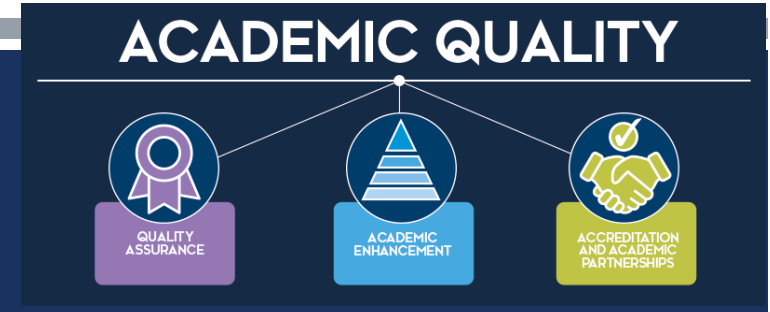




Managing Quality, Academic Standards and Academic Risk: **the Effectiveness of HWU's Quality Processes**

*Dr Maggie King, Head of Academic Quality,
April 2021*

SUMMARY: KEY PROCESSES



Managing Quality, Academic Standards and Academic Risk related to Taught Provision and the Student Experience (Foundation, UG, PGT, PGR). Two Key Aspects:

- 1) Key Internal and External Quality Processes
- 2) The Student Voice: Listening and Responding

Internal and External Quality Processes:

**How Heriot-Watt currently manages quality,
academic standards and academic risk**

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT



Scottish Sector Definitions:

- **Assurance**
 - “guaranteeing the quality and academic standards of educational provision”

- **Enhancement**
 - “taking deliberate steps to improve the effectiveness of the student learning experience”

An **ENHANCEMENT**-Led Approach to Quality

The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework:

- Innovative approach
- Emphasis on enhancement, not only quality assurance
- Focus on the whole student learning experience
- Collaboration and partnership

Assurance is embedded in Enhancement

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK

Quality Enhancement Framework: the enhancement-led approach to quality in Scottish Higher Education.

- Five key aspects, plus one-year Focus On Projects
- In place since 2003
- Developed in partnership by a range of agencies: the Scottish Funding Council, the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland and the National Union of Students Scotland
- Emerged from, and was a reaction to, quality assurance processes that seemed to be intrusive, emphasised compliance and concentrated on the current state of play, rather than on improvement.
- Founded on the principle that the purpose of quality systems in higher education is to improve the student learning experience



**ENHANCEMENT-LED
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**



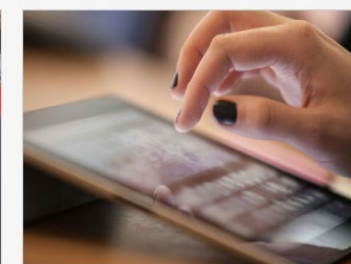
ENHANCEMENT THEMES



**INSTITUTION-LED
REVIEWS**



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



PUBLIC INFORMATION

**FOCUS ON
PROJECTS**

QAA UK: Transnational Education Reviews; UK Quality Code

CURRENT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEWS OF HWU'S QUALITY PROCESSES

What we currently do:

- Each year, Academic Quality reviews quality assurance and quality enhancement processes, adapting in response to user feedback and/or external requirements. Process changes endorsed by UCQS or UCLT
- Sector-wide fora enable us to draw on good practice to adapt or strengthen or quality processes
- ELIR provides an external, periodic perspective on the effectiveness of our quality processes and our ability to manage academic risk

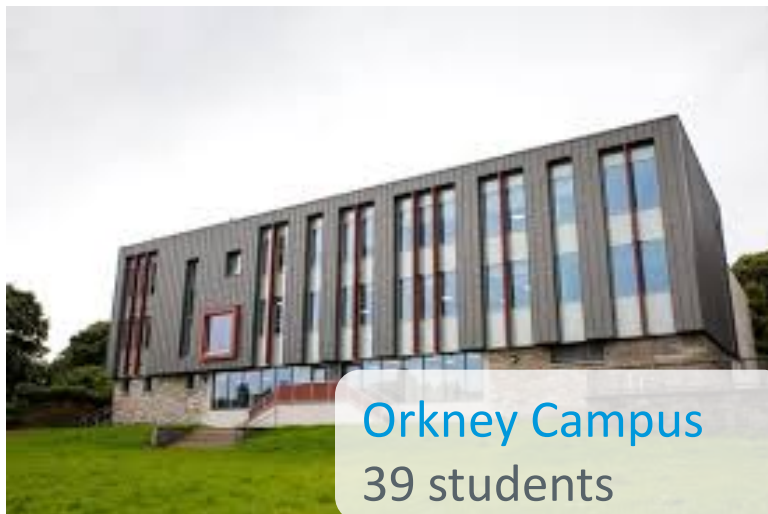
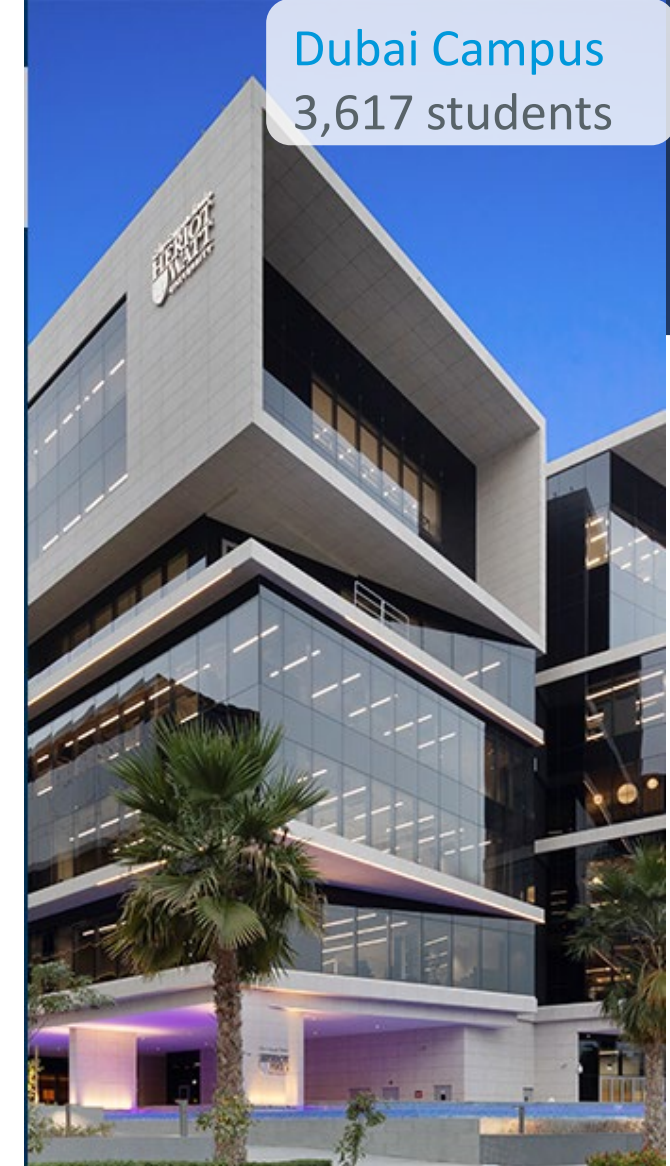
ELIR, November 2020:
HWU **commended** for
the effectiveness of its
global quality
processes, including
during COVID-19

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR NOVEMBER 2020): **COMMENDATION**

External validation of HWU's robust, effective global quality framework

The University has a mature and effective institutional quality framework which is well-understood by staff across all campuses and is supported by the use of clear and accessible documentation.

This has enabled an agile and effective response to the global coronavirus pandemic across all campuses, which was effectively led and coordinated at senior level, working across different national contexts.



Heriot-Watt: A Global Institution

GLOBAL STUDENT POPULATION

2018/19 Data

27,459 registered
students in total:

15,570 on 5 campuses

11,889 studying with an
academic partner or
online as an independent
distance learner



EXTERNAL QUALITY PROCESSES

Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland. UK)

Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)

Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland. UK)

Transnational Education Reviews (TNE)
(eg Hong Kong 2018, Malaysia 2019)

In-country Accreditation Authorities

Malaysia Qualifications Agency (MQA)
Knowledge and Human Development Agency (KHDA:
Dubai)

Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRBs)

UK and international accreditation of HWU
programmes

*Challenge of meeting
requirements of multiple
accreditation authorities/
organisations*

ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS

1

- Implementation of University's Academic Regulatory Framework
- Clear and consistent application of Regulations across all Schools, all modes and location
- Key role through Regulatory Framework (incl. policies and procedures) in assuring quality and academic standards globally
- Assessment and Examination

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/documents/regulations.pdf>



ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

Session 2020/21

(version 15 - updated after a meeting of the Senate on **3 September 2020**, which agreed modifications to Regulation 3 and Regulation 42). This update also takes into account Senate decisions on Regulation 4 (in July 2020), and Regulation 34 (June 2020).

Terminology in the Regulations

"Primary Academic Units" (from 2019):

In line with the definitions in the new [Charter and Statutes](#), which were approved by the Privy Council on 12 June 2019, the Senate has agreed that all references in the Regulations to "Schools" should be read as references to "Primary Academic Units".

"Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness" (from 2017):

In line with a change to its Standing Committees, the Senate has agreed that all references in the Regulations to "Senate Business Committee" should be read as references to "Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness".

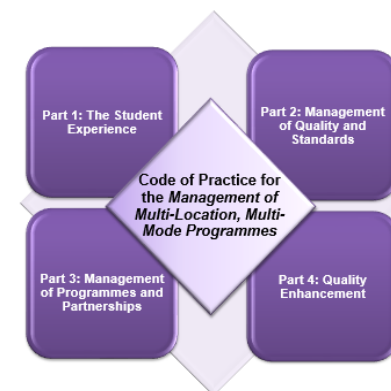
Regulation number	Regulation Title	Page No.
1.	General Regulation	3
2.	Admission	7
3.	Modular First Degrees • Schedule 1A : Degree of Bachelor in Combined Studies • Regulation 3 (Old): Non Modular First Degrees	10
4.	Postgraduate Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas	35

HWU'S CODE OF PRACTICE

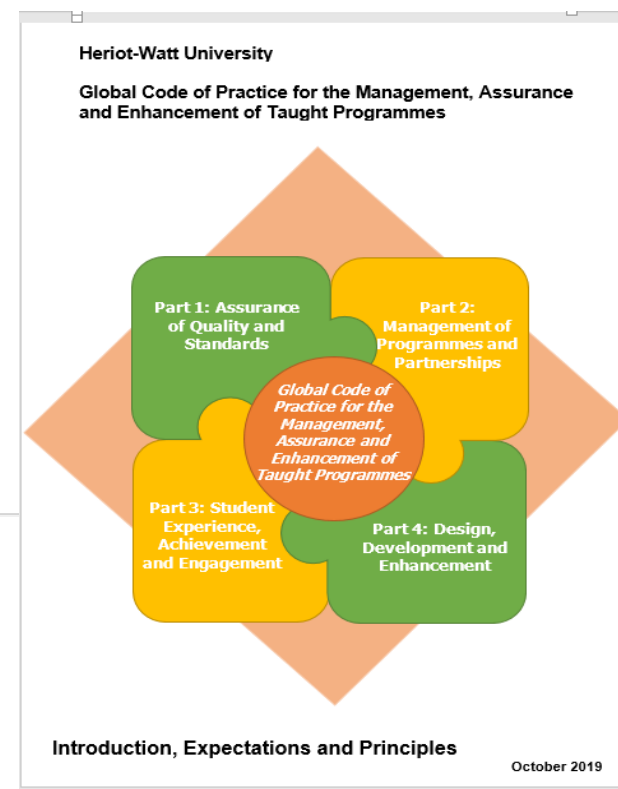
Global Code of Practice for the Management, Assurance and Enhancement of Taught Programmes

- A framework for managing, assuring and enhancing the quality and academic standards of programmes and of the student learning experience across all forms of taught provision (campus-based; via partner organisations (academic and industrial); through independent distance learning/online).
- Enables HWU to meet UK Quality Code, Competitions and Markets Authority, Scottish Funding Council and global accreditation
- BUT *"an ethos of enhancement and continuous improvement overarches and influences the implementation of this Code in practice. The University unequivocally adopts an **enhancement-led approach** to quality and encourages diversity and innovation."*

Academic Registry



February 2014



BRIEFING PAPERS: LEARNING AND TEACHING; QUALITY ASSURANCE 3

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC QUALITY

LEARNING AND TEACHING
BRIEFING PAPER 13 (VERSION 3)

DATE: JANUARY 2019
(reissue of August 2015 version)

STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE: THRESHOLD CRITERIA

HWU's Approach to the Student Learning Experience

Heriot-Watt University highly values the spectrum of choice it offers to students in mode and location, as well as the range of benefits available through different study options. This variety is, however, governed by a key, fundamental principle designed to safeguard academic standards across multi-mode/location provision:

identical academic standards; diversity of learning experiences

Minimum Threshold for the Student Learning Experience

The University has an ethos of supporting diverse student learning experiences and, therefore, is not overly prescriptive in specifying the criteria required of the "HWU student learning experience". However, the University does stipulate a minimum threshold for the learning experience of all students, irrespective of mode or location:

The quality of the learning experience will enable students to achieve all of the programme's specified learning outcomes

All Heriot-Watt programmes of study are required to meet the minimum threshold and to fulfil the following Expectation, as articulated in Part 1, Student Experience, of the University's *Code of Practice for the Management of Multi-Location, Multi-Mode Programmes*:

All Heriot-Watt programmes of study will provide students with the opportunity to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, and the University will seek to enhance the experience of students across all modes and locations.

Scope

Heriot-Watt's principles-based (rather than rules-based) approach to the student learning experience is encapsulated in the 35 key principles outlined in Part 1 of the Multi Code. Through these, programmes can meet the minimum threshold and Expectation. The principles cover:

- General Approach
- Application, Admission and Enrolment
- Induction
- Learning and Teaching
- Assessment
- Representation/Feedback
- Award
- Employment

Monitoring

The University monitors the student learning experience through Annual Monitoring and Review, Thematic Review and Periodic Review. Annual Monitoring and Review specifically considers the extent to which the learning experience enables students to achieve the programme's specified learning outcomes.

In addition, student surveys provide direct feedback from students on their learning experiences.

Enhancing Student Learning is a key strategic objective in the learning and teaching strategies of the University, Schools and relevant Professional Services.

References and Further Information

Contact: quality@hw.ac.uk Multi Code: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/heriot-watt-multi-code.htm>
Student Learning Experience: Threshold Criteria: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/student-learning-experience-threshold-criteria.pdf>

Learning and Teaching Briefing Papers

This briefing paper has been produced by Academic Quality and is one of a series related to Learning and Teaching. The briefing papers aim to provide a concise, informative overview of key policies, and include links to relevant procedures and templates.

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC QUALITY

QUALITY ASSURANCE
BRIEFING PAPER 7 (VERSION 3)

DATE: FEBRUARY 2019
(reissue of June 2013 version)

POLICY ON MODERATION OF ASSESSMENT

Key Principle

Schools must have a formal moderation policy, and must retain records showing that moderation has occurred.

The School's moderation activity will be reported on by the Chief External Examiner each year and reviewed through the Internal Audit process every three years.

School moderation processes must ensure equivalence between course assessment across all modes and locations of study.

Scope

The scope of the University and School policies covers:

- All qualifying assessments contributing to the degree awards associated with a programme:
 - All forms and variants of summative assessment (ie those contributing to the overall mark/grade and award of credit) across all modes and locations of delivery
 - All stages of the assessment process (from design of assessments to confirmation of results)
- Stage 3 assessments on programmes from which a large number Ordinary degrees are awarded.

Schools may opt to apply some or all of their moderation policy to assessments in non-qualifying courses.

Policy on Moderation of Assessment

In May 2013, the Senate approved, for implementation with effect from 2013/14, a Policy on the Moderation of Assessment. The aim is:

To assure the University that the standard of student learning required to achieve a specific grade, credit or award is consistent as far as possible across each discipline and is fair to all students.

Implementation

Each School:

- should have a moderation policy, which should meet the requirements of the University Policy,
- can use *Guide for Schools on the Moderation of Assessment* to produce or revise their own policies.
- should send their moderation policy to the Clerk of the University Committee for Quality and Standards.

Review

- The University Policy will be reviewed every three years by the University Committee for Quality and Standards (most recently, December 2018).
- School policies will be reviewed every three years as part of the Internal Audit process.

School Moderation Policy

As template for School moderation policies is provided in outline form in the University Policy and in detail in the Guide for Schools. The suggested categories are:

1. Policy Statement
2. Scope
3. Roles and Responsibilities
4. Reporting Procedure
5. Communication of the School Policy

Schools may adapt their moderation policies to reflect the extent of potential risk to equity of treatment of students or to consistency of quality and standards.

School Moderation Policies

A copy the School Moderation Policy, including revised versions, should be sent to the Clerk of the University Committee for Quality and Standards.

References and Further Information

Contact: quality@hw.ac.uk Moderation Policy + Guide: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/moderation-policy-guide.pdf>
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/moderation-policy-guide.pdf> Quality Assurance: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/quality-assurance.htm>
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/quality-assurance.htm> Learning and Teaching Policies and Procedures: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/learning-teaching-policies-procedures.htm>
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/learning-teaching-policies-procedures.htm>

Quality Assurance Briefing Papers

This briefing paper has been produced by Academic Quality and is one of a series related to Quality Assurance procedures. The briefing papers aim to provide a concise, informative overview of key processes, and include links to relevant policies, procedures and templates.

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/academic-registry/quality/learning-teaching/learning-and-teaching-briefing-papers.htm>

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/quality-assurance-briefing-papers.htm>

KEY TO MANAGING ACADEMIC RISK: IDENTICAL ACADEMIC STANDARDS

4

The most critical element of HWU's global quality framework

Programmes on 5
campuses,
partnerships,
online

How do we assure
academic
standards?

How do we
enhance the quality
of the student
learning
experience?

***Identical academic
standards; diversity of
learning experiences***

KEY PRINCIPLE OF IDENTICAL ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Identical academic standards; Diversity of learning experiences

- Same learning outcomes irrespective of location or mode
- Same academic standards irrespective of location or mode
- Different experiences in different locations and modes to meet the needs of different students
- Always sufficient to allow students to achieve the learning outcomes

***One Heriot-
Watt Degree
Worldwide***



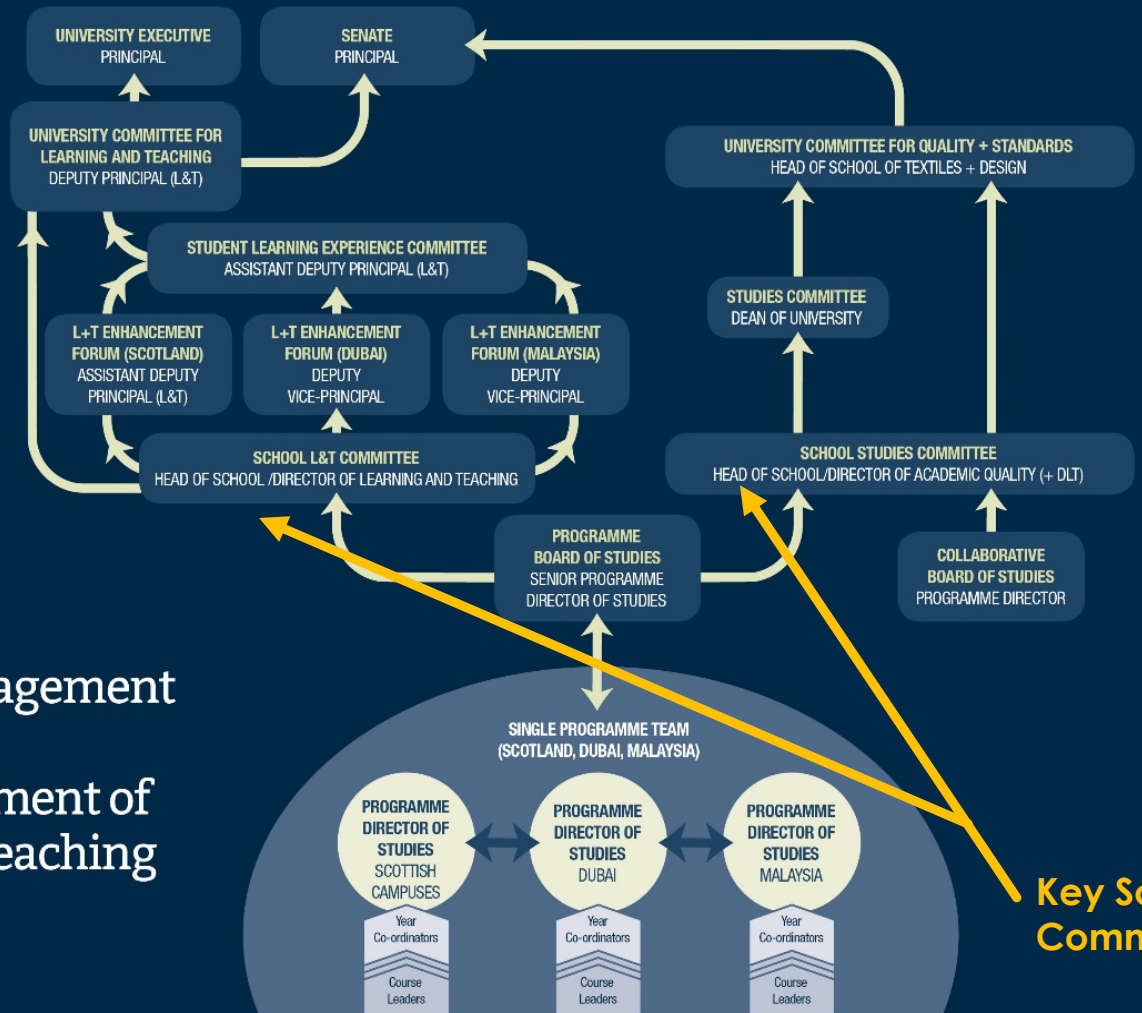
GLOBAL ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES (QUALITY, LEARNING AND TEACHING)

5



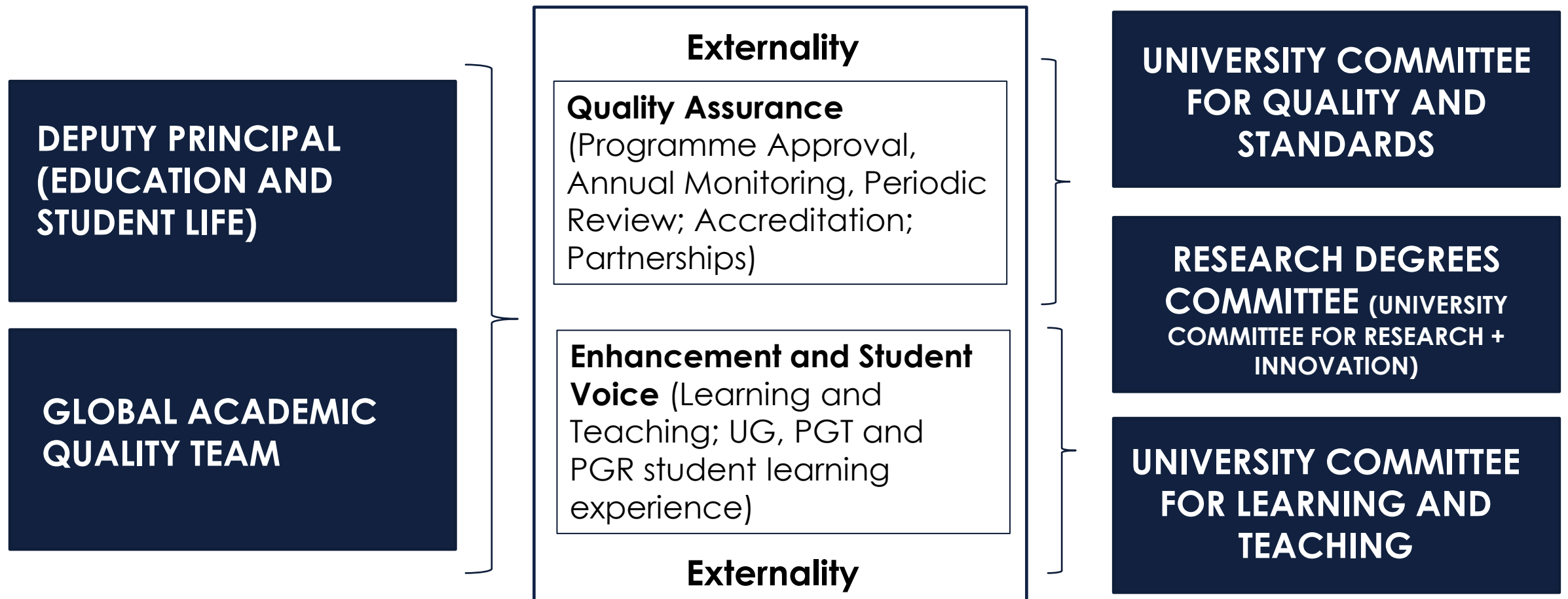
University
Committees are
mirrored in
Schools

Academic Management
Structures:
Global Management of
Learning and Teaching



Key School
Committees

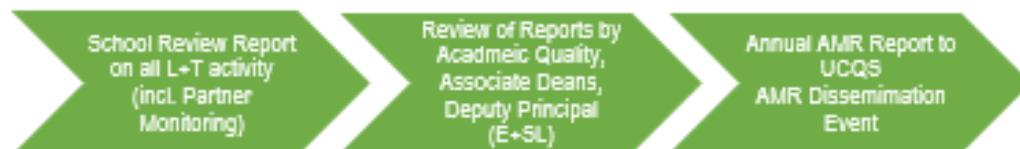
GLOBAL MANAGEMENT OF THE THREE KEY ASPECTS OF QUALITY



Programme Approval



Annual Monitoring and Review



Periodic Review: Academic Review



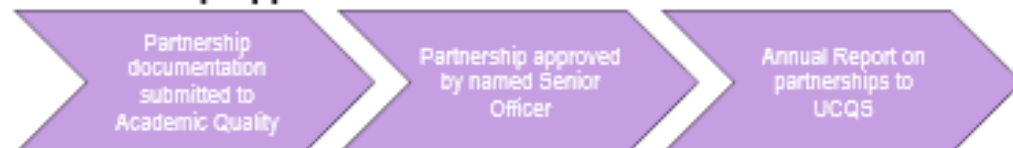
Periodic Review: Internal Audit



Examinations



Partnership Approval



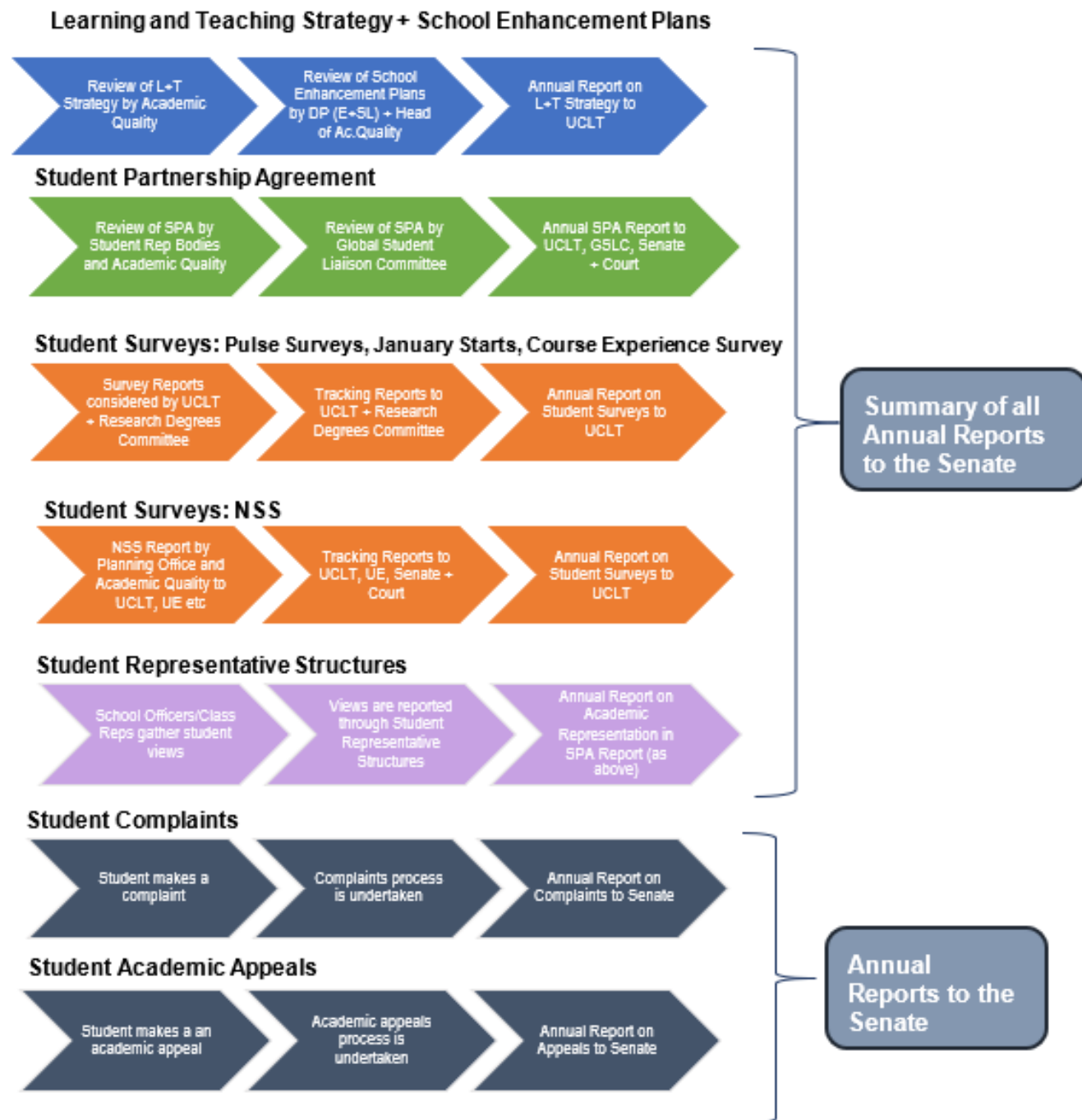
Summary of all Annual Reports to the Senate

Quality Processes in Action

1. Quality Assurance

Specific processes for managing higher risk areas:

- Internal Audit
- Off-Campus + Multi-Campus Exams Policies
- Risk Assessment in Partnerships



Quality Processes in Action

2. Enhancement and Student Voice

Global Engagement:

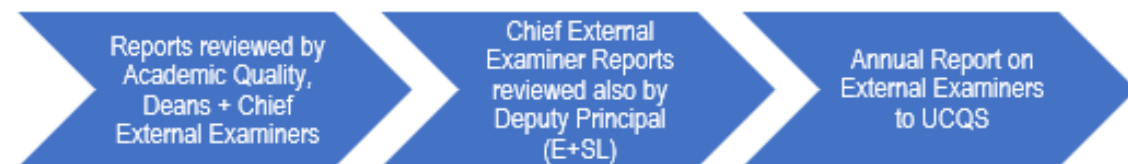
- Student Partnership Agreement
- Surveys: Foundation, UG, PGT, PGR
- Three Student Representative Bodies

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR 2020): **COMMENDATION**

Partnership Working with Students

Positive partnership working with student representative bodies (SRBs) - the University effectively engages with its SRBs, involving them in active consultation and decision-making processes. They have built, over a period of time, open and collegial relationships between senior management and student officers which demonstrate mutual respect, leading to increasing effective student representation and, in turn, effective enhancement of the student learning experience.

External Examiners



PSRBS



In-Country Accreditations



QAA Scotland Annual Discussion



QAA Reviews (ELIR and TNE)



Summary of all Annual Reports to the Senate

Quality Processes in Action

3. Externality

Specific processes related to higher risk areas:

- ELIR
- Transnational Education Review
- In-country accreditations
- PSRBs: outwith UK
- Chief External Examiners

OVER-ARCHING ANNUAL REVIEWS: BRINGING TOGETHER QUALITY ASSURANCE, ENHANCEMENT + STUDENT VOICE AND EXTERNALITY

Annual Institutional Report on Quality to the Scottish Funding Council

Annual Discussion with Quality Assurance Agency Scotland

Heriot-Watt University

Annual Institutional Report on Quality
to the Scottish Funding Council

2019/20

Approved +
signed off by
Court

Academic Quality
HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY

QAA Scotland: Annual Discussion with Heriot-Watt University
17 September 2020

List of Documentation

The following documents have been provided in advance for the Annual Discussion meeting:

A. Periodic Review 2019/20

1. Academic Review Process and Schedule (UK + Dubai)
 - a. Global Academic Review Process (future process)
 - b. Academic Review Briefing Paper
 - c. Academic Review Guidance Materials
 - d. Main Schedule of Academic Reviews
 - e. Interim Schedule of Academic Reviews (2020/21 and 2021/22)
2. Academic Review Process and Schedule (Malaysia)
 - a. Global Academic Review Process (future process)
 - b. Academic Review Process for Malaysia: Committee paper
 - c. Academic Review (Malaysia) Briefing Paper
 - d. Academic Review (Malaysia) Guidance Materials
 - e. Main Schedule of Academic Reviews
3. Academic Review Reports (UK)
Report, Action Plan, Enhancement Workshop:
 - a. Civil and Structural Engineering
 - b. Chemical Engineering
 - c. Mathematics
4. Academic Review Reports (Dubai)
 - No Reviews took place (no documentation to provide)
5. Academic Review Reports (Malaysia)
 - No Reviews took place (no documentation to provide)
6. Academic-Related Review of Professional Services
 - No reports for individual reviews as BOC Project is reviewing the Professional Services
 - a. Handbook - Academic-Related Review of Professional Services
 - b. Schedule
7. Internal Audits
 - No Internal Audits took place in 2019/20 (no reports to provide)
 - a. Internal Audit Handbook (updated March 2019)
 - b. Schedule of Internal Audits

B. Annual Summary Reports

8. Summary of Reports from External Examiners and Chief External Examiners, 2018/19 (report deferred until end of Semester 1 2020, and so not included here; [verbal update only](#))
9. Summary of Academic Reviews, 2019/20
10. Summary of Deans' Representatives at Examination Boards, 2020 (report deferred until end of Semester 1 2020, and so not included here; [verbal update only](#))
11. Summary Report of Annual Monitoring and Review 2019/20

C. Student Engagement 2019/20

12. Student Partnership Agreements 2019/20 and 2020/21
13. Results and Analysis of 2019 NSS-PTES-HWU Annual Survey
14. University 2019 Survey Action Plan

D. Enhancement 2019/20

15. University Committee for Learning and Teaching: Annual Strategic Review Report, 2019/20
16. Learning and Teaching Strategy 2018-2025

Note:

Enhancement Theme Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience: Heriot-Watt University, Year 3 Report - this has been deferred following extension from QAA Scotland and so is not included here; [verbal update only](#)

E. Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council 2019/20

17. Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council on Institution-Led Quality Review

F. ELIR4 January, March and November 2020 (no documentation provided)

ELIR4 Update on Resumed Review, 9-13 November 2020; [verbal report only](#)

G. Response to COVID-19 in AY2019/2020 and AY 2020/21

AY 2019/2020

18. Summary of COVID-related actions for Exams and Assessment in 2019/20
19. HWU's Approach to No Detriment Policy, April 2020
20. Academic Quality - Revised Processes and Deadlines, March 2020
21. Supporting Students Learning Online, March 2020
22. Summary of L+T COVID Student Survey, May 2020

AY 2020/2021

- a) L+T COVID Group - Preparing for AY 2020/21
- b) L+T COVID Group - Remit
- c) L+T COVID Group - Membership
- d) L+T COVID Group - Timeline
- e) L+T COVID Group - Decisions
- f) School Summaries - Responsive Blended Learning

H. Briefing Papers

24. L+T and QA Briefing Papers