



Academic Quality Framework

Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee

Approved by Academic Council

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Table of Contents

1. Responsibilities.....	3
2. Membership.....	6
3. Term of Office.....	7
4. Removal or Disqualification.....	8
5. Resignation.....	8
6. AQAEC Meetings.....	8
7. Reporting and Communication.....	14
8. Committees.....	14
APPENDIX A.....	15
APPENDIX B.....	16

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The Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (AQAEC) is a sub-committee of Academic Council. AQAEC shall have responsibility for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of University Quality Framework, Education Model and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

1. Responsibilities

The Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (AQAEC) has the following responsibilities:

Quality Framework

- a. To develop, and oversee the implementation of, all academic quality assurance and enhancement procedures, and the underpinning academic policies, within the University.
- b. To develop and review University assessment regulations ensuring the alignment to academic policies and the Education Model.
- c. To approve and maintain the [Academic Quality Review Schedule](#), consider for approval any requests for changes to the agreed schedule of reviews, and report progress and outcomes to Academic Council.
- d. To consider and approve the Programme Review Panel Reports and School Responses from reviews of all programmes leading to Major Awards, as per the [Programme Review Process](#).
- e. To note Programme Review Panel Reports and School Responses from reviews of all programmes leading to non-major awards, and which have been approved by the respective Faculty Board.
- f. To approve the appointment of the external members of Programme Review Panels, as nominated by the respective Faculty Board, and to establish Programme Review Panels for all reviews of programmes leading to major awards.

- g. To note the approval of the external members of Programme Review Panels, by Faculty Boards for all reviews of programmes leading to nonmajor awards.
- h. To recommend Academic Affairs instigate a programme review of a particular programme or set of programmes. The recommendation shall be based on the outcomes of a quality enhancement process such as the [Annual Quality Enhancement Process](#), [School Review](#) or the [Making Changes to Programmes & Modules Process](#). AQAEC may request that the review is limited to specific aspects of the programme.
- i. To approve the appointment of the external Panel members for School, Faculty and Professional Services Reviews and formally establish the Review Panel.
- j. To consider and approve Panel Reports and resulting responses from School, Faculty and Professional Services reviews.
- k. To review the Annual Quality Report (AQR) drafted by Academic Affairs prior to its submission to QQI, to ensure it incorporates trends, issues and examples of good practice, which have been identified through the [Annual Quality Enhancement Process](#).
- l. To critically review academic quality assurance procedures and if necessary, make recommendations for changes to the Quality Framework to Academic Council.
- m. To consider the Quality Enhancement Plans, arising from Annual Programme Enhancement reports, from Faculty Boards, draft the [University Quality Enhancement Plan](#), ensure responsibility is assigned to appropriate committee/function and monitor progress in relation to all actions.
- n. To ensure the outcomes of relevant academic quality reviews (such as school and Faculty reviews) are integrated, where appropriate, into the [University Quality Enhancement Plan](#).

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

- o. To develop the [University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy](#), ensuring its alignment with the [University Strategic Plan](#), [Education Model](#) and [Quality Framework](#).

- p. To oversee and monitor the implementation of the University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and related policies such as those related to eLearning, blended learning and flexible learning and teaching methods.
- q. To ensure quality enhancement procedures and teaching and learning enhancements are evidence-based and informed by student feedback (e.g. module and programme feedback and ISSE data).
- r. To promote and encourage the development of effective, inclusive and appropriate teaching methodologies within the University, including advanced, inclusive and innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods.
- s. To lead the development and promotion of staff development opportunities in teaching and learning to include both continuing education and refresher courses for existing teaching staff.
- t. To coordinate, and advise Academic Affairs, on measures to support enhancements in learning, teaching and assessment practices, such as teaching fellowships, awards schemes and education development projects.

Education Model

- u. To support the development of the Education Model through the review of proposals and draft documents and leading the review of the Education Model after implementation.
- v. To monitor, through the quality enhancement processes, the implementation of the relevant aspects of the Education Model across academic activities in relation to: programme provision; learning, teaching and assessment; and research.
- w. To ensure staff development opportunities in quality enhancement and teaching, learning and assessment are focused on supporting academic staff to align to the Education Model.

Research

- x. Review the Graduate Research Regulations or any proposed changes to those recommendations and when satisfied make a recommendation to Academic Council for approval of those regulations or changes.

Other

- y. Carry out such other functions as are considered appropriate subject to the approval of Academic Council.
- z. Submit approved minutes to Academic Council and where required submit reports (e.g. School and Faculty Review Reports), draft regulations and policies for noting or approval.

2. Membership

2.1 The Membership of AQAEC shall ensure the committee has members with the required expertise, to ensure effective and efficient decision making, from across the University to carry out the responsibilities listed above.

2.2 The membership of AQAEC shall comprise:

- Head of Academic Affairs (Chairperson) (ex-officio)
- Assistant Head of Academic Affairs (Quality Framework) (ex-officio)
- Assistant Head of Academic Affairs (Learning, Teaching & Assessment) (ex-officio)
- Academic Quality Advisors (ex-officio)
- Vice-Dean for Education from each Faculty (ex-officio)
- 1 academic staff member of SL2 or SL3 grade from each Faculty Board (elected)
- 1 academic staff member of any grade excluding HPAL, SL2 and SL3 grades from each Faculty Board (elected)
- 3 student members (nominated)

- 1 member from the Graduate Research School Board (nominated)
 - 1 member from Student Services & Wellbeing (nominated)
 - 1 member from Recruitment, Admissions & Participation (nominated)
 - 1 member from ICT Services (nominated)
 - 1 member from Library Services (nominated)
 - 3 Academic Council members (elected)
- 2.3 The academic staff from the Faculty Boards will be identified through the process described in Appendix B.
- 2.4 The student members will be nominated by the Students' Union in accordance with its own procedures.
- 2.5 The AQAEC members from Student Services & Wellbeing, Recruitment, Admissions & Participation, ICT Services and Library Services will be nominated by the Heads of those Professional Services.
- 2.6 All Academic Council members will have the opportunity to nominate themselves to become a member of AQAEC. In the event there are more nominations than required members an election will be held as per the process described in Appendix B.
- 2.7 With the approval of Academic Council up to two additional members may be co-opted and in addition other persons may be invited to attend by the Chairperson as considered appropriate. To propose new members, the Chairperson should write to the Chairperson of Academic Council with the names of the proposed additional members and a rationale for their membership.
- 2.8 The membership of AQAEC will be at least 40% gender balanced.

3. Term of Office

- 3.1 The term of office of non-ex-officio members of AQAEC shall not exceed 3 years and a member may not serve more than two consecutive terms of office.

4. Removal or Disqualification

- 4.1 A nominated or elected member of AQAEC who has been absent from three consecutive meetings, unless such absence has been approved by the Chairperson in advance, shall be deemed to have resigned from AQAEC.
- 4.2 Where a nominated or elected member is absent for two consecutive meetings without explanation, the secretariat will communicate this to the member outlining consequential actions if the member misses the next meeting. If no satisfactory written explanation is received and the member does not attend the next meeting, this outcome will be communicated to the next AQAEC meeting for removal of the member, with this vacancy filled in line with the procedures in Section 2 above. The replacement will fill this vacancy for the unexpired term of office remaining.

5. Resignation

- 5.1 A nominated or elected member of AQAEC may at any time resign from AQAEC by written communication to the Chairperson, and the resignation shall take effect from the date of receipt of such communication.

6. AQAEC Meetings

Chairperson

- 6.1 The Head of Academic Affairs will be the Chairperson of AQAEC.
- 6.2 If and so long as the Chairperson is not present, meetings of AQAEC will be chaired by one of the Assistant Heads of Academic Affairs. If the Head of Academic Affairs and both Assistant Heads of Academic Affairs are not able to attend a meeting of AQAEC, the Head of Academic Affairs will select a member of AQAEC to chair the meeting in advance of the meeting.

Secretariat

6.3 The secretariat will be provided by Academic Affairs.

Quorum

6.4 The quorum for all AQAEC meetings shall be 50% of the complete membership plus one. Where the complete membership constitutes an odd number the quorum shall be 50% of the membership rounded up to the next whole number.

6.5 AQAEC may hold or continue a meeting by the use of any means of communication by which all the members can hear and be heard at the same time (in this document referred to as an “online meeting”):

- i. A member of AQAEC who participates in an online meeting is taken for all purposes to have been present at the meeting.
- ii. A duly convened meeting of AQAEC at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all or any of the authorities, power and discretions vested in or exercisable by AQAEC.

Frequency of Meetings

6.6 AQAEC shall hold at least two meetings per semester and such and so many additional meetings as may be necessary, as determined by the Chairperson, for the due fulfilment of its functions.

Notice and Convening of Meetings

6.7 The dates of AQAEC meetings should be determined by the Chairperson and published at the start of the Academic Year and aligned to the document submission dates of Academic Council.

6.8 Additional meetings of AQAEC shall be summoned by the Secretariat of AQAEC at the request of the Chairperson of AQAEC.

- 6.9 The Secretariat to AQAEC shall ensure that all members receive information and papers in a timely manner to enable full and proper consideration to be given to the issues.
- 6.10 Unless otherwise agreed, notice of each meeting confirming the venue, time and date together with an agenda shall be forwarded to each member of AQAEC electronically, and any other person required to attend, not less than five working days before the date of the meeting. Supporting papers shall be sent, or made available electronically, to AQAEC members and to other attendees as appropriate, at the same time.

Attendance at Meetings

- 6.11 Only members of AQAEC have the right to attend AQAEC meetings. Other individuals from the University and external advisers may be invited to attend, by the Chairperson, for all or part of any meeting, as and when appropriate.
- 6.12 Attendances shall be recorded as Present, Apologies (apology furnished in advance or at the meeting) or Absent (no apology furnished).
- 6.13 If a member cannot attend a meeting of AQAEC, this should be communicated to the Secretariat in advance of the meeting, or alternatively it can be communicated to the Chairperson at the beginning of the meeting.

Agenda Items

- 6.14 The agenda shall contain details of the matters to be put before the meeting for discussion.
- 6.15 Any member of AQAEC may request a matter be placed on the agenda for discussion provided it is conveyed to the Secretariat in writing not less than ten working days in advance of the meeting to which it refers (not including the date of the meeting) and the matter falls within the terms of reference of AQAEC. Such matters shall be considered by the Chairperson as to their appropriateness for inclusion on the agenda.

- 6.16 Any matter which has been accepted for discussion in accordance with the provision of these Terms of Reference shall be placed before the meeting by the Chairperson in the order in which it appears on the agenda.
- 6.17 The inclusion of the item “Any Other Business” (AOB) on the agenda shall be used by the Chairperson only to inform the meeting of any other items which are germane to the matters already discussed and for the elucidation of any other items of a factual or relevant nature. The Chairperson may permit a member to raise a matter under AOB provided this item has already been raised with the Chairperson prior to the meeting and the Chairperson has decided it was appropriate to bring it to the attention of AQAEC members for the consideration under AOB.
- 6.18 Approved agenda items must be submitted in the correct format to the Secretariat ten working days before the date of the AQAEC meeting to facilitate the timely distribution of papers to members.
- 6.19 The Chairperson has the delegated authority of AQAEC to remove an item from the Agenda if it is not received in time to allow members due consideration of the matter or to a suitable standard.

Proceedings at Meetings

- 6.20 Members who wish to speak at any meeting shall make their address to the meeting through and at the request of the Chairperson.
- 6.21 The first business of each meeting shall be the reading and approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting which, if approved, shall be signed by the Chairperson as proof of the accuracy thereof. The secretariat shall minute the decisions and resolutions of all meetings of AQAEC, including recording the names of those present and in attendance.
- 6.22 The Minutes of the meeting shall be drawn up and approved at the next meeting of AQAEC. No discussion shall take place upon the Minutes except upon their accuracy or where the Chairperson considers discussion appropriate.

- 6.23 Any amendment to the Minutes shall be recorded and agreed by AQAEC at the next meeting. The Minutes of AQAEC meetings shall be circulated to all members of AQAEC.
- 6.24 Every question at a meeting of AQAEC shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present and voting on the question, and in the case of an equal division of votes, the Chairperson shall have a second or casting vote.
- 6.25 Any member of AQAEC may, at any time during a meeting and without notice, raise a point of order. The Chairperson's ruling on the acceptability on the point of order shall be subject to a vote of the meeting if called for by the member raising the point of order.

Duration of Meetings

- 6.26 Each meeting of AQAEC shall continue until such time as the business to be conducted thereat shall have been satisfactory dealt with.
- 6.27 In cases of extreme time pressure, the Chairperson may, at their discretion reasonably exercise the following:
- Either curtail discussion of any motion or other matter before the meeting and put the motion or matter before the meeting for a vote, or
 - Adjourn agenda items (other than Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising therefrom) to a subsequent meeting. This may be either a scheduled meeting or at an extraordinary meeting convened specially to consider them.
- 6.28 The Chairperson's ruling shall be final in regard of either alternative.

Procedures for obtaining decisions between meetings

- 6.29 In accordance with subparagraphs 6.30, 6.31 and 6.32 below, the Chairperson of AQAEC, has the delegated authority of AQAEC to deal with matters that in their opinion, are urgent and cannot wait until the next meeting of AQAEC and are certified in writing. If the Chairperson is unavailable to act for any reason, the Assistant Heads of Academic Affairs shall have the same powers and this procedure shall be read accordingly.
- 6.30 In all situations, the Chairperson shall endeavour to convene a quorate meeting, to consider urgent matters that arise between meetings and shall only utilise this procedure as a final option having made every effort to hold a quorate meeting.
- 6.31 In seeking Chairperson's action, the person making the request shall in all cases prepare a written report. The report shall be in accordance with the same procedures and shall require the same clearances from other parties with an interest in the issues as if the report was to be submitted to a meeting of AQAEC. The report must specify the reason(s) for the urgency and the reason(s) why the matter cannot wait until the next meeting of AQAEC.
- 6.32 When submitted, the Chairperson shall, if practicable, also seek the views of the members of AQAEC.
- 6.33 In respect of any decision taken by the Chairperson under this procedure, the Chairperson shall record their decision in writing and shall also certify in writing that in their opinion the issue is urgent and cannot wait until the next meeting of AQAEC.
- 6.34 The Chairperson shall report every decision taken under this procedure in writing to the next meeting of AQAEC for noting.

7 Reporting and Communication

- 7.1 The Head of Academic Affairs, as Chairperson, shall be responsible for reporting the decisions and views of AQAEC to Academic Council and/or other Academic Council sub-committees, as appropriate.
- 7.2 Minutes shall be recorded and, when approved, submitted to Academic Council.
- 7.3 Approved minutes shall also be available on the University intranet.

8 Committees

- 8.1 AQAEC may establish other sub-committees subject to the approval of the Academic Council or at the request of Academic Council. To propose a new sub-committee, the Chairperson should write to the Chairperson of the Academic Council with the draft Terms of Reference, and a rationale for the establishment, of the new sub-committee.
- 8.2 AQAEC may establish working groups at any time to undertake specific tasks on behalf of the Board. The establishment of working groups does not require the approval of the Academic Council.
- 8.3 AQAEC may invite individuals from outside the University to become members of sub-committees subject to the approval of the Academic Council. To propose external members of sub-committees, the Chairperson should write to the Chairperson of the Academic Council with the names of the proposed external members and a rationale for their membership.
- 8.4 AQAEC sub-committees will normally be chaired by a member of AQAEC.

APPENDIX A

Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee Membership

1. Ex-Officio Members

- 1.1 Members of the committee because of their role in the University.
- 1.2 Members of the committee bringing specific expertise and knowledge and/or they have specific University responsibilities, management or otherwise, for functions or activities aligned to the responsibilities of the committee as listed in Section 1 of this document.

2. Nominated Members

- 2.1 Members representing the views of a function, academic unit or representative body, but may also have specific responsibilities, management or otherwise that are required by the Committee to successfully undertake its responsibilities as listed in Section 1 of this document.
- 2.2 These members are nominated by the Head of the relevant function, academic unit or representative body.

3. Elected Members

- 3.1 Members elected to by a cohort of stakeholders within a function, academic unit or a Committee/Board.
- 3.2 Elected members must nominate themselves through the process described in Appendix B of this document, and where more nominations are received than required number of member, an election process will be followed to identify the committee members.
- 3.3 Elected members bring their own knowledge, understanding, expertise and experience to the AQAEC discussions and decisions.
- 3.4 Elected members may also bring the views of colleagues to AQAEC.

APPENDIX B

Election of AQAEC Members

1. Academic Staff Member of SL2 or SL3 grade from each Faculty Board

- 1.1 Each Faculty Board will elect one academic staff member of SL2 or SL3 grade to be a member of AQAEC.
- 1.2 The academic staff member of SL2 or SL3 grade will be appointed using an election process whereby each academic staff member of SL2 or SL3 grade on Faculty Board will have the opportunity to nominate themselves for election.
- 1.3 Eligibility to vote for the academic staff member of SL2 or SL3 grade shall be confined to members of the Faculty Board at SL2 and SL3 grades.
- 1.4 The Returning Officer for the election of staff to AQAEC will be the Assistant Head of Academic Affairs (Operations) and may authorise any person to exercise designated functions on their behalf.
- 1.5 A call for nominations shall be circulated at least two weeks before the election date. Nominations shall be made on the [Nomination Paper](#) available from Academic Affairs and submitted to the Returning Officer or nominee. The Returning Officer shall rule on the validity of each Nomination Paper and may rule that it is invalid if, but only if, it is not in accordance with the eligibility criteria.
- 1.6 Every person in respect of whom a Nomination Paper has been determined to be valid and whose candidature has not been withdrawn, shall stand validly nominated as a candidate.
- 1.7 In the event that there is only one validly nominated candidate from a Faculty Board, the Returning Officer shall declare the candidate elected.

- 1.8 A poll will be conducted if more than the one person is validly nominated. Voting shall be by secret ballot and on the basis of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. Votes shall be counted by the Returning Officer or nominee in accordance with the arrangements made by the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer shall give due notice of these arrangements to the electorate.
- 1.9 In the event that there are no validly nominated candidates, the Faculty Dean, as Chairperson of Faculty Board may nominate an academic staff member of SL2 or SL3 grade from the membership of Faculty Board to be a member of AQAEC.

2. Academic Staff Member of any grade excluding SL2 and SL3 grade from each Faculty Board

- 2.1 Each Faculty Board will elect one academic staff member of any grade excluding SL2 and SL3 grades to be a member of AQAEC.
- 2.2 The academic staff member of any grade excluding SL2 and SL3 grades will be appointed using an election process whereby each academic staff member of those grades on Faculty Board will have the opportunity to nominate themselves for election.
- 2.3 Eligibility to vote for the academic staff member of any grade excluding SL2 and SL3 grades shall be confined to members of the Faculty Board at those grades.
- 2.4 The Returning Officer for the election of staff to AQAEC will be the Assistant Head of Academic Affairs (Operations) and may authorise any person to exercise designated functions on their behalf.
- 2.5 A call for nominations shall be circulated at least two weeks before the election date. Nominations shall be made on the [Nomination Paper](#) available from Academic Affairs and submitted to the Returning Officer or nominee. The Returning Officer shall rule on the validity of each Nomination Paper and may rule that it is invalid if, but only if, it is not in accordance with the eligibility criteria.

- 2.6 Every person in respect of whom a Nomination Paper has been determined to be valid and whose candidature has not been withdrawn, shall stand validly nominated as a candidate.
- 2.7 In the event that there is only one validly nominated candidate from a Faculty Board, the Returning Officer shall declare the candidate elected.
- 2.8 A poll will be conducted if more than one person is validly nominated. Voting shall be by secret ballot and on the basis of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. Votes shall be counted by the Returning Officer or nominee in accordance with the arrangements made by the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer shall give due notice of these arrangements to the electorate.
- 2.9 In the event that there are no validly nominate candidates, the Faculty Dean, as Chairperson of Faculty Board may nominate an academic staff member of any grade excluding SL2 and SL3 grades from the membership of Faculty Board to be a member of AQAEC.

3. Academic Council Members

- 3.1 All non-ex-officio Academic Council members will have the opportunity to nominate themselves for AQAEC membership through an 'Expression of Interest' process.
- 3.2 An "Expression of Interest" call shall be circulated to all non-ex-officio Academic Council members and nominations shall be submitted to Academic Affairs.
- 3.3 A poll will be conducted if more nominations than required members are received. Voting shall be by secret ballot and on the basis of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. Votes shall be counted by the Returning Officer or nominee in accordance with the arrangements made by the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer shall give due notice of these arrangements to the electorate.

- 3.4 The Returning Officer for the election of Academic Council members to AQAEC will be the Assistant Head of Academic Affairs (Operations) and may authorise any person to exercise designated functions on their behalf.