1495 UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN | CELEBRATING 525 YEARS 1495 – 2020

Mapping Against the UK Quality Code

SECTION 8: MONITORING & EVALUATION

Academic Services | ***Quality & Policy***
academicservices@abdn.ac.uk

Authored: January 2022 | Updated: November 2023

SECTION 8: MONITORING & EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

The Quality Code is split into 12 themes, available online on the QAA website at https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code. As part of this, Monitoring and Evaluation is an important method of ensuring quality and standards throughout courses and programmes. The monitoring and evaluation processes are vital in ensuring the continuous improvement and enhancement of our pedagogical provision. This includes routes for feedback and engagement into these processes. The Quality Code describes this as follows:

> *Monitoring and evaluation of higher education is an essential process within providers, forming a fundamental part of the academic cycle. It can, and should, look at all aspects of the higher education experience. All higher education providers are involved in course monitoring and review processes as these enable providers to consider how learning opportunities for students may be improved.*

In practical terms, this ensures that all courses and programmes are fit for purpose and are upholding the appropriate academic standards. To do this, engagement from academic staff and students is vital. Processes such as these are often overseen by a Quality and Standards Committee (or Quality Assurance Committee) to ensure that standards are upheld appropriately. This focuses on enhancement and assurance that the aspects which work well are maintained.

In defining key terms that will be used frequently in this section, the Quality Code notes the following:

Monitoring: The routine collection and analysis of information that focuses on an area of work, project or programme/course, undertaken while the area of work, project or programme/course is ongoing.

Evaluation: The periodic, retrospective assessment of an organisation, an area of work, project or course, that might be conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from monitoring, current and historic, to develop an understanding and inform planning.

Providers: Any organisation involved in the provision of higher education to students and apprentices

Degree-awarding bodies: Organisations empowered to award higher education awards under relevant UK statutes.

SECTION 8: MONITORING & EVALUATION

The Quality Code has three different sections: the expectations for standards; the expectations for quality; and the guiding principles. The relevant expectations for standards and quality are detailed below. The Guiding Principles are mapped to the University's own policies, procedures and quality mechanisms. There are two separate sections for the University's practices, detailing what the University does and has in place to support that expectation/principle, as well as the supporting documentation, which includes reference to supporting policy, procedure, website or other document.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STANDARDS & CORE/COMMON PRACTICES	EXPECTATIONS FOR QUALITY & CORE/COMMON PRACTICES
The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.	Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.	The provider designs and/or delivers high quality courses.
The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.	The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.
	The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.
	The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES	UNIVERSITY PRACTICES	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
GUIDING PRINCIPLES		
1. Providers agree strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation to ensure processes are applied systematically and operated consistently. Providers have strategic guiding principles that set out why monitoring and evaluation takes place and what it intends to achieve. They ensure that activities are relevant, useful, timely and credible. The processes used, and the results from monitoring and evaluation activity, are recorded clearly and are themselves reviewed periodically to ensure they remain fit for purpose.	The University's Academic Quality Handbook includes all relevant strategic and operational information relating to the monitoring and evaluation of education provision. The Handbook provides details of the University's policies and procedures for Annual Course and Programme Review, Internal Teaching Review and our processes for obtaining student feedback. All courses and programmes are monitored annually through the University's Annual Course and Programme Review procedures. These procedures draw upon a range of feedback to inform the process of review including student feedback through the course feedback form, Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings, feedback from External Examiners, Programme Advisory Boards and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies together with analysis of course data and feedback from the course delivery team and input from class representatives. While Schools manage the Annual Course Review process reviewing these internally, all forms are submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) . Annual Programme Reviews are submitted by Schools to QAC and are discussed with Schools with any policy issues being referred to relevant committees for consideration, as appropriate. A periodic Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process is used to review all teaching-related activities at a School / Discipline level in line with the requirements of the QAA (Scotland) Quality Enhancement Framework. The review process seeks to (i) provide assurance regarding quality and standards of provision; (ii) promote dialogue in areas where quality could be improved; (iii) identify good practice; (iv) encourage and support critical reflection on current practice; and (v) encourage and support engagement with relevant professional services. In preparation for the ITR, Schools submit an evidence-based critical analysis and curriculum map(s). The ITR visit by a panel including External Subject Specialist(s) follows up on key themes identified from the School documentation and includes a Pedagogic Partnership Session which provides a forum for an	Academic Quality Handbook (Webpage) Monitoring & Review (Webpage) Annual Course & Programme Review (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) Course Feedback Form (Webpage) Class Representation (Webpage) Enhancement Themes (Webpage) Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (Webpage) New to UoA Survey (Webpage) Undergraduate Experience Survey – in progress Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (Webpage) Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (Webpage) Graduate Outcomes (Webpage) NSS (Webpage)

	open discussion of challenges leading to the production of a School Action Plan. A Report of the ITR is produced and the School is required to submit to QAC annually, a follow-up report detailing progress in regard to the action plan. A dedicated meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee considers all ITR follow-up reports to ensure consistency in approach across all Schools and institutional oversight. Student feedback is also a key component of the University's processes of monitoring and evaluation. The University use Course Feedback Forms to seek views from students on what they have liked about the course and what they have not liked together with areas of good practice. This process provides valuable feedback to course coordinators to inform review of their course and to identify any changes requiring to be made for the next year. The feedback from this process informs the Annual Course and Programme Review process. The University places strong emphasis on the involvement of students on committees and in decision making. Each School has an AUSA Students' Union elected School Convener who is the lead student representative for each School. They work closely with the elected class representatives to feed any concerns about courses and programmes to the School. The School Convener (or other student representative) attends School-level committees (e.g. School Education Committee) where they are able to contribute to discussions around future courses and programmes, policy matters, feedback (e.g. NSS results) and other matters. At a University level, AUSA Students' Union Representatives are also full members of all Education committees including the University Education Committee and the Quality Assurance Committee along with Senate which is the University's main academic decision-making body. Class representation also plays a role in evaluation, as class representatives are invited to formal Student-Staff Liaison Committees to raise course, programme, discipline or School-level issues. These issues are also fed into the annual monitoring processes.	

	In terms of wider student feedback, the Aberdeen Student Experience and the New to UoA Surveys are used to gauge feedback on non-academic experience, whilst the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and NSS are used to gauge student feedback on the student's academic experience. The surveys allow the University to enhance and improve their services based on the feedback provided. This is then dissolved to students by means of 'You Said: We Did' messaging, which helps to close the feedback loop. The University has engaged actively with the QAA's Enhancement Themes and utilises the strategic framework this provides to enhance our educational provision. The University has continued the good practice associated with the Enhancement Themes despite the conclusion of the theme. All Schools and Professional Services Directorates develop annual plans which are reviewed centrally by the Senior Management Team and inform budget setting and planning. Within these, Schools and Directorates are required to comment on their strategic priorities relating to Education and how these align to, and progress made towards Education-related performance indicators. These plans also seek comment on alignment to the Aberdeen 2040 Strategic themes.	
2. Providers normalise monitoring and evaluation as well as undertaking routine formal activities. Effective monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing activity incorporated into everyday, standard practice. Formal activities - such as periodic review of courses, annual monitoring and workshops - are set in place on a routine basis. Progress against plans developed in response to	The University operates a range of formal mechanisms of monitoring and evaluations as outlined in section 1 above. While these formal review processes are valuable, we also use more informal and ongoing mechanisms to keep activities under review. We greatly value and encourage feedback to ensure ongoing enhancement of the student and academic experience. The student feedback webpages offer opportunities to provide feedback on an ongoing basis on the student and academic experience, particularly through the student feedback form and Ask sessions, as well as identifying other avenues that students can provide feedback, such as the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey, New to UoA Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.	Student Feedback (Webpages) You Said, We Did (Webpage) Monitoring & Review (Webpage) Annual Course & Programme Review (Webpage) Quality Assurance Committee (Webpage) Course Feedback Form (Webpage) Class Representation (Webpage) External Examining (UG/PGT) (Webpage) External Examiners (PGR) (Webpage) Roles and Responsibilities of External Examiners, AQH (Document) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Programme Advisory Boards (Webpage)

the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation is checked.	With all feedback, the University is keen to ensure that the feedback loop is closed, particularly with the 'You Said, We Did' initiative, which aims to inform students of the changes that were made as a result of student feedback. In terms of the academic environment, while the Annual Course and Programme Review processes provide a formal review of academic provision, course and programme coordinators use more informal mechanisms such as informal mid-course surveys to seek early feedback from students enabling them to, where possible, adjust their provision to address any issues immediately. Likewise, through the AUSA Students' Union Sabbaticals, our School Conveners and Class Representatives, there is close partnership between the University and the student body and as such any issues that arise can be addressed in a proactive and timely manner. The University uses External Examiners to feed into all our Education provision. The role includes consultation on assessment for a particular course, and membership of Examiners' meetings. In the latter aspect of the role, they provide external verification and comparability of student assessment and results aiming to ensure that standards are achieved and maintained. Part of their role includes highlighting good practice as well as identifying areas for development. In some Schools, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) input into course and programme provision. For example, PSRBs may have a role in curriculum design to meet professional requirements. Input is also obtained from Programme Advisory Boards. These Boards include expertise from industry and employers and can provide expertise in teaching, learning and assessment.	
3. Providers clarify aims, objectives, activities and	The University uses data to provide an evidence base to inform institutional and school level decision making. As part of an ongoing	Data Protection (Webpage) Data & Business Intelligence Hub (webpage)

actions, and identify the key indicators, issues, questions, targets and relevant information/data. Providers decide and prioritise what they will monitor and evaluate, fitting with internal and strategic priorities and external requirements, and within available resources, establishing systems which are ongoing and pre-emptive rather than simply reactive.	project to enhance access to data, the University has invested in a new business intelligence platform, Microsoft PowerBI, which allows Schools to access data pertinent to their own School and provides data on areas such as student population, student admission applications, research income, research applications and awards, Research Excellence Framework (REF) results, Graduate Outcomes results, National Student Survey (NSS) results, and degree classifications data. Further data will be added to this platform in the next phases of the project. The University uses survey data to inform decision making and enhancement to the student experience. Such survey information includes National Student Survey data, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey. More ad hoc surveys are also used to ascertain feedback on particular services or specific topics. These various metrics are used by University and School Committees to provide an evidence base to support monitoring and evaluation and to inform decision making. Such information is also used as part of the Institutional Planning Process (see 1 above) through use of key performance indicators to enable monitoring of progress towards objectives. Such metrics are also used in our processes for monitoring and review of teaching and learning: our Annual Course (ACR) and Programme Review (APR) processes and our Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process. In ACR and APR, analysis of course and programme data is an important component of the process. Similarly, within the ITR process, an action plan is identified with key performance indicators identified as to how the School will achieve the actions as set out.	Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) (ITR) Monitoring & Review (Webpage) Annual Course & Programme Review (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage)
4. Providers decide whom to involve in the different stages of monitoring and evaluation, clearly defining	The Vice-Principal (Education) is responsible for leading the effective delivery of the University's strategic objectives for Education including quality assurance and enhancement.	Monitoring & Review (Webpage) Class Representation (Webpage) Student-Staff Liaison Committees, Academic Quality Handbook (Document) Annual Course & Programme Review (Webpage)

roles and responsibilities and communicating them to those involved. Providers identify key internal and external stakeholders, particularly students, allowing consideration of how they can be involved and contribute to the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems, analysis of data and the communication of findings.	A description for the responsibilities of the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the School Director of Education role is available on the University's website. These positions have an extensive focus on the enhancement and assurance of quality. The University committee structure and remits, including the Quality Assurance Committee and the School Education Committee, have a focus on the assurance, management and enhancement of quality issues. The University's annual monitoring processes are outlined in the Academic Quality Handbook and detail relative roles and responsibilities. These are summarised below: ▪ Students should be involved in the evaluation of courses and programmes, and do so by means of Course Feedback Forms, Class Representation and Student-Staff Liaison Committees. This feedback feeds into the annual monitoring and periodic monitoring processes. ▪ Programme and Course Coordinators are responsible for completing annual course and programme review forms. ▪ External Examiners are responsible for completing their External Examiner Report. ▪ Heads of School and School Directors of Education are responsible for reviewing annual course and programme review forms, as well as providing a response to External Examiner Reports. ▪ Members of the Academic Services team, part of the Directorate for Academic Services and Online Education, are responsible for undertaking an initial review of APR and External Examiner Reports and providing reports on these for consideration by the Quality Assurance Committee. The Team is also responsible for communicating required deadlines relating to annual monitoring processes to all parties and ensuring that External Examiners have the correct information with regard to their role (e.g. contract, roles and responsibilities). ▪ Members of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) are responsible for overseeing annual course and programme reviews and responses to External Examiner reports. These are considered at a	Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Roles and Responsibilities of External Examiners, Academic Quality Handbook (Document) External Examiners Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement Description (Webpage) School Director of Education Role Description (pp.12-14) (Document)

	dedicated QAC meeting where any emerging good practice can be discussed and disseminated or emerging themes can be identified for further discussion/action.	
5. Providers evaluate, analyse and use the information generated from monitoring to learn and improve. Providers ensure their processes periodically analyse and assess data they collect to generate evidence used in quality assurance and enhancement, internal decision-making, planning and learning processes.	The University makes extensive use of quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. survey outcomes, assessment data and key performance indicators) to inform decision making and support its evaluation. The University's Annual Course and Programme Review place an emphasis on enhancement, development, and improvement. These aspects are integral to the processes, ensuring that the University is consistently improving, based on feedback received and perceptions of what is working and what is not. Within the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process, the pedagogic partnership session between staff and students leads to the development of a School action plan identifying actions for improvement and enhancement provision. These sessions also provide a valuable opportunity to share good practice more widely throughout the School or a particular discipline. The University places a strong emphasis on enhancement and as such actively collects and shares examples of good practice. These are valuable resources which academic colleagues can draw upon to inform their pedagogic practices.	Monitoring & Review (Webpage) Annual Course & Programme Review (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Good Practice (Webpage)
6. Providers communicate outcomes from monitoring and evaluation to staff, students and external stakeholders. Providers put in place mechanisms to share, discuss and interpret findings, for example, periodic internal meetings and specific evaluation workshops.	Communications to students are managed through the Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing team and are handled through the University's Student Communication Policy. The outcomes of course evaluations and student feedback are often relayed in a few ways: ▪ You Said, We Did ▪ Student-staff Liaison Committees ▪ Focus groups ▪ Informal feedback to student concerns	Student Communication Policy (Policy) – note this is currently being reviewed Communication with You (Webpage) Course Evaluation (Closing the Feedback Loop) (Webpage) You Said, We Did (Webpage) Student-Staff Liaison Committee (Webpage)

These systems may also facilitate conversations on actions required and draw out learning points for the provider and other stakeholders.	External Examiner Reports are uploaded to the Virtual Learning Environment, MyAberdeen, for all students to access, to ensure the closure of the feedback loop. Feedback is also provided to External Examiners following consideration of their reports by Schools and the Quality Assurance Committee. Similarly, Schools feedback to Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies in regard to any recommendations made in their reports. The University places a strong emphasis on enhancement and as such actively collects and shares examples of good practice. These are valuable resources which academic colleagues can draw upon to inform their pedagogic practices.	
7. Providers take account of ethics and data protection requirements when designing and operating monitoring and evaluation systems. Providers have informed consent from any participants, ensure anonymity in the communication of findings, and respect GDPR and all other data protection laws.	The University's Data Protection Policy outlines responsibilities in regard to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Retention policies ensure the appropriate management of data and ensure it is disposed of appropriately when no longer required. Staff including External Examiners are trained on how to deal with potentially sensitive or confidential information. Information is provided in induction materials pertaining to the handling of data. The University makes use of key principles in relation to inclusivity and accessibility for all students accessing their education. An Inclusivity and Accessibility in Education Framework has been developed which aims to enable inclusion and accessibility to be fully integrated into all aspects of the design and delivery of learning, teaching and assessment. The Framework draws together relevant guidance, policies, resources, support and specialist training relating to accessibility and inclusivity. The University operates Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that no group is unduly discriminated against and to ensure activities are carried out in a fair and transparent way. All new policies should be reviewed by	Data Protection (Webpage) Inclusivity and Accessibility (Webpage) Inclusivity and Accessibility Framework (Webpage) Equality Impact Assessment (Webpage) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Policy)

	means of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure they are fit for purpose in an inclusive environment.	