

Ownership, Status, Governance, Quality Assurance and Monitoring

1 Introduction

The following document sets out details of the ownership, status, governance, quality assurance and monitoring at the University of Law.

2 Ownership and Governance Structure

Prior to 1 October 2012, The College of Law ('the College' and a registered charity and company incorporated by Royal Charter) was responsible for all of the provision of legal education under that name. From that date the training and education business of the College was transferred to a new company, renamed The College of Law Limited. At the same time the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills agreed that the Degree Awarding Powers, originally obtained in 2006 and renewed in 2011, would transfer to the new company.

In November 2012, following the award of University status, The College of Law Limited was renamed The University of Law Limited and, along with Legal Network Television Limited and College of Law Services Limited, was sold to a company owned and controlled by Montagu Private Equity LLP.

In advance of the sale The College of Law Limited had undertaken to the various regulatory bodies to which it was subject that:

- the Academic Board along with the standards and quality reporting structures would continue and the Academic Board would retain its powers including approval and monitoring of all programmes, monitoring and maintenance of academic quality and standards and the award of all degrees and other qualifications by the new company;
- an Academic Standards Committee chaired by a non-executive director replaced the former Academic Audit Committee; and
- the company would continue to meet in full the academic and resource requirements associated with all approved programmes both general and relating to any specific conditions which may have been or may be applied in the future.

In June 2015 ownership of the University was transferred to Global University Systems (GUS). A pre-condition of the sale was the agreement and implementation of a Governance Agreement to ensure the continued and successful separation of commercial and academic matters. The key section of the agreement is 4.1 which provides that:

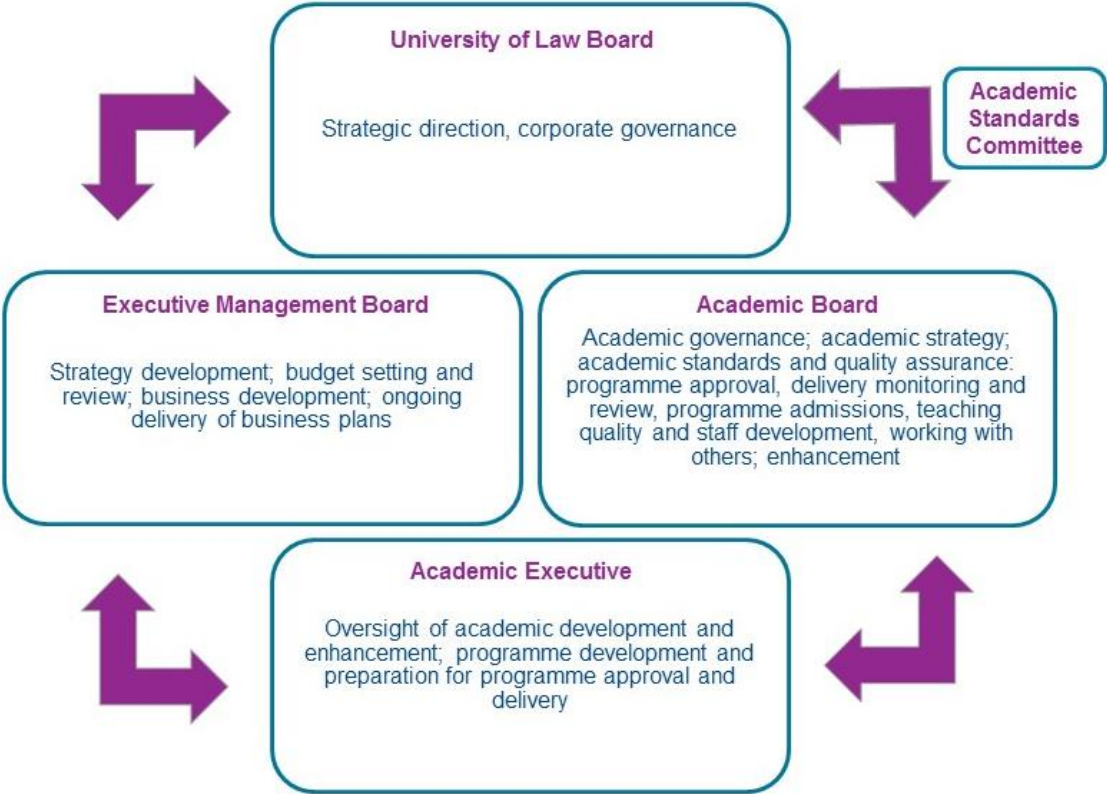
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‘The University through its Board, Committees, officers and policies shall control all academic matters of the University, including the setting of admissions criteria, the determination of individual applicant admissions decisions, all progress matters, the formulation of all academic policy and the setting and maintaining of all academic standards related to the awards it makes.’

Under these revised arrangements the power and responsibilities of the Academic Board as the academic authority for the University remain unchanged.

The terms of the Governance Agreement also maintain the overall governance structure and the relationship between the University of Law Board – responsible for strategic direction and corporate governance - and the Executive Management Board. The current Chair of the University of Law Board is the Rt Hon. Lord David Blunkett. The University’s Vice-Chancellor reports directly to the Chair of the University’s Board.

The relationship between the University of Law Boards, together with key and responsibilities is set out in the following diagram:



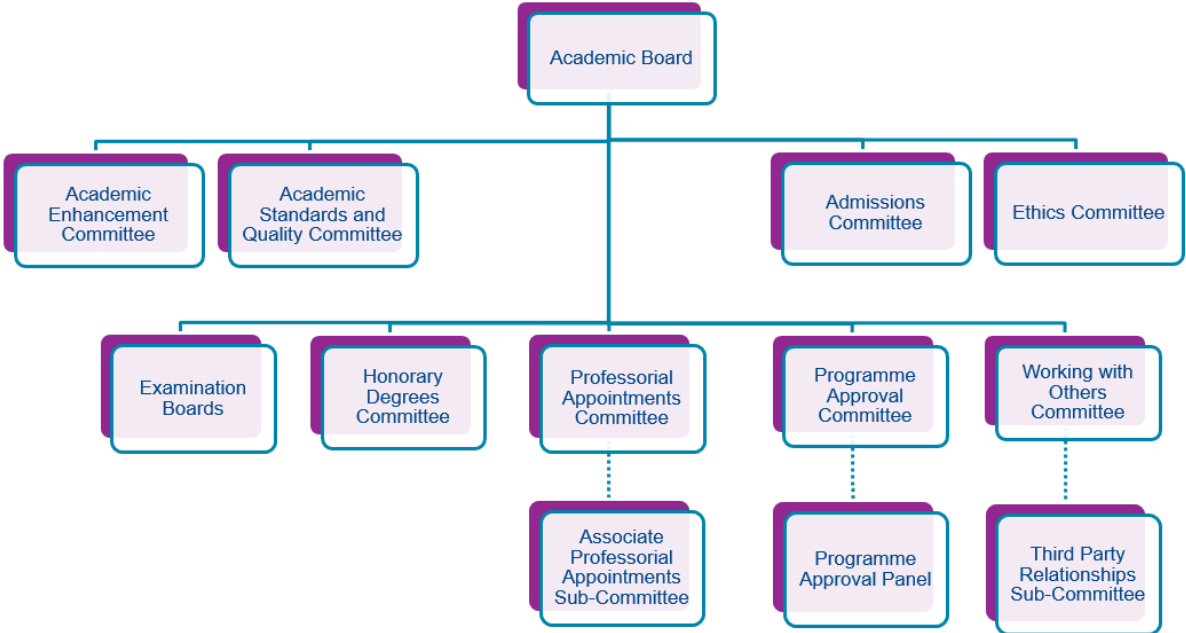
Diagrams setting out in detail the University’s management structure in relation particularly to academic governance, through boards and committees, are attached as an appendix: University Management and Committee Structures.

3 Academic Governance and Programme Management

3.1 Academic Board

The Academic Board remains the ultimate academic authority of the University and takes such measures and acts in such a manner as shall best promote the academic and professional work of the University. It safeguards the standards of the University’s awards and ensures that students receive a high quality academic experience whilst studying at the University. It oversees the University’s academic management, including the curriculum and all aspects of academic standards and quality assurance associated with the University as a degree-awarding body, including the programme approval and monitoring of programme delivery, setting and reviewing admissions policy, teaching quality and related staff development, working with others, and enhancement. It has the power to make regulations and policies, including those which delegate any of its powers.

Academic Board meetings are held three times a year and concentrate on major issues of academic strategy, policy, priority and academic standards and quality assurance. The academic governance, standards and quality assurance work of the Academic Board is mainly undertaken by its committees, which report to the Academic Board. The committee structure of the Academic Board is shown in the diagram below:



During 2015/16, these committees assumed more routine business, with meetings of key committees scheduled regularly. The Academic Registry has provided additional support to the committees and minutes and supporting documents are published on the University’s virtual learning environment.

Membership of the Academic Board comprises ex officio members, internal members, four external members from academic higher education or professional

education (at least two of whom should be from a legal background) and at least four student members from the current or recent student body (currently five).

The work of the Academic Board is assured by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC), a committee of the main University of Law Board to which it reports. The Academic Board reports formally to the ASC annually, but ASC meetings review key standards and quality indicators at its meetings, which are held four times a year. The ASC includes a student member from the current or recent student body.

3.2 Academic Management

(a) Academic Executive

The Academic Executive, formerly chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and now chaired by the Academic Registrar, has oversight of academic development and enhancement, including programme development and preparation for programme approval and delivery. Meetings of the Academic Executive take place 'virtually' on a weekly basis, one week reviewing product development and the other exercising general oversight of broader academic developments and enhancement. Membership comprises the Academic Registrar (Chair), Deputy Academic Registrar, Vice-Provost, Academic Enhancement, and the Directors of Business Programmes, Design and Assessment, and Conversion and Enrolment, ensuring representation from admissions, law and business programmes, enhancement, and programme approval / regulatory compliance. It provides essential two-way communication between the senior staff representing these areas and the Executive Management Board.

In broad terms:

- the Vice Provost, Academic Enhancement oversees the enhancement of the student experience and academic developmental needs of staff;
- the Director of Business Programmes manages the business school on a day-to-day basis, including responsibility for managing partnerships, staffing, the student experience, design and development of programmes and links with professional bodies;
- the Director of Design and Assessment is responsible for the development and implementation of the University's strategy for the creation and maintenance of the curriculum, structure and content of all programmes including the assessments and exam regime to underpin quality and standards of all programmes;
- the admissions function of the University is the responsibility of the Director of Conversion and Enrolment in addition to overseeing the conversion activity carried out by external teams on behalf of the institution; and
- the Deputy Academic Registrar oversees the approval process for all University programmes and leads on a number of regulatory compliance matters.

An additional level of oversight is provided by the Executive Management Board to which the Director of Academic Registry reports for academic provision.

(b) Programme Directors Group

The University's programmes are delivered nationally across the regional campuses and some online. All course materials and assessments are designed centrally by appropriately experienced academic staff, but who will also have teaching input into the relevant subject(s) and programme(s).

The Director of Design and Assessment is supported by a Programme Directors Group comprising the National Programme and Student Affairs Directors for each of the University's programmes or programme areas. These posts have overall responsibility for the quality of the delivery of relevant programmes. The Director of Business Development and Planning attends Programme Directors Group meetings so that there is a direct communication link with the Executive Management Board.

The University's ethos is to ensure the consistency and equivalence of student experience as far as possible across:

- the different campuses
- the various modules within programmes; and
- the different modes of study.

This has been consistently encouraged by the professional body regulators. It has also been welcomed by students where the approach and format of documentation is consistent across all modules of the particular programme.

Consistency and equivalence is achieved by:

- a common format of learning methodology, learning materials etc. across each programme;
- the appointment of module/subject leaders who co-ordinate the delivery of a particular subject, mentoring any inexperienced tutors;
- regular meetings between National Programme Directors and campus Programme and Student Leads, the latter being the heads of the relevant programmes at each of the University's campuses;
- cross-campus marking and moderation mechanisms using common scripts for initial marking and conference calls to set the standard and marking approach;
- external examiners and Examination Boards for programmes, **not** individual campuses; and
- the use of quantitative data, centrally, to monitor and review consistency, e.g. student questionnaires, assessment and progression data etc.

(c) Campus Deans Group

A Campus Deans Group is chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic Development. It meets fortnightly and acts as a communication link between the campuses and the Executive Management Board, taking an overview of issues arising in campuses, tracking student recruitment trends, design allocations (as needed) and discussion of enhancement initiatives from the programme teams.

(d) Operational Services Team

The Director of Operational Services is responsible for the delivery of client services, including administrative support and resources, across all campuses. Day-to-day management of these services is the responsibility of the Operational Services Team.

4 Quality Assurance and Monitoring

4.1 Responsibility for quality assurance

The table below gives an overview of how responsibilities for the management of standards and quality are distributed between the Academic Board and relevant functions involving academic management.

Managing Standards and Quality		
	Lead	Key tasks
Setting	Academic Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting formal academic standards and quality expectations, including for collaborative arrangements Ensuring that University's academic standards and quality assurance conforms with all applicable external benchmarks Approval of all regulations, policies, systems and procedures which are required to assure academic standards and quality Approving academic strategy
	Academic Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that all programmes are developed to meet standards required by the Academic Board, national frameworks and PSRBs Ensuring that enhancement activities are fully integrated in the development, including ongoing, of programmes
Delivering	Programme Directors Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that all programme assets, delivered either in hard copy or online to support the student learning experience, are of a high and consistent standard Ensuring that all assessments are of an appropriate and consistent standard Ensuring that the marking of all assessments is at an appropriate and consistent standard, that results are properly recorded and all students are treated fairly in the assessment process Ensuring equivalence of standards and quality of all programme collaborative arrangements
	Campus Deans Group and Operational Services Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring high quality teaching Ensuring the provision of high quality resources (buildings, classrooms and equipment, libraries, social areas, IT resources) to support the student learning experience Ensuring the provision of student support, pastoral care, disability support, careers service, curricular-related activities
Assuring	Academic Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual monitoring Review of all relevant student progression and achievement data, and related management information, including of collaborative arrangements Oversight and regulation of all Exam and Award Boards, including appointment of external examiners Approving standard for all University awards Undertaking programme periodic review

	Programme Directors, Campus Deans, Operational Services as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acting in response to all relevant quality assurance indicators and reporting on actions to the Academic Board• Identifying opportunities for enhancement• Ensuring that feedback is given on all aspects of programme and assessment design to facilitate the continuing enhancement of courseware
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The Academic Board, supported by the Academic Registry, is responsible for: the stewardship of the University's formal academic processes; approval of regulations, policies, and protocols required to regulate programmes and awards; approval, annual monitoring, periodic review and re-approval of programmes and modules; approval and monitoring of collaborative arrangements; academic enhancement; appointment of all external examiners; and authorisation of all University awards.

4.2 Quality assurance processes

The University relies on two distinct but related kinds of process to manage standards and quality: those which are formal and deliberative in nature; and those which form part of the overall, routine management of the University's business.

The former consist of conventional processes of approval, annual monitoring and periodic review and re-approval. Examples of the processes which are embedded within routine management are the regular, normally monthly or bi-monthly, meetings (face-to-face or virtual) of the Academic Executive, Programme Directors Group, Campus Deans Group and Operational Services Team.

4.3 Annual monitoring

The objectives of formal annual monitoring of programmes are to ensure that standards are appropriate and that our programmes deliver a quality learning experience to our students. It must ensure the continued effectiveness of the University's strategic approach to and enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices.

The aims of annual monitoring are:

- to evaluate the extent to which academic standards continue to align with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) and/or the Master's Degree Characteristics (MDC) as appropriate;
- to evaluate the extent to which academic standards continue to meet the requirements of the relevant PSRB if any;
- to evaluate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are attained by students;
- to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and of assessment and feedback practices in relation to the intended learning outcomes;

- to ensure that programmes, modules and components remain current and valid in light of changes in both the underlying substantive law and practice;
- to ensure continued alignment with the University's strategy and mission;
- to ensure that appropriate action is taken, in a timely manner, to remedy any identified issues, and to measure the effectiveness of such actions; and
- to measure student performance against appropriate indicators.

Programme monitoring policy and procedures are set out in the University's policies and protocols Q8 Programme Monitoring and Review.

4.4 External examiners

The primary role of external examiners is to confirm that:

- the assignments set for each summative assessment will enable students to demonstrate that they have achieved the outcomes specified for the module and programme concerned;
- internal examiners have adopted and consistently applied appropriate criteria and other benchmarks for purposes of grading these assignments;
- any concessionary powers have properly been applied; and
- the summative result and award proposed for each candidate is correct under the University's regulations and accords with the level as defined in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

External examiners consider and for some programmes formally approve all proposed summative assessments, assessment criteria and marking schemes. They receive a comprehensive sample of assessment scripts after these have been internally marked and moderated, together with supporting information. They receive reports and data required to enable them to confirm concessions decisions, summative results and awards.

The University's policy and protocols govern appointment of its external examiners. In approving appointments, the Academic Board's Academic Standards and Quality Committee may impose conditions such as probationary periods and/or mentoring arrangements for those who are new to external examining. The committee will reject appointments where proposed appointees do not meet the University's criteria or are deemed to have insufficient expertise. External examiners receive an induction from the University.

There is regular contact with external examiners throughout the academic year. External examiners attend University examination boards in person or by telephone in the case of those conducted by telephone conference. External examiners are encouraged to attend University on other occasions to familiarise themselves with the work of the University.

External examiner reports must cover:

- appropriateness of assessment standard;
- quality of design of assessments;
- standard of performance of students;
- marking standards (including consistency); and
- administration.

They are asked to confirm: that assessment policies were made clear; that they had access to all appropriate materials; and whether any comments made during the marking process had been taken into account.

External examiners send reports to the Academic Registry. The Registry prepares a digest and schedule of any issues which external examiners have raised, and then circulates the report and the digest to those responsible for quality assurance of the programme or modules to which they relate.

The National Programme and Student Lead Directors will set out, in the annual monitoring reports they submit to the Academic Board, the steps they propose to take in response to any issues relevant to their respective areas of responsibility.

Where an external examiner has raised any major issue, it will be specifically reported to the Academic Board via the Programme Directors or Academic Registry report as appropriate together with a note of proposed or actual action.

4.5 The use of quantitative and qualitative data

The University makes extensive use of two sets of centrally produced data for purposes of its management of academic standards and learning opportunities. The first is produced by the Academic Registry from the student records system and consists of detailed data relating to retention, progress and achievement. This is more relevant to standards. The second is derived from the annual University-wide student survey which is conducted by the Market Intelligence Team. This is more relevant to the quality of learning opportunities.

The Registry is responsible for the maintenance of accurate student records relating to assessments. It has regular contact with campus assessment office staff to encourage the sharing and dissemination of good practice; undertakes training; liaises with IT support to ensure that results calculations work correctly; checks and analyses results data; and uses that data to provide a wide range of detailed management information to programme teams and the Academic Board.

The University's comprehensive student records database and supporting software makes it possible to hold and manipulate data on student progression and achievement suitable both for annual monitoring and routine management purposes. The Academic Registry can, therefore, interrogate and report on this data by: student cohort and profile; mode of delivery; University campus; examination venue; workshop group; class-tutor; marker; assessment question paper; and – for some programmes - question.

On this basis, it produces at the end of each academic year a summary of results including overall pass, non-pass and withdrawal rates, broken down by mode and campus. The results are matched with factors such as the gender, previous educational background, ethnicity, disability and age of the students concerned. This in turn informs annual reports to the Academic Board.

The data thereby provides a powerful tool to assist the Academic Board to monitor standards; identify inconsistencies and trends and track diversity-sensitive issues. It also allows the University to assess the impact on student performance of any changes to curricula, syllabuses or learning and assessment methods.

Finally, data is used “in-year” to inform the marking and moderation process, including cross-campus comparison, equivalence of different examinations in the same subject or identification of individual markers who may be out of line. For example, where such an issue is identified in relation to a mock assessment, it can result in classroom observation, individual marker training or a broader cross-campus review prior to the formal assessment itself.

For purposes of managing learning opportunities, the University uses a number of centrally produced data sets. These include:

- The returns from the annual student survey. This covers all the resources which contribute, directly and indirectly, to learning opportunities.
- The returns from the Teaching Quality Evaluation Forms. These are distributed at the end of a module to enable students to feedback on the effectiveness of the teaching they received in that module. They are completed by the vast majority of students and are used for quality assurance and management of staff development.
- In relation to employability support services, the returns from the annual First Destination survey; the mid-year analysis of Careers Service activity in each campus; and the statistics produced for the purposes of the Pro Bono Service’s Annual Report.
- Nationally published data such as the National Student Survey (NSS), and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE).

In addition to its use within the annual monitoring, approval and review/re-approval processes, this data is used by a wide range of University and local level managers to monitor the performance of the services for which they are responsible. Under the University’s management structure, the Executive Management Board has prime responsibility for University-wide oversight and development of most of the resources and services devoted to learning opportunities. It uses this data, together with some additional sets which it has created for purposes of resource planning, budgeting and allocation, as part of the routine conduct of its business across the year.

4.6 Annual Student Survey

All students are invited to complete a ‘course survey’ to feedback on their experience of both the university and their course. Reports from all course surveys are provided

to senior management who work with their teams to create action plans on all issues arising from surveys.

4.7 Teaching Quality Evaluation Forms (TQEFs)

TQEFs are another method of collecting student evaluation – focusing only on the quality of teaching. They are completed by all students anonymously, usually towards the end of the teaching period, evaluating various aspects of teaching skills, identifying what worked well for them as learners, and offering constructive comments. Students are asked also to answer a question on the Form self-evaluating their own commitment e.g. their preparation work and their participation. Tutors keep a copy of their TQEFs so they can see both the scores for every question and also the students' narrative free text comments.

All TQEFs are also scanned, and software produces data reports from which the University can give tutors any key statistics.

The TQEF data reports also enable the University to see if the students' scores indicate any significant differences between subjects, or courses, or the University's campuses, often corroborating (and sometimes explaining or shedding light on) the separate and wider annual Student Survey.

The TQEF data reports are summarised in the Annual Monitoring Report for each programme. A brief summary report is also provided to the Academic Board on an annual basis and the results are included in quarterly Key Performance Indicator monitoring.

4.8 Focus groups

Focus groups of students, or sometimes former students, are convened to provide more qualitative data to inform design, delivery and enhancement. Focus groups are held during the development phase of new or amended programmes; in the first term of delivery of a new or amended programme; or to investigate further any specific issue.

4.9 Student staff liaison committee meetings (SSLC)

SSLCs offer students the chance to raise a variety of issues, usually through a Class Representative. Each class selects up to two Class Representatives. Not all items raised at SSLCs are problems that need resolving as they include positive feedback and general information provided to students by staff.

Actions are listed in SSLC minutes and the minutes are published to students via the Student Association microsite, 'Atticus'.

4.10 Other student feedback mechanisms

The Student Association was established in 2015 which created a systematic feedback process, headed by the Student Association President and assisted by the Student Association Administrator. The Association has Campus Officers

(remunerated positions representing each University campus), along with Course Representatives (volunteers representing each programme), Student Trustees and Student Members of Committees. These representatives meet at Student Parliament meetings, which is the main decision-making body of the Student Association.

The Student Association designed its own internal microsite, 'Atticus', and this is now the main online student engagement area. Atticus includes a range of information and online feedback mechanisms as well as a list of clubs and societies across all University campuses.

4.11 Assessment policies and regulations

The University has a number of policies governing assessment standards and the management of assessment: S1: Setting and maintaining academic standards; S2: Awards Framework; Q6: Assessment Policy; Q6.2 Marking and Moderation Policy. In addition, the University has protocols governing the management of assessments, including:

- a set of detailed protocols which cover assessment design;
- a set of protocols which cover the conduct of assessments and thus such matters as the submission of coursework assessments, disruption to examinations, the use of external examination centres and the use of computers to take examinations;
- a set of detailed assessment regulations for each programme which set out, for example: the requirements for successful completion of the programme concerned; eligibility for (and, where applicable, the classification of) any award; the processing and determination of concessions applications and the finalisation of summative results at both module and programme levels;
- examination board protocols, maintained by the Academic Registry, which set out procedures to be used in applying assessment regulations consistently across University programmes (for example application of the fit-to-sit regulation and requirements regarding supporting evidence); and
- other policies such as learning support for students with special needs, diversity, admissions.

4.12 Approval and periodic review

Approval and review involve a combination of formal and deliberate, and routine and business processes. These are set out in detail in the University policies Q1: Programme Design.

Following internal strategic and business approval, formal academic programme approval and re-approval is undertaken by the Academic Board through the Programme Approval Committee.

Appendix:

See University Management and Committee Structures

Version history:

Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
V1.0	VP – AGQS	Initial drafting group	15/07/13
V1.1	Registry Officer	Change to the document coding convention	March 2020
V1.1	Registry Assistant	extension to term of approval of 1 year.	October 2021