students inducted to the mode of learning? What approaches are used to adequately prepare the student for degrees of autonomous learning? Are the students made aware of their involvement in any collaborative learning? How? 	<p>What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark?</p> <p>Are there gaps that need consideration?</p>

Benchmark 4	Foci for reflection	Response
<p>Students should have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How is student support provided? In what way is the learner's responsibility communicated? How is the institution's responsibility mapped out for the student? 	<p>What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark?</p> <p>Are there gaps that need consideration?</p>

Benchmark 5	Foci for reflection	Response
<p>Students should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the outset of their study, an identified contact, either local or remote 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What arrangements are made to monitor and feedback to students on 	<p>What evidence is available to meet</p>

Benchmark 5	Foci for reflection	Response
<p>through email, telephone, or other electronic means, who can give them constructive feedback on academic performance and authoritative guidance on their academic progression;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>their progress? Who are the key contacts and how will this be operated?</p> <p>2) How do learners' feedback to the programme team about their experience?</p>	<p>the above benchmark?</p> <p>Are there gaps that need consideration?</p>

Benchmark 6	Foci for reflection	Response
<p>The awarding institution, whether or not working through a support provider, should be able to ensure that students can be confident that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff who provide support to learners on blended or fully online programmes have appropriate skills, and receive appropriate training and development; Support for learners, whether delivered through staff of a support provider 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. 	<p>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?</p> <p>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?</p>	<p>What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark?</p> <p>Are there gaps that need consideration?</p>

Assessment of students

Benchmark 7	Foci for reflection	Response
<p>Students should have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of units, modules or elements of the programme in respect of assessment overall; 	<p>1) Are the relevant module/programme handbook and regulations made available to students, including details</p>	<p>What evidence is available to meet the above benchmark?</p>

Benchmark 7	Foci for reflection	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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? 	Are there gaps that need consideration?

Benchmark 8	Foci for reflection	Response
<p>The awarding institution, whether or not working through a programme presenter or support provider, should ensure that students can be confident that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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?

Chapter 7

Quality Assurance of Assessment

Updated October 2023

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INTRODUCTION

“Assessment is a fundamental aspect of the student experience. Students learn from assessment activities, interact with staff and peers, and gain feedback on their progress and performance. Assessment enables them to reflect and continually build on their learning.” (QAA,2018)

This chapter describes the University’s approach to the quality assurance of assessment. The practices described below are aligned with the [Office for Students’](#) (OfS) [Regulatory Framework](#), specifically the B Conditions of Registration for Quality and Standards. The following B Conditions have particular relevance to assessment practices, 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.
- **B4** - Ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards.
- **B5** - Deliver courses that meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications at level 4 or higher.

It is also informed by the [Quality Assurance Agency’s](#) (QAA) UK Quality Code’s supporting [Advice and Guidance on Assessment](#) and is consistent with the University’s [Assessment Policy](#).

The QAA’s [Academic Integrity Charter](#), provides ‘a baseline position upon which to develop policies and practices to ensure that every student’s qualification is genuine, verifiable and respected’ (QAA, 2020). As a signatory, the University has committed to the implementation its seven principles for academic integrity (see Figure 1). These include working with staff, students, and the sector, to protect and promote academic integrity and act against academic misconduct.

Assessment practices at Edge Hill are both *for* and *of* learning. Students’ learning is demonstrated through:

- **Formative assessment** - as part of their learning development; and,
- **Summative assessment** - through assessment against Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) leading to the award of academic credit towards an intended qualification award.

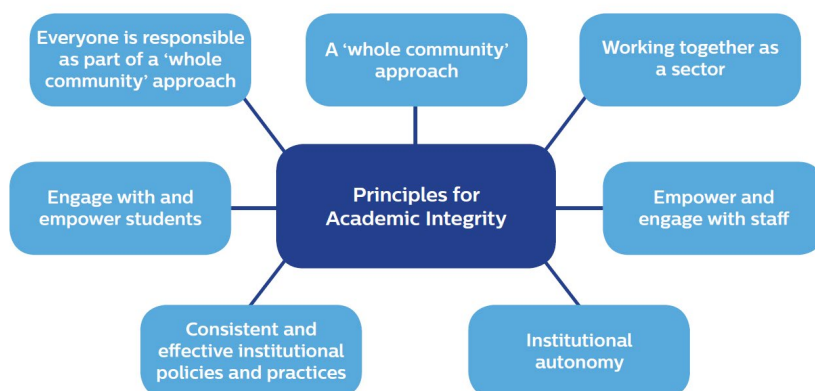
Assessment is an integral part of learning and must be closely aligned to:

- The programme / module Aims and Rationale;
- The methods of teaching and learning to be used; and,

- The ILOs to be demonstrated by students at each level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

In designing assessment activities, tutors must ensure they are aligned to the learning outcomes and will enable their achievement to be measured.

Figure 1: Principles for Academic Integrity (QAA, 2020)



ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

The University works to develop students' understanding of the purpose and process of assessment – also known as **assessment literacy** - to help them better understand the relationship between intended learning outcomes, assessment (marking) criteria, grades and feedback as a means towards meeting the assessment requirements and improving their own performance.

Programme teams provide detailed information to students about the following:

- **The purpose of assessment:** staff make clear links between assessment and the module's aims, academic rationale and learning outcomes.
- **The form(s) of assessment:** staff ensure that students receive detailed information about the type(s) of assessment they will encounter and, where possible, have the opportunity to practise it before it is used summatively.
- **The part played by a single piece of assessment in a student's overall award:** staff ensure that students are aware of the credit and classification system which operates in the award for which they are studying.
- **How to prepare for assessment:** staff ensure that all students receive advice and guidance on how to prepare for assessment and that no student is disadvantaged by unavoidable absence from any taught session in which such guidance and support is offered.
- **The assessment criteria to be used in judging students' work:** students are made aware of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria that will be used to indicate

the standard they have achieved; this includes assessment of proficiency in the use of the English Language. They are also advised of any penalties for incorrect spelling, grammar or academic referencing¹. The reasons for awarding a particular grade are made explicit on the assessment feedback sheet.

- **The penalties that will be incurred for any form of academic malpractice:** students are advised of current University policy as set out in the [Academic Regulations](#).
- **The effects that non-attendance will have on assessment:** students are advised of the general attendance requirement at the commencement of their studies. No grade penalty may be incurred for poor or non-attendance unless participation is assessed through specific activities, e.g., assessed seminars, or is referenced explicitly within the intended learning outcomes².
- **The procedures for submitting work for assessment:** a clear deadline for submission is set. Staff ensure that all submitted work is collected securely and its receipt acknowledged. Work submitted late receives a zero mark.
- **Extensions:** students are advised of the procedures for extensions which must be agreed in advance of the submission date. Extensions are approved only where unforeseen circumstances have arisen and the reasons for them are clearly documented. Departments ensure that students are treated equitably when granting extensions.
- **Personal circumstances:** students are advised of current University policy³ as set out in the Academic Regulations. Personal Circumstances procedures allow students to notify assessment boards of factors that may have affected their performance in assessment.
- **Students with disabilities and/or specific learning difficulties:** students are advised of current University policy as set out in the Academic Regulations. Referral may also be made to the Disability Adviser and the Academic Registry.
- **Arrangements and procedures for conventional examinations:** students are advised of current University policy as set out in the Academic Regulations. A clear date, duration and location for examinations is set. Conventional exams are subject to invigilation controls. Non-attendance at an examination is awarded a zero mark.
- **Arrangements and procedures for computer-based examinations, Time Limited Assessments online (TLAs):** where applicable, students (and staff) are made cognizant of current University policy on computer-based exams as set out in the Academic Regulations⁴. Computer-based exams may be subject to proctoring controls.
- **Feedback on coursework:** staff agree the date by which assessed work will be returned to students with relevant grades and detailed written feedback. University policy dictates a **maximum turn-round time of 4 weeks** although the precise time may vary depending on the nature of the assessment (e.g., a short essay compared with a lengthy dissertation) and the number of students registered on the module. Where

¹ See 'Assessment of Academic Referencing Policy' at <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/assessment-of-academic-referencing/>.

² For example, where minimum attendance is necessary to meet professional standards and/ or Fitness to Practise requirements.

³ See Academic Regulations Appendix 7.

⁴ See Academic Regulations, Appendix 5.

in exceptional circumstances the turn-round time will exceed 4 weeks, staff ensure that students receive advance notification.

- **Feedback on examinations:** all examinations are followed by feedback which as a minimum takes the form of a group presentation to students indicating common strengths and weaknesses exhibited in scripts and advising how general performance could be improved.
- **Students' rights to appeal against assessment decisions:** students (and staff) are made aware of the guidance prepared by the Academic Registrar on the grounds for appeal⁵ and the way in which appeals will be handled.
- **Explanation of the processes in place to ensure assessment is fair:** For example, how assessment strategies are validated, the internal moderation process, external examination, monitoring and evaluation).

Summative assessment

Programme teams are responsible for deciding the form, volume and timing of assessment in modules and programmes which are considered and approved at validation. Summative assessment strategies typically comprise:

- Coursework - *Written assignment, including essay; report; project; dissertation; portfolio.*
- Written examination
- Practical skills assessment - *Oral assessment and presentation; viva voce examination; clinical skills assessment (OSCE).*

Information on assessment collected at validation also supports the production of programme publicity, e.g., print and online prospectus, and compilation of external data returns including the University's submission for Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) assessment.

Departments have procedures to ensure there is no inadvertent overlap between specific tasks of different modules of the same programme, or between coursework and examination questions in the same module.

When setting a specific task, e.g., an essay title, tutors ensure that it conforms to the assessment strategy that was approved at validation and that the assignment specification has been moderated by a second member of the teaching team. Draft examination papers⁶ are approved by the external examiner who may also review draft coursework specifications by agreement with the programme team.

⁵ See Academic Regulations, Appendix 22.

⁶ For modules at Level 5 and above but also including Level 4 for Foundation Degrees - see Chapter 2.

Formative assessment

All assessment, including summative assessment, may be considered to have formative elements and programme validation requires teams to demonstrate and explain their strategies for formative experiences - a key element of 'assessment *for* learning'. The formative value is greater when coupled with highly **developmental feedback**, however formative experiences should go further and help students understand the nature of assessment, what it is for and how it works. Programme teams demonstrate at validation how formative experiences have been incorporated into modules. The [Taught Degrees Framework](#) wiki contains a number of useful links and exemplars for course developers, which include:

- Writing in front of students to show and explain how good writing works.
- Showing pieces of written work and describing their qualities, annotating the text with comment bubbles and track changes 'in action'.
- Involving students in 'marking' sample work and giving feedback as a means of demonstrating how assessment criteria are used.

The University has approved a set of minimum baseline expectations in relation to assessment and feedback for use by course teams and validation and review panels which is provided in the Appendix.

Where examples of former students' work are utilised for formative purposes, these will in all cases be anonymised and the explicit permission of the authors obtained in line with the University's Intellectual Property Policy.

Monitoring and evaluation

Module evaluation and annual programme monitoring (see chapter 3) provide opportunities to reflect on the inclusiveness and general fitness-for-purpose of all teaching, learning and assessment activities. Terms of reference for assessment boards include the specific evaluation of assessment in modules exhibiting low first-time pass rates.

ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Marking and Moderation

Assessment criteria are used to classify student achievement of ILOs above (and below) threshold (pass) standard, i.e., 40%. Programme teams use **Sector Recognised Standards**, which include the **mandatory Outcome Classification Descriptions for FHEQ Level 6** (Annex D of the FHEQ) to develop level 5 and 6 marking criteria that measure the demonstration of knowledge, understanding and skills within each classification band – Third, Lower Second, Upper Second and First Class (although further differentiation within the 70-100% First Class band is considered best practice). Separate criteria are developed for each FHEQ level (4 to 7). Use of assessment criteria should be transparent within the assessment process enabling students, internal moderators and external examiners to see clearly how marking decisions

have been arrived at and to this end will align closely with the written feedback provided to students.

- **First marking** provides sufficient feedback to enable students to understand how their grades have been determined and how they might raise the standard of their work in future. All examination scripts are 'blind marked' with the candidate's name concealed on the cover sheet. While there is no Institutional requirement, departments determine whether to adopt blind marking for other forms of assessment, although it is recognised that some forms of practical assessment, such as performance and presentations, will often exclude this possibility. Where new staff (including associate lecturers) join a programme team and are inexperienced in assessment, Module/ Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of, understand and utilise the assessment criteria effectively. Such programme teams are advised to moderate all, or a high proportion of, less experienced staff's assessments (see below). Support for staff inexperienced in assessment is available from the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT).
- **Second marking** is a process for reviewing and confirming marks as a prelude to internal moderation (below). **Unlike moderation, second-marking is not compulsory across all assessed pieces of work** but may be used where departments feel it is particularly appropriate, e.g., for the assessment of final year dissertations and extended projects. Second markers may attend assessed live performances or presentations which should be video-recorded where practicable for the purpose of internal and external moderation.
- **Internal moderation** is a process used within departments to test for consistent application of the assessment criteria across the range of marks displayed by a cohort. Moderation uses sampling⁷ to confirm that the profile of marks is appropriate. The moderator(s) review the work with sight of the marking tutor's grades and feedback and focuses on establishing the appropriate grade/class of the work, rather than being excessively concerned with precise numerical scores. Markers and moderators agree final marks for the work and where the variance is greater than ten marks (that is, the difference of a whole classification) it may be appropriate to engage a second moderator. Where the moderator identifies a consistent variance (over or under) across the majority of the sample, an additional sample is requested and in exceptional cases may prompt the scaling of marks or a requirement to re-mark the whole cohort's work. **Moderators are mindful of the impact of changing individual marks during the process on the rest of the cohort and this should not occur.** Evidence of a record of moderation must be present and made available to external examiners. The record must document the moderation process and lessons learned in relation to teaching, learning and assessment that may enhance the next cycle of learning. Discussions between marking tutors and moderators also consider the appropriateness of assessment, and assessment criteria.

⁷ For Institutional guidance on the range and size of moderation samples, see <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/documents/Assessment-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf>.

Following internal moderation, all internally-moderated work is sent to **the external examiner** for further sampling sufficient to confirm that, in their expert opinion, academic standards are being set appropriately and that students are achieving them (see chapter 2). Module Assessment Boards are convened to consider students' marks and make recommendations to Progression and Award Boards (see chapter 8) according to specifications set out in sections H and I in the [Academic Regulations](#).

Moderation of 'closed' programmes

The process for programme closure as detailed in Chapter 4 of this Handbook involves a Faculty proposal to the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC) confirming termination of recruitment, the date by which the final full- and/or part-time cohorts complete and the arrangements in place to maintain the quality of the student experience. **During the closure period, programmes remain subject to the full range of quality assurance processes** including annual monitoring, external examining, curriculum review and any minor / major modifications deemed necessary to maintain academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities. Following completion of the final cohort, any individual students trailing referred assessment are covered by existing procedures which require their work to be internally moderated only. There is no requirement for external moderation, on the basis that constructing a meaningful sample in such circumstances is likely to be impractical (see chapter 2).

In some cases, **repeating students or students who have had an interruption to their studies return to study** after their programme has ceased delivery. In such circumstances the University supports them to complete the awards on which they were initially registered, through either:

1. Continuing on their original modules where these remain in delivery for other programmes; and/or
2. Undertaking alternative subject modules that demonstrably meet the Programme Learning Outcomes of their intended award; and/or
3. Negotiating Student-Initiated Credit⁸ that demonstrably meets the Programme Learning Outcomes of their intended award.

In each of the above three scenarios, normal external examiner arrangements apply.

In a very small number of cases where students are required to **repeat without attendance** after module delivery has ceased, they remain registered on their original modules for assessment only and there is generally no requirement for external moderation (although internal moderation is still undertaken). Nevertheless, Faculties may seek the involvement of an external examiner where this felt to be both *proportionate and productive*, most notably where there are enough students to generate a meaningful 'cohort' for moderation purposes and/or where the assessment makes a significant contribution to the student's intended award, e.g., final year Dissertation or Extended Project. In such cases, the Faculty has the option of:

⁸ See Academic Regulations s. C3.9.

- Retaining the outgoing external examiner (with an Extension of Office where required and available); or
- Extending the duties of an examiner of a similar or cognate programme of the same department; or
- Appointing a separate examiner (time-limited appointment).

Inclusive Assessment Design and Reasonable Adjustments

Teaching and learning activities are influenced by University policies and UK legislation⁹ related to Equality and Disability. Faculties seek to make their programmes accessible and inclusive at the point of design, devising learning and assessment activities that do not knowingly disadvantage or exclude any student group. Course designers take steps to identify and resolve any barriers and biases in respect of a proposed programme's content, learning activities, learning outcomes and assessment strategy. For example, consideration may be given to how students with a sensory impairment will access learning materials resulting in adaptations to the materials or how and when they are made available. Similar consideration must be given to assessment so that it is accessible to all students. A range of teaching and assessment methods also helps accommodate students' varying learning styles and preferences. The provision of academic and personal support also considers the diverse needs of students.

The University subscribes to inclusive assessment practices, ensuring that assessment is designed in a way that meets the needs of all students, including those studying at different locations, via different modes of study (blended or online) and those possessing one or more protected characteristics. Inclusion features prominently among the principles of the [Assessment Policy](#) which states that '*Assessment will be informed by Edge Hill's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Strategy](#) and will seek to be inclusive and not to disadvantage specific individuals or groups of students.*'

Programme approval (validation) panels judge the extent to which inclusion has been considered within the curriculum design process in relation to student characteristics that may include:

- Age, e.g. school-leaver or mature returner to study
- Gender, including sexual orientation and gender-identification
- Ethnicity, including faith or belief systems and cultural values
- Socio-economic background, including first-time HE participation
- Entry qualifications, e.g. A-level, BTEC, T-Levels, Access/ Fastrack; no formal qualifications/ RPEL
- Disability and/ or specific learning difficulties.

Once a programme or module is validated, **reasonable adjustments** (such as additional time for an examination) or **alternative assessments** (substituting one form of assessment for another) may be accessed by students with specific learning difficulties or disabilities.

⁹ Equality Act (EQA) 2010 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

Students are requested to consult their tutors or the University's Inclusion team¹⁰ before making an application for Faculty approval. In the case of alternative assessments, the choice of substitute is determined by the module leader on condition that it (i) meets the validated module learning outcomes for that particular element of assessment (and any professional body requirements); (ii) is confirmed with the external examiner¹¹; and (iii) is verified by the responsible Programme Leader or Head of Department.

'Must Pass' and 'Pass/Fail'

The University's Academic Regulations permit the award of credit where the aggregation of marks obtained within a module is 40% or higher¹². Designating an individual assessment element as **Must Pass**¹³ means that the student will not progress in the module unless the mark achieved in that element is at least 40 irrespective of the final module mark, e.g. a student with an aggregated module score of 50 would fail the module if they scored below 40 in the Must Pass element. Must Pass is normally reserved for the assessment of core (professional) competencies that are integral to a qualification award and can either be *weighted*, i.e. make a x% contribution to the overall module score, or *unweighted* (0% contribution) as justified at validation. Where used, Must Pass elements should be clearly identified as such under Additional Assessment Information in the module specification template (E-VAL).

Designating an assessment element **Pass/Fail** means that the student is awarded a mark of *either* 100 or 0. Because this is a binary judgement and there is no grading involved, Pass/Fail should be used where task completion against the intended learning outcomes, rather than degree of performance is being measured. Examples may include the submission of an essay plan or small research proposal. Assessment is weighted in the normal manner and because of the potential to 'skew' the aggregated module mark Pass/Fail elements will normally carry a low weighting, e.g. 10% contributing only 10 or 0 marks to the overall module grade. Pass/Fail elements should be clearly identified as such under Summative Assessment in the module specification template (E-VAL).

Whilst they are different and treated separately, it is possible for an assessment element to be specified *both* 'Must Pass' and 'Pass/Fail' – for example, a clinical skills test could be designated Must Pass with a Pass/Fail mark of either 100 or 0 (either weighted or unweighted).

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR [EXPERIENTIAL] LEARNING

The University's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy¹⁴ acknowledges that learning may occur in a wide variety of settings and facilitates the formal recognition of such learning, whether based on previous academic qualifications or on learning derived from personal or

¹⁰ <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/departments/support/studentservices/inclusive/>.

¹¹ For modules at FHEQ level 5 and above, but with some additional exceptions – see Chapter 2.

¹² See Academic Regulations H3.6. However, a separate process of *condonement* may be used to compensate students for marginal failure of a module – see section H11 of the Regulations.

¹³ Requires justification at programme validation.

¹⁴ Academic Regulations, Appendix 4

professional experience gained outside any formal educational setting. Learning recognised in this way can be used towards meeting the entry requirements for an Edge Hill programme, or for 'entry with advanced standing' where one or more modules is exempted up to a permitted credit threshold¹⁵. Individuals seeking to have their prior learning recognised, access processes for the consideration of RPL claims which are described in Faculty Quality Statements (see chapter 1), and where credit is being assigned for experiential learning, this is normally through the assessment of a portfolio demonstrating alignment with learning outcomes (see Table 1 below).

RPEL claimants receive support and guidance in producing their portfolios, and initial assessment is by a member of Faculty staff other than the designated support tutor. External examiners (see chapter 2) review a sample of portfolios, negotiated with the department/Faculty, which is typically larger than for modules that are conventionally delivered and assessed. Ultimate responsibility for the assessment of RPEL claims resides with the appropriate Faculty assessment board.

STUDENT-INITIATED CREDIT

Students who fail a module after initial re-assessment¹⁶ can substitute another module¹⁷ or undertake a negotiated learning module for the award of Student-Initiated Credit. Student-Initiated Credit is also available for students whom an assessment board has permitted to transfer from an Ordinary degree to an Honours degree¹⁸. Proposals for Student-Initiated Credit are considered and approved by Faculties using the process described in their Faculty Quality Statements and are supported by learning agreements which typically include:

1. The student's name, department and the programme/year on which they are enrolled.
2. The rationale for Student-Initiated Credit.
3. The code, title and credit value of the module to be replaced and the code, title and credit value of the replacement module¹⁹.
4. The proposed module content, intended learning outcomes and assessment that have been negotiated between the student and tutor, and how the module learning outcomes align with the programme learning outcomes for the justification of a student's award.
5. Submission date for assessment.
6. Signatures of the tutor and student indicating their agreement of the negotiated learning.
7. External examiner's approval (for Student-Initiated Credit at level 5 and above).

¹⁵ See Academic Regulations s. C7.10.

¹⁶ Note: module substitution is not permitted following a second failed re-assessment.

¹⁷ Up to 40 credits may be substituted subject to ensuring consistency with the validated programme learning outcomes and that any modules designated 'core' to the programme/award are not substituted. See Academic Regulations section H12.8.

¹⁸ Academic Regulations section I4.6.

¹⁹ Which may be a validated 'shell module' of the appropriate level and credit value containing generic learning outcomes to which the negotiated content and assessment are applied.

8. Signature of the approving authority, e.g., PVC Dean or Associate Dean of Faculty or chair of the relevant Faculty committee.

Table 1: Portfolio assessment process in support of RPL claims

Claimant's details:	Description
Curriculum Vitae:	
Current job description:	This should be included only if the claim is for learning from work that includes, or is relevant to, the claimant's current post. Where no formal job description exists the claimant should develop his or her own job description.
The Claim:	This should state the learning outcomes achieved, the level and volume of credit being claimed and (for advanced entry) any modules from which exemption is being sought.
Evidence of Learning Achievement:	This should comprise the primary documentary evidence adduced by the claimant in their Reflective Account (below).
Reflective Account:	<p>This should be explicitly cross-referenced to (and evaluate) the learning outcomes and the evidence of learning achievement. Length, content and style should be appropriate to the volume and level of credit being claimed. The account should demonstrate that the student has engaged with the relevant academic literature and be properly referenced. It should be produced in anticipation of the criteria against which the claim for credit will be assessed which will include its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Validity</i>: the match between the evidence presented and the learning achieved; • <i>Sufficiency</i>: sufficient volume and breadth of evidence, including reflection, to demonstrate the achievement of all the outcomes claimed; • <i>Authenticity</i>: the evidence must be clearly related to the applicant's own efforts and achievements (independent verification may be specified); • <i>Currency</i>: demonstrating that what is being assessed is current learning.

RETENTION AND DISPOSAL OF ASSESSED WORK

The University's [Retention Records Schedule](#) contains the following guidance on the procedure and timelines for the retention and disposal of assessed student work:

Record Category	Retention Period	Rationale	Notes
Examination scripts (i.e., completed answers)	Level 4: Confirmation of Level 4 Results + 5 years	To allow for disputes to be resolved	

Record Category	Retention Period	Rationale	Notes
	All other levels: Termination of relationship with student + 5 years.		
Assessed work (other than examination scripts). Including dissertations, that counts towards the final award	Termination of relationship with student + 5 years.	Best practice	Retention period applies only when the assessment is retained by the University. Assessed work may be returned to students at any stage providing marking/ moderation/ sampling processes are complete. Departments are required to retain samples for audit purposes ²⁰ . Retention in these cases will be dictated by the requirements of the audit. It is advised that externally examined samples and associated reports are stored for ease of retrieval. Samples may be retained indefinitely as 'exemplars' where the author gives consent.
PhD theses	May retain indefinitely	Best practice	Only where consent is given by the author.

²⁰ For example, by the Office for Students, Ofsted or as required by individual Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

APPENDIX: “Assessment and Feedback: Baseline Expectations to Ensure Good Practices”

The processes of Assessment Design – Quality Management and Enhancement

1. Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria and tasks will be designed to match the level of higher education study. These will be checked by internal and external experts from this and another university when a programme is validated, or when significant modifications are made.
2. Marks are based on how well students perform against the Learning Outcomes and against specific Criteria for an individual assessment, or against generic Criteria for specific assessment types at that level.
3. Assessment tasks (including coursework, examinations, presentations etc. for levels 5, 6 & 7 and 4, 5 for Foundation Degrees) will also be checked and approved by an External Examiner before they can be used.
4. Tutors’ marking will be checked by other tutors as part of Assessment Moderation sampling, to make sure it is fair and consistent. **A moderation record will be kept for each sampling**, indicating the nature of the sample, those involved, and any lessons learned which may enhance future learning, teaching and assessment.
5. This will be followed by further scrutiny by External Examiner/s who also check fairness, that standards are appropriate, and that feedback is of high quality.

Student Support and Development of Assessment Literacy

6. Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria will be explained in detail. These will be provided for students in a handbook.
7. The Programme Handbook will contain a schedule and instructions for submitting work and the date on which feedback will be received.
8. Teaching will include guidance and preparation for assessment (i.e. Formative Assessment). Tutors will explain how assessment works for each type of assessment that students will encounter. This will be in good time, before students experience that assessment type.
9. Students will be shown examples of assessment, feedback and grades awarded so that they get a sense of ‘what matters.’
10. Tutors will provide opportunities to discuss assessment during teaching. The Personal Tutor will also act as a source of guidance.

Feedback and Communications

11. Students will receive feedback specifically constructed to explain in detail how grades have been awarded and how well the Learning Outcomes have been met against the Assessment Criteria.
12. Feedback will be developmental, giving specific advice for the future. It will be provided in a timely way (within 4 working weeks) in accordance with the schedule set down in the Programme Handbook.

13. Where feasible, work will be submitted via the VLE and feedback returned via the VLE. Students should be asked to consider Learning Outcomes and Assessment criteria prior to submitting to maximise the quality of their work before submission.
14. Any unforeseen delays in feedback will be communicated immediately to students and a confirmed date set for receipt. If a delay is anticipated, contingency measures will be pursued to ensure the original deadline is met.
15. Students will be given an opportunity to discuss feedback with a tutor, individually or as a group. Feedback on examinations will be discussed with the whole group (similar to an examiner's report on strengths and areas for further development)

Fairness in Assessment

In conclusion, it is important that students understand that assessment is a fair process and should know how we underpin that with integrity and accountability. The following messages should be reinforced as part of student inductions each year:

- When we create a programme, learning outcomes and assessment criteria are carefully designed to match the level of your study. These are checked by external experts from another university.
- Assessment tasks (coursework, exams, presentations etc.) are also checked and approved by an external examiner from another university before they can be used.
- Marks are based on how well you perform against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. They are focused solely on the quality of your work and are not a comparison or competition with other students' work.
- A process called assessment moderation makes sure marking/grading is fair and consistent. This involves tutors having their marking/grading checked for fairness and consistency by other tutors, followed by further scrutiny by external examiners.

This helps us ensure our standards are appropriate and our feedback is of high quality.

For further guidance on Assessment and Feedback see:

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/documents/Assessment-and-Feedback-Policy.pdf> .

Chapter 8

Academic Governance

Updated October 2023

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INTRODUCTION

Successful higher education providers are characterised by a full and mutually respectful partnership between academic and non-academic members of their communities who individually and collectively take full responsibility for maintaining the standards of their awards and the quality and enhancement of students' learning opportunities.

This also extends to the participation of students in line with the Core Practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education which state that higher education providers 'actively engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience'¹.

The effectiveness of the procedures set out elsewhere in this Handbook is ultimately dependent on the University's arrangements for academic governance and in particular, the activities of Academic Board and its committees². The committee structure has been designed to secure the accountability of all staff, groups and committees within the University to one another as well as to external stakeholders and sits alongside the Institution's management and executive structure which is subject to the ultimate authority of the Board of Governors.

As outlined in the Articles of Government, Academic Board determines its own procedures and these are approved by the Board of Governors.

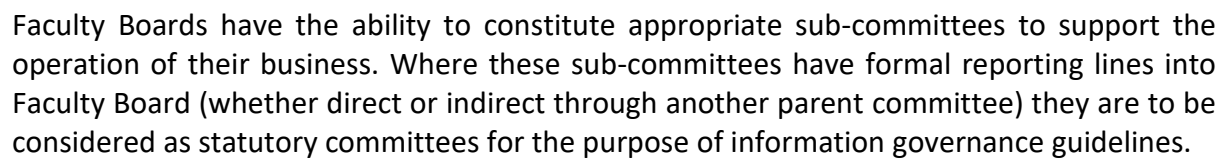
This chapter describes and explains the structure, remits, constitutions and individual roles of Academic Board, its committees and members. In addition to clear and complete terms of reference and relevant and appropriate memberships, an effective committee structure depends upon the efficient management of committee business and a commitment on the part of all members to critical engagement, free expression and the civilities of challenging but constructive and open debate.

Alternate representation is permitted for most Academic Board committees unless otherwise stated in the Committee Constitution and Membership, or within the Standing Orders. If a Committee member is unable to attend a meeting, they are able to identify an alternate to attend the meeting in their absence. It is desirable that where possible, alternates are identified and attend the meeting to ensure that meetings remain quorate. In the case of elected academic representation from Faculties on Academic Board, provision has been made for one alternate elected member to deputise for elected members when they are unable to attend.

¹ <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code>.

² Agendas, papers and confirmed minutes of Academic Board and its sub-committees may be accessed via: <Y:\Everyone\Academic Board Committees>.

The academic governance committee structure is as follows:



Roles and responsibilities

Secretariat

The secretariat for the academic governance structure is provided by the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team, with support from other areas for a limited number of specialist committees which are serviced by Faculties, Academic Registry and the Research Office. The Secretariat is responsible for:

- Publishing the annual schedule of committee meetings, ensuring appropriate alignment to the Board of Governors calendar and flow of business between committees and their sub-committees.
- Co-ordinating the Annual Process Review for Chapter 8 of the Quality Management Handbook, including reviewing committee membership and terms of reference in conjunction with the committees.
- Running annual elections for representatives across the committee structure.
- Maintaining central committee membership records, monitoring expiry dates for appointed members as appropriate.
- Updating the Standing Orders annually, for submission and approval by Academic Board.
- Delivering relevant training and briefing sessions related to academic governance and committee operations.

Role of the Committee Chair

These are either *ex officio*³ posts or appointed by Academic Board or a designated sub-committee. Chairs work closely with secretaries to ensure that committee business is planned and managed appropriately. All committee/sub-committee/group Chairs will also normally be members of any parent committees. Chairs are able to access shadowing or mentoring from other experienced Chairs if required, and guidance to support them in their role can be provided by the secretariat.

Responsibilities of the Chair

The primary function of the committee Chair is to manage the meeting effectively through creating an environment conducive to good discussion. Chairs are also responsible for:

- ensuring that all members who wish to participate in a discussion are enabled to do so;
- providing such information as may have a bearing on the debate and which is not commonly available;
- the clarification of the actual issue under debate;
- advising on the legality of debate in terms of the type of business deemed to be "in order" for the meeting to discuss, and whether debate of resolution is allowable under the Standing Orders;
- providing any requisite rulings on points of order or directions regarding procedure
- Ensuring well-defined outcomes and decisions from meeting discussions.
- Encouraging debate which leads to clear and positive outcomes.

³ Such positions are held 'by virtue of the office', rather than by the individual in their own right.

- Providing leadership within meetings and steering discussions where appropriate.
- Managing the committee's effectiveness, including good time management.
- Remaining apprised of the latest issued Standing Orders.
- Maintaining a strong relationship with the committee Secretary, providing support if required⁴.
- Keeping their knowledge of the committee's function up to date.
- Appointing Chairs of any sub-committees under their Committee, and a Deputy Chair where required.
- Reporting to the relevant 'parent' committee to provide updates on the business, decisions and operations of their committee⁵.

A member may request that the Chair rules on a point of order, or ask that a relevant regulation be read or for any other information that they considers pertinent to the subject or procedure.

The Chair may freely contribute their personal opinions to a debate, but if they wish to propose, second or oppose a motion, they must appoint a temporary Chair to preside until the business is completed, including the voting on any motion they may have introduced. The Chair then resumes office and continues with the meeting.

Chair's action

As agreed in the Standing Orders, where deemed necessary, the Chair may take decisions and make approvals outside of scheduled committee meetings (usually related to category A agenda items exclusively). Chair's action should be taken on an exceptional basis and requires advance discussion with the committee Secretary. Where possible, Chairs should seek comments from the broader committee membership to inform any approval given via Chair's action. For transparency, any Chair's Action taken is reported at the next meeting for comment by the Members. A log of Chair's action taken is also maintained by the Secretary and this is reported on within the committee's Annual Report to monitor the appropriateness of Chair's action taken.

Deputy Chair

Some committees have a constituted Deputy Chair to deal with items where there may be a conflict of interest for the Chair, or where they are unavailable. Other committees may designate a Deputy Chair for individual meetings or specific items as required and appointed by the Chair.

Role of the Committee Secretary

Committee Secretaries provide a vital role in effective academic governance, providing expert and proactive support to committees. Secretaries are required to take ownership of the business of their committee, developing expert knowledge to support the committee's

⁴ This includes agreeing the agenda, making decisions on authors/speakers, reviewing and approving draft minutes and challenging members where required (such as with persistent none attendance or late paper submission).

⁵ The minutes of the 'child' committee should be submitted to the 'parent' committee where available. Where this is not possible, a verbal update should be provided at the meeting by the Chair instead.

operation and good decision making. Building a good relationship with the Chair is also essential for this role, tailoring approaches and styles where possible.

Secretaries are required to have a strong understanding of academic governance procedures, including the Standing Orders, providing advice upon operational matters where required by the committee or Chair.

Committee secretaries are generally allocated by the Secretariat, with specific exceptions for specialist committees with different requirements. The institutional membership spreadsheet outlines where these responsibilities reside for each Secretary role.

Responsibilities of the Secretary

Secretaries are also responsible for specific, operational tasks, including:

- Generating draft agendas, informed by the committee business plan, their expert knowledge, and through suggestions from committee members and wider stakeholders.
- Circulating meeting information and papers in good time for meetings.
- Disseminating actions as soon as possible following committee meetings, following up relevant actions where required.
- Producing accurate and concise minutes promptly within ten working days of committee meetings.
- Escalating issues to the Chair where appropriate⁶.
- Co-ordinating requests for Chair's Action where appropriate.
- Liaising with committee paper authors, advising on agenda categorisation and other relevant matters.
- Producing the Annual Report and Business Plan for the committee.
- Advising the committee and the Chair on procedural matters, including the operation of closed business and declarations of interest⁷.
- Adhering to appropriate information governance requirements, including ensuring appropriate data protection arrangements are in place for the distribution and destruction of committee papers⁸ and handling matters of closed business appropriately⁹;

Training for secretaries of Academic Board committees is available on request and details can be found on the Academic Governance WIKI pages¹⁰. Shadowing and mentoring opportunities are available for new secretaries where required.

⁶ Examples where this may be appropriate could be the repeated non-attendance by key committee members, or other matters which may affect the effective operations of the committee.

⁷ Further information is available elsewhere in this Chapter and within the Standing Orders.

⁸ For any additional operational guidance please contact Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework.

⁹ See section 4.1 for further guidance.

¹⁰ <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/governance>.

Committee roles

The fundamental responsibilities which are shared by all members of the University are to respect the authority (as set out in their terms of reference) of Academic Board and its committees; comply with action requirements; submit papers and agenda items to deadline and in accordance with the relevant Standing Orders; and to ensure that the views and experience of themselves, their colleagues and of students are adequately represented at and by the relevant committees.

The last of these can be met in a variety of ways which may include standing for election to a committee; encouraging colleagues and students to stand for election; participating in ballots for elections; attending a committee as an observer; submitting agenda items and papers for consideration by a committee; and providing feedback to Chairs, secretaries or the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team on the effectiveness of the University's deliberative committee structure.

The Vice-Chancellor has right of attendance at any University Committee/Sub-Committee or Working Group.

Responsibilities of committee members

All members of institutional committees are expected to actively engage with their allocated committee(s) and their responsibilities include:

- Attending all meetings where possible, providing advance apologies where unavoidable¹¹.
- Suggesting items of business for the committee to consider and engaging with the call for agenda items issued in advance of the meeting.
- Reading the distributed paperwork in advance of the meeting and preparing questions and comments.
- Presenting designated items at the meeting.
- Maintaining strict confidentiality for items of closed business or at closed Committees e.g. External Examiners Sub-Committee.
- Disseminating relevant information or decisions to their Faculty or Department.
- Updating the Secretary regarding any role or contact information changes.
- Providing feedback on committee operations and engaging with the annual committee effectiveness review
- Engaging with training and guidance available to support committee members.
- Disclosing any matters which may fall under the requirement for Declaration of Interest.
- Ensuring the appropriate consideration for issues of equality and diversity, especially where matters of approval are considered¹².

¹¹ Members are also able to send an appropriate representative to attend on their behalf. For more information please contact the Secretary.

¹² In policy development, decisions and resolutions, matters of equality and diversity are considered where relevant, and may include reflecting on any impact on people with different protected characteristics, namely race; disability; age; sex; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity and religion or belief.

A member of an Academic Board Committee may nominate an Alternate to attend on their behalf if the member is unable to attend a specific meeting of a committee. Alternates have the same rights as the member they are acting for. If an Alternate is to be nominated the Secretary of the relevant committee should be informed at least 48 hours before the meeting is to take place.

Categories of committee membership

The constitutions of Academic Board and its committees are designed to maximise the effectiveness of the deliberative structure by including a mix of members which vary according to each committee's terms of reference. The role of the different types of membership and their period of appointment is detailed below.

Category of Membership	Period of appointment	Role on committee
Ex-officio	Continuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential, specialist expertise connected to their role or position • Consistent, fixed membership protects committee memory • Responsible for the dissemination of key discussions or decisions to their Department/Faculty
Appointed	1 year (rolling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides expert advice and information from their Department/Faculty, to contribute to debate and decision making • Selected to represent a sample of views from a Department/Faculty • Allows greater reflexivity where there are capacity or role changes • Provides an opportunity for personal/professional development
Elected	3 years ¹³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an example of the views of a designated constituency • Provides a mechanism by which views of constituents may be represented within to committee decision making • Allows rotation of committee membership on controlled cycle • Provides an opportunity for personal/professional development
Students	Rolling annual appointment	<p>Generally constituted student representatives are elected sabbatical officers from the Students' Union, however some committees may also draw student representatives from other forums.</p> <p>More information on students on committees can be found elsewhere in this chapter.</p>

Processes for the election of elected representatives can be found elsewhere in this chapter.

External individuals may be constituted on a committee and be from outside of the University (i.e. not members of staff or students). This may include lay representatives or staff from the Students' Union for example. They are granted privileged access to the committee and have voting rights alongside other members.

¹³ Any elected member of a Committee away from the institution on a full-time basis for one year or more will resign their seat to cover the period of absence.

Additional individuals may be co-opted onto specific meetings where their attendance or expertise is required. This is done at the discretion of the Chair¹⁴ and they are recorded as 'in attendance'. They do not count in quorum calculations and hold no voting powers. Co-opted members generally remain on a committee for a period of one year.

Similarly, observers are allowed at any open meeting of committees at the discretion of the Chair, however closed business may be restricted to them.

Due to the nature of some roles, an individual may hold multiple positions on a single committee e.g. ex-officio and appointed. Details of the impact of this on the calculation of quorum and voting rights can be found in the Standing Orders.

A register of all committee members (excluding Faculty committees) is maintained by the Academic Governance and Quality Assurance Team within the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework department and includes responsibility for appointed positions.

Any in-year vacancies which emerge may be managed in various ways, at the discretion of the Chair:

- Holding the position as vacant;
- Asking for a replacement appointed representative where appropriate;
- Co-option of a specific individual for the remainder of the academic calendar.

Guidance on appointing members

Appointed positions are subject to annual review by a designated Dean, Director or Chair of a Committee. Guidance on making appointments is provided to these Appointers as follows:

- **Representation**

Appointed members are there to represent the views of the Faculty but are not expected to speak with expert authority on specific matters (this falls to the ex officio representatives), therefore colleagues with varied backgrounds and experience to represent the area's views and expertise should be considered.

- **Attendance**

Anyone appointed must be able to attend regularly and have adequate time to prepare for meetings. Attendance information for any current members to inform is provided to inform the decision to renew anyone.

- **Talent spotting**

This is an opportunity to spot emerging talent in their area, including across junior members of staff who may be future leaders. Appointers may wish to seek volunteers from within their area and this is supported by an **Expression of Interest** process to seek interest from across staff (with support from line managers required). Committee attendance should be seen as a form of professional development and can be suggested within PDRs.

¹⁴ The Vice-Chancellor has right of attendance at any University Committee/Sub-Committee or Working Group.

- **Diversity**

Committee representation should be as balanced as possible and, as appointed positions make up a proportion of the whole committee, therefore it is important that appointments reflect the diversity of the University. Further guidance on this shall be provided by the University EDI Group.

Election protocols

This section provides the details for the operation of elections in academic governance committees, as agreed by Academic Board. Elections are normally held annually in advance of the new academic year however in-year elections are permissible.

The Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance will act as Returning Officer for the election of members and elections are conducted by the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team in accordance with these protocols.

The nominal roll for elections is maintained by Human Resources and includes academic staff and support staff employed by the institution on a permanent or temporary contract, in a full time or fractional full-time post; it does not include staff employed on Associate Tutor contracts or other casual staff. The four constituencies for elections are:

- Academic staff in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
- Academic staff in the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine
- Academic staff in the Faculty of Education
- Professional service / support staff

The determination of elected members shall be by ballot, using the system of the Single Transferable Vote (STV), through an e-voting platform. The call for nominations will allow a period of at least seven days in which nominations will be lodged with the Returning Officer.

Ballots will be normally be held following this seven-day period, with a minimum of a further seven days permitted for the casting of votes. Candidates for election will be invited to produce a brief manifesto for publication.

An extension to the nomination period is allowable where required to fill all committee vacancies and the election ballot can be re-scheduled to allow for all elections to take place simultaneously.

Results of elections will be published for all staff. Training for new members is available.

Unfilled posts will normally remain vacant for one year and re-advertised at the next election cycle, as will any in-year vacancies which emerge however temporary 1-year appointments may be made to fill vacancies which are not elected to.

Student representation

All committees of Academic Board are responsible for remaining cognizant of matters which impact upon students and this is supported and enhanced through engagement of students with academic governance. This is achieved in a variety of ways to maximise engagement and

ensure meaningful representation on committees, including engagement with the Students' Union and its elected officers.

There is a tiered approach for student representation on Committees, in relation to Students' Union elected officers, starting with the most significant and formal way of involving the Students' Union and its elected representative in committee decisions:

1. The Students' Union and its elected sabbatical officers have the right to attend any open meeting of a committee of Academic Board. To facilitate this, they are sent the annual Committee Business Plans and the agendas/papers for each meeting, so they may identify specific meetings they wish to attend¹⁵.
2. The Chair of each committee may request the attendance of the Students' Union and/or an elected officer for specific meetings of their Committee, where a pertinent discussion is anticipated.
3. Consultation on specific items or papers may be done by correspondence between the Committee Secretary and the Students' Union and any resulting feedback on items fed into the appropriate meeting.
4. A standing item may remain on each committee agenda to allow the Students' Union the opportunity to submit a relevant update on its activities to the committee for information.

Other students may also be included on committees as student representatives and these can be drawn from programme boards or other forums as identified by the committee, as long as its constitution is up to date.

Link Governor Scheme

The Board of Governors operates a Link Governor Scheme for the major Academic Board committees, to which vacancies are advertised amongst independent members by the Clerk and confirmed by the Chair. The participating Academic Board Committees are:

- Academic Planning Committee
- Academic Quality Enhancement Committee
- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Research and Innovation Committee

Link Governors are classed as 'in attendance' at such meetings and whilst they may contribute to discussion, they do not hold formal voting powers or count in the quorum calculations.

Committee operations

Committee effectiveness and review

The evaluation of the effectiveness of each Committee is monitored by the committee on an annual basis through a dedicated section in their Annual Report. Any subsequent recommendations for improvements or changes to the committee or related processes form part of the Annual Process Review¹⁶.

¹⁵ Committees with a constituted student representative have this detailed on their constitution.

¹⁶ See Chapter 1.

Annual Reports

At the end of each academic year, an annual report is drawn up by the committee Secretary with input from the Chair. These reports summarise the decisions taken by the committee, reflect upon the effectiveness of its operation in the previous academic year and provide an opportunity to identify and recommend changes for the following year. The report should normally be produced following a discussion at the final meeting of the year of the committee, providing members with the opportunity to contribute their thoughts and opinions. The final report is approved at the first meeting of the academic year.

Annual Process Review

One of the outputs of the annual report may be the identification of changes to committee membership or remit. Such changes require consideration and approval by Academic Board and are reflected within this chapter of the Quality Management Handbook. Any other relevant, significant procedural changes related to academic governance are also included in the Annual Process Review. Included within this process is the annual review and updating of the Standing Orders.

Declaration of Interest

Members are expected to disclose any potential conflicts of interest at each meeting to ensure that the committee's business and decisions are handled appropriately. Each committee agenda provides an opportunity for the declaration of interests at the start of each meeting via a standing agenda item.

Identifying a conflict

A declaration is required where there may be a potential conflict between a committee member's personal interests and the committee business, including where these interests could directly benefit from an outcome or decision. Being open about this interest means that the committee can operate transparently and with integrity.

It is important to know that conflicts can be perceptual as well as actual. If an item may appear to benefit a member's personal interest, even if it will not actually do so, members must still declare this.

Conflicts of interest for committee members may include, for example:

- An interest in a third-party organisation being discussed by the committee. For example, a member may sit on the governing body of a partner institution.
- A personal relationship (family member, personal friend, intimate relationship, supervisor etc) with a student being discussed in the meeting.
- Responsibility for, or involvement with, a course or programme being discussed (for section A approvals only).

The committee Secretary can provide advice where there are queries related to potential conflicts.

Process for handling declarations

Conflicts of interest should be handled proportionately according to the nature of the declaration and the item of business. The Chair has the ultimate discretion as to the required

action to take in relation to potential conflicts of interest, however some indicative guidance is listed below:

- If the issue relates to an item where a decision or approval will be made, including where this may determine ongoing strategy, the committee member may be asked to leave the room for this item. This should be reflected within the minutes.
- In some cases, this action would not be proportionate to the level of risk. Indeed, it may be beneficial for the committee to hear the committee member's expert views as part of their discussion. However, it is still important that the committee is made explicitly aware of any interest through the declaration, rather than assuming prior knowledge.

Business Planning

Prior to the start of each academic year, a Business Plan for each committee is developed by the Secretary, with input from the Chair. These plans provide an indication of the business which will be received at each meeting of the year to aid planning. The Business Plan also demonstrates where the committee is executing its Terms of Reference, although it is acknowledged that other, adhoc business may also demonstrate these.

Communication

A termly newsletter is produced for the wider university community, highlighting important decisions, discussions and approvals which have taken place across the academic governance structure. The Governance WIKI pages¹⁷ also provide a repository of guidance to increase awareness of the business of academic governance and ensure transparency of operation.

¹⁷ <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/governance/>.

Guidance

Secretarial conventions

A set of established conventions exist for the operation of committee paperwork, including agendas and minutes.

Agendas

A set agenda exists for institutional committee agendas and this is divided into the following sections:

- Standing Items (approval of minutes, matters arising, action updates, Chair's announcements)
- A – Items for approval
- B – Items for discussion
- C – Items for information
- Any other business and the next meeting information

Members may request that agenda items contained in Section A, B or C be transferred to different sections of the agenda, by contacting the Secretary at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of a meeting. The movement of items of business in this way shall be confirmed at the meeting, prior to the consideration of substantive business.

The Secretary must be notified of items to be considered under Any Other Business at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of a meeting.

Once circulated, the agenda of an Ordinary meeting or an Extraordinary meeting shall not normally be amended except by approval of the Chair.

The Secretary is responsible for identifying the appropriate category and ensuring report authors reflect this within any coversheets. Agendas may also describe the actions required by the committee e.g. 'Members are asked to approve the policy'. Where this is applicable, the language used should mirror the agenda category to avoid confusion amongst committee members. So, items would normally always be asked for approval, discussion or provided for information.

Committee Abbreviations

Each committee is allocated an abbreviated three letters for use in document/item references, with the exception of Faculty Boards whom determine their own abbreviation and conventions as follows:

Committee	Abbreviation	Example References
Academic Board	ABD	001/ABD/19 ABD/01A/19
Honorary Awards Committee	HAC	001/HAC/19 HAC/01A/19
Academic Planning Committee	APC	001/APC/19 APC/01A/19

Committee	Abbreviation	Example References
Academic Quality Enhancement Committee	AQC	001/AQC/19 AQC/01A/19
Learning and Teaching Committee	LTC	001/LTC/19 LTC/01A/19
Research and Innovation Committee	RIC	001/REC/19 REC/01A/19
Employability Sub Committee	EMS	001/EMS/19 EMS/01A/19
External Examiners Sub Committee	EES	001/EES/19 EES/01A/19
Graduate School Board of Studies	GSB	001/GSB/19 GSB/01A/19
Research Degrees Sub-Committee	RDS	001/RDS/19 RDS/01A/19
Human Tissue Management Sub-Committee	HTS	001/HTS/19 HTS/01A/19
Regulations Review Sub Committee	RRS	001/RRS/19 RRS/01A/19
Student Experience Sub Committee	SES	001/SES/19 SES/01A/19
University Research Ethics Sub-Committee	UES	001/UES/19 UES/01A/19
Faculty Board – Faculty of Education	EDU/FAB	001/EDU/FAB/19 EDU/FAB/01A/19
Faculty Board – Faculty of Arts and Sciences	FAS/FACB	001/FAS/FACB/19 FAS/FACB/01A/19
Faculty Board – Faculty of Health, Social Care & Medicine	FB	001/FB/19 FB/01A/19

Item Numbering

As demonstrated in the example references above, conventions for item references exist and should follow the principle below:

(a) (b) (c)

--- / --- / ---

- 3 digit unique number of the minute for the committee for that academic year (starting from '001'). The minute numbers should be continued in sequence for all committee meetings of that year.
- 3 digit abbreviation identifying the committee (see table above).
- 2 digits identifying the academic year; the year used must be the first year of that session i.e. academic year 2019/20 will be identified by '19' and will be used throughout the year.

Document Numbering

Similarly document references which identify specific papers submitted under items also have their own unique reference. All documents submitted to committees should follow the principle below:

(a) (b) (c)
--- / --- / ---

- 3 digits for the abbreviation of the committee (see table above).
- 3 characters, consisting of two numbers and one alphabetical character (e.g. 01A). The number represents the document's number within that committee meeting, e.g. 01 is the first document at the meeting. The alphabetical character identifies the specific committee meeting, for example the first meeting of the committee is A, the second is B and so on.
- 2 numbers to indicate the academic year.

Minutes and action recording

Whilst minutes are the record of discussion and decision from a meeting, they are designed to be read alongside Committee agendas and papers. For each agenda item, the structure of minutes will normally follow this order:

- Title of agenda item
- Received: paper reference
- A brief summary of what the speaker says in their introduction to the item or paper. This should not duplicate any content of any paper submitted under this item but should explain that the item was about.
- A summary of the key discussion points. These should be kept concise and include clarifications of the content of any papers and any important debates or considerations which informed the decision, outcome or action. Care should be taken to ensure that minutes reflect the remit and authority of the Committee and evidence their appropriate operation of these responsibilities.
- The outcome (approved/rejected, noted etc.). One of the key functions of minutes is to record decisions taken and any actions required in response to those decisions. This should also align with the anticipated outcome detailed in any paper coversheet.

Minutes are required to be both concise and accurate, usually making no direct reference to individual named members but instead referencing job titles or roles within the committee. Where appropriate, to make a distinction between multiple members of a committee, initials may also be used to distinguish between members. This is particularly important in the setting of actions following discussions so that it is clear who is responsible for taking this task forward.

Actions should be detailed at the end of each appropriate item and recorded in the Actions Log which is appended to the minutes of each meeting. Secretaries should distribute actions as soon as possible after each meeting, including to any actors not in attendance at the committee meeting.

Recording Attendance

A list of attendees is provided at the start of the minutes of each meeting and contains a complete list of all members of the committee and whether they were: **Present, Apologies or Absent** (did not send apologies). Where a representative is sent in the place of a committee member they should be recorded as Present (Alternate) and details of their alternate should be recorded.

Decisions

Where appropriate, decisions may be recorded within three categories:

- a) **Key decisions:** of strategic importance to the University or that it is essential that all staff are aware of them/decisions of general interest to the wider University community.
- b) **Transactional decisions:** these relate to specific committees such as Academic Planning Committee, External Examiners Sub-Committee and Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee and relate to a very specific audience or purpose.
- c) **Committee specific decisions:** All other decisions will be committee specific decisions. They will form part of the minutes and the reporting of decisions. Any member of the University wanting to see decisions of this nature will need to refer to the relevant committee minutes for details.

Most decisions at committees can be categorised under C, however key decisions may need reporting separately and will likely be included in the Academic Board newsletter.

A list of decisions taken at each meeting is provided as an appendix to the minutes of each meeting, and a standing item at the following meeting requires the approval of Members as to the description of the decisions taken.

Information Governance

The University Records Management Policy and University Retention Policy¹⁸ apply to all committee papers and the appropriate Data Steward resides in the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team.

In alignment with the institutional policy, committee papers are broadly designated as 'internal'; available to any authenticated member of the University. Typically, it is identified that if this level of information was leaked outside of the University, it could be inappropriate or ill-timed.

However, items of closed business are classified as 'restricted'; available only to specified and/or relevant individuals, with appropriate authorization (committee members in this context). A breach of restricted papers could cause serious damage resulting in the compromise of activity within the University in the short to medium term. This includes both personnel data and research data.

¹⁸ Available at [Information Governance Guidance and Policies](#).

Closed business

Unless designated otherwise, the business at committees is classified as open to all members and therefore does not contain any sensitive or commercially confidential information beyond what is appropriate for that committee's standard operation. It is the responsibility of the submitting author to highlight exceptionally where an item should be classified as an item of closed business. In such circumstances this should be made clear to the committee by the Secretary in the agenda and minutes, with attention drawn to this in the meeting too. Items of closed business, as with general committee papers, should be circulated exclusively to designated committee members. However closed business should not be published on the WIKI or Y Drive for access by other members of the University; the Secretary is responsible for keeping closed business items secure in their own files for future audit.

Agenda items deemed suitable to be classed as 'Closed Business' are exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 however it may be that in certain circumstances the request could be made under the Data Protection Act 2018. It is to be recognised that any such request would only apply to personal information and it is expected that any release of information under this Act would need to be heavily redacted.

Certain committees are designated as closed due to the sensitive nature of their business and discussions¹⁹ and so all items within their meetings are closed. Their minutes are also automatically designated as closed items of business and when circulated to 'parent' committee members, secretaries should ensure that these are handled appropriately and not published in the wider university committee paper repository.

Within committees a discussion may be determined as closed by the Chair at any point, normally to enable a confidential discussion about a specific item. In these circumstances minuting is normally suspended or reduced until the Chair declares the discussion to be open again.

Retention

The University Records Management Policy does not currently specify governance or committee documentation within its guidance and there is not yet an Institutional retention schedule for these associated documents. Therefore, a bespoke approach is required to ensure appropriate information governance is in place for Academic Board and its committees, based upon the recognised sector best practice guidance from the Joint Information Systems Committee (2007). It has been determined that all Academic Board committees and constituted sub-committees shall be deemed statutory under the JISC guidelines due to their instrumental role in the governance of the University and its functions. Therefore, all committee administration records are currently required to be kept for the lifetime of the Institution. This includes but is not limited to: records documenting the development and establishment of the terms of reference for a statutory committee; and records documenting the conduct of the business of a statutory committee (agenda, minutes and supporting papers).

¹⁹ The Terms of Reference for these Committees outline their closed status.

Whilst it is recognised that there is a requirement to retain records of Institutional committees and their operations, all committee members, secretaries and Chairs should follow the guidelines detailed in the Institutional Records Management Policy in relation to general good record keeping, including not retaining duplicate copies of paperwork as the Secretary is responsible for maintaining the definitive single copy for retention.

Any committees not formally constituted under the Academic Board will require separate consideration to determine an appropriate retention period as they are to be considered as non-statutory.

Archiving

Within the GQASC Secretariat, a central archive for committee papers is maintained on the Y:/Everyone folder structure and is maintained by GQASC. At the end of each academic year, the full set of committee papers (which includes agendas and minutes) are filed.

For committee supported outside of the GQASC secretariat, the archive should be maintained in the same way and stored centrally unless otherwise agreed. The secretary is responsible for the maintenance of an archive of papers for their committee and for general good record management.

Guidance for committee report authors

Committee effectiveness is greatly enhanced where items clearly meet the needs of both the author and committee members. There are a few simple things which paper authors can do to facilitate such an outcome:

- 1) **Ensure that your paper is succinct, written according to plain English principles, and tailored to the committee's requirements.** Your paper should be no longer than the content requires and must clearly state its purpose; ideally, papers should begin with a short series of bullet points which summarise the content and the action being requested of the committee.
- 2) **You must fully complete your coversheet.** If you do not, your item will be returned to you by the Secretary. Ultimately, the coversheet will help you to easily convey the item's purpose to the committee and lead to a productive outcome. It will also ensure that actions can be swiftly allocated and actioned following the meeting. The coversheet should take no more than 5 minutes to complete.
- 3) **Work with the Secretary to ensure that your item is in the right format.** If you are asking a committee to approve a proposal, it will be easier for them to do so if they receive a paper and have time to read and consider this before the meeting. If you are requesting a discussion, a presentation may be more appropriate.
- 4) **Ensure that your item is on the correct section of the agenda.** The Secretary will work with you to correctly allocate your item to either Section A (for approval), Section B (for discussion) or Section C (for noting). It is your responsibility to direct the committee's focus to the aspects of your item which you'd like them to approve/discuss/note.
- 5) **Meet the paper deadline.** Late papers prevent committee members from being able to allocate sufficient time to prepare for the meeting, reducing its overall effectiveness. They also cause unnecessary stress to colleagues involved in the

preparation and printing of hard copies. Where items are delayed significantly, they will be removed from the agenda. Items listed as papers on the agenda will not be changed to verbal items at a late stage unless this is to the benefit of the committee. Where individual authors are regularly delayed in submitting papers these may be highlighted in the committee's annual report.

Terms of Reference and Membership

The following is the definitive, current Terms of Reference and Membership for each constituted committee within the academic governance structure.

Academic Board

Subject to the provisions of the Articles of Government, to the overall responsibility of the Board of Governors and to the responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor, the Academic Board (AB) shall be responsible:

- Subject to the requirements of external validating and accrediting bodies, for:
 - general issues relating to the teaching, programmes of study and research scholarship, at the Institution, including criteria for the admission of students; and the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners;
 - policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students, including progression and award boards;
 - the content of the curriculum; academic standards and the validation and review of courses; the procedures for the award of qualifications and honorary academic titles; and the procedures for the expulsion of students for academic reasons;
- For considering the development of the academic activities of the University and the resources needed to support them and for advising the Vice-Chancellor and the Board of Governors thereon;
- For the oversight of continued compliance with Office for Students Conditions of Registration.
- For advising on such other matters as the Board of Governors, the Vice-Chancellor, or University committees may refer to the Academic Board.
- For the approval of any changes to the structure or nomenclature of Faculty Schools or Departments, as recommended by Faculty Board
- For ensuring all committees of the University's deliberative governance structure adhere to principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law.
- For ensuring all committees of the University's deliberative governance structure review their effectiveness on an annual basis and adhere to the protocols outlined in the Academic Board Standing Orders.
- To give due regard to any academic risks which fall within the remit of its Terms of Reference.

The Academic Board may establish such committees as it considers necessary for purposes enabling it to carry out its responsibilities, provided that each establishment is first approved by the Vice-Chancellor and Board of Governors.

The membership of Academic Board shall be no more than 35 members, comprising the Vice Chancellor (who shall be Chair) and such other members of staff and students as may from time to time be approved by the Board of Governors. If the Vice Chancellor is unable to chair a particular meeting they will nominate a Deputy Chair from among the members of the Academic Board to take the Chair in his/her place. The period of appointment of members and the selection or election arrangements shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Governors.

The number of members of any such committee and the terms on which they are to hold and vacate office shall be determined by the Academic Board.

Appointed members or alternates with full voting rights are permitted at Academic Board and its committees in order to ensure appropriate communication to all parts of the University. The only exception is the Honorary Awards Committee which does not permit alternates.

Standing Orders²⁰ for Academic Board and its sub-committees are approved by Academic Board prior to the commencement of the academic year.

Co-options: A provision for up to two co-opted members is available to Academic Board and its committees. Co-options may be used to incorporate a member with specific expertise of value to the committee and/or to provide a balanced membership with respect to under-represented groups within the University. Co-options may be made within a meeting through the raising of a formal motion and its resolution, and a period of co-option must be agreed at this point by the Committee.

Academic Board also delegates significant responsibilities to its reporting committees²¹:

- Academic Planning Committee (APC);
- Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC);
- Honorary Awards Committee (HAC);
- Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC);
- Research and Innovation Committee (RIC);
- Other committees including Faculty Boards, which are detailed below.

²⁰ These are available at [Y:\Everyone\Academic Board Committees\Committee Information](#).

²¹ Some sub-committees which report into these senior committees also hold specific delegated authority, as outlined within their Terms of Reference.

Membership:

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Vice-Chancellor
Secretary	Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework
Ex-Officio Members	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) & Dean of Faculty of Arts and Sciences Pro Vice-Chancellor & Dean of Faculty of Education Pro Vice-Chancellor & Dean of Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine Dean of Teaching and Learning Development Director of Student Recruitment and Administration Director of Governance and Assurance Director of the Research Office Academic Registrar Director of Student Services Dean of the Graduate School Head of Academic Registry Chair of Academic Planning Committee Chair of Academic Quality Enhancement Committee Chair of Learning and Teaching Committee Chair of Research and Innovation Committee
Appointed Members	Representative of Learning Services
Elected Members	Two from Professional Services/support staff Three academic representatives from Faculty of Arts and Sciences Three academic representatives from Faculty of Education Three academic representatives from Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine
Student Representation	Two student representatives nominated by the Students' Union
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	A representative from the Students' Union staff (to provide support to the student representative(s))

Honorary Awards Committee (HAC)

The University may confer the following honorary awards:

Honorary Doctorate: (HonDPhil; HonDSc; HonDLitt; HonLLD; HonDEd; HonDTech; HonDBA; HonDUniv, HonDA)

Note: Honorary award holders may use the approved designated letters after their names but the award of Honorary Doctorate does not confer entitlement to use the title 'Dr' in front of their names.

Approval of Nominations

Nominations may be made through Faculties, Services, Directorate or the Board of Governors and should be submitted to the HAC Secretary who will instigate an annual call for nominations. The University may also receive nominations from other sources. Nominations must include a brief resumé and supporting statement indicating how the nominee meets the criteria for award. Additional information on the role of Honorary Awards Committee can be found in Appendix 25 of the Academic Regulations²².

All nominations will be considered by the Honorary Awards Committee Membership which comprises:

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Vice-Chancellor
Secretary	Academic Registry
Ex-Officio Members	Pro-Chancellor Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary Clerk to Governors Head of PR, Corporate Communications and External Relations
Appointed Members	Two members of Academic Board (one of which must be a student representative) A representative of the Board of Governors
Elected Members	Not applicable
Student Representation	See appointed membership
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	Not applicable

The Honorary Awards Committee is a closed committee and therefore its proceedings are confidential. Additionally, no discussions should be held with the nominee until approval of the award has been given by the committee. Alternate representation is not permitted for this committee; however, *in absentia* members may submit their written comments by prior arrangement with the Secretary.

²² Available via www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic-regulations/.

Academic Planning Committee

The Academic Planning Committee (APC) considers proposals for new academic developments.

APC's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To recommend to Academic Board and Directorate changes and developments within the University's academic portfolio.
- 2) To consider the broader University implications of academic developments in terms of physical resources, human resources, support and services, and to give development consent to departments and Faculties.
- 3) To take strategic oversight of longer-term planning in relation to the University curriculum offer.
- 4) To monitor the effectiveness of curriculum development decisions by reviewing recruitment to new provision and monitoring programme closures approved by AQEC.
- 5) To consider and approve Applications for Development Consent including the approval of new Target and Named Awards as defined within the Academic Regulations (Appendix 5).
- 6) To consider and approve Initial Proposals for Modification of validated programmes.
- 7) To consider and approve any changes to the validated UCAS tariff point bands, IELTS score for programmes or level 2 or 3 entry standards.
- 8) To oversee academic partnership activity, including the consideration of new proposals, strategic monitoring of existing partnerships and the longer-term strategic planning for academic partnership activity.
- 9) To monitor and review the process and operation of academic planning within the University including the schedule of Autumn Monitoring and Spring Planning meetings with departments and Faculties.
- 10) To give due regard to any Consumer and Market Authority implications of proposals presented for approval which involve a material change for students and where appropriate, provide a judgement as to where such proposals may require student consent or consultation.
- 11) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.
- 12) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the committee's business.
- 13) To give due regard to any academic risks which fall within the remit of its Terms of Reference as delegated from Academic Board.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Secretary	Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework
Ex-Officio Members	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) & Dean of Arts and Sciences Pro Vice-Chancellor & Dean of Education Pro Vice-Chancellor & Dean of Health, Social Care and Medicine Dean of Teaching and Learning Development Director of Student Recruitment and Administration Director of Strategic Planning Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance Head of Academic Registry
Appointed Members	A representative of Learning Services
Elected Members	Not applicable
Student Representation	Not applicable
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	Not applicable

Where appropriate the Chair may co-opt additional members to the Committee for additional expertise, for example, a representative from the International Office may be co-opted to attend a meeting which is considering international partnership proposals.

Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC)

Overseeing the academic quality and standards of the University's taught programmes is the principal responsibility of AQEC and its sub-committees. It is responsible to the Academic Board for the operation of the University's quality management strategies with specific regard to academic standards and quality enhancement, including programme approval, annual monitoring, curriculum review, internal audit, academic partnerships, partner-delivered provision and the outputs from external examining.

AQEC's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To develop and implement the University's quality management strategy through the monitoring of sector (QAA) developments and production of an Annual Process Review including monitoring and reviewing the quality processes and the operation of Autumn Monitoring.
- 2) To advise Academic Board regarding areas of emerging academic risk and to recommend appropriate remedial action.
- 3) To monitor the implementation of devolved quality responsibilities by Faculties, receiving and considering minutes of Faculty quality committees and other reports of Faculties and support services as appropriate.
- 4) To monitor academic standards and the quality of taught provision through receipt and consideration of curriculum review and internal audit reports; student surveys; and annual overviews of academic partnerships and partner-delivered provision, programme validation, departmental monitoring and external examiner reports.
- 5) To approve new taught programmes and the closure of existing programmes using powers delegated to it by Academic Board and referring matters to LTC relating to the student experience as appropriate.
- 6) To give academic approval to new academic partnerships and programmes to be delivered with partner organisations, using powers delegated by Academic Board.
- 7) To monitor and review the quality processes and the operation of Annual Monitoring
- 8) To evaluate the operation of Scheme and Progression Boards to include annual reports on degree classifications, academic appeals and cases of academic misconduct.
- 9) To oversee the operation of processes for programme approval, curriculum review and internal audit and the membership of the Validation and Audit Standing Panel (VASP).
- 10) To oversee the Register of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and ensure compliance with required processes relating to the accreditation or endorsement of provision.
- 11) To review and monitor the business of its Sub-Committees and approve any recommendations or proposals put forward.
- 12) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.
- 13) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the committee's business.
- 14) To retain an oversight of the effectiveness of its reporting sub-committees.
- 15) To give due regard to any academic risks which fall within the remit of its Terms of Reference as delegated from Academic Board.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Secretary	Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework
Ex-Officio Members	Director of Governance and Assurance Dean of Teaching and Learning Development Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance Faculty Quality Officer (Faculty of Arts and Sciences) Faculty Regulation and Governance Officer (Faculty of Education) Faculty Academic Governance and Quality Manager (Faculty of Health, Social Care & Medicine) Chair of the External Examiners Sub-Committee Chair of the Faculty Quality Committee (one per Faculty) Academic Quality Officers
Appointed Members	A representative of Learning Services A representative of Academic Registry Two academic representatives from Faculty of Arts and Sciences Two academic representatives from Faculty of Education Two academic representatives from Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine
Elected Members	Not applicable
Student Representation	A student representative nominated by the Students' Union
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	A representative from the Students' Union staff (to provide support to the student representative)

External Examiners Sub-Committee (EESC)

The External Examiners Sub-Committee (EESC) is responsible for the engagement of external examiners by considering external examiner nominations for taught programmes against the criteria set out in the Quality Management Handbook²³. For all proposed nominations EESC makes one of the following decisions:

- That the nomination should be approved;
- That the suitability of the nomination is not clear and that the nominating Faculty should provide further information in support of the nomination;
- That the nomination is not suitable and the nominating Faculty should provide an alternative nomination.

The External Examiners Sub-Committee is a closed committee and therefore its proceedings are confidential. Additionally, no discussions should be held with the nominee until approval of the nomination has been given by the committee.

EESC's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To make decisions on the engagement of external examiners for taught provision leading to awards of Edge Hill University*.
- 2) To develop, monitor and evaluate the processes for the nomination, engagement, administration and reporting of external examiners (in accordance with relevant national expectations).
- 3) To monitor the external examiner posts held by the University's staff and the institutions from which the University's examiners are drawn to ensure an appropriate spread and to guard against reciprocal arrangements.
- 4) To receive reports on a variety of aspects of external examiner administration (e.g. vacancies, fee levels, induction arrangements) and agree any changes required.
- 5) To advise AQEC and, through that committee, Academic Board of any policy or operational issues related to external examiners that might impact on the quality and standards of the University's academic provision.
- 6) To receive and consider annual summaries of external examiner reports, identifying areas of academic risk and opportunities for quality enhancement.
- 7) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.
- 8) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the committee's business.

* External examiners for Research Degrees (Doctorate/MRes) will be approved by the Graduate School.

²³ See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 2 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/08-academic-governance.pdf.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair²⁴	Associate Head of Secondary and Further Education
Deputy Chair²⁵	As appointed by the Chair of EESC
Secretary	Academic Quality Officer
Ex-Officio Members	Academic Quality and Standards Manager
Appointed Members	Three academic representatives from Faculty of Arts and Sciences Three academic representatives from Faculty of Education Three academic representatives from Faculty of Health and Social Care
Elected Members	Not applicable
Student Representation	Not applicable
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	One Designated Faculty Officer (one per Faculty) ²⁶ Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance

²⁴ The Chair of EESC is appointed by the Chair of AQEC.

²⁵ The Deputy Chair is appointed by the Chair of EESC on an annual basis and is drawn from the existing appointed members of EESC, to deputise for the Chair where they are unavailable or where they may have a conflict of interest.

²⁶ These are determined by the Associate Deans for Quality in each Faculty.

Progression and Award Boards

Scheme Progression and Award Boards operate with delegated authority from the Academic Board in confirming Progression and Award results for Edge Hill University Taught Awards. Specifically, they are responsible for:

- 1) Confirming the results for each student in relation to their progression or award, having regard to the recommendations from Module Assessment Boards and Panels considering mitigating circumstances and malpractice.
- 2) Reviewing RP(E)L recommendations and the operation of RP(E)L Panels.
- 3) Determining condonements, referrals and deferrals, having regard to Module Board recommendations.
- 4) Making recommendations in relation to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
- 5) Considering reports from associated external examiners.
- 6) Confirming associated prizes and academic achievement awards.
- 7) Advising on the operation of the Academic Regulations²⁷.

The Senior Assistant Registrar (Assessment and Awards) prepares an annual report to Academic Quality Enhancement Committee on the outcomes from, and operation of, assessment boards.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	PVC Dean/Associate Dean of Faculty/ or Directorate member
Secretary	Academic Registry
Ex-Officio Members	Director of Governance and Assurance Head of Academic Registry Heads of Department Heads of Curriculum Areas Subject Leaders Programme Leaders Subject/Programme staff Faculty Assistant Registrar
Appointed Members	Not applicable
Elected Members	Not applicable
Student Representation	Not applicable
External Representation	Chief External/External Examiners Representatives of Partner Institutions as appropriate to the business of the Board
In Attendance	Not applicable

Further details regarding the operation of Progression and Award Boards for taught degrees can be found in the Academic Regulations appendices.

Progression and Award Boards are to be considered as closed Committees and therefore their proceedings are confidential.

²⁷ Available via www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic-regulations/.

The Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary and Director of Governance and Assurance / Head of Academic Registry have right of attendance at any assessment board. Pro Vice-Chancellors & Deans of Faculty have right of attendance at any assessment board operated by their Faculty.

Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)

The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) is responsible for leading on enhancements to the University's strategies for learning, teaching, and assessment, and has overall strategic responsibility for the student experience.

LTC's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To review University policy, practice, systems and processes that impact directly on the quality of the taught student experience and on student retention and progression, identifying and promoting opportunities for enhancement.
- 2) To promote developments and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment including research into aspects of pedagogy and professional development within the University and ensure alignment between teaching and learning strategies and Institutional capabilities.
- 3) To promote developments and innovation in Teaching excellence and Technology Enhanced Learning within the University including the implementation of enhancements referred from AQEC.
- 4) To monitor employability and enterprise activity in relation to its impact on enhancing graduate employability.
- 5) To consider issues relating to the current student experience referred by AQEC following the approval of programme closure proposals.
- 6) To review and monitor the business of its Sub-Committees and approve any recommendations or proposals put forward.
- 7) To monitor and review the University's regulatory framework for taught programmes and recommend appropriate changes to AB.
- 8) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.
- 9) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the Committee's business.
- 10) To retain an oversight of the effectiveness of its reporting sub-committees.
- 11) To give due regard to any academic risks which fall within the remit of its Terms of Reference as delegated from Academic Board.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Secretary	Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework
Ex-Officio Members	Dean of Teaching and Learning Development Head of Directorate Office Director of Governance and Assurance Chair of Faculty Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee (one per Faculty) Chair of Employability Sub-Committee Chair of Regulations Review Sub-Committee Chair of Student Experience Sub-Committee
Appointed Members	A representative of Learning Services A representative from Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework A representative of Academic Registry A representative of Student Services Two representatives from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (one of whom must be a Learning & Teaching or SOLSTICE Fellow) Two representatives from the Faculty of Education (one of whom must be a Learning & Teaching or SOLSTICE Fellow) Two representatives from the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine (one of whom must be a Learning & Teaching or SOLSTICE Fellow)
Elected Members	Two representatives from Professional Services
Student Representation	A student representative nominated by the Students' Union
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	A representative from the Students' Union staff (to provide support to the student representative) A representative from the Strategic Planning and Policy Unit

Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC)

The Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC) is responsible to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) for advising on issues relating to the operation of learning, teaching and student support and its impact on the student experience. It is also responsible for facilitating an Institutional focus for issues concerning student retention and widening participation and for promoting the dissemination of good practice.

SESC's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To identify, evaluate, promote and disseminate good practice in learning and teaching and the academic guidance and support of learners.
- 2) To identify, evaluate and promote a range of learning and teaching strategies and assessment techniques that derive from the University's policies on teaching and learning, assessment and academic support.
- 3) To review and draft updates to these policies for consideration and approval by LTC.
- 4) To receive key annual reports relating to the operation of student facing policies and procedures and events in the Academic Cycle which may impact on the overall student experience (e.g. First Week, complaints etc.)
- 5) To oversee the development of the University's Retention Strategy and develop the Annual Retention report and devise and monitor progress against the annual Action Plan.
- 6) To oversee the University's performance in relation to widening participation and personal tutoring.
- 7) To monitor the levels of student complaints in the University.
- 8) To encourage the dissemination of good practice and promote wider discussion of the issues in Faculties and Services.
- 9) To undertake specific tasks delegated by LTC.
- 10) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.

To ensure that equality and diversity considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the committee's business in order to accommodate a more diverse community.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Director of Student Services
Secretary	Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework
Ex-Officio Members	Dean of Teaching and Learning Development Head of Student Experience Faculty Assistant Registrar (one per Faculty) Strategic Projects and Policy Officer Strategic Lead for Access and Participation
Appointed Members	A representative of the International Office A representative of Student Recruitment A representative of Academic Registry A representative of Learning Services A representative of IT Services A representative of Facilities Management A representative of Strategic Planning and Performance Unit A representative from Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework A representative of Student Services A representative from each Faculty
Elected Members	Two academic representatives from Faculty of Arts and Sciences Two academic representatives from Faculty of Education Two academic representatives from Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine One representative from Professional Services
Student Representation	One student representative nominated by the Students' Union
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	A representative from the Students' Union staff (to provide support to the student representative)

Employability Sub-Committee (EMS)

The Employability Sub-Committee (EMS) is responsible to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) for advising on issues relating to employability and enterprise activity and its impact on learning and teaching and the overall student experience.

EMS's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To monitor overall employability, graduate employability and enterprise activity in relation to its impact on enhancing student employability.
- 2) To provide a forum for University-wide sharing of information, ideas and procedures in relation to employability, employer liaison and enterprise.
- 3) To monitor and evaluate the impact of the Employability Strategy.
- 4) To monitor the progress of annual employability plans provided by academic departments and ensure that cross-Institutional support is provided where necessary.
- 5) To improve communications and engagement with employers across the University.
- 6) To provide a forum to support the implementation of the key strategic employability themes.
- 7) To monitor the effectiveness of the committee on an annual basis.
- 8) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the Sub-Committee's business.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations)
Secretary	Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework
Ex-Officio Members	Head of Careers
Appointed Members	A representative of Human Resources A representative of the Centre for Learning and Teaching A representative from Learning Services Two representatives from Faculty of Arts and Sciences (one of whom must be a SOLSTICE or Learning and Teaching Fellow) Two representatives from Faculty of Education (one of whom must be a SOLSTICE or Learning and Teaching Fellow) Two representatives from Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine (one of whom must be a SOLSTICE or Learning and Teaching Fellow)
Elected Members	Two academic representatives from Faculty of Arts and Sciences Two academic representatives from Faculty of Education Two academic representatives from Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine One representative from Professional Services/support staff
Student Representation	Not applicable
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	Not applicable

Regulations Review Sub-Committee (RRSC)

Although it is not expected that there would be major changes to the Academic Regulations²⁸ until such time as the University determined that a full review was appropriate, operational practice and legislative or national framework changes may occasionally result in requirements for amendment. The Regulations Review Sub-Committee has therefore been established as a sub-committee of Learning and Teaching Committee to bring forward any proposals for change.

RRSC's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To review the Academic Regulations on an annual basis, with a commitment to do so in the best interests of the university community, taking account of:
- 2) Operational practice
- 3) National framework changes
- 4) Legislative changes
- 5) External examiner comments
- 6) Issues raised from meetings with Chairs and Secretaries of Assessment Boards
- 7) Impact in relation to equality.
- 8) To approve new Award Types as defined within the Academic Regulations (Appendix 2).
- 9) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.
- 10) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the Group's business.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Secretary	Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework
Ex-Officio Members	Director of Governance and Assurance Senior Registrar; Assessments and Awards Faculty Assistant Registrar (one per Faculty)
Appointed Members	A representative from Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework A representative of Centre for Learning and Teaching A representative of Student Services Two representatives from Faculty of Arts and Sciences Two representatives from Faculty of Education Two representatives from Faculty of Health, Social Care & Medicine
Elected Members	Not applicable
Student Representation	Not applicable
External Representation	A representative from the Students' Union staff
In Attendance	Not applicable

²⁸ Available via www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic-regulations/.

Research and Innovation Committee (RIC)

The Research and Innovation Committee is responsible to Academic Board for assuring the standards and quality of research and knowledge exchange activity undertaken by staff and students.

RIC's Terms of Reference are:

To formulate, implement and review the Edge Hill Research Policy and Strategy and make recommendations on resources and processes necessary to successful implementation, including staff development.

- 1) To monitor research and knowledge exchange activity across the University.
- 2) To monitor submissions to research councils and other bodies for funding and evaluate their success and make recommendations on the development of future submissions.
- 3) To develop, implement and evaluate the University's quality framework for research degrees including the training and support of students and the appointment, training and support of supervisors.
- 4) To review and monitor the work of the University Research Institutes and approve any recommendations or proposals put forward.
- 5) To review and monitor the business of its Sub-Committees and approve any recommendations or proposals put forward.
- 6) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.
- 7) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the committee's business.
- 8) To retain an oversight of the effectiveness of its reporting sub-committees.
- 9) To give due regard to any academic risks which fall within the remit of its Terms of Reference as delegated from Academic Board.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) & Dean of Faculty of Arts & Sciences
Secretary	Graduate School
Ex-Officio Members	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) Director of Research Office Head of Research Support Dean of Teaching and Learning Development Associate Dean for Research (Faculty of Arts and Sciences) Director of Knowledge Exchange and Innovation (Faculty of Education) Associate Dean for Research Innovation (Faculty of Health, Social Care & Medicine) Directors of the University Research Institutes Chair of University Research Ethics Sub-Committee Chair of Human Tissue Management Sub-Committee Chair of Faculty Research Committee (one per Faculty) Chair of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Dean of the Graduate School
Appointed Members	A representative of Learning Services
Elected Members²⁹	Two academic staff from Faculty of Arts and Sciences Two academic staff from Faculty of Education Two academic staff from Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine
Student Representation	One student representative nominated by the Students' Union
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	A representative from the Students' Union staff (to provide support to the student representative)

²⁹ Elected representatives on RIC should have either a current research profile or be active within their Faculty Research Committee.

University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URESC)

The remit of the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URESC) is to oversee the good ethical practice of research and knowledge exchange activities carried out by staff and students across the Institution.

URESC's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To ensure that the Research Ethics Committees (RECs) are executing the Framework for Research Ethics appropriately and ensuring best practice in ethical research and KE.
- 2) To review any case where the REC considers the proportionality of risk to require University level scrutiny.
- 3) To act as an appeal committee for the RECs.
- 4) To ensure that all ethical approvals are recorded and reported appropriately.
- 5) To ensure that the University is aware of developments of best practice in relation to ethical guidance, advice, support and scrutiny.
- 6) To ensure that training in research ethics is in place as part of a staff development programme (URESC is not responsible for the running of these sessions).
- 7) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.
- 8) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the committee's business.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	University Professor (appointed as Chair by the Research and Innovation Committee)
Secretary	Research Office
Ex-Officio Members	Director of Research Office Human Tissue License Designated Individual Chair of Arts and Humanities Research Ethics Committee Chair of Science Research Ethics Committee Chair of Social Science Research Ethics Committee Chair of Education Research Ethics Committee Chair of Health-Related Research Ethics Committee
Appointed Members	One representative from Faculty of Arts and Sciences One representative from Faculty of Education One representative from Health, Social Care and Medicine One representative of the Graduate School
Elected Members	Not applicable
Student Representation	One PGR student representative
External Representation	Four external representatives – 2 specialist representatives and 2 lay representatives
In Attendance	Not applicable

Human Tissue Management Sub-Committee (HTMSC)

The Human Tissue Management Sub-Committee (HTMSC) is responsible for overseeing activity conducted under the University's Human Tissue Research Licence and reports directly to the University Research and Innovation Committee.

HTMSC's Terms of Reference are:

- 1) To establish, review and revise policies and procedures to ensure Edge Hill University conducts its business in accordance with the requirements of the Human Tissue Act (2004) and associated codes of practice.
- 2) To monitor activity under the University's Human Tissue Research Licence.
- 3) To monitor compliance with the conditions of the University's Human Tissue Research Licence, and policies and procedures detailed in the University's Human Tissue Quality Manual, including the review of internal and Human Tissue Authority audits.
- 4) To establish the provision and monitoring of training and support given to Edge Hill University staff and postgraduate students working under the University's Human Tissue Research Licence, as well as members of the University Research Ethics Committee.
- 5) To review any adverse events relating to the handling or storage of human tissue and implementing changes in policy or procedure where appropriate.
- 6) To receive reports from the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee on ethics applications received that contain licensable activity.
- 7) To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis.
- 8) To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the committee's business.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Professor of Clinical Exercise Physiology
Secretary	Research Office
Ex-Officio Members	Persons Designate (Professional Services staff responsible for storing and handling Human Tissue) University Bio Safety Officer
Appointed Members	A representative of Research Office An academic representative of every Department using Human Tissue
Elected Members	Not applicable
Student Representation	Not applicable
External Representation	Not applicable
In Attendance	Not applicable

Whilst not a constituted member, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) will receive papers for this meeting as the License Holder's Contact and will have any relevant matters escalated to them.

Research Degrees Sub-Committee

The Research Degrees Sub-Committee is responsible for research degree matters relating to the sector, quality, regulations, policies and postgraduate researcher experience. Its Terms of Reference are:

1. To consider proposals for modifications to regulations and policies pertaining to research degrees.
2. To make recommendations to Academic Board, through the Research and Innovation Committee, where appropriate, for modification of the Research Degree Regulations and their operation.
3. To provide oversight of any research degree developments in the sector, as well as quality & regulatory matters in relation to research degrees and alert the University through the Research and Innovation Committee where appropriate.
4. To identify, evaluate, promote and disseminate good practice in postgraduate researcher supervision.
5. To consider issues relating to postgraduate researcher experience, making recommendations as appropriate.
6. To consider matters as requested by the Graduate School.
7. To monitor the effectiveness of the sub-committee on an annual basis.
8. To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the sub-committee's business.

Its constitution shall be as follows:

Chair	Dean of the Graduate School
Secretary	Research Degree Administration Coordinator
Ex-officio members	Graduate School Manager
	PVC (Research)
	Associate Dean of the Graduate School
	Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts & Sciences
	Associate Dean (Research and Innovation), Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine
Appointed members	Associate Dean (Research & Impact), Faculty of Education
	Representatives from the relevant research subject areas
In attendance	Researcher Development Fellow
	Research Office Representative
	Learning Services Representative
	Student Services Representative
	Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework Representative
Student Union Representation	PGR representative
	Elected student representative

Graduate School Board of Studies

The Graduate School Board of Studies operates with delegated authority from the Academic Board in confirming Progression and Award results for Edge Hill University Research Awards. Specifically, it is responsible for:

1. Confirming examination outcomes for project registration, progression, and final examinations
2. Monitoring and reviewing individual PGR progress, including reviewing the recommendations of the annual appraisal process and taking final decisions on appraisal outcomes.
3. Taking final decisions on malpractice outcomes.
4. Taking final decisions on fitness to study outcomes.
5. Taking final decisions on termination of registration.

Its membership shall be as follows:

Chair	Associate Dean of the Graduate School
Deputy Chair	An academic staff member from the Graduate School
Secretary	Graduate School Administrator
Ex-officio members	Researcher Development Fellow
Appointed members	2 academic staff seconded to the Graduate School ³⁰

The Graduate School Board of Studies shall be considered quorate if two members of the Board are present in addition to the Chair and the Secretary.

The Graduate School Board of Studies is to be considered as managing closed business and therefore its proceedings are confidential.

³⁰ These are Edge Hill University academic staff, seconded to the Graduate School, with expertise in one of each of: Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities, broadly construed. They will be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School in consultation with the PVC Research.

Knowledge Exchange Sub-Committee (KESC)

The Research and Innovation Committee oversees the application of the University's research and innovation activity via knowledge exchange (KE) partnerships. To support this activity, the Knowledge Exchange Sub-Committee (KESC) undertakes specialist work to ensure that KE infrastructure remains adequate and effective. Its terms of reference are:

1. To formulate, implement and review the University's KE strategy and associated policies
2. To evaluate the progress made against the University's KE strategy
3. To ensure that the University remains compliant with its commitment to the KE Concordat
4. To ensure the visibility and promotion of KE activity to enhance the University's brand and reputation.
5. To monitor submissions of consultancy tenders, evaluate their success and make recommendations on the development of future submissions
6. To receive and evaluate periodic reports on KE activity from the Knowledge Exchange Office and faculties making recommendations as appropriate.
7. To monitor the quality and financial returns of KE activity
8. To contribute to and review the University's annual HE-Business and Community Interaction (HEBCI) return, HEIF requirements and Knowledge Exchange Framework.
9. To monitor the effectiveness of the committee annually
10. To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the committee's business
11. To give due regard to any academic, business or commercial risks which fall within the remit of its terms of reference as delegated from the Research and Innovation Committee

Membership

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Director of Knowledge Exchange
Secretary	Knowledge Exchange Officer
Ex-Officio Members	Director of the Knowledge Exchange Office Associate Dean (Enterprise & Employability), FAS Associate Dean (Learning & External Relations), FoE Associate Dean (Academic Planning & External Engagement), FHSCM Director of Strategic Planning Head of Research Policy Head of Communications and PR
Appointed Members	A representative from the Faculty of Arts & Sciences A representative from the Faculty of Education A representative from the Faculty of Health, Social Care & Medicine

Faculty Boards

Faculty Boards are responsible for:

Purpose	<p>Faculty Board is the most senior committee within the Faculty's governance structure. It approves and monitors the Faculty's governance arrangements and strategic direction. The Faculty Board also seeks assurance that progress has been made against Faculty and institutional policies and action plans and seeks to further enhance practice throughout the Faculty.</p> <p>The Faculty Board may span responsibilities for academic and executive governance and is usually complemented by a Faculty Executive decision-making group.</p>
Main Functions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve and monitor the operation of Faculty-specific strategies, policies and structures 2. To oversee the Faculty's implementation of institution-wide policies and action plans 3. To provide a forum for Faculty-wide discussion and debate on topics identified by the Dean. 4. To provide a communication and consultation mechanism for central services areas. 5. To effectively monitor risks in relation to curriculum delivery, referring as appropriate to the Faculty's Risk Register. 6. To discuss other matters related to Faculty Business as decided by the Dean of Faculty.
Responsible for approving: (strategies and policies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Strategic Plan (and associated Academic Development Plan) • Faculty Research Strategy • Faculty Learning & Teaching Strategy • Faculty Enterprise & Employability Strategy • Faculty International Strategy • Others specific to each Faculty
Accountable to:	Academic Board
Responsible for: (sub-committee structure)	To be completed by each Faculty Board secretary

Sub-committee delegated powers:	To be completed by each Faculty Board secretary
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Membership:

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Pro Vice-Chancellor & Dean of Faculty
Ex-Officio Members	Senior academic staff from across the Faculty, the number to be determined by the Faculty Faculty Administration Manager
Academic Staff Representation	Elected or ex-officio representation from across the Faculty's academic staff. The number of representatives to be determined by the Faculty
Support Staff Representation	A minimum of one member of Support Staff from the Faculty
Student Representation	A minimum of three student representatives including one representative of the Students' Union and two representatives elected or nominated by programme boards. Faculty Postgraduate Research representative
In Attendance	Representatives from Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework, Academic Registry and Learning Services, Centre for Learning & Teaching, Student Services and/or other Faculties as determined by the Board's business. Representatives of external stakeholders ³¹ Representatives of the other Faculties.

Secretarial and administrative support for Faculty Boards is provided from within the Faculty.

Faculty Committees

Faculties will require expert advice on key aspects of academic policy and should establish standing sub-committees in the following areas:

- Academic Planning;
- Academic Quality & Enhancement;
- Learning and Teaching;
- Research

(Note: Committee titles for the above four areas will vary across Faculties and other committees may be established according to the particular needs of the Faculty).

³¹ For example, partner organisations and employers.

- Programme/Subject Boards (see 9.2)
- Staff-Student Consultative Fora (see 9.3)

Programme/Subject Boards

The first-line responsibility for the quality assurance of academic provision rests with Programme/Subject Boards. These also provide a formal process for student representation which complements the more informal Student-Staff Consultative Fora (SSCFs).

1. Programme/Subject Boards are responsible for a defined group of cognate academic provision and are responsible to Faculty Board for:
2. Monitoring, evaluation and review of all academic provision within the remit of the Board.
3. Monitoring student academic performance, progression and achievement.
4. Monitoring student recruitment and retention across provision within the remit of the Board.
5. Consideration of the department's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and, at the appropriate point in the cycle, its Curriculum Review report.
6. Consideration of regular reports and minutes from Student-Staff Consultative Fora (SSCFs) within the remit of the Board.
7. Where practicable, consideration of outline programme proposals (Applications for Development Consent) and proposals for programme modifications.
8. Recommendation to Faculty Board for the appointment, or extension of the terms of appointment, of external examiners.
9. Receipt and consideration of external examiner reports and departmental responses.
10. Responding to consultation from other Committees and Groups in the University on matters relevant to the programmes that are within the Board's remit.
11. Engaging and facilitating the involvement of student representatives including arrangements for their nomination and selection and processes for feeding back to other students.
12. To monitor the effectiveness of the Committee on an annual basis
13. To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the Board's business.

Category of Membership	Committee Member
Chair	Normally the member of staff with overall responsibility for the management of the programme.
Secretary	Member of staff from the Faculty or Department Office
Members	An academic staff representative from each award-bearing course or pathway. Staff with other significant course/programme management responsibilities.
Student Representation	At least one representative of each Student-Staff Consultative Forum, elected by and from its student members (see 9.3 below).
External Representation	Representatives of external stakeholders, e.g. partner organisations and employers.
In Attendance	Representation from key academic-related service areas, in particular Learning Services and the Academic Registry.

Student-Staff Consultative Fora

Student-Staff Consultative Fora (SSCFs) are convened for a defined year, pathway or programme and are formally accountable to Programme Boards. Their Terms of Reference are to:

1. To engage and facilitate the involvement of student representatives including arrangements for their nomination and selection and processes for feedback to other students.
2. To consider staff and student feedback on the modules and programmes within the remit of the established group.
3. To consult with staff and students on matters of relevance relating to the modules and programmes within the remit of the established group.
4. To ensure that any necessary action arising from feedback and consultation is channelled through the appropriate structures with the actors identified, and that feedback on outcomes is provided to students, staff and other relevant parties.
5. To enable service area and external representation where appropriate.
6. To ensure that equality considerations are taken into account in the conduct of the Forum's business.

Student-Staff Consultative Fora have a different status from that of Programme and Faculty Boards. The latter are formally-constituted committees within the University's deliberative structure whilst Faculties are permitted greater discretion over the design and operation of SSCFs; for example, they might be constituted on a year group, pathway or award/course basis. Decisions on the number of SSCFs should be informed by two considerations:

1. The size and complexity of the provision; and
2. The need to ensure that all aspects of the business of a SSCF are directly relevant to the particular interests of its student and staff members.

It is up to the Faculties to determine whether an SSCF is necessary and include information about the alternative student feedback and representation mechanisms adopted in the absence of an SSCF (i.e. feedback goes directly to programme board without this middle step).

The constitutions of SSCFs may either provide for 'open' student membership or for elected student representatives. The latter option is recommended and, if adopted, the constitution of a SSCF must ensure that the student membership is capable of representing the full range and diversity of the interests and experiences of the various constituencies from which the student representatives are drawn. The staff membership of SSCFs must similarly reflect the breadth of the curriculum and the full range of course management roles. In general, Faculties should aim to establish SSCFs in which the number of student and staff members is roughly equal.

The Students' Union provides a framework for the SSCFs to promote engagement in constructive dialogue and appropriate feedback. The framework does this by outlining the minimum requirements of all parties.

Chapter 9

Quality Assurance of Research Degrees

Updated October 2023

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1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This chapter describes the processes that the University has put in place to assure the quality of the research degrees that it awards.¹ The chapter outlines the form that approval, monitoring and review take in relation to each relevant element of research degrees at Edge Hill. It generally does not repeat the content of the University's Research Degree Regulations,² which are the definitive statement of both regulative and constitutive matters in relation to the University's research degrees and are in no way modified or overturned by the content of this chapter. The Research Degree Regulations, however, do not describe many of the Graduate School co-ordinated processes that are essential to the quality management of research degrees at Edge Hill. As a consequence, this chapter, along with various other Graduate School guidance and process documents,³ supplements the Research Degree Regulations and its appendices (Schedules A-H), and describes in greater detail processes only briefly mentioned, or in some cases merely alluded to, in the Research Degree Regulations.

The processes are situated centrally and managed through the Graduate School Board of Studies (GSBoS), Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDSC)⁴ and the Graduate School,⁵ which, collectively, act as the focus for all processes and procedures relevant to the experience of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) whilst they are at the University.

2. PRINCIPLES

The University's research degree processes are intended to be both robust and also to fulfil a developmental function by, for example, preparing PGRs for their final oral examination through exposing them to vivas and viva-like experiences involving increasing degrees of critique and externality from an early stage in their research. In the development of its policies and procedures Edge Hill takes full account of the Office for Students conditions of

¹ By Order of the Privy Council, Edge Hill University was granted Research Degree Awarding Powers in August 2008.

² Available at <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/research-degree-regulations/>

³ Listed in Schedule E of the Research Degree Regulations.

⁴ For the constitution and terms of reference for both the Graduate School Board of Studies and Research Degrees Sub-Committee see Quality Management Handbook (QMH) Chapter 8:

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/quality-management-handbook/>

⁵ <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/graduateschool/>.

registration,⁶ the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications,⁷ and of practice across the higher education sector. The University's policies and procedures are transparent and conducted in such a way as to ensure, as far as is possible, the independence - from the project and associated thesis or dissertation upon which the assessment of PGRs is based - of those taking decisions about the progression and examination of PGRs. Information regarding research degrees is included on the Graduate School website and on the PGR Blackboard site which are updated regularly and made available to PGRs and supervisors.

Edge Hill regards its PGRs as being early career researchers who are completing research that will prepare them for careers not only as researchers and university staff but also, through the development of a range of skills and reflection on the learning they bring to their research, for careers outside academia.

Edge Hill University supports lifelong learning, and this is reflected in the fact that a proportion of its PGRs study in part-time mode. The institution is committed to ensuring that its research degree processes are designed to meet the needs of part-time, as well as full-time, PGRs, in particular through ensuring that mandatory training and development sessions and other obligatory processes are identified with as much notice as possible and are generally scheduled on the same single day each week, or sometimes at the weekend, to assist those studying part-time, and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who have teaching responsibilities.

3. RESPONSIBLE STRUCTURES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

The University's academic governance structure is the means by which large structures (departments, faculties etc.) are accountable to the University in relation to much of their responsibilities. As a consequence, it is really the Graduate School, not the GSBoS (which is part of the Graduate School), or Research Degrees Sub-Committee that is ultimately responsible for research degrees at Edge Hill. The accountability of the RDSC, via the University Research and Innovation Committee, to Academic Board is the means by which the Graduate School is held accountable to the University.

The Graduate School

The Graduate School is responsible for the development and operation of the processes and procedures relating to all aspects of research degree registrations, progression and examination. The Graduate School is managed by the Dean of the Graduate School, assisted by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School and the Graduate School Manager. The Graduate School is an academic unit of the University, but it is also, in a wider sense,

⁶ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/conditions-of-registration/initial-and-general-ongoing-conditions-of-registration/>

⁷ <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks>

essentially a complex network of academics, managers, administrators and structures, managed and coordinated by the Dean, Associate Dean and Graduate School Manager.

The Graduate School is also responsible for taking a range of decisions in relation to PGR registration that do not require more formal consideration by GSBoS. Those include the following:

- changes to registration (mode of study, target award)
- extensions
- interruptions of study
- approval of initial supervisory teams
- approval of changes to supervisory teams
- approval of examination panels

Some applications for changes to registration, including withdrawals, simply require administrative checking and processing by administrators in the Graduate School, but where decisions are required the Graduate School Manager is responsible for making those decisions. Extensions and interruptions are considered by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School (who is also the Chair of the Graduate School Board of Studies). Approval of initial supervisory teams, changes to supervisory teams and approval of examination panels are the responsibility of the Graduate School Manager. Where necessary, the Graduate School Manager will consult the Associate Dean. The Dean of the Graduate School does not generally take a role in matters that concern individual PGRs, including the work of the Graduate School Board of Studies, in order to remain independent to consider appeals if necessary.

Graduate School Board of Studies

The University's research degrees are awarded by Academic Board, which devolves its powers in this respect to the Graduate School Board of Studies (GSBoS), which is not a deliberative committee but a Progression & Award Board of the University, with some additional responsibilities for other academic matters as specified in its Terms of Reference. Graduate School Board of Studies operates under the delegated authority of Academic Board. The Dean of the Graduate School provides an annual overview report for Academic Board which is the research degree equivalent of the annual overview report on the operation of Progression and Award Boards for Taught provision, which confirms that all awards have been made in accordance with the appropriate regulations and processes.

The Graduate School Board of Studies is chaired by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School and deals with the following business:

- approval of examination outcomes (project registration, progression, and final examination)
- awards
- review of individual PGR progress
- annual appraisals
- final decisions on malpractice outcomes
- final decisions on support to study
- final decisions on termination of registration

Research Degrees Sub-Committee

Research Degrees Sub-Committee is a deliberative committee and is concerned not with individual research degree registrations, but rather with matters related to developments in the sector, quality, regulations, policies and PGR experience, etc. The Research Degrees Sub-Committee meets three times per year and is chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School. The Research Degrees Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of the Research and Innovation Committee and reports in the standard way through its minutes etc.

4. THE UNIVERSITY'S RESEARCH DEGREES

Edge Hill currently awards four research degrees, the Master by Research (MRes), the Master of Philosophy (MPhil), the Professional Doctorate and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The MPhil cannot be a target award and is only awarded to PhD candidates unsuccessful in gaining a doctorate following final examination for a doctorate. The PhD may be obtained either by PGRs following the conventional route, by staff or former staff submitting a portfolio of published work and analytical commentary, or through the Double Award route defined in Schedule H. In each case assessment is by a *viva voce* examination. The characteristics of each award are outlined in the Research Degree Regulations and are described in more detail in Schedule C of those regulations, and the Research Degree Handbook.⁸

5. APPROVAL, MONITORING AND REVIEW IN RELATION TO RESEARCH DEGREES

Approval and modification of research degrees

There is a single route for each research degree (PhD, professional doctorate and MRes), and the PhD by publication is an alternative route to a PhD available to staff of the University and some former staff. There are no individual research degree programmes – no tokens of a

⁸ [Available from the Graduate School Learning Edge Site.](#)

given type of research degree, in the way that there are, for example, individual validated tokens of the type Bachelor of Arts, such as a B.A. in History or a B.A. in English. As a consequence, there is no validation of research degrees, but rather approval of research degree routes or modifications to research degree routes by Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

Modifications of research degree routes

Proposal of new research degrees is very rare, and given that the University offers the PhD, PhD by publication, professional doctorate and MRes, and has defined routes for each, and, in addition has withdrawn the MPhil as a target award, it seems unlikely that any new research degree routes will be proposed in the foreseeable future.

Nonetheless, changes may occasionally be required to research degree routes. In such cases, the Graduate School convenes a working group to identify the options available. The working group submits formal proposals to Research Degrees Sub-Committee for consideration. RDSC may suggest modifications, request further developmental work, or approve the proposals in their entirety. The process is coordinated by the Dean of the Graduate School, who then makes the necessary alterations to the Research Degree Regulations through the formal process for amending those regulations.

Approval of Professional Doctorate cohorts

Another form of approval that is occasionally required is that of new professional doctorate cohorts. Such approval can take two forms – approval of the intake of a new cohort studying in an area where the University already has at least one cohort working in that area, and approval of the first cohort for professional doctorate study in a given subject area. As already noted, the professional doctorate route has been approved and any proposal to take a cohort working in a given subject area must be consistent with the approved route. That means that approval of new cohorts, whether the first in a given subject area or a subsequent intake in an existing professional doctorate subject area, concentrates on the supervisory capacity and expertise of the proposing team, the availability of internal examiners, the availability of facilities and resources, the size of the proposed cohort, and the proposed post-nominal designation. A formal application to RDSC must be made by each proposing team by completion of the relevant pro forma. Representatives of the proposing team attend part of the meeting of RDSC that considers the application and are questioned by members of the sub-committee. RDSC may require modifications, or may reject a proposal, but when approval is given that approval is only for the intake of a single cohort. The intake of subsequent cohorts requires separate approval at a later date. RDSC also stipulates a maximum number of PGRs that may be taken in the cohort that it approves and confirms the post-nominal designation. There is no separate programme title (because there is no programme, but only a route), so PGRs are awarded a professional doctorate and may use the approved post-

nominal designation, but they are not awarded a professional doctorate in a named subject, rather, the certificate gives the title of the research project (the thesis title). The award would, therefore, be of a professional doctorate, not, for example, of an EdD.

Review of research degree routes

Research degree routes are not programmes, and as such they are not the kind of thing that can be reviewed in the way that programmes are standardly reviewed. The research degree experience of each individual is more or less unique, so it is not possible to make the kind of inferences from general data about, for example, completion rates, withdrawals, times to completion etc. that are standardly made in the evaluation and review of programmes. The same issues arise in relation to figures on recruitment and the ‘performance’ of specific departments or faculties. As a consequence, the evaluation and review of research degrees is quite different from that of taught programmes.

Evaluation and review is holistic and conducted annually by the Graduate School. There are two interconnected sets of processes that provide data for evaluation and review of research degrees – one is the appraisal of individual PGR progress and experiences, and the other is the process of benchmarking that culminates in the annual updates to the Research Degree Regulations and chapter 9 of the Quality Management Handbook.

The appraisal of PGR progress and experiences includes formal annual appraisal conducted by the Graduate School Board of Studies, formal review of PGR progress, which is conducted by the Graduate School Board of Studies in cases where the Board deems it necessary to provide the support to an individual PGR that is afforded by the production of a short report by the PGR and another by the Director of Studies on behalf of the supervisory team at regular intervals for a fixed period of time to assist a PGR who has been struggling or who is returning from a period of interruption of studies. The Graduate School also oversees the approval of supervisory teams informed by regular capacity checks made by the Graduate School to ensure that, before accepting a PGR, the University has the capacity to provide the required number of supervisors with appropriate subject expertise, and the necessary internal examiners for the project.

The processes by which amendments are made on an annual basis to the Research Degree Regulations and to chapter 9 of the Quality Management Handbook involve consideration by the Graduate School of relevant developments in relation to research degrees that emerge from the work of the OfS, QAA, RCUK, the UK Council for Graduate Education, the Research and Enterprise Network for Universities and Vitae, along with agendas such as the REF and Athena SWAN. In addition, the Graduate School provides the opportunity to review our own provision by reflecting on the PGR experience through the work of Research Degrees Sub-Committee, Postgraduate Researcher Representatives and the associated PGR representation structures.

Review and approval of changes to Research Degrees Regulations

Such benchmarking and evaluation leads to the Graduate School identifying proposed amendments to the Research Degree Regulations. Those proposals are considered at the spring meeting of Research Degrees Sub-Committee. They are then considered by Research and Innovation Committee before being considered and approved by Academic Board at its July meeting. The final, amended version of the Research Degree Regulations and associated appendices is then taken back to RDSC at its first meeting of the new academic year for information. Changes made to the Research Degree Regulations and any alterations to processes and procedures made during the year are reflected in the revisions to chapter 9 of the Quality Management Handbook.

Review of Professional Doctorates

There are three kinds of review of professional doctorates: i. review of the route(s); ii. review of capacity; and iii. review of the content of subject-specific training. The routes are reviewed in the way described above under 'Review of Research Degree Routes'.

Capacity is reviewed as described above under 'Approval of Professional Doctorate Cohorts' because approval is only ever for the intake of a single cohort, so the approval of any subsequent cohort requires an additional application by the delivery team.

Review of the subject-specific training is completed annually by the delivery team under the co-ordination of the relevant professional doctorate lead. The results of such reviews are considered by RDSC.

Admission to Edge Hill's research degrees

A candidate must normally hold at least an upper second-class honours degree from a UK HEI, its equivalent from an HEI outside the UK,⁹ or other equivalent qualifications or professional experience. Evidence of equivalence will normally be presented through a portfolio. Applicants for research degrees must provide at least two academic references from appropriate referees who can attest to their academic attainment and fitness for research.

Applications for admission to a research degree are received by the Graduate School, which processes them and sends them to the relevant Graduate School Research Degree Coordinator who manages the process of scrutiny of both the application and references. Where an applicant's qualifications and references are satisfactory and there is the potential to offer appropriate supervision and provide the necessary facilities, that applicant may be offered an interview. International applications are directed to the International Office by the Graduate School in the first instance to ensure the necessary checks are completed. In the

⁹ As determined by the UK National Information Centre for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills (UK ENIC): enic.org.uk.

case of competition for a limited number of places, a short-listing process may take place before the interview stage. The decision of the panel is reported to the Graduate School by the panel chair using a checklist form that ensures that panels consider all relevant matters. The panel may place conditions on the offer of a research degree place, which may include a requirement that further preparatory study be undertaken. The Graduate School ensures that the checklist has been completed satisfactorily before making an offer of a place.¹⁰ All PhD, professional doctorate, and non-UK MRes applicants that are offered a place must have been interviewed. The decision as to whether to conduct an interview for UK MRes applicants is made by the relevant Graduate School research degree contact in consultation with the MRes Lead or, where necessary, the Graduate School. An interview is not a regulatory requirement because many MRes applicants are Edge Hill undergraduates at the time of application, and so are already known to the department or faculty in which they would be based and have discussed the proposal with appropriate Edge Hill staff. In such cases, an interview is unlikely to serve any useful purpose. The fact that an interview is not a regulatory requirement does not, however, in any way limit the ability of the Graduate School research degree contact to require an interview if it is necessary to establish whether a candidate should be offered a place and/or whether the University has the relevant supervisory capacity.

Applicants are made aware that admission to the University does not guarantee registration of the research project, as a PGR may develop a detailed research proposal that proves to be of insufficient quality or fails to meet the necessary academic requirements.

The initial stage of the programme consists in the PGRs developing a detailed research proposal, which is examined by three academics, including two with subject-specific expertise, to determine whether the project should be registered. In the case of the PhD and the professional doctorate, the project registration examination includes a viva. In the case of the MRes the proposal is shorter than those for doctoral projects and examination does not include a viva. Proposed supervisory teams are assessed against criteria (both for the composition of the team and individual membership of a supervisory team) by the Graduate School and, where necessary, revisions to teams may be required. If, during this process, it becomes apparent that the University cannot provide appropriate supervision or the facilities for its successful completion, the PGR will be encouraged to modify the proposal and given suitable guidance and support. A PGR that was unwilling to make such revisions would be supported to seek registration for a research degree at another university where appropriate supervision and facilities are available. Such an outcome is highly unlikely, however, because an assessment of supervisory requirements for the project as outlined at the point of application is made prior to the offer of a place. While plans can change as a full registration

¹⁰ <http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/11531/> illustrates the administrative checks that take place between interview and offer.

proposal is prepared, any PGR developing their project in a direction that would make supervision or the provision of suitable facilities impossible would be alerted to that danger by the supervisory team and could make adjustments accordingly.

Enrolment for research degrees at Edge Hill is at one of two enrolment points determined each year by the Graduate School. The enrolment points are usually at the beginning of October and the beginning of February. This not only helps ensure that PGRs are part of a cohort, but also means that all PGRs have the same experience in relation to researcher development and training opportunities, as they all have full access to the programme of sessions co-ordinated by the Graduate School, which is delivered twice per year. In certain very exceptional circumstances (related to some external funding conditions), and only in the case of the PhD, a PGR may be permitted to begin study at a specified date at another point in the academic year (the date being determined by the Graduate School in consultation with Academic Registry). That is not desirable, however, and is discouraged, because the programme of postgraduate researcher development is extensive and cannot be repeated for PGRs beginning their studies at an atypical point in the academic year. Such PGRs cannot, therefore, have the same quality of experience as PGRs beginning their studies at one of the standard enrolment points. To mitigate this state of affairs as much as possible, PGRs will only be accepted in such circumstances in cases where the relevant subject area demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the Graduate School, that it is able to provide alternative training and development activities to fully compensate (at least at the level of content, if not at that of discussion and interaction with other PGRs) for all sessions that the incoming PGR will miss as a result of the atypical enrolment point.

The Graduate School may accept applications for research degrees from candidates who wish to transfer from another UK research degree awarding institution where they are already registered, and from where their supervisor is moving to join the staff of Edge Hill. In such cases, evidence of progress from the candidate's previous institution will be used to inform a decision by the Graduate School regarding the point of registration, and the time remaining until progression or submission.

Each such case will be unique, so while the standard interview checklist is the minimum requirement in relation to documentation, additional documentary requirements may be established by the Graduate School in particular cases. In all cases, however, an admissions interview must be conducted – chaired by someone appointed to that role by the Graduate School, and the University's English language requirements must be met.

Approval, monitoring of review of supervisory teams and supervisory capacity¹¹

A distinction is made between those supervisors required to meet the stipulations of the Research Degree Regulations and those with a supervisory role additional to the core regulatory requirements.¹² Supervisors contributing to meeting the regulatory requirements for the composition of a supervisory team for doctoral PGRs must be active researchers currently involved in the production of peer-reviewed publications, and with a recent record of such publications.¹³ Edge Hill University doctoral PGRs each have a supervisory team consisting of at least two, but normally not more than three, supervisors, two of whom will be internal to the institution and at least one will have previous experience of successful supervision at doctoral level. Collectively, the supervisory team will demonstrate active engagement in research, bringing to the support of the PGR a range of skills and knowledge relevant to the project.

One member of the supervisory team, who will be a permanent member of staff of the University, will be designated as Director of Studies. The Director of Studies has responsibility to ensure supervision of the candidate on a regular and frequent basis and manages the supervisory team. Other members of the team will have specific subject and/or methodological expertise and may, occasionally, be drawn from outside the University when absolutely necessary.

MRes PGRs will standardly have one supervisor, but some may have a team of two supervisors where a combination of the expertise of two members of staff is necessary.

Initial proposals for supervisory teams are made by Graduate School research degree contacts. Those are considered against criteria by the Graduate School, and amendments made, in consultation with research degree contacts and departments and faculties, when necessary. Following the project registration examination process supervisory teams are confirmed by the Graduate School. This process of making initial proposals in relation to the supervisory team and later confirmation after the project has been fully designed and approved, ensures that if the design of a project alters during the course of the preparation

¹¹ Candidates for PhD by publication are not registered PGRs, and do not have supervisors. Such candidates sometimes have mentors appointed from among the staff of the University, but that is an informal advisory role and does not constitute supervision.

¹² The core regulatory requirements for the composition of a doctoral supervisory team are two members of Edge Hill University staff, one of whom must have previously supervised at least one doctorate to successful completion.

¹³ An external supervisor from a relevant profession (and so not an academic) may be added as a third member of a supervisory team.

of the project registration research proposal in such a way that the initial supervisory team is not suitable, adjustments can be made to the team immediately.

If it becomes necessary to alter a supervisory team at any time after confirmation of the team, an application is considered by the Graduate School.

Assurance of the quality of supervision provided for the University's doctoral PGRs rests with the Graduate School and GSBoS. It is for that reason that the Graduate School must approve any permanent changes to supervisory arrangements. Where a change is necessitated by the ill-health, retirement or other long-term unavailability of a member of the supervisory team, appropriate alternative arrangements must be proposed by the relevant research degree contact and any such arrangements must be organised to ensure that the PGR is not disadvantaged in project progression.

There will inevitably be situations where difficulties arise in the relationship between PGR and supervisor. Where this is the case, the parties should initially seek to resolve these informally by involving, where he or she is not part of the situation, the Director of Studies in a mediating role. Where this proves impossible or the issue remains unresolved, the Graduate School should be contacted. The Graduate School will then resolve matters, and changes may be made to supervisory arrangements by the Graduate School.

While supervisory difficulties can be brought to the attention of the Graduate School at any time of the year, the annual appraisal process provides an opportunity to monitor supervision on a regular basis. As part of that process PGRs and Directors of Studies (on behalf of the supervisory team) each write separate reports on the PGR's progress, which can assist the Graduate School in identifying difficulties in relation to supervision. When such difficulties are identified by those means they are taken to GSBoS for consideration if the Graduate School is unable to informally resolve any issue.

The Graduate School regularly monitors supervisory capacity across the University. Such monitoring considers both the supervisory load of individual members of staff (which is not normally permitted to rise, in the most extreme cases, above nine PGRs in total, a maximum of six of which can be doctoral PGRs),¹⁴ and the capacity within subject areas. This involves not only considering the supervisory load of individual staff, but also the requirements for internal examiners, which must also be taken into account in assessing supervisory capacity, as examiners cannot have had any involvement in the supervision of PGRs whom they examine. Graduate School research degree contacts are responsible for monitoring supervisory capacity within their subject area, but the Graduate School also monitors capacity

¹⁴ Those figures are maximums for the most experienced supervisors, not a standard supervisory load. Many supervisors will not be permitted such a load.

independently. In addition, capacity is considered on every occasion on which a supervisory team is approved.

The Graduate School has various options available to it in identifying suitable supervisory teams. In addition to the standard supervisory role (research active staff of the University contributing to meeting the regulatory requirements for a supervisory team), the Graduate School may appoint a supervisory team mentor. Individuals allocated such a role will be experienced supervisors with significant experience of supervising at the relevant level to successful completion. Supervisory team mentors may contribute to meeting the requirement for two members of Edge Hill University staff on a doctoral supervisory team, but often they may not conduct their own research in the relevant discipline. Where a supervisory team mentor is drawn from a different discipline there will be a third member of the supervisory team, usually external to the University, with relevant subject knowledge and experience in addition to the Director of Studies and the supervisory team mentor. Supervisory team mentors will primarily focus on assisting, mentoring, and advising the other members of the supervisory team, but may also advise the PGR. Supervisory team mentors will be credited with completions along with other members of the supervisory team, but their responsibilities as supervisory team mentors are additional to their supervisory workload as standard supervisors on other teams. The role of supervisory team mentor is not included in calculations of supervisory capacity. It is the responsibility of the Graduate School to ensure that supervisory team mentors have sufficient time to perform their duties.

Some supervisors (those with no previous experience of supervision to successful completion) may be designated as having a developmental supervisory status. In such cases, the person occupying such a role will be a third member of the supervisory team, additional to those necessary to meet the regulatory requirements for a supervisory team.

Where there is a formal partnership between Edge Hill University and another institution, one member of Edge Hill staff and one member of staff of the partner institution shall constitute a supervisory team by the requirements of the Research Degree Regulations. The Graduate School will decide in each case whether to appoint a supervisory team mentor in addition to those two supervisors. Where there is no such formal partnership, external supervisors will be a third, or in rare cases, fourth, supervisor and so not be part of the core members of the team necessary to meet the regulatory requirements.

Postgraduate researcher development

Postgraduate researcher development takes five different forms:¹⁵

- I. Core postgraduate researcher development sessions (mandatory for all new PGRs)
- II. Methodological development sessions (mandatory for all new MRes and professional doctorate PGRs, and available for inclusion in a programme of related studies for all PhD PGRs)
- III. Additional postgraduate researcher development sessions (mandatory for all new PhD PGRs, but available to all PGRs for inclusion in a programme of related studies)
- IV. Professional doctorate subject-specific development sessions (mandatory for all professional doctorate PGRs)
- V. The individual programme of related studies designed by the PGR and his or her supervisor(s) (mandatory for all PGRs).

The design and delivery of the core and additional postgraduate researcher development sessions is co-ordinated by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School in consultation with the MRes Lead, the Professional Doctorate Leads, the Graduate School Researcher Development Fellows, and the Graduate School research degree contacts for each subject area. The design of the core postgraduate researcher development programme is informed by benchmarking and consideration of evaluations of previous training. As part of the evaluation of all postgraduate researcher development, PGRs are asked whether there are any topics they feel should be added to the programme. These suggestions are reviewed by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School and presented for consideration to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee where appropriate.

The design and delivery of the methodological development programme is co-ordinated by the MRes Lead and overseen by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate School Researcher Development Fellows consult with staff in their respective broad disciplinary categories (social science, science, and arts & humanities), and propose content for six sessions in each broad disciplinary category. In addition, some cross-disciplinary topics are identified and included in the programme as extra sessions.

The design and delivery of subject-specific development for the professional doctorates is coordinated by the Professional Doctorate Leads, who are also responsible for evaluation of such sessions.

¹⁵ Detailed descriptions of the different forms of research student development sessions and the specific schedules can be found in the Research Degree Handbook:
<http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/15194/>

All postgraduate researcher development activities are evaluated annually by the Graduate School.

Approval of project registration

The GSBoS is the body that formally approves a programme of research as being appropriate for a PGR seeking the award of an Edge Hill University research degree. In making its decision, however, the Board takes the advice of the relevant examination panel.¹⁶ This panel generally comprises two research-active members of staff, one of whom will normally be a member of the PGR's proposed supervisory team and one of whom will be appointed as chair in accordance with the Research Degree Regulations. The panel provides a written report containing a recommendation to GSBoS. The recommendation and paperwork are considered by GSBoS. Exceptions to the above arrangements for panel membership require the approval of the Chair of the GSBoS.

The examination panel's recommendation is one of the following:

- I. The project should be registered at the level of the degree sought;
- II. The project should not be registered at the present time. The PGR should revise and resubmit the proposal for re-examination (with a viva for doctoral degrees);¹⁷
- III. Following a re-examination, the submission is not of an appropriate standard, so the project should not be registered (the PGR's enrolment will therefore be terminated by the Board); or
- IV. The PGR should be considered under the University's malpractice regulations.

Should the panel recommend that the project should not be registered, the PGR has one opportunity to re-submit a proposal and be re-examined.

In order to determine that any particular project is an appropriate one to be pursued by a specific PGR for a research degree of Edge Hill University, the GSBoS must satisfy itself that:

- I. the PGR is suitably qualified;
- II. the programme of research submitted by the applicant is viable and appropriate to the standard of the award sought;
- III. the supervisory arrangements are adequate and sustainable in terms of the programme requirements;
- IV. appropriate resources and facilities are available for the conduct of the programme of research;

¹⁶ [The Graduate School Learning Edge Site \(Supervisors area\)](#) contains project registration processes, guidance, and examination paperwork.

¹⁷ Where the PGR's original submission was made after the submission deadline, the initial examination must be considered a second sitting. Under such circumstances, the option to offer revise and resubmit is not available.

- V. ethical approval has been, or is in the process of being, obtained where appropriate; and,
- VI. where a project is wholly or partly funded by an external agency or there is a collaborating institution, this does not inhibit the fulfilment of the objectives of the project and/or the academic requirements of the research degree, nor potentially give rise to a conflict of interest with the University. Formal written agreement from any collaborating organisation is required before registration can be approved.

Research proposals are assessed against the following criteria:

By the end of the examination, the examiners should be satisfied that the PGR can:

1. Demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of appropriate research methodologies in designing the research;
2. Demonstrate appropriate research project management skills, and critically reflect on those skills (must have included a research project management plan in the submission);
3. Demonstrate sensitivity to, and understanding of, ethical and other values. Has planned for and identified a relevant, specific, Research Ethics Committee meeting date at which ethical approval will be sought;
4. Articulate and defend a scholarly argument at the relevant postgraduate level;
5. Critically reflect on the methodological choices made in designing the research;
6. Demonstrate advanced critical ability to appraise, reflect and evaluate in relation to both subject knowledge and research skills development;
7. Demonstrate a capacity for advanced critical, theoretical and conceptual reflection upon subject matter of relevance to their area of study;
8. Demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills in relation to research design;
9. Provide rigorous and convincing evidence that the project is feasible and of an appropriate level for the research degree for which registration is sought;
10. Demonstrate proficiency in written English and display academic writing skills to the appropriate level for the relevant research degree (assessed via submission only);
11. Demonstrate an advanced ability to defend their proposed research design;
12. Demonstrate the ability to produce a research data management (RDM) plan that both respects subject confidentiality and ensures data is reusable where appropriate (must have included the plan in the submission);
13. Demonstrate that they have completed:
 - I. a learning and skills needs analysis;
 - II. designed a programme of related studies that reflects the identified needs, and
 - III. completed the programme of postgraduate researcher development activities appropriate to the research degree or have identified suitable equivalent

development activities to undertake (which must be approved in advance by the Graduate School).

If all of these criteria are met, there is no reason not to recommend registration of the project.

Ethical scrutiny and approval

Research proposals must adhere to the Research Ethics Policy.¹⁸ No primary research or data collection may start until a proposal has gained the appropriate ethical approval.

Progression viva

In relation to doctoral work, the progression submission and subsequent viva provides an opportunity to confirm, in a formal setting, the robustness of the ideas developed in a PGR's research and their preparedness for a final viva examination, subsequent to the submission of a completed thesis.¹⁹ This provides the Graduate School, through the GSBoS acting on its behalf, with an opportunity to assure itself that the project is of such a character as to allow the development of a thesis of a quality appropriate to submission for examination. It also allows the Graduate School, again acting through the GSBoS, to assure itself that the PGR is making intellectual developments appropriate to examination at the relevant level. Supervisors can also observe their PGR's performance in this formal setting, identify any areas where additional support is required and help to prepare them for the final examination. The progression viva, therefore, performs a number of important functions for all parties to the research degree.

Both part- and full-time doctoral PGRs must submit a progression application to the Graduate School. Normally, an application should be submitted no later than eighteen months from enrolment for full-time PGRs, or thirty-six months for part-time, and applications must be supported by the supervisory team. An application must be accompanied by a report of no more than 6,000 words outlining:

- I. Progress to date in the literature review, methodological development and data collection;
- II. The original contribution to knowledge that will be made by the research;
- III. The written work to date,²⁰ its form and whether it has been seen and commented on by supervisors;

¹⁸ 2020 - 2023 policy link - <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/research-ethics-policy/>

¹⁹ The Graduate School Learning Edge site contains progression processes, guidance, and examination paperwork.

²⁰ The written work should normally comprise at least one draft chapter of the thesis. Where work has already been published, the candidate might find it helpful to make reference to the appropriate publication(s).

- IV. The timetable for thesis submission;
- V. A detailed plan of the final thesis structure.

Applications are assessed by an examination panel, appointed on behalf of the Graduate School. The panel comprises two research-active members of staff, no more than one of whom will be a member of the supervisory team. One member will be external to the University and at least one of the examiners will have experience of supervising at least one PhD to successful completion. In some cases an independent chair will be appointed, but the internal examiner will act as chair where that person has completed research degree viva chair training. Amendment to these arrangements requires the approval of the Chair of the GSBoS or the Dean of the Graduate School and will only be given where exceptional mitigating circumstances apply.

On completion of the viva, the examination panel will prepare a report making one of the following recommendations to the GSBoS:

- I. The application to progress be approved;
- II. Progression should not be permitted at the present time. The candidate should revise and resubmit the application for re-examination *without* a second viva;
- III. Progression should not be permitted at the present time. The candidate should revise and resubmit the application for re-examination *with* a second viva;
- IV. Following a re-examination, the submission is not of an appropriate standard, so the candidate should not progress (the candidate's registration will therefore be terminated by the Board); or
- V. The candidate should be considered under the University's malpractice regulations.

The GSBoS will make the final decision and where a referral by the examination panel is confirmed by the Board, a PGR is permitted a period of no more than eight weeks (for full-time PGRs) or twelve weeks (for part-time PGRs) to make a re-submission. In the case of a decision to refer an application for further work, written feedback will be provided by the panel chair for transmission to the PGR. In the event that a panel has not included a member of the PGR's supervisory team, the written feedback will also be provided to the supervisors.

Only one re-submission of a progression application is permitted and where an application is rejected for a second time registration will be terminated. PGRs who are refused permission to progress at the second submission may appeal under the Appeals Procedure described within the Research Degree Regulations.

The MRes does not include a formal progression *examination*, but it does have a formal review of the academic progress of all PGRs through a process co-ordinated by the MRes Lead

on behalf of the Graduate School. The process is outlined in the *Research Degree Handbook*. The reports are considered by a panel drawn from the MRes co-ordinators, and also including the MRes Lead and, where necessary, the Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

Changes to registration

All changes to registration are by application and subject to the approval of the Graduate School. These changes include:

- I. Change to mode of study²¹
- II. Interruption of study
- III. Extension to the period of registration and to submission deadlines
- IV. Change in award level

In order to be considered by the Graduate School, any request for a change to registration must be supported in writing by the supervisory team.

Change to mode of study

Mode of study has different implications in research degrees from those it has in taught programmes because of the specificity of the research project and the requirements in relation to supervisory expertise. As a consequence, changes to mode of study cannot simply be granted whenever a request is made, but rather the Graduate School must consider the implications of granting such a request. Standardly, that will involve considering whether a change from full-time to part-time study will adversely affect the capacity of a supervisor or the University more generally to supervise other PGRs, including the capacity to admit new PGRs. Those issues are related to the allocation of (human) resources and planning, as the decision to admit a PGR is based on an assessment of the required resources, including human resources, for the period of registration originally proposed. Granting a request for a change from full-time to part-time registration could, if that request was made at the beginning of the period of registration, add three years to the time a supervisor is occupied in the supervision of a PGR. In addition, in relation to some projects, the Graduate School may ask the supervisory team to make an assessment of whether the currency of the research will be adversely affected by the delay to completion that a change of mode of study can bring.

Interruption of study

Where a PGR is prevented from making progress with their programme of research because of illness or other reasonable cause, they may seek an interruption of study; PGRs are permitted, in extenuating circumstances, to interrupt studies (intercalate) for a minimum of three months (90 days) and a maximum period of twelve months (365 days) in total across

²¹ For example, from part-time to full-time.

the entirety of their registration period in the case of the PhD and professional doctorate, and a minimum of 60 days and a maximum of 90 days in the case of the MRes. It is unusual for a PGR to be granted periods of interruption totalling more than twelve months during the registration although exceptions to this may be made by the Graduate School acting within its discretion. Approved periods of interruption will not be included in calculating the PGR's period of registration for the purpose of determining minimum and maximum periods. Applications for interruption of registration must be supported by evidence and a considered explanation of the circumstances that will prevent completion within the normal timescale.

Extension to the period of registration and to submission deadlines

Requests to extend the period of registration beyond the maximum period normally allowed will be considered by the Graduate School, which will consider the request in the context of the progress made to date, the reason for the request for additional time, and its assessment of the likelihood of eventual submission of a thesis or dissertation appropriate for examination for the degree for which a PGR is registered.

An extension will normally only be made for a maximum 90-day period and requests that extensions should take effect retrospectively will only be granted should the Graduate School consider that sufficient justification has been provided to explain why such a course of action is necessary, and why a timely prospective application was not made.

The Graduate School also considers requests for extensions to examination submission deadlines. Again, PGRs must provide an appropriate reason for the request, and the Graduate School considers the impact of granting the request on the PGR's ability to complete the research degree within the timeframe specified by the Research Degree Regulations, because the extension of examination submission deadlines does not lead to an extension of the period of registration.

Change in award level

Should a PGR who has registered for the degree of PhD or professional doctorate be unable to complete the requirements of the award or seek to exit before submission for a doctorate, he or she may apply for the registration to be remitted to MRes. In such cases the Graduate School will satisfy itself that the standard of award applied for is appropriate and can be met. PGRs enrolled on the MRes cannot apply for a change in award level because there is no lower level of research degree, and the University does not offer the opportunity for MRes PGRs to transfer to a higher level of research degree.

Withdrawal and termination of registration for an Edge Hill University research degree

If a PGR ends his or her registration, that is a withdrawal. If the University ends a PGR's registration, that is a termination of registration. Where the Graduate School becomes aware that a PGR has withdrawn their registration for a research degree it will notify the supervisory team, the appropriate Graduate School research degree contact and the department or faculty in which the PGR was based.

Where a supervisory team becomes aware that a PGR has withdrawn their registration for a research degree it will notify the Graduate School.

In either event, the Graduate School and the GSBoS must be notified of any PGR who has withdrawn.

In the event that the Graduate School is of the opinion that a PGR is not making satisfactory academic progress and/or it is evident that he or she is no longer in contact with her/his supervisory team, the Graduate School may formally take the initiative and employ the procedures outlined in Schedule F of the Research Degree Regulations, which could lead to termination of registration. The decision to terminate registration can only be made by GSBoS. Normally where there are concerns identified by the supervisory team or through the various monitoring processes, the PGR's progress will be placed under review for a specified period of time before termination of registration is considered, however, the formal process for review of PGR progress is not required in all circumstances (such as lack of engagement on the part of a PGR, some support to study or malpractice cases, etc.), and the Board can terminate registration at any point if the relevant conditions are deemed by the Board to have been met.²² Termination of registration may also result where the Research Degree Support to Study Procedures (Schedule G of the Research Degree Regulations) are employed or in some cases of academic malpractice (which are covered by Schedule B of the Research Degree Regulations).

In the case of both withdrawal and termination of registration, the Graduate School will notify Academic Registry, which will follow its standard process.

Monitoring of PGR progress

The University operates an appraisal system in relation to research degree registrations involving both the PGR and the Director of Studies (on behalf of the supervisory team). Both are required to independently complete a pro forma and provide a written report. The reports are considered through a Graduate School process that results in those cases judged in need of consideration being referred to the GSBoS. The appraisal is required for PGRs who have

²² <http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/9099/> outlines the progress review process.

not submitted work for a viva thus far in the calendar year. The documentation from the supervisory team includes a recommendation in relation to continued enrolment in the next academic session and, should it be evident to the GSBOS that a PGR is failing to make satisfactory progress or failing to respond appropriately to feedback, the Board may terminate their registration under the Research Degree Regulations or place the PGR's progress under review. Any PGR who is denied progression or whose registration is terminated under these regulations may appeal on procedural grounds using the University's Appeals Procedures.²³

The appointment of examiners

Examination teams are nominated by the supervisory team but are appointed by the Graduate School. The Director of Studies for a PGR is responsible for submitting proposals for the examination team to the Graduate School at least three months prior to the proposed date of the examination.

Each PGR is examined by an examination team of at least two examiners. Each examination team includes at least one internal, and one external examiner. An examination team may not include more than three examiners.

With some exceptions, which are outlined in the Research Degree Regulations, where the PGR being examined is a permanent or full-time member of staff of either Edge Hill University, a designated research partner institution of the University or a collaborating institution as designated on the approved research degree project registration documentation, an additional external examiner is required (this does not apply in the case of Graduate Teaching Assistants).

The examining team must collectively have experience of a minimum of two previous examinations of PGRs at the level of the award being examined. Examiners must be experienced in research in the general area of the PGR's thesis and, where practicable, will have specialist experience in the particular topic that is the subject of examination. This is particularly important for the external members of the examination team.

For a professional doctorate, at least one member of the examining team must have appropriate experience of working in the profession. Whilst it is preferable to invite an academic with such experience to join the examining team, it is acknowledged that this will not always be possible. In such cases the practitioner will be a third (and external) examiner. Thus, a team may comprise an internal academic, an external academic (for benchmarking of standards), and finally an external practitioner. At least one of the examiners must be familiar with professional doctorates.

²³ <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/graduateschool/regulations/>.

It is extremely important that the external examiners must be, and must be seen to be, independent of the University, the department in which the PGR has pursued his or her research, any research partner or collaborating institution and the research project upon which the PGR's thesis is based. This means that an external examiner may not have acted previously as the PGR's supervisor or advisor, nor be either a supervisor of another PGR or, during the previous three years, have been an external examiner on a taught course in the same department in which the PGR is based. Additionally, the Graduate School acts to ensure that an external examiner is not appointed with such frequency that familiarity with the University might be considered prejudicial to objective judgement.

While it is not possible to require the same degree of independence of the internal examiner as it is of external examiners, the University does not allow a member of staff who is, or has been, the PGR's supervisor or formal advisor to be a member of the examination team for that PGR.

Appointment of viva chairs

The Graduate School appoints an independent and suitably experienced member of staff to chair the viva and who may make personal contemporaneous notes in relation to the process of the viva. These notes are retained by the chair and cannot be destroyed until the period for appeal has expired. Viva chairs (for project registration, progression and final vivas) are drawn from a standing panel of staff, the members of which have completed viva chair training provided by the Graduate School. Chairs must be entirely independent of the project, and the department or faculty in which the PGR is based.

Final examination

The final examination of Edge Hill University's research degrees²⁴ involves two stages and a degree cannot be awarded until both have been completed. These stages are:

- I. the submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis or, in the case of the MRes, the dissertation;
- II. the defence of the thesis or dissertation by oral examination (or approved alternative).

In the case of doctoral degrees, following three years of full-time enrolment or four-and-a-half years of part-time enrolment, submission of a thesis is the sole responsibility of the PGR. Should a PGR wish to submit prior to the conclusion of that period of enrolment, the prior approval of the supervisors is required. In such cases, when they approve submission the supervisors are confirming that the thesis is of an appropriate standard to merit examination. A supervisor's agreement to the submission of a thesis does not ensure its approval by the

²⁴ <http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/31902> illustrates the process for final examination.

examiners, nor can it be used as grounds for appeal against the outcome of an examination or introduced as evidence in any such appeal.

All theses and dissertations must be submitted in English and all oral examinations will be conducted in English. Oral examinations will normally be held on mainland Britain with exceptions being approved by the Chair of the GSBoS. Requests for final examination using video conferencing are permitted. In such cases all individuals involved in the examination must agree to the request. Progression examinations are standardly conducted using video conferencing.

In order to maintain a degree of distance between participants in the examination of a thesis, PGRs may not take any part in the formal arrangements for the examination nor have any formal contact with the external examiners between their appointment and the oral examination (or approved alternative).

The Graduate School will ensure that the conduct of examinations and the presentation of the examiners' recommendations are undertaken in accordance with the University's Research Degree Regulations. Within the viva, the independent chair plays this role and reports any concerns to the Graduate School. Where the GSBoS is made aware of a failure to comply with the specified procedures, the examination may be declared invalid and new examiners appointed.

Assessment of the thesis takes place in two stages. Each examiner independently makes a preliminary report, which must be submitted prior to any communication between the examiners about the thesis. This pre-viva report should include a preliminary recommendation. Examiners are required not to consult with each other in the preparation of the pre-viva reports. When all the reports have been received, the examiners are free to discuss the thesis and how they would like to approach the examination.

In their preliminary reports, examiners are at liberty to recommend that no useful purpose would be served by conducting an oral examination (or approved alternative). Where the examiners are agreed in this, they will provide written guidance on the deficiencies of the thesis for the PGR, who will then have a period of no more than twelve months in the case of the PhD and professional doctorate or 90 days in the case of the MRes to revise the thesis for re-examination. Where the preliminary recommendations from the external examiners are not in agreement, the viva chair, or, where necessary, the Graduate School, will consult with all the examiners to reach a decision as to whether to proceed with the oral examination (or approved alternative).

Following an oral examination (or approved alternative) the examiners will, where they are in agreement, prepare a joint report and recommendation to the GSBoS and, where the recommendation is to make the award, certify that the thesis meets the criteria for the award.

The recommendations that the examiners may make are set down in the Research Degree Regulations.

Where the examiners are not in agreement following the oral examination (or approved alternative), each examiner will prepare a separate report and recommendation, and these will be considered by the GSBoS. The Board will determine one of the following outcomes, which must be considered in the order listed here with the first possible option adopted:

- I. to accept a majority recommendation provided that such recommendation includes the views of at least one external examiner;
- II. to accept the recommendation of the external examiner;
- III. to require the appointment of an additional external examiner;
- IV. to require the appointment of a new examining team;

In exceptional cases, where the Board feels that an examination has been conducted within the regulations, but that the examiners have failed to make a recommendation that is consistent with the regulations, or with their own comments on the work, the Board may not follow the recommendation of an examination panel. In such cases, the Board may make an award without a further examination.

Only one re-examination for a research degree award is permitted and the Graduate School may, where it is satisfied that just cause exists, approve an extension to the re-submission timescales detailed in the Research Degree Regulations. In the event of a re-examination, where possible, the examining team responsible for the final recommendation from the first examination will operate for re-examination, except that the GSBoS may require that an additional external examiner be appointed if it believes that to be necessary under the circumstances pertaining at the time of re-examination. If it is not possible to conduct the second examination with the panel from the first viva, the Board may simply allow a replacement without requiring an additional examiner. Examiners are required to complete preliminary report forms as detailed above.

Following the re-examination, the examiners will agree a written report and recommendation to the GSBoS. The recommendations available to the examiners in the event of a re-examination, and the process to be followed in the event of disagreement within the examination team, can be found in the Research Degree Regulations.

PhD by publication

The term 'PhD by publication' describes the route that a candidate takes to reach the examination for a PhD but does not in any way imply different learning outcomes. Another important feature of the PhD by publication is that it is *an opportunity*, rather than a programme of research. The PhD by publication route provides eligible staff, or former staff meeting certain requirements, with the opportunity to submit a body of published work and

an analytical commentary on that work for consideration for the award of a PhD. That is quite different from the other routes to an Edge Hill research degree (PhD, professional doctorate and MRes), which are specified routes by which an enrolled *PGR* of the University can engage in a programme of research, which he or she designs, having considered the advice of supervisors, and a programme of postgraduate researcher development activity. In the case of the PhD by publication candidates never have the status of PGR, do not follow a programme of postgraduate researcher development activity, do not conduct a programme of research (as the research has already been completed and published), and do not receive supervision, although they do receive the relatively informal advice of a mentor in relation to the preparation of the analytical commentary and perhaps also the selection of published work to include in the submission.

The distinctiveness of the route is that the thesis comprises a coherent portfolio of both the candidate's²⁵ published work and an associated analytical commentary, which identifies the candidate's original contribution to knowledge. The formal examination of the published work and analytical commentary is in the form of a viva (or approved alternative), in exactly the same manner as for candidates who have submitted a single dissertation.

The defining feature of this route to a PhD is that the prospective candidate has already conducted research, and the outputs have been made available in the public domain.

The University takes a view on the appropriateness of the prospective candidate's publications using a staged approach:

Stage 1: establishing the *prima facie* case;

Stage 2: production of an analytical commentary and portfolio; and

Stage 3: assessment by viva.

The first stage may be regarded as a speculative enquiry, which aims to establish whether the research outputs might make sufficient contribution to warrant assessment for a PhD. The Graduate School takes formal advice from an external peer subject advisor before considering whether or not to approve progression to the second stage.

It is during the second stage that prospective candidates make the detailed case regarding the coherence and originality of their published work. The submission of the analytical commentary and portfolio of work marks the point at which candidature is formally recognised by the Graduate School, with the appointment of the final PhD viva panel. The

²⁵ Restricted to current staff and previous members of staff of the University who meet certain criteria.

candidate is not considered to be a PGR of the University, as the research has already been completed.

The Graduate School has produced detailed guidance for prospective candidates and makes them available to staff at the appropriate time. The Dean of the Graduate School offers informal support to prospective candidates.

Assessment is conducted in accordance with the University's normal regulations for PhDs. The only notable difference is that, as the assessment is of previously *published* work, the examination team cannot require further work to be undertaken before a re-submission. Thus, whilst minor changes may be required in the candidate's analytical commentary, a decision that further research is required leads to a decision not to award the PhD. The candidate is, however, permitted to make a new application for candidature in no fewer than three years, by which time their portfolio of published work will have developed further, which may therefore lead to a more successful conclusion.

Academic malpractice

The nature and purpose of the research degree means that academic malpractice is a particularly important issue for those involved in its delivery. The University's Research Degree Regulations address both the issue of what constitutes malpractice and how allegations of this nature are dealt with (specifically identified in Schedule B of the Regulations).²⁶

All PGRs must adhere to the University's Code of Practice for Research. If an individual suspects misconduct, he or she should refer to the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Research Misconduct.²⁷

Academic appeals

If PGRs feel that they have suitable grounds for appeal, they may appeal Graduate School Board of Studies decisions relating to progression and award, or malpractice, under the terms of the Academic Appeals Procedure set out in the general academic regulations.²⁸

Of particular note is the fact that, under the Research Degree Regulations, all recommendations of examination teams that a candidate should fail a research degree, or recommendations that an award should be made at a lower level than that for which a thesis

²⁶ <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/research-degree-regulations/>

²⁷ These codes are available for download from <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/code-of-practice-for-the-conduct-of-research/> and <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/code-practice-reporting-research-misconduct/>.

²⁸ <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic-regulations/academic-regulations-2021-22/>

was presented for examination, will automatically be reviewed for process and procedure by the Graduate School.

Complaints

If a PGR has a complaint regarding provision by the University, the University has a published Complaints Procedure.²⁹ PGRs are strongly advised to seek the free advice and support of the Students' Union. Complaints must be lodged within three months of the incident occurring for it to be investigated.

PGR representation and PGR experience

Postgraduate researcher representatives are appointed by the Graduate School each year following the invitation to all PGRs to make expressions of interest. Those roles are not Students' Union roles, but rather roles created by the Graduate School for developmental purposes to ensure PGR involvement in discussions about the development of research degrees while also enabling the Graduate School to have accurate information about the experience of PGRs that can inform decision-making. One of the postgraduate researcher representatives attends Research Degrees Sub-Committee and an item on the agenda is devoted to a report on the activities of the postgraduate researcher representatives and discussion of any issues raised. The Graduate School operates a three-level process for reporting and addressing student experience matters.³⁰ That process directs matters to the appropriate part of the University for resolution. For example, individual problems are quite different from general PGR experience matters and must be dealt with in a very different way, not least because they can raise a need for confidentiality. Equally, certain matters, such as those concerning the GTA studentship scheme sometimes prove to be things which require action in the departments or faculties in which a GTA is based for teaching purposes. The aim of the three-level process is to identify the correct path so that all matters are addressed by the most appropriate individuals.

In addition to addressing any institutional level matters that arise from the three-level process, the Graduate School evaluates all feedback collected from the postgraduate researcher representatives who meet with the Associate Dean of the Graduate School on a termly basis. Following a review of the efficacy of the PRES survey in 2021, the Associate Dean of the Graduate School proposed departmental focus group interviews as a more tailored means by which feedback from all PGRs could be garnered. The focus group outcomes are reported to the last Research Degrees Sub-Committee each academic year and any actions taken as a result of the focus groups are reported to the next Research Degrees Sub-

²⁹ <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/complaints-procedure/>

³⁰ <http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/15194/>

Committee. These actions are communicated to all PGRs and supervisors via the Graduate School monthly newsletter.

PGRs with teaching responsibilities

The Graduate Teaching Assistant studentship scheme is an institutional scheme coordinated by the Graduate School with the assistance of Human Resources, the faculties and the departments in which PGRs in receipt of a studentship are based. The Graduate School works closely with the faculties and the PVC (Research) to ensure that the requirements of the scheme do not have a detrimental impact on the ability of the GTAs to complete their research degrees within the timeframes specified in the Research Degree Regulations. Throughout, the Graduate School ensures that the requirements imposed by the system of funding research studentships do not in any way disadvantage PGRs in receipt of a studentship, particularly those that involve teaching. Equally, the Graduate School Board of Studies requires that, if a PGR does not meet the required academic standards, the fact that PGR is in receipt of a studentship has no bearing on the decision-making process in relation to the PGR's progress.

Employability

The centrality of the Researcher Development Framework to the experience of PGRs at Edge Hill means that the skills and attributes standardly developed by a fully trained researcher in the course of completing a research degree are developed in such a way as to maximise the employability of research degree graduates. In addition, a particular set of development sessions provided by the Graduate School is principally focussed on preparing PGRs for careers in academia and research more widely.

Working with third parties

The University, on occasion, identifies expert individuals from outside the University, who have the most appropriate expertise to supervise the programme of research. In such cases the University provides appropriate remuneration to the individual including a small annual honorarium, further remuneration for each supervisory meeting they attend at the University up to a maximum of four meetings per year, and expenses as outlined in the University's financial policies.³¹

Research degrees and collaborating institutions

Whenever a programme of research leading to the award of a research degree is conducted in partnership with, or with the support of, another organisation, the University must be made aware of, and agree to, the details at the point of registration of the programme of work.

³¹ <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/finance/Policy+and+Procedures>

There are typically three types of collaborating arrangement:

1. Guaranteed access to physical resources.

Such cases might, for example, involve granting access to private or public archive material, to data from fieldwork conducted by the partner organisation, to specialist computing facilities or to specialist laboratory equipment.

In such cases access is likely to be central to the successful completion of the research work, and the Graduate School is required to ensure that access is guaranteed.

The Graduate School thus requires a written commitment from the collaborator/partner that defines the rights of access to resources in order to make an appropriate decision, and which will be considered by the Graduate School Board of Studies at the point of project registration.

2. Partnerships

Academic partnerships³² are those where Edge Hill University and another educational organisation enter into a formal agreement to work together, and within which a research degree forms an element of the work. Such arrangements are relatively rare because the University has not hitherto entered such collaborations in the case of research degrees.

Research collaborations, where a partner organisation has any responsibility for delivery, assessment or supervision of a research degree awarded by Edge Hill University, will be categorised according to the University's partnership taxonomy³³. Whilst certain responsibilities for managing academic standards and the quality of assessment, student support and/or supervision may be delegated to a partner, ultimate responsibility for standards and quality reside with the University's as awarding body.

The processes for managing the approval, monitoring and management of such partnerships reside with the Graduate School and are fully aligned with the Quality and Standards Conditions B1 to B5 of the Office for Students' (OfS) Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England³⁴.

The University requires formal partnership agreements to be made whenever an external partner organisation bears any responsibility for the 'delivery or assessment' of any award-bearing academic activity.

No research degree registration can be approved until a formal agreement between the partners has been produced and signed. Such partnerships vary considerably, and there is no

³² For a more detailed definition, including the University's taxonomy of academic partnerships, see Chapter 5.

³³ See the University's taxonomy of academic partnerships, Chapter 5.

³⁴ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/conditions-of-registration/>.

standard template to follow. The Graduate School works with the Research Office in the preparation of such agreements.

The agreement must include responsibilities for resourcing, supervision and examination; financial arrangements; arrangements for late or early termination of the agreement; arrangements for agreeing variation to the programme of research; arrangements for seeking ethical approval for the work; arrangements for reporting progress and outcomes of the work; confidentiality; and ownership of intellectual property arising from the research.

The Graduate School should consider the agreement before it is signed.

Double Award PhDs.

Double award registration is one mechanism (there are others) for two institutions to register and co-supervise a PGR. PGRs on a Double award PhD will hold full registration as an EHU student for the duration of their studies. They will simultaneously hold full registration for the duration of their studies at the partner institution.

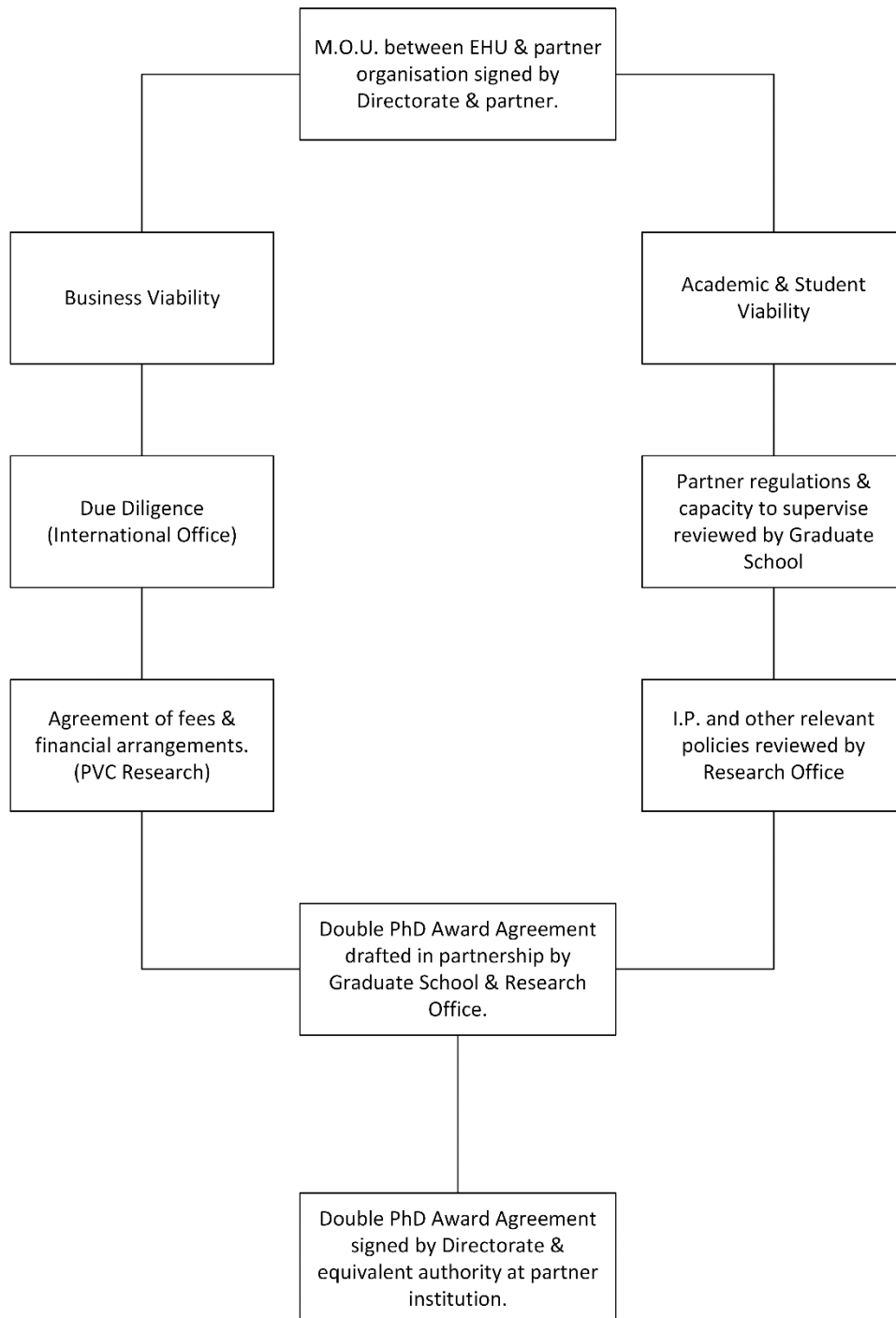
A double award therefore results in two certificates, one from each institution, where each awards a doctorate for the candidate having met the requirements of its own (and only its own) regulations. That means that the candidate must meet the requirements of the regulations of each of the two institutions and only relatively minor adjustments are made to the path the candidate must take in order to complete the PhD to the satisfaction of both institutions. For example, there aren't two final vivas, but rather one viva in which the candidate is assessed on the criteria of both sets of regulations. Supervision involves staff from both institutions in a single team and the candidate must spend at least six months at each institution. The additional regulations governing the management of Double Award PhDs are set out in Schedule H of the Research Degree Regulations.

Edge Hill University does not offer *joint* award PhDs which result in one certificate, as it were, jointly badged, being awarded by two institutions. Joint Award PhDs require a bespoke set of regulations to be agreed for each joint award partnership and is prohibitively difficult and inefficient.

All proposals to register a PGR on a double award PhD with a new partner institution must be submitted to the Graduate School a minimum of 4 months before the PGR is due to commence their proposed double registration. This is to allow for the business and academic approval of the Double Award PhD Agreement, as well as for the PGR to comply with any relevant ATAS and immigration processes/requirements.

Process for the approval of Double Award PhDs

The process for the approval of Double Award PhDs is as follows:



In reviewing the Academic & Student viability of a proposal for a Double PhD Award Agreement, the proposing academic is required to provide the following documentation (or equivalent) to the Graduate School as a minimum:

- Research Degree Regulations
- I.P. Policy
- Disciplinary / Student conduct policy.
- Research misconduct policy

3. Research degree funding provided by an external organisation

Those are cases where an external organisation provides funding which will be used, in full or in part, to support a programme of research leading to a research degree.

In these cases, the University and funding body have generally entered a formal agreement where the funding body provides financial support for a predetermined programme of research. Such arrangements include research council grants and contract research.

Funders must agree to cover the costs between enrolment and project registration, and if the PGR fails to successfully negotiate the project registration examination process, or, indeed, the progression examination process, or the PGR's registration is terminated for any reason, or the PGR withdraws, the agreement ends, and the University returns any unspent funds. Such agreements vary considerably, and there is no standard template to follow. The Graduate School works with the Research Office in the preparation of such agreements.

These agreements generally include: financial arrangements; arrangements for seeking ethical approval for the work; arrangements for reporting progress and outcomes of the work; confidentiality arrangements; and ownership of intellectual property arising from the research. Some funding bodies make specific requirements for the training and support of the researcher, and in others there may be specific project-based requirements (for example, security clearance, DBS checks etc.).

The Graduate School should consider the agreement before it is signed.

A common feature of such agreements is clarification of the fact that the PGR and the University manage the research, and the sponsor cannot dictate the direction in which the research develops.

Appendix: Glossary

Updated October 2023

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ACRONYMS

AAP	Articulations Approval Panel (of VASP)
AAR	Academic Assurance Report (Board of Governors)
ADC	Application for Development Consent
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report
APC	Academic Planning Committee
APR	Annual Process Review
AQEC	Academic Quality Enhancement Committee
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme
CLT	Centre for Learning and Teaching
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CVU	Council of Validating Universities
DBA	Desk Based Assessment
DMG	Directorate Management Group
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EESC	External Examiners Sub-Committee (of AQEC)
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EPA	End-Point Assessment (apprenticeships)
EPAO	End-Point Assessment Organisation (apprenticeships)
ESC	Employability Sub-Committee (of LTC)
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
E-Val	Electronic Validation Documentation System

FDL	Flexible and Distributed Learning
FEC	Further Education College
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (QAA)
GSBOS	Graduate School Board of Studies
HAC	Honorary Awards Committees (of Academic Board)
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Report
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HTMSC	Human Tissue Management Sub-Committee (of RS)
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IFATE	Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IPM	Initial Proposal for Major Programme Modification
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training (generally replaced by 'ITE', above)
LEO	Longitudinal Education Outcomes data
LTC	Learning and Teaching Committee
MAP	Module Approval Panel
MMP	Major Modifications Panel (of VASP)
MMR	Minor Modifications Review
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MRes	Masters Degree by Research
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education

PDP	Personal Development Planning/Portfolio
PGCE	Professional Graduate Certificate in Education/Postgraduate Certificate in Education ¹
PLO	Programme Learning Outcome
PSRB	Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
PVM	Programme Validations and Modifications (group)
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Tertiary Education
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
QIP	[Apprenticeship] Quality Improvement Plan
QME	Quality Management and Enhancement
QMH	Quality Management Handbook
QTLS	Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (<i>FE Sector</i>)
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RIC	Research and Innovation Committee
RO	Research Office
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning
RRSC	Regulations Review Sub-Committee (of LTC)
SCITT	School-Centred Initial Teaching Training
SAR	[Apprenticeship] Self-Assessment Report

¹ Professional Graduate Certificate in Education at Level 6; Postgraduate Certificate in Education at Level 7.

SEEC	Southern England Consortium (for Credit Accumulation and Transfer)
SESC	Student Experience Sub-Committee (of LTC)
SPPU	Strategic Planning and Policy Unit
SSCF	Student-Staff Consultative Forum
SSR	Student-Staff Ratio
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UCAS Postgraduate	The UK Postgraduate Search Tool and Application Service
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Framework (Advance HE, formerly Higher Education Academy)
URESC	University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (of RIC)
VASP	Validation and Audit Standing Panel
WBL	Work-Based Learning
WRL	Work-Related Learning

GLOSSARY

Academic Assurance Report

Produced annually by the Director of Governance and Assurance and Clerk to Governors, the AAR summarises the quality processes and outcomes of the previous year as evidence for the Academic Board and Board of Governors that the University remains in compliance with the Office for Students' General Ongoing Conditions of Registration for Quality and Standards.

Academic Board

Academic Board is the supreme academic authority within the University's deliberative committee structure. Its major committees are the *Academic Planning Committee (APC)*, *Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC)*, *Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)*, *Research and Innovation Committee (RIC)* and *Faculty Boards*. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Academic Partnership

Academic partnerships cover any module, course or programme that is delivered in whole or in part by or with another organisation and for which the University has responsibility for academic standards and quality. Academic partnerships also include articulation arrangements. Partnerships are differentiated into categories according to potential risk. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#) for details including the taxonomy of partnership arrangements according to risk profile.

Academic Planning Committee (APC)

APC is responsible for advising Academic Board and the Directorate on the broad institutional implications of strategic academic developments and gives development consent for new programmes and major programme modifications. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapters 4 & 8](#).

Academic Quality Enhancement Committee

The Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC) oversees the academic quality and standards of the University's taught programmes. It is responsible to the Academic Board (AB) for the operation of the University's quality management strategy with specific regard to academic standards and quality enhancement, including programme approval, annual monitoring, periodic review, developmental enquiries, academic partnerships and the outputs from external examining. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Academic Registry²

The primary responsibilities of the Academic Registry are for the management of student assessment and the maintenance of student records.

Academic Partnership Proposal

An initial description of a proposed partnership arrangement (category C and above) and is used to assess both business viability and fit with the University's Curriculum and International Strategies (by APC).

Accessible Information

Information presented or made available in appropriate formats so that it can be found and understood by all intended audiences.

Access and Participation Plan

Formerly known as Access Agreements, Access and Participation Plans set out how an institution will seek to improve equal opportunities for under-represented groups, as defined by the Office for Students.

Advance HE

Created out of the former Higher Education Academy and Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, a sector organisation with a remit for enhancing teaching and supporting learning in higher education, developing academic managers and leaders, and supporting governing bodies to discharge their responsibilities for academic and corporate governance. Owners of the [UK Professional Standards Framework \(UKPSF\)](#) which provides the reference point for HEA Fellowship and accreditation.

Alternative (Exit) Award

Students who exit their degree programme prematurely and have achieved the requisite number and level of credits may be awarded an intermediate award as confirmed at validation, e.g., 120 credit Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) or 240 credit Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE). Alternative awards are also available for students on PSRB-regulated programmes who have the requisite number/ level of credits but have not met the requirements for professional registration. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 4](#).

² www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/.

Anonymous Marking

The marking of students' submitted work without their identity being revealed to the person carrying out the marking at the time the work is marked, so that the assessment is unbiased.

Annual Monitoring Round (AMR)

Department-level AMERs provide evaluation of the quality and standards of the University's taught provision drawing on programme performance data and other primary evidence. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 3](#).

Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Report (AMER)

The annual monitoring process at department level consists of a Desk-Based Assessment of Academic Standards and Quality, and the creation of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) which contains details of how the department intends to improve performance in specific areas and showcases examples of good practice linked to higher performance. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 3](#).

Annual Process Review (APR)

The Annual Process Review (APR), which is conducted on behalf of AQEC, contains evaluation of one or more elements of the University's quality management strategy informed by consultation with, and feedback from, Faculties and academic-related support services. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 1](#).

Annual Review Form

The Annual Review process operates for all academic partners at Category C+ and provides an opportunity to review and monitor the currency and effectiveness of academic partners and the associated delivery of Edge Hill provision. The Annual Review of Academic Partnerships operates in conjunction with Departmental Annual Monitoring but is a separate process. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

Application for Development Consent (ADC)

The process by which Faculties seek approval from the Academic Planning Committee for new programmes of study or the re-validation of existing programmes. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 4](#).

Articulation

An agreement by the University to recognise an external qualification for entry with advanced standing to an Edge Hill programme, e.g., direct entry to the final year (level 6) of

an undergraduate degree or to the dissertation stage (final 60 credits) of a Masters degree. Articulation arrangements enable advanced entry for all students holding the approved qualification and are therefore distinct from applications for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which are made by individuals. An articulation arrangement may be accompanied by a progression agreement with the qualification provider. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

Articulations Approval Panel (AAP)

A sub-group of the Validation and Audit Standing Panel with responsibility for approving articulation arrangements (as above). See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

Asynchronous Learning

Asynchronous learning is a general term used to describe forms of education, learning and teaching that do not occur in the same place or at the same time. It uses resources outside the constraints of time and place among a network of people.

Awarding Body

An organisation with power to award its own qualifications. UK degree awarding bodies have their powers conferred either by Royal Charter, Act of Parliament or (as is the case for Edge Hill University) the Privy Council.

Benchmark Statements

The QAA's subject benchmark statements³ set out national expectations about the standards of undergraduate (and some Masters) degrees in a range of subjects and are designed to assist those involved in programme design, approval, delivery and review. See also *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*.

Benchmarking

A process for establishing the comparability or equivalence of the University's provision and practices with those of other higher education providers (or vice versa).

Blackboard Ultra

Proprietary brand of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) chosen by many education institutions including Edge Hill University's Learning Edge VLE. See also *Virtual Learning Environment*.

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements.

Blended Learning

Programme designed to be studied through a combination of both sustained online delivery and on-site learning. Patterns of study will vary but will be through a combination of online and on-site teaching and learning across the academic year.

Bologna Process⁴

The European Commission's process to establish a European Higher Education Area with a common framework for higher education qualifications and standards. See also *European Credit Transfer System*.

Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT)⁵

An Edge Hill service department focused on enhancing student and staff learning and promoting the objectives of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy⁶. The CLT manages the Advance HE-accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education and UKPSF Continuing Professional Development Framework. See also *Advance HE*.

Characteristics Statements⁶

Published by the QAA, the six Characteristics Statements define the distinctive features of: Foundation degrees; Masters degrees; Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding; Doctoral degrees; HE Apprenticeships, and Micro-credentials.

Classroom

Programme designed to be studied through attendance on site with teaching and learning in person, and supplementary asynchronous and/ or synchronous elements to add value.

Combined Honours

A mixed undergraduate programme of study derived from two subjects, either 60 credits per subject per level (Joint Honours), or 80/ 40 credits per level (Major/Minor). See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 4](#).

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)⁷

Non-ministerial government department responsible for strengthening business competition and preventing and reducing anti-competitive activities. Monitors compliance

⁴[The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵[Learning and Teaching Strategy - Edge Hill University](#)

⁶[Characteristics Statements \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#)

⁷www.gov.uk/government/organisations/competition-and-markets-authority.

with consumer protection legislation with specific guidance for higher education providers and students.

Completion

The proportion of students that were observed to have gained a higher education qualification (or were continuing in the study of a qualification) four years and 15 days after they started their course (six years and 15 days for part-time students)

Continuation

The proportion of students of students that were observed to be continuing in the study of a higher education qualification (or have gained a qualification) one year and 15 days after they started their course (two years and 15 days for part-time students)

Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CATS)

Credit accumulation provides students with the opportunity to acquire academic credit for their learning achievements which then counts progressively towards a qualification award. Credit transfer is an arrangement by which credit granted by one awarding body is recognised by another.

Credit Rating

The award of specific or general credit to modules or programmes that are designed and delivered by the University or by other organisations. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

Degree Apprenticeship

Degree Apprenticeships are practical vocational degree courses at FHEQ levels 6 & 7, regulated by the Office for Students, which allow people to combine both the academic study from a traditional university degree with practical vocational experience, assessed against a national Apprenticeship Standard. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

Degree Outcomes Statement

Degree Outcomes Statements are produced and published by higher education providers and analyse their degree outcomes in the context of arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment, academic regulations (degree classification algorithm), and academic governance.

Delivery Plan

A systematic and comprehensive record of the responsibilities that are retained by the University and those that are delegated to another organisation in the management and delivery of partner-delivered provision. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

Development Consent

See '*Application for Development Consent*'.

Developmental Enquiry

A form of internal investigation that explores cross-cutting themes or practices across Faculties with the aim of identifying and promoting good practice. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 3](#).

Diploma Supplement

A document issued to graduates describing the nature and content of their qualification and the structure of the higher education system within which it was awarded. Includes (at Edge Hill) the student's transcript of modules/credit and Award Statement.

Directorate

The executive management team of Edge Hill University consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and five Pro Vice-Chancellors including three Faculty Deans.

Double Marking

Assessment of students' work by two or more independent markers as a means of safeguarding or assuring academic standards by controlling for individual bias.

Dual Degree

An academic partnership in which two awarding organisations design, validate⁸ and deliver a course of study, however students receive separate degrees from both partners. Each is responsible for making its own award under its own regulations, however the programme's components form a single package requiring elements of joint management and oversight. Edge Hill University does not deliver dual degrees at this time.

⁸ In this arrangement, each partner is responsible for taking the programme through its own Institutional approval (validation) process.

Due Diligence

Enquiries related to the governance, ethos, status, capacity, reputation and general sustainability of a potential delivery organisation or support provider to satisfy the requirements of a degree-awarding body for an arrangement to deliver learning outcomes.

Electronic Validation Documentation System (E-Val)

A database that uses a web front-end to assemble and publish electronic programme and module specifications, Applications for Development Consent and Initial Proposals for Major Programme Modification for all Edge Hill University awards.

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)⁹

Government agency with responsibility for funding skills training for further education in England, including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.

Employability

A set of achievements, skills, understanding and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.

Employability Sub-Committee

The Employability Sub-Committee (ESC) is responsible to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) for advising on issues relating to employability and enterprise activity and its impact on learning and teaching and the overall student experience.

End-Point Assessment

The independent assessment of apprentices at the conclusion of Higher and Degree Apprenticeship programmes. Conducted by registered End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs).

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)¹⁰

Part of the Bologna accord for the establishment of a single European Higher Education Area, ECTS supports student mobility within the EHEA through credit transfer with one ECTS credit being equivalent to two UK HE credits.

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency.

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) | Education and Training (europa.eu)

External Examiners

A peer review system operated by UK higher education providers which engage academic staff of other providers to review (moderate) assessed student work. External examiners verify that qualifications meet or exceed national threshold standards and that standards beyond threshold are comparable with other providers. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 2](#).

External Examiners Sub-Committee (EESC)

Makes recommendations to AQEC on the engagement of external examiners using criteria defined in Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 2](#). For EESC's constitution and terms of reference, see Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Faculty Board

Responsible to *Academic Board* for the monitoring, evaluation and review of academic provision within the Faculty, including programmes delivered by or with academic partners. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Flexible and Distributed Learning

Distinguished from conventional classroom-based activity on the basis of *location*, where the time and place of learning are to some extent controlled by the student; or *prescription*, where there is some flexibility to negotiate the content, learning outcomes and assessment activities.

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)¹¹

This describes the achievement represented by higher education qualifications at levels 4-8 with reference to generic qualification level descriptors. See also *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*.

Franchising

The transfer of significant responsibilities for the delivery (in whole or in part) of a university programme or module/s to another organisation. See also *Academic Partnership* - Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

¹¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks.

Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework Unit (GQASC)

A central service department of the University comprising three teams whose role is to ensure the University's quality, standards and student outcomes comply with the Office for Students' (OfS) whole regulatory approach.

Graduate Attributes

Are the high-level qualities, skills and understandings that a student should gain as a result of the learning experiences they engage with, while at university.

Graduate Outcomes survey

A UK-wide survey of graduates fifteen months after completion which aims to help current and future students gain an insight into career destinations and development in the context of performance by individual degree providers. Delivered by HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency), the survey has replaced the previous Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey and helps universities and colleges fulfil their legal requirement to report on the outcomes of higher education funding and regulatory bodies, e.g., the Office for Students.

Graduate School (Board of Studies)

The Graduate School Board of Studies (GSBOS) acts as the progression and award board for MRes, MPhil, PhD and professional doctorate students.

Higher Apprenticeship

Higher Apprenticeships are practical vocational courses at FHEQ levels 4 & 5, inspected by Ofsted, which allow people to combine both the academic study from a traditional university higher education programme with practical vocational experience assessed against a national Apprenticeship Standard. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

Higher Education Provider

Organisations that delivers higher education. In the UK this may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of one or more degree-awarding bodies.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)¹²

The central source for the collection and dissemination of statistics about publicly-funded UK higher education. The Office for Students' Designated Data Body for England.

Honorary Awards Committee

A committee of the Academic Board with responsibility for receiving nominations and making recommendations for recipients of the University's honorary degree awards.

Hybrid Learning

Programme designed to be studied both in-person or synchronously online. The tutor delivers the session on campus and teaches the remote and in-person learners at the same time using technology.

Human Tissue Management Sub-Committee (HTMSC)

The Human Tissue Management Sub-Committee (HTMSC) is responsible for overseeing activity conducted under the University's Human Tissue Research Licence and reports directly to the University's Research Innovation Committee. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Initial Proposal for Major Modification (IPM)

Initial Proposal for Major Modification of an Existing Validated Programme received by the Academic Planning Committee and completed using the E-Val system. See also Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 4](#).

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Undergraduate and Postgraduate (PGCE) programmes with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for School-based provision, and Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status for Further Education.

Integrated Masters

A four-year programme that combines undergraduate and postgraduate study at levels 4-7 in proportions of 120 credits per level.

¹² www.hesa.ac.uk/.

Integrated Single Honours

A mixed subject undergraduate programme in which subjects are combined in roughly equal proportions across the three years/ levels of study. See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4.

Intended Award

Intended awards are promoted in the University's course prospectus and equate to successful completion of a full programme of study. See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4.

Internal Audit

A reserved term which at Edge Hill encompasses various assignments undertaken by Internal Auditors on behalf of the Board of Governors. See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 3.

Intersections of characteristics

The intersection of two or more indicators of underrepresentation (for example, white British males from low socioeconomic backgrounds) to enable a broader understanding of a provider's student population. This is used to identify barriers to equality of opportunity.

Joint Degree

An academic partnership arrangement in which two (or more) awarding institutions together provide a programme of study which results in a single award of both/ all institutions operating under a common set of academic regulations. Edge Hill University does not validate Joint degrees at this time.

Joint Honours Degree

A mixed undergraduate degree derived from two subjects in equal proportions, i.e., 60 credits per subject per level. See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4.

Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)

Responsible to the *Academic Board* for leading on enhancements to the University's strategies for learning, teaching, and assessment, and with overall strategic responsibility for the student experience. See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 8.

Level Descriptors

A statement of the generic characteristics of outcomes of learning at a specific level of a qualification framework, used as a reference point.

Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO)

A set of official experimental statistics on employment and earnings outcomes of higher education graduates by degree subject studied and university attended.

Major/ Minor Degree

A mixed undergraduate degree derived from two subjects in the ratio of 80/ 40 credits per level. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 4](#).

Major Modifications Panel (MMP)

A sub-group of the Validation and Audit Standing Panel with responsibility for approving major programme modifications. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Minor Modifications Review

Minor Modifications Reviews are conducted by the Validation and Audit Standing Panel (VASP) and consider the totality of modifications made since the previous Institution-level validation or review activity to confirm that a programme's award title, aims and learning outcomes remain valid and achievable. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 4](#).

Moderation (of assessment)

A process for sampling assessment which tests for consistent application of marking criteria across the range of student achievement (grades). Internal moderation, which normally precedes moderation by an external examiner, confirms that the marks awarded are in the appropriate range and in exceptional cases may include the scaling of marks or a requirement to re-mark a whole cohort (see also *Second marking*). See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 7](#).

Module Approval Panel (MAP)

Faculty process for approving new modules. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 4](#).

MOOC

Massive Open Online Courses are aimed at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the internet. Courses are typically free and tend not to offer academic credit. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapters 4 and 6](#).

Masters by Research

A Level 7 research degree - see also Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 9](#).

Module Assessment Board

Receives the marks from module assessment and makes recommendations for the award of credit to the associated *Progression and Award Board*.

Notional Learning Hours

The number of hours that (it is expected) a learner at a particular level will spend, on average, to achieve the specified learning outcomes at that level.

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)¹³

A single inspectorate for schools and providers of initial teacher education and apprenticeships at levels 2-5 including Higher Apprenticeships.

Office for Students (OfS)¹⁴

National regulator of higher education in England, replacing the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Responsible for teaching standards, market entry and widening participation including responsibility for monitoring the Prevent duty¹⁵.

Online Learning

Programme designed to be studied online, with teaching and learning consisting of both synchronous and/ or asynchronous online learning activities.

Outreach Delivery

A form of academic partnership in which the University retains full responsibility for the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of a programme that is delivered by its own staff at another location (also occasionally referred to as 'flying faculty'). Includes learning venues (Edge Hill Category B academic partnership) and supported learning centres (Category C academic partnership). See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 5](#).

¹³ www.ofsted.gov.uk/.

¹⁴ www.officeforstudents.org.uk/.

¹⁵ Prevent duty: relevant higher education bodies must give due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism – see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales.

PebblePad

Adopted by Edge Hill University to support academic, professional, and personal development goals of students while encouraging them to provide evidence of programme learning outcomes, professional competencies, and graduate attributes.

Periodic Review

Five-yearly cyclical internal review of an academic department's taught degrees. Periodic review establishes that academic standards are being maintained and the quality of students' learning opportunities enhanced. Successful periodic review confers continuing approval of current taught programmes. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 3](#).

Personal Circumstances

Part of the University's Academic Regulations¹⁶, the Personal Circumstances process provides for students whose health or personal circumstance at the time of assessment are deemed deserving of special consideration by a Scheme Progression and Award Board – see Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Personal Development Planning/Portfolio (PDP)

A process used within programmes to help students plan, record and reflect on their personal development as learners, often linked with the development of academic and graduate transferable skills.

PhD by Publication

A doctorate awarded through submission of a coherent portfolio of peer-reviewed published work which provides an original contribution to knowledge - see Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 9](#).

POLAR

POLAR (participation of local areas) is a classification of small areas across the UK according to the participation of young people in higher education. There have been several iterations of POLAR, which are referred to as POLAR1, POLAR2, POLAR3, and POLAR4.

Professional Doctorate

Professional doctorates are equivalent to a PhD, the key difference being that the student's research is informed by, and ultimately contributes to, their professional practice context – see Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 9](#).

¹⁶ Available via [Academic Regulations 2022/23 - Edge Hill University](#)

Programme Board

Reporting to Faculty Board, Programme Boards are located in academic departments and provide opportunities for the formal discussion and evaluation of programme-related issues. Participants comprise teaching staff and student representatives (see also *Student-Staff Consultative Forum*). See Quality Management Handbook Chapters 6 & 8.

Programme Specification

At Edge Hill University, programme specifications are used to describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and other attributes that students will have developed on successful completion, and the teaching and assessment activities that support their learning. Programme specifications form the core of the documentation required for programme approval (See *Validation*).

Programme Validations and Modifications Group (PVM)

Information on module and programme approvals, modifications and closures is circulated by email to a group of key Edge Hill University stakeholders comprising Faculties, Academic Registry, Admissions, Careers Centre, Corporate Communications, Learning Services, Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework unit, Strategic Planning and Policy Unit and Student Recruitment.

Progression

The proportion of qualifiers that identify managerial or professional employment, further study or other positive outcomes among the activities that they were undertaking when responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey 15 months after they left higher education (See *Graduate Outcomes survey*).

Progression and Award Board

Progression and Award Boards operate with delegated authority from the Academic Board to confirm the award and classification of Edge Hill University credit and awards. See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 8, also *Module Assessment Board*.

Protected Characteristics

Certain characteristics – age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race (ethnic origin or national identity), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation – which in the context of the Regulator, may require particular consideration in ensuring equal access to educational opportunities for all.

Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

Replacement for the National Qualification Framework (NQF), the QCF recognises Further Education qualifications and units through the award of credit, typically at levels 1-3 but also at higher levels for some professional programmes. The QCF is regulated jointly by England's regulator Ofqual, Wales' DCELLS and Northern Ireland's CCEA.

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)¹⁷

An independent charity working to benefit students and higher education, and one of the world's experts in quality assurance.

Regulations Review Sub-Committee (RRSC)

A sub-committee of the Learning and Teaching Committee with responsibility for making recommendations for changes and additions to the *Academic Regulations*. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Research Innovation Committee (RIC)

Responsible to the Academic Board for assuring the standards and quality of research and knowledge exchange activity undertaken by both staff and students. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Assesses the quality of research in UK higher education institutions and used by the four UK higher education funding bodies (Research England, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), and the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE)) to determine the allocation of research funding.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Recognition of Prior (Certificated) Learning, RP(C)L; Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning, RP(E)L

The process of recognising previous learning that is either formally certificated or *experiential*, i.e., derived from the workplace or other life experience. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 7](#).

Risk Assessment Meeting

May be convened at very short notice and enables a rapid response to a specific presenting issue, incident or set of circumstances. An Institutional panel chaired by a senior manager is convened and considers written and oral evidence with a report submitted to AQEC

¹⁷ www.qaa.ac.uk/.

(Academic Quality Enhancement Committee) and the Directorate within two to six weeks of commissioning.

Sandwich Programme

A programme of study that includes a significant time – normally a year – spent studying away from the university or college (typically a work-based setting).

School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)¹⁸

Initial teacher education designed and delivered by groups of neighbouring schools and colleges in which trainees are usually based in a lead school and complete their teaching practice at others within the group.

Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC)

A sub-committee of the *Learning and Teaching Committee* with specific responsibility to advise on issues related to the operation of learning, teaching and student support and their impact on the student experience. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Student Voice Survey

A survey of students' learning experience at module and programme level conducted electronically on a schedule managed by the Marketing Team. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 6](#).

Student-Staff Consultative Forum (SSCF)

A mechanism for staff and students to discuss programme- related issues (see also *Programme Board*). See Quality Management Handbook [Chapters 6 & 8](#).

Synchronous Learning

Synchronous learning refers to a learning event in which a group of students are engaging in learning at the same time.

Tableau

Tableau software is used for creating data visualisations, publishing data sources and publishing workbooks with particular application to Edge Hill's Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review processes.

¹⁸ www.ucas.com/postgraduate/teacher-training/train-teach-england/postgraduate-teacher-training-england.

Taught Degrees Framework¹⁹

Guiding principles, support and resources for the design and delivery of Edge Hill's undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees focused on student induction and transitions; learning, teaching and assessment; academic and pastoral support; graduate employability; and civic awareness and internationalisation. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 6](#).

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

A government mechanism for recognising teaching quality among higher education providers (analogous to the *Research Excellence Framework*).

Technology Enhanced Learning

Involves the use of [electronic media](#), [educational technology](#) and [information and communication technologies \(ICT\)](#) in the delivery of face-to-face, blended or distance learning programmes (see also *Virtual Learning Environment*). See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 6](#).

Thematic Support Panel

A cross institutional panel commissioned to investigate and provide support and challenge to a specific presenting issue or set of circumstances. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 3](#).

Turing Scheme²⁰

The Turing Scheme is a student exchange programme established by the UK Department for Education in 2021 as a Brexit replacement for the EU Erasmus Programme.

UK Quality Code for Higher Education²¹

The *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* represents a shared understanding of quality practice across the UK higher education sector. It applies to higher education providers based in all four nations of the UK. It is a reference point for the quality arrangements, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, the Quality Code is not regulatory, but providers are able to use it to inform their approach to quality as a way of providing comparability across the UK and to aid international visibility.

¹⁹ www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/taught-degrees-framework/.

²⁰ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/study-work-abroad/outside-uk/turing> The Turing Scheme | British Council

²¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URESC)

The University Research Ethics Sub-Committee (URESC) of the Research Innovation Committee oversees the ethical good practice of research and knowledge exchange activities carried out by staff and students across the Institution. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 8](#).

Validation

The formal Institutional procedure for the academic approval of an Edge Hill University programme of study. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapter 4](#).

Validation and Audit Standing Panel (VASP)

An appointed body of qualified and experienced academic and senior support staff who receive training to serve on Edge Hill validation, review and audit panels. See Quality Management Handbook [Chapters 3 & 4](#).

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

A software system designed to facilitate online learning. See also '*Blackboard*'.

Work-Based Learning/Work-Related Learning (WBL/WRL)

Programmes or modules that embody practical employability skills to complement students' academic knowledge and skills. *Work-based* learning occurs mainly in the workplace and includes a significant amount of work-based assessment, while *work-related* learning may involve industry simulations, projects and case studies.