

Chapter 1

The Quality Strategy: Management of Quality and Standards

Updated October 2020

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THE EXTERNAL REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

From 1975 until 2009 the majority of the academic provision delivered by Edge Hill led to awards of Lancaster University. Following a successful application based on scrutiny by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) were granted by the Privy Council in 2005 with University title conferred shortly afterwards in 2006. The TDAP assessors found that broad confidence could be placed in the soundness of the then-College of Higher Education's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards; that there was a clearly defined set of quality assurance systems with explicit and well understood reporting lines; and that those systems were well developed and thorough¹. The Institution had thus demonstrated that it had become a mature, self-determining and self-critical academic community capable of assuming responsibility for the award of its own degrees. Following additional QAA scrutiny Edge Hill University was granted Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) in 2008.

Degree awarding bodies are responsible for setting **academic standards** that meet or exceed the national threshold standards defined within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education² (see also below), specifically the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) level descriptors³, qualification characteristics statements⁴ and subject benchmark statements⁵. Once set at validation⁶, external examiners⁷ 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 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 registered⁸ HE provider in England has developed and published a Degree Outcomes Statement⁹ articulating the results of an internal review, describing:

- The relationship between the Institution's degree outcomes and entry qualifications, student characteristics, subject mix and sector benchmarks.

¹ A report, in lieu of institutional audit, based on enquiries undertaken in academic years 2004-05, in connection with Edge Hill College of Higher Education's successful application for taught degree awarding powers' (QAA, 2006) <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13134/1/RG271EdgeHill.pdf>.

² See 'Quality Assurance Agency', below

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf?sfvrsn=170af781_16.

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/supporting-resources.

⁵ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements.

⁶ A deliberative process for programme approval - see Quality Management Handbook (QMH) Chapter 4.

⁷ See QMH Chapter 2

⁸ See 'Office for Students', below.

⁹ Edge Hill's Degree Outcomes Statement can be accessed via the Academic Quality & Development Unit website at www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/academic-governance/degree-outcome-statement-2/. See also: 'Degree Classification: Transparency, Reliability and Fairness – A Statement of Intent' (UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, 2019) www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/degree-classification-soi.pdf.

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

In the context of programmes delivered by or with academic partner organisations¹⁰ degree-awarding bodies' responsibilities for setting standards may never be delegated, however partners contribute to maintaining standards through Edge Hill's programme monitoring and review¹¹ processes.

Unlike academic standards which are set in relation to national reference points, defining and measuring academic quality is less straightforward. Nevertheless, the UK Quality Code describes baseline expectations for quality through its supporting Advice and Guidance¹² on course design and delivery, including learning, teaching and assessment; externality and partnerships; Work-Based Learning; admissions; student support; complaints and appeals processes; and student engagement. Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidelines¹³, and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Good Practice Framework¹⁴ provide additional reference points for consumer and student protection.

Edge Hill's processes for programme approval, monitoring and review aim to deliver *threshold* judgements on academic quality and standards in line with national baseline expectations, and establish areas of potential or actual excellence *above threshold* for the purpose of quality enhancement.

Office for Students (OfS)

All publicly-funded (Approved (fee cap)) HE providers in England are required¹⁵ to register with the Office for Students by demonstrating their compliance with Initial Conditions of Registration. Edge Hill University was entered into the Register of Higher Education Providers in England¹⁶ in 2018 and remains subject to continuous monitoring against

¹⁰ See QMH Chapter 5.

¹¹ See QMH Chapter 3.

¹² www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance.

¹³ 'UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law' (CMA, 2015)

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428549/HE_providers_-_advice_on_consumer_protection_law.pdf.

¹⁴ 'The good practice framework: handling student complaints and academic appeals' (OIA, 2016)

www.oiahe.org.uk/media/96361/oia-good-practice-framework.pdf. See also 'Statement of Good Practice on Higher Education Course Changes and Closures' (HEFCE et al, 2015) www.guildhe.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Statement-of-good-practice-Nov15.pdf.

¹⁵ In accordance with section 4(5) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA)

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/contents.

¹⁶ <https://apis.officeforstudents.org.uk/OfsRegisterDownload/api/Register/>.

General Ongoing Conditions of Registration¹⁷ that include the following for Quality and Standards:

Condition	Description
Condition B1	The provider must deliver well designed courses that provide a high quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
Condition B2	The provider must provide all students, from admission through to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
Condition B3	The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers and/or enable further study.
Condition B4	The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards.
Condition B5	The provider must deliver courses that meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) at level 4 or higher.
Condition B6	The provider must participate in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework ¹⁸ .

'Value for Money'

The Office for Students considers that value for money (VfM) is demonstrated where 'all students, from all backgrounds... experience the full benefits of higher education – both during their studies and afterwards – in exchange for the effort, time and money they invest'. At the same time, taxpayers have a right to expect that providers 'use public money and student fees efficiently and effectively to deliver graduates, from all backgrounds, who contribute to society and the economy'¹⁹. On this basis, the OfS identifies the following as **contributing directly to VfM**:

¹⁷ www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/conditions-of-registration/initial-and-general-ongoing-conditions-of-registration/.

¹⁸ See 'Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework', below.

¹⁹ 'Office for Students' value for money strategy 2019 to 2021' (OfS, 2019)

www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/336c258b-d94c-4f15-af0a-42e1be8f66a1/ofs-vfm-strategy.pdf.

Measure of VfM	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration	Edge Hill University activity	Supporting evidence
<p>Improving teaching quality – providers:</p> <p>1. Deliver well-designed, high-quality courses and reliably assess their students' achievements</p>	B1	<p>Programme design and approval ('validation') ensure that course content and standards are consistent with national reference points including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and QAA Subject Benchmark Statements.</p> <p>Reliability of assessment is established through the design of assessment tasks that test the acquisition of Intended Learning Outcomes, aligned with national level descriptors, and differentiate students' performance above threshold (Pass) standard. Assessed student work is internally moderated to ensure consistency of marking across a cohort.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/04-programme-and-module-approval-and-modification.pdf • Programme validation reports • Programme Specifications • Quality Management Handbook Chapter 7 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/07-quality-assurance-of-assessment.pdf • EHU Taught Degrees Framework: 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment' www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/taught-degrees-framework/ • Programme validation reports • Module Specifications • Coursework marking criteria • Sample marked student work

Measure of VfM	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration	Edge Hill University activity	Supporting evidence
2. Support their students, from admission through to completion, so that they succeed in and benefit from higher education	B2	<p>External examiners confirm that appropriate standards are being set for, and achieved by, students.</p> <p>Programme design and validation consider the 'student journey' from recruitment and admission, pre-entry support, enrolment and induction; to inclusive teaching and learning, academic and pastoral support, learning resources including teaching staff, and preparation for graduate employment or further study.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Management Handbook Chapter 2 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/02-external-examiners.pdf • External examiner reports • Quality Management Handbook Chapters 4 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/04-programme-and-module-approval-and-modification.pdf & 6 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/06-quality-assurance-of-learning-and-teaching.pdf • EHU Taught Degrees Framework: 'Induction and Transitions', 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment', 'Education for Personal Development and Enhancement' www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/taught-degrees-framework/ • Part B validation documents • Programme validation reports

Measure of VfM	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration	Edge Hill University activity	Supporting evidence
3. Deliver successful outcomes for all of their students that are valued by employers or enable further study.	B3	<p>Internal and external monitoring and review test the effectiveness of these approaches.</p> <p>Programme design and validation prioritise the development of inclusive teaching and support that cater to students' different protected characteristics and learning preferences while at the same time engaging them with new ways of acquiring and demonstrating learning. In addition to subject-specific and practical skills, programmes embed the delivery of key transferable 'graduate' skills. Where</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Management Handbook Chapter 3 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/03-annual-monitoring-periodic-review-and-internal-audit.pdf • Annual Monitoring Reports • Periodic Review reports • Internal Student Pulse Survey • National Student Survey • TEF Provider Assessment of EHU www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/#/provider/10007823 • Quality Management Handbook Chapters 4 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/04-programme-and-module-approval-and-modification.pdf & 6 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/06-quality-assurance-of-learning-and-teaching.pdf • EHU Taught Degrees Framework: 'Graduate Attributes, Work-Related and Work-Based

Measure of VfM	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration	Edge Hill University activity	Supporting evidence
		<p>available, programmes seek and obtain professional accreditation or other recognition that enhances graduates' employability.</p> <p>Internal and external monitoring and review test the effectiveness of these approaches.</p>	<p>Learning', 'Citizenship and Awareness of Global Perspectives'</p> <p>www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/taught-degrees-framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHU Register of Professional Accreditations • Quality Management Handbook Chapter 3 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/03-annual-monitoring-periodic-review-and-internal-audit.pdf • Annual Monitoring Reports • Graduate Outcomes Survey • Periodic Review reports • Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Survey • Reports of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (where available) • TEF Provider Assessment of EHU www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/#/provider/10007823

Measure of VfM	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration	Edge Hill University activity	Supporting evidence
<p>Protecting students as consumers - providers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give students clear, accurate and timely information about their course including the number and type of contact hours and expected self-study time and the total costs of a course including fees and any necessary additional costs. 2. Ensure that their contracts with students are clear and that students are aware of surprising or important terms. 		<p>The University's prospectus describes each programme by its aims, structure, modules including types of assessment, tuition fees, financial support and scholarships. Course costs not covered by the advertised tuition fee are specified by exception.</p> <p>Current students receive programme information which also describes module learning hours differentiated by scheduled learning activities, placements and guided independent study as approved at validation.</p> <p>The University provides details of, and links to, documents that form part of its contract with students comprising Regulations, Rules, Codes, Conditions and Policies that students agree to comply with. These are updated annually and where occasional adjustments are needed, e.g. to accommodate external or internal changes these are consulted on with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHU Prospectus www.edgehill.ac.uk/study/ • Module handbooks (Blackboard) • Module specifications • EHU Student Terms and Conditions including Regulations, Rules, Codes, Conditions and Policies www.edgehill.ac.uk/guides/student-terms-and-conditions/

Measure of VfM	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration	Edge Hill University activity	Supporting evidence
<p>3. When developing and implementing policies and procedures, give due regard to Competition and Markets Authority guidance on complying with consumer protection law.</p>	C1	<p>the Students' Union and no amendments made that are considered detrimental to students. Students receive a briefing note outlining any changes, and up-to-date Regulations, Rules, Codes, Conditions and Policies are published on the University website.</p> <p>CMA guidance informs the University's policy and procedures for student recruitment and admission. These include giving applicants accurate, clear and unambiguous pre-contract information on course characteristics, structure, fees and costs which constitutes an 'invitation to purchase' under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations (2008). Offer-holders are advised of the full contractual terms and conditions, highlighting any particularly surprising or important terms, and once offers have been accepted students receive confirmation of their contract with the University.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHU Admissions Policy www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/admissions-policy/ • EHU Student Terms and Conditions including Regulations, Rules, Codes, Conditions and Policies www.edgehill.ac.uk/guides/student-terms-and-conditions/

Measure of VfM	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration	Edge Hill University activity	Supporting evidence
		Terms and conditions avoid giving the University unreasonably wide discretion to modify course content and structure once a programme is in delivery. Where material changes are being considered a formal approval process includes student consultation and, in very specific circumstances, consent where widespread changes to curriculum or award titles are proposed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4 www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/04-programme-and-module-approval-and-modification.pdf Programme and Module Modification Reports
<p>Transparency of fees and funding – providers:</p> <p>1. Have adequate and effective management and governance arrangements based on principles of transparency and value for money for students.</p>	E2	<p>The University publishes clear information about how it ensures value for money including income and expenditure data demonstrating how income from students' fees is spent.</p> <p>The Board of Governors approves annual estimates of income and expenditure, sets a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EHU Financial Reports and Statements www.edgehill.ac.uk/corporate-information/financial-reports/ EHU 'Facts and Figures: Key Performance Indicators' www.edgehill.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/ EHU Articles of Government and Scheme of Delegation

Measure of VfM	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration	Edge Hill University activity	Supporting evidence
		framework for staff pay and conditions and (through its Audit Committee) reviews draft annual financial statements. An Annual Accountability Return to the OfS by Governors confirms that funds are used for the purposes given.	www.edgehill.ac.uk/corporate-information/governance-and-management/governing-documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board of Governors Terms of Reference www.edgehill.ac.uk/corporate-information/board-of-governors/resources/section-board-governors/, business plan, meeting agendas and minutes

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)²⁰ is the Designated Quality Body (DQB) for higher education in England with responsibility for managing the quality assurance elements of the OfS's HE Regulatory Framework²¹. Specific DQB responsibilities include designing and conducting Quality and Standards Reviews (QSRs)²² of new providers seeking entry to the HE sector in England. The QAA also develops and maintains the UK Quality Code for Higher Education²³ which sets the following Expectations for HE providers across all four nations:

UK Quality Code for Higher Education Expectations	Link to OfS Conditions of Registration
<i>(Standards)</i> The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.	OfS Condition B5
<i>(Standards)</i> The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.	OfS Condition B4
<i>(Quality)</i> Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.	OfS Condition B1
<i>(Quality)</i> From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.	OfS Condition B2

By meeting these Expectations UK HE providers also demonstrate their alignment with Part One of the 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2015)'²⁴.

Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)

A national **Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)**²⁵ establishes where the quality of HE provision exceeds baseline expectations by conferring Bronze, Silver and Gold awards against defined criteria for teaching quality, the learning environment, and

²⁰ www.qaa.ac.uk/en.

²¹ 'Securing student success: Regulatory framework for higher education in England' (OfS, 2018) www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1406/ofs2018_01.pdf.

²² 'Quality and Standards Review for Providers Registered with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers' (QAA, 2019) https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/quality-and-standards-review-for-registered-providers-guidance.pdf?sfvrsn=4ccdc281_12

²³ www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

²⁴ 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)' (2015). Brussels, Belgium www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf.

²⁵ 'The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF): A short guide' (OfS, 2019) www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/0c6bd23e-57b8-4f22-a236-fb27346cde6e/tef_short_guide_-_june_2019_final.pdf.

student outcomes. Following an independent panel's evaluation of institutional performance data²⁶ accompanied by a provider commentary, Edge Hill's most recent TEF assessment²⁷ confirmed that:



- ✓ **The higher education provider (Edge Hill University) delivers consistently outstanding teaching, learning and outcomes for its students.**
- ✓ **It is of the highest quality found in the UK.**

Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

Edge Hill University has a strong track record in developing degree programmes that integrate academic study with professional competencies resulting in registered practitioner status in teaching²⁸ and health professions²⁹. 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 (accredited by the British Psychological Society). Accreditation may extend professional body membership to Edge Hill 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 website³⁰.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT AT EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY

Degree-awarding bodies are responsible for setting and maintaining the standards of their qualifications and awards and enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities. At Edge Hill University, these responsibilities are discharged through staff engagement with:

- Academic Regulations³¹ governing programme structures and the award of qualifications and credit;
- a Taught Degrees Framework³² containing practical guidance on programme design and delivery; and

²⁶ Including National Student Survey outcomes, continuation rates and graduate employment outcomes.

²⁷ Published in May 2017 and available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/#/tefoutcomes/provider/10007823.

²⁸ Regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

²⁹ 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/.

³⁰ www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/course-design-development-and-approval/professional-accreditations/.

³¹ Available at www.edgehill.ac.uk/corporate-information/strategies-policies/?tab=governing-documents.

³² See QMH Chapter 6, also www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/taught-degrees-framework/.

- A **Quality Management Handbook (QMH)**³³ which describes operational procedures for programme design and approval, monitoring and review.

The scope and content of the QMH, alongside other Institutional policies and procedures addresses national expectations for HE standards and quality as defined in the UK Quality Code³⁴. In developing operational processes for quality assurance the University has sought to balance rigour with flexibility, ensuring that they:

- satisfy the expectations of external regulators and quality assurance agencies while at the same time serving the University's own quality assurance requirements;
- are capable of generating reliable intelligence and promoting effective action;
- are actively and willingly supported and engaged with by academic and professional services staff, students and external stakeholders including employers and academic partner organisations; and
- are fit for present and, as far as can reasonably be anticipated, future purposes.

Our quality processes are based on the principle of shared responsibility in which all parts of the organisation are accountable to each other through the Institution's executive management and governance structures³⁵. Managers have an important role in promoting a 'no blame' culture in which staff have the confidence to expose current problems and potential threats to quality and standards, and individuals at all levels are empowered to formulate and take the necessary action to address these. Threats may be generated by internal or external conditions and are either exacerbated or mitigated by how the University responds to them, and a predictive approach enables early identification of factors contributing to academic risk³⁶. Edge Hill's academic planning and validation³⁷ processes enable the management of risk associated with developing new provision³⁸, new modes of delivery and entry into new markets, as well as changing market and regulatory conditions. Monitoring and review³⁹ processes facilitate the identification and management of risks that arise during programme delivery and any associated impact on quality and standards. Whether or not academic provision is deemed to be at risk depends on the interaction between the threats to which it is exposed and the capacity of its 'owners' to manage them, resulting in a calculation of *net risk*; thus a department operating in a high-risk environment may be assigned a medium or even low level of net risk based on its capacity to manage that risk. Where net risk is deemed to be high, additional scrutiny⁴⁰ may

³³ The complete QMH is available for download from www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/quality-management-handbook/.

³⁴ See 'Quality Assurance Agency', above.

³⁵ As described at www.edgehill.ac.uk/corporate-information/.

³⁶ For a more detailed exploration of academic risk management see the report of the Edge Hill-led HEFCE Good Management Practice project GMP250 'Quality Risk Management in Higher Education' (2002), available at www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/files/2012/08/QualityRiskManagementReport.pdf.

³⁷ For a full description of the University's academic planning and validation processes, see QMH Chapter 4.

³⁸ See also 'Edge Hill University Curriculum Strategy', available at www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/curriculum-strategy-2014-2020.pdf.

³⁹ See QMH Chapter 3.

⁴⁰ For example, a Departmental Risk Assessment or Extraordinary Audit – see QMH Chapter 3.

be initiated and measures put in place to support the relevant area in managing it - to this end, Institutional quality assurance systems and procedures have been developed that:

- adopt a risk-focused approach to monitoring that enables early warning of potential problems so that appropriate action may be taken;
- are independent of executive structures and capable of sending uncomfortable messages in any direction;
- are proportionate and minimise burden on staff and resources whilst ensuring due rigour⁴¹;
- align programmes and awards with the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, degree characteristics statements and subject benchmark statements⁴², and with relevant professional standards and any requirements of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSBRs)⁴³;
- utilise evidence (data) to support programme approval, monitoring and review activity;
- utilise relevant external expertise in the design, development, approval, monitoring and review of programmes;
- devolve appropriate operational responsibilities to Faculties whilst retaining central oversight⁴⁴;
- identify features of good practice with potential for wider dissemination (for quality enhancement)⁴⁵; and
- require actions taken as a result of these processes, and the processes themselves⁴⁶, to be systematically and regularly reviewed and evaluated.

The operation of the University's quality strategy is managed by the Academic Quality & Development Unit (AQDU)⁴⁷ working in close association with the University's Directorate and Faculties, whilst oversight and evaluation are by the Academic Board and its senior committees, principally the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC)⁴⁸. Policy development and operational procedures take account of updates to the UK Quality Code and other sector benchmarks and are continuously reviewed to maintain alignment with them.

⁴¹ For example, in the differentiation of minor and major programme modifications and the processes used to approve them – see QMH Chapter 4.

⁴² www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-existing-uk-quality-code/part-a-setting-and-maintaining-academic-standards.

⁴³ 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.

⁴⁴ See 'Faculty Academic Quality Statements' (below).

⁴⁵ See Appendix.

⁴⁶ See 'Annual Process Review' (below).

⁴⁷ www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/.

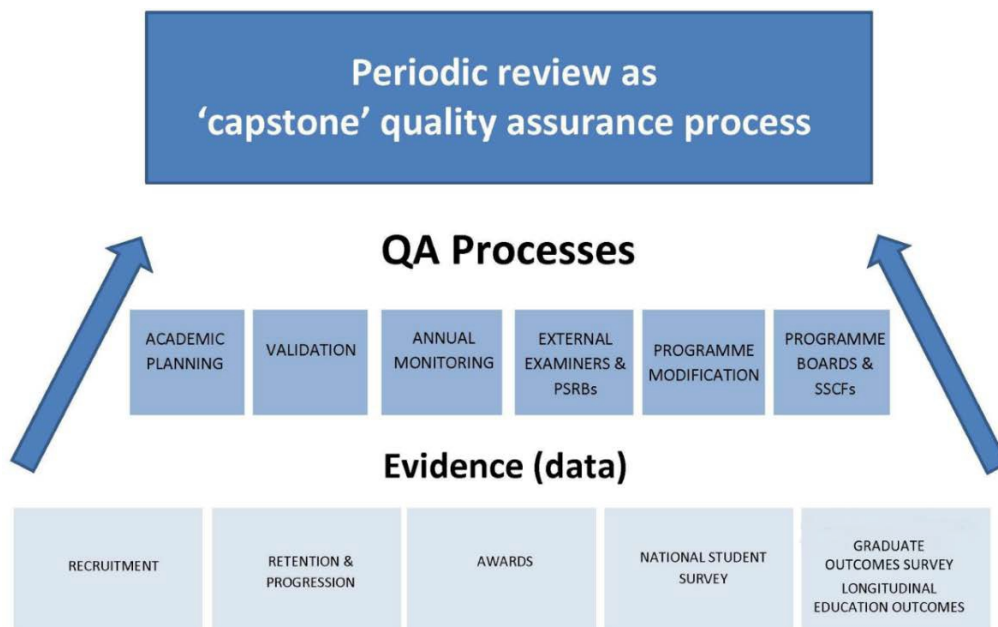
⁴⁸ **Note:** Principal responsibility for the quality assurance of postgraduate research degrees including PhD, Professional Doctorate and Masters by Research programmes resides with the Academic Board's Research and Innovation Committee through its sub-committee the Graduate School Board of Studies - see QMH Chapters 8 & 9.

The Periodic Review Process

Higher education providers' internal Periodic Review processes have been identified as a 'key mechanism to improve academic outcomes and the student academic experience'⁴⁹. In formulating their approach to Periodic Review providers make effective use of a range of evidence to reflect on, analyse, plan and implement improvements to the student academic experience. Providers consider how the review process will:

- identify issues or problems that need addressing in the student academic experience and its outcomes;
- enable improvement to be detected and evaluated, identifying innovations and developments that could enhance students' academic experience and outcomes;
- make use of appropriate externality including academic experts from other UK HEIs (and from overseas, where appropriate), employers, graduate alumni, and representatives of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs); and
- operate in partnership with current students.

Review evidence may be *quantitative*, e.g. student recruitment, retention and progression data, first-time module pass rates, award classifications and graduate employment outcomes; *qualitative*, e.g. reports of external examiners and PSRBs, and minutes of Programme Boards and Student-Staff Consultative Fora; or both, e.g. National Student Survey. Through its dual focus on academic risk and quality enhancement the Periodic Review process described in Chapter 3 of this Handbook adheres closely to this specification and so provides an effective 'capstone' for all of the University's quality assurance activities:



⁴⁹ 'Revised Operating Model for Quality Assessment: Baseline regulatory requirements' (HEFCE, 2016).

Faculty Academic Quality Statements

The University's quality management strategy permits the delegation of certain quality assurance responsibilities to Faculties, for example the review and re-approval of modules and approval of minor programme modifications⁵⁰. 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 which is to assure the University (via AQEC) that those arrangements remain fit-for-purpose and are consistent with the Institution's overarching quality management strategy.

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

Quality Management Handbook Chapter	Reference	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.
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

⁵⁰ See QMH Chapter 4.

		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 periodic review reports; Student Pulse Surveys; and (where practicable) Applications for Development Consent and initial proposals for programme modifications.
4	a)	Faculty planning of new programmes including 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 review and 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 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 Faculty review of programmes that have not recruited for two successive years prior to enrolment of students re-commencing.
4	j)	Faculty 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.

Whilst Faculties are responsible for determining the precise format of their Quality Statements they should as a minimum contain a brief description of processes for the above responsibilities with reporting lines and timescales indicated where appropriate. Where processes have changed since the previous Statement, these should be highlighted in the updated version and accompanied by a brief explanation of the change. Faculty Academic Quality Statements are approved by Faculty Boards⁵¹ prior to their receipt by AQEC⁵² and are available internally⁵³.

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 structures⁵⁴. 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. The 'owning' department may determine its own 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:

- (i) fully consistent with University policies and regulations;

⁵¹ Or the relevant Faculty Board committee – see QMH Chapter 8.

⁵² Annually at its February meeting.

⁵³ Via the AQDU wiki at

<https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/aqdu/Faculty+Quality+Processes+and+Responsibilities> (EHU staff only).

⁵⁴ 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).

- (ii) notified to the responsible Faculty at the beginning of each academic year, typically through receipt of the current Programme Handbook; and
- (iii) reported on (by exception) in the Programme Leader's next contributions to programme monitoring and review.

Annual Process Review

This Handbook is the product of years of debate and experimentation within the University and builds upon established procedures that are continuously evaluated against current regulatory conditions and sector best practice. Its purpose is to assist staff in developing both a general understanding of the Institution's quality strategy and their own responsibilities within it, and detailed knowledge of specific operational processes with which they are required to engage. The assurance of standards, management of risk and enhancement of quality are collective responsibilities and to this end the Handbook describes the roles and contributions of individuals, groups, panels and committees which may include students and external stakeholders.

The operation of the quality strategy is routinely monitored by a cross-faculty Quality Operations Group⁵⁵ chaired by the Head of Quality Operations, and evaluated using direct feedback from Faculties and academic-related support services as well as via AQEC and other Academic Board committees, e.g. the Learning and Teaching Committee. An **Annual Process Review (APR)**, led by the AQDU, provides the opportunity to propose procedural changes for implementation in the next academic year. APR planning and preparation commences at the Quality Operations Group and informs a preliminary scoping document received by the March/ April meeting of AQEC, followed by wider consultation coordinated by the AQDU. The Head of Quality Operations presents the final APR recommendations for approval by AQEC in June and a revised edition of the Handbook is prepared for AQEC approval in the following October.

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.

While the AQDU and Faculty Quality Officers can answer general queries about quality processes, each chapter of the Handbook has been assigned a named Institutional contact (identified in the page footers) who is the recommended point of contact for more detailed advice and guidance.

⁵⁵ "A forum for the exchange of information to enable quality practitioners located within Faculties and the AQDU to fulfil their responsibilities for quality management in an approachable and cohesive way" (QOG Terms of Reference, 2018).

APPENDIX: Edge Hill University Quality Enhancement Position Statement (updated June 2020)

According to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) 'quality enhancement naturally forms part of effective quality assurance'⁵⁶, and as a learning-led university Edge Hill 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* quality⁵⁷. Our strategy for quality management therefore extends beyond simple assurance and the 'closing down' of issues and risks, to celebrating successes and identifying and sharing good practice; with this in mind, it is designed to be:

- Systematic and evidence-based, making comprehensive use of cyclical programme performance data both quantitative and qualitative.
- Deliberative, inclusive and actively involving of students and other Institutional stakeholders i.e. staff of Faculties and professional support services and other stakeholders such as Employer Advisory Groups and the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine's Service Users and Carers Forum.
- Informed by other appropriate externality including academic peer reviewers for programme validation and review, external examiners, and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- Objective, reflective and risk-focused.
- Evaluative and focused on improvement and positive impact on learners.
- Efficient and proportionate.

Routine quality assurance activities identify good practice and assess its transferability to other settings and contexts, with dissemination via University committees⁵⁸ and staff professional development activities. However, as the QAA has also indicated enhancement is 'more than a collection of examples of good practice'⁵⁹ ... [and] should stem from a high-level awareness of the need to consider improvement'⁶⁰. To this end, University policies, strategies and regulations have been formulated in line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018) which holds that providers regularly review their core practices for quality and standards and use the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement⁶¹:

⁵⁶ *UK Quality Code for Higher Education General Introduction*, QAA (2011) p. 12.

⁵⁷ *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.

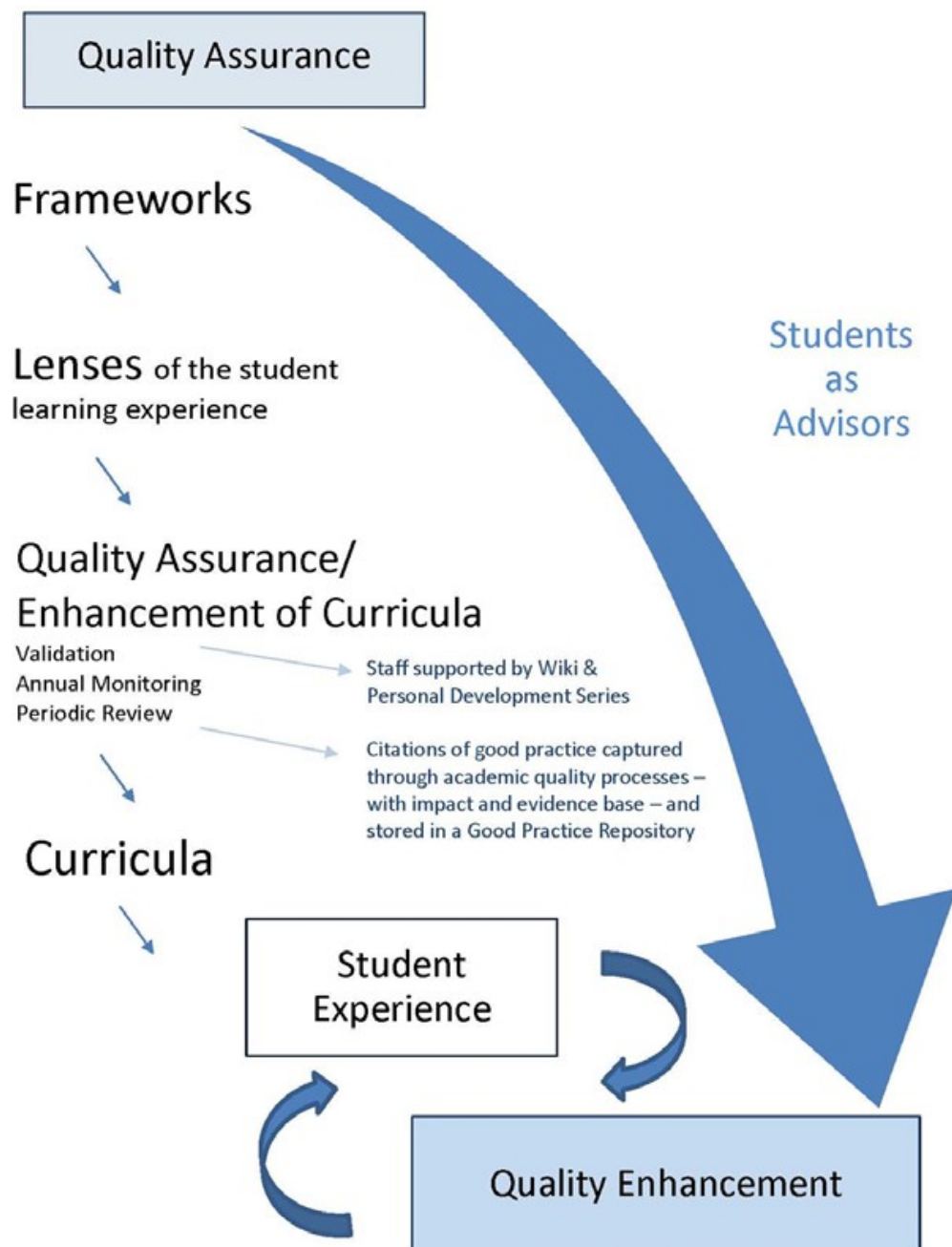
⁵⁸ In particular, the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and its Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC).

⁵⁹ *Higher Education Review: A handbook for QAA subscribers and providers* (QAA, 2015), p. 32.

⁶⁰ *UK Quality Code for Higher Education General Introduction* (QAA, 2011), p. 12.

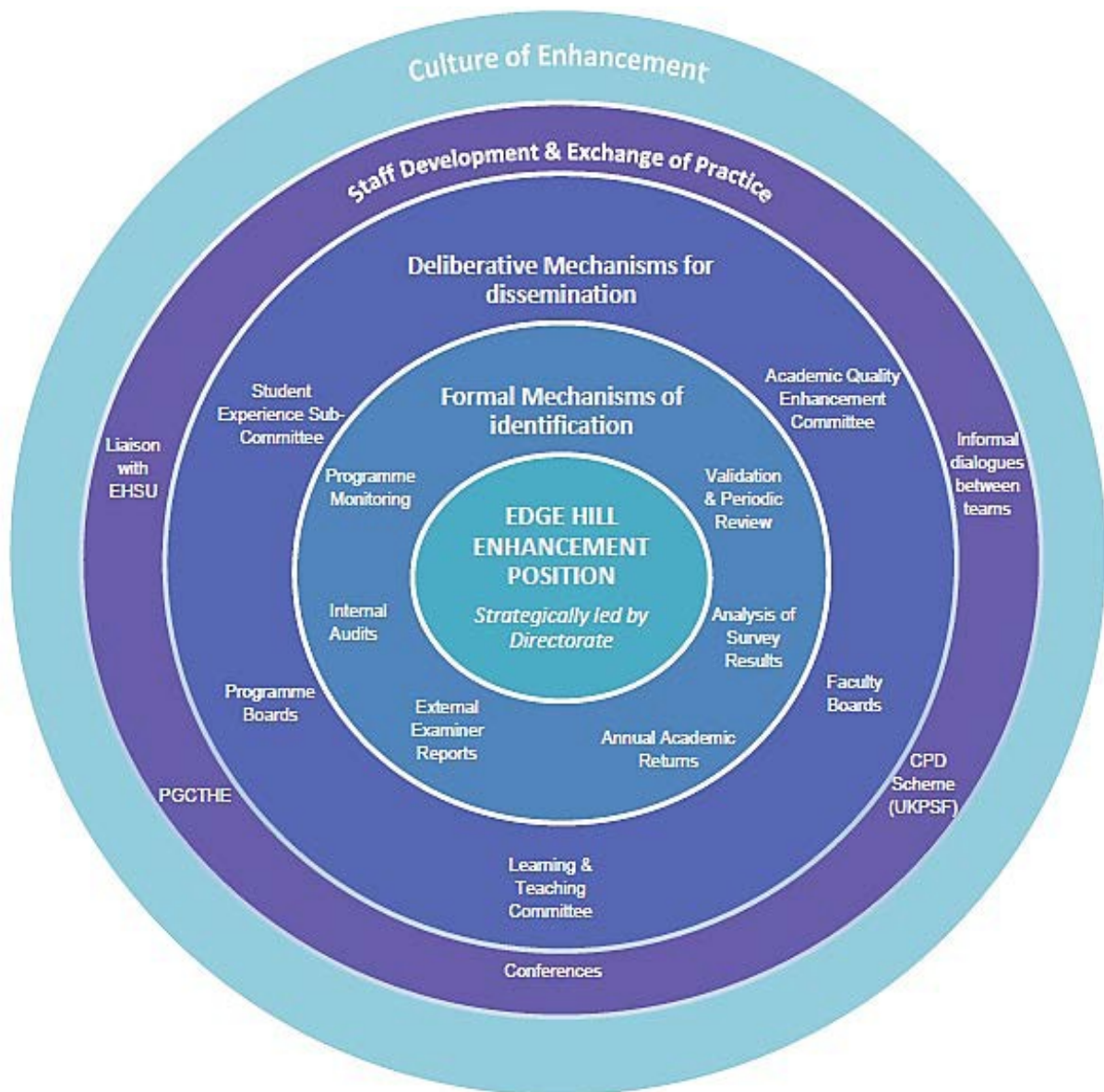
⁶¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/revise-uk-quality-code-for-higher-education.pdf?sfvrsn=4c19f781_8.

Figure 1 – 'Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement'



Whilst a systematic approach to enhancement requires some 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:

Figure 2 – ‘System and structures for quality enhancement’



The Office for Students (OfS)'s General Ongoing Conditions of Registration⁶² require HE providers to 'deliver well designed courses that provide a high quality academic experience for all students'⁶³, while assessment for the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)⁶⁴ expects them to have in place effective approaches for continuously

⁶² See also QMH Chapter 1, 'Office for Students'.

⁶³ OfS Condition of Registration B1, see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/conditions-of-registration/initial-and-general-ongoing-conditions-of-registration/.

⁶⁴ See also QMH Chapter 1, 'Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework'.

improving the student academic experience and student outcomes. Edge Hill's approach to enhancement, which is reviewed and updated annually by the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC)⁶⁵, comprises an array of different processes, tools and activities developed and implemented across departments and Faculties and sharing the same eight aims:

Enhancement aim	Achieved through
<p>1) To embed a culture and commitment to enhancement in the University's mission, policies and strategies.</p>	<p>The University's Strategic Plan⁶⁶ includes a commitment to harness the creativity, knowledge and commitment of its staff to promote its values and enhance its activities. One of our core values is to enhance the life opportunities that a good education provides for our students, with specific emphasis on employability. Enhancing the student experience is a strategic aim and includes enhancement of the learning infrastructure, staff knowledge and expertise and research environment. Enhancement or improvement are embedded in discrete policies and strategies including those for learning and teaching⁶⁷, assessment⁶⁸ and the management of academic quality and standards⁶⁹.</p> <p>The University's enhancement culture is led and promoted by an executive management team (Directorate) comprising the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellors with designated responsibilities for the student experience, research, and external relations through their executive roles and as chairs of Academic Board committees. Faculty Associate Deans with specific responsibility for learning and teaching and quality assurance lead the promotion of enhancement through their executive roles and as chairs of Faculty Board committees, supported by Heads of Department, Senior Learning and Teaching Fellowship Leads and chairs of Programme Boards. A management group of Directors and other senior staff reports to the Directorate and supports it in its work.</p>

⁶⁵ At its June meeting.

⁶⁶ 'Edge Hill University Strategic Plan', available at www.edgehill.ac.uk/corporate-information/strategies-policies/.

⁶⁷ 'Edge Hill University Learning and Teaching Policy (2012)' www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/files/2012/02/Teaching-and-Learning-Policy-Updated-Oct-2012.pdf and 'Learning and Teaching Strategy (2016)' www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/files/2012/02/LTC-21C-16-L-and-T-Strategy-and-TEFDefinitive.pdf.

⁶⁸ 'Edge Hill University Assessment Policy (revised 2019)' www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/files/2019/02/Assessment-Policy-Revisions-2019-Definitive-after-LTC.pdf.

⁶⁹ Quality Management Handbook (QMH), available for download at www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/quality-management-handbook/.

	<p>Enhancement features generally in the terms of reference of all Academic Board committees and principal sub- committees, and specifically in the remits of the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC), Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC)⁷⁰.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>External examiners⁷¹ are required to comment on aspects of curriculum including effective teaching, learning and assessment that are worthy of wider dissemination.</p> <p>Validation⁷² and periodic review⁷³ processes highlight any features of good practice with potential for wider dissemination. Authors of validation and critical review documents provide evidence-based examples of innovation or other good practice in teaching, learning and assessment, and student support.</p> <p>Annual monitoring⁷⁴ and periodic review include the collection and evaluation of programme performance data to identify effective practice in teaching and learning and the student experience. Heads of Department specify effective practice using evidence from external examiner reports, minutes of Programme Boards and Student-Staff Consultative Fora, Student Pulse Surveys, and other surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS).</p> <p>Developmental Enquiries (a form of internal quality audit)⁷⁵ have an enhancement focus and provide a thematic exploration of aspects of the student experience that intersect different Faculties and support services.</p>
<p>3) To evaluate and confirm that it is good practice and capable of being transferred to other settings and contexts.</p>	<p>Periodic Review panels ‘triangulate’ departments’ self-evaluations with programme performance data and other evidence to establish the effectiveness of their practice. Discussions with programme teams help validation and review panels to identify the locus and ownership of practice, its transferability and potential for dissemination and wider application.</p>

⁷⁰ See QMH Chapter 8.

⁷¹ See QMH Chapter 2.

⁷² See QMH Chapter 4.

⁷³ See QMH Chapter 3.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

	Validation and review panels contain appropriate externality which enables benchmarking of EHU practice to the wider higher education sector.
<p>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.</p>	<p>External examiners' reports and departmental responses are considered by Programme and Faculty Boards which enables dissemination within and across departments. Faculties produce annual summary evaluations of external examiner reports and responses for receipt by the External Examiners Sub-Committee which enable visibility of good practice across Faculties.</p> <p>Validation, monitoring and review reports are received for approval by AQEC. Annual overviews of external examiner, validation, annual monitoring and periodic review reports identify good practice and provide opportunities for dissemination through cross-Faculty membership of Academic Board committees. Specific good practice in learning and teaching is brought to the attention of LTC via annual summary reports. Faculties develop and approve their own processes for capturing and evaluating good practice which is reported to LTC and AQEC through the minutes of Faculty teaching and learning and quality committees.</p> <p>The Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT)⁷⁶ draws on evidence from validation, monitoring and review to showcase and share effective practice, e.g. through a Professional Development Seminar series and major events including an annual international conference and Learning and Teaching Day⁷⁷. The Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (PGCTHE)⁷⁸ exposes new teachers to best practice. Teaching review/ peer observation of teaching is linked with annual staff performance review and has an enhancement as well as assurance function. The Taught Degrees Framework is supported by a wiki-based repository⁷⁹ of practical guidance and resources for enhancing teaching and learning. An associated staff blog⁸⁰, hosted by the CLT and populated by citations from validation, monitoring and review reports, signposts specific good practice with potential for wider application.</p>

⁷⁶ www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/.

⁷⁷ www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/professional-development/.

⁷⁸ www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/professional-development/postgraduate-certificate-in-teaching-in-higher-education/.

⁷⁹ <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/ufr/Home> (EHU staff login required).

⁸⁰ <https://blogs.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/>.

<p>5) To apply said practice in new settings and (ideally) improve upon it.</p>	<p>The University's Learning and Teaching Fellowship and SOLSTICE Fellowship⁸¹ are managed from the CLT and facilitate inter-department and inter-Faculty exchange of practice. Fellows contribute actively to the provision of Continuing Professional Development for enhancing teaching quality (Objective 2 of EHU's Learning and Teaching Strategy⁸²) and enhancing student learning through research-informed teaching (Objective 6).</p> <p>Criteria⁸³ for Senior Learning and Teaching Fellow and Professorial appointments recognise sustained innovation and excellence in teaching including contribution to the advancement of learning and subject development, and pioneering work in course development.</p>
<p>6) To monitor and evaluate its impact, engaging students in co-creating and evaluating good practice and sharing or cascading the outcomes.</p>	<p>Programme Boards, Student-Staff Consultative Fora, student focus groups and Pulse Surveys provide mechanisms for evaluating the impact of applied practice and generate evidence for annual monitoring and periodic review.</p> <p>Students receive training to sit on Academic Board committees and validation and periodic review panels.</p> <p>Annual Student-Led Awards are organised by the Students' Union and aimed at recognising and celebrating excellence among teachers and support staff.</p>
<p>7) To benchmark against best sector practice and use this to enhance the quality of learning opportunities for Edge Hill students.</p>	<p>External examiners suggest improvements to enhance the learning experience of students. EHU staff undertake external examining at other HEIs and import sector best practice into their own programmes while at the same time sharing their own and colleagues' practice with others.</p> <p>Validation and review panels contain appropriate subject externality. Course development teams engage paid external consultancy in programme design.</p> <p>The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC) disseminate exemplars of sector best practice in teaching and supporting students. The</p>

⁸¹ www.edgehill.ac.uk/solstice/about/.

⁸² Available at www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/about.

⁸³ <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/humanresources/Academic+Career+Progression> (EHU staff login required).

	<p>Taught Degrees Framework Wiki⁸⁴, hosted by the CLT, contains practical resources and other materials derived from external sources including Advance HE (formerly the Higher Education Academy).</p> <p>Academic and service staff are members of professional associations which provide opportunities to identify and share best practice, e.g. Advance HE (formerly the Leadership Foundation for HE) and the Association of University Administrators. The University operates an Advance HE-accredited CPD scheme⁸⁵ for the award of HEA Associate Fellowship, Fellowship, Senior Fellowship and Principal Fellowship based on individuals' self-evaluation with supporting evidence.</p> <p>Departments secure relevant external accreditation of their programmes by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies which enhances the value of students' academic qualifications.</p> <p>Professional support services highlight any external enhancement activities in which they are engaged including recognition by national bodies as part of annual Service Planning.</p> <p>On behalf of AQEC, the Academic Quality & Development Unit formally considers overview reports of QAA reviews and updates to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and highlights sector good practice for benchmarking purposes.</p>
<p>8) To undertake ongoing reflection on (and enhancement of) our enhancement processes themselves as they evolve further.</p>	<p>Validation, monitoring and review panels consider departments' processes for identifying and sharing good practice for the purpose of quality enhancement. Heads of Department comment on how good practice is identified and disseminated internally, and outwards to the Faculty and wider University. Validation and review panels comment on this in their reports.</p> <p>An Annual Process Review⁸⁶ is undertaken on behalf of AQEC and results in procedural improvements that are captured in the annual revision of the Quality Management Handbook.</p>

⁸⁴ <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/wiki/display/ufr/Home> (EHU staff login required).

⁸⁵ www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/ehu-cpd-scheme-ukpsf/.

⁸⁶ See also QMH Chapter 1, 'Annual Process Review.'