QUALITY MANUAL

2023/24

**Quality and Academic Services,
Academic Registry**

Title: Quality Manual					
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The University holds Degree Awarding Powers that enable it to confer both taught and research degrees. As an independent body, it has overall responsibility for the academic standards and quality of the qualifications it awards, wherever and in what context those awards are conferred, including those awards validated for collaborative partners. This Quality Manual specifically describes the University's Quality Framework: how it sets and maintains robust academic standards and assures and enhances the quality of learning opportunities for taught courses. It applies equally to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD) and covers all provision carrying USW credit at level 3 and above in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Additional guidance for collaborative arrangements can be found in the Partnerships Manual and for Degree Apprenticeships, can be found in the Degree Apprenticeships Manual

The processes developed within the University's Quality Framework align with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales' Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

The approach to quality underpins delivery of the Academic Plan and 2030 Curriculum Project. For example, by focusing attention on course identity, on impact on the learner, improved student engagement, and a consistent focus on enhancement.

In this manual, "we" or "our" means the University of South Wales.

1.2 Definitions

Our definitions in relation to academic standards, academic quality and quality enhancement are as follows:

a) **Academic standards:** the level of achievement a student must reach to gain an academic award. For similar awards, the threshold level of attainment should be the same across the UK.

b) **Academic quality:** the learning opportunities provided to students to assist them in achieving their award and how well these opportunities are managed. It is about ensuring that the learning, teaching, assessment, support and resource environment are appropriate for delivering effective learning outcomes.

c) **Quality enhancement:** the process of taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities and develop a culture of improvement that is forward looking.

1.3 Principles

Our Quality Framework is guided by the following principles:

a) **Completeness:** Processes apply to all credit-rated University provision including collaborative programmes. For information on research degrees, please refer to the [Research Degree Regulations](#).

b) **Enhancement-led:** The Quality Framework ensures that our quality assurance and quality enhancement practices remain interrelated, and our quality assurance processes support the enhancement agenda.

c) **Efficient and proportionate:** The Quality Framework is lean, fit for purpose and designed to ensure rigorous assessment of academic standards while using a risk management approach to target activity and improvement where it is needed and minimise the impact on workloads.

d) **Impactful and continuous:** The Quality Framework is dynamic, proactive and forward-looking. Processes are not static and align with other internal processes in order to maintain a coherent, holistic and continuous approach to quality management that is impactful.

e) **Objectivity:** Processes are informed by the views of external experts and bodies.

f) **Devolved Responsibility:** Staff are collectively responsible for maintaining academic standards. Responsibility and accountability are located at the appropriate levels, and evaluation takes place at the closest point possible to the actual learning and teaching.

g) **Informative and transparent:** Reliable data and information is generated and prompts effective and timely action through evidence-based action planning.

h) **Partnership:** Maintaining standards and improving learning opportunities is a collective concern and quality processes invite collaboration between academic and professional departments in delivering improved outcomes for learners.

i) **Agility and Flexibility:** The Quality Framework is designed to be flexible and responsive to future change.

1.4 Quality Framework Process

The following processes comprise our Quality Framework:

a) Course Lifecycle
b) Continuous Monitoring
c) Course Review and Revalidation
d) Management of Partnership Provision[1]

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[1] Further detail may be found in the Partnerships Manual

1.5 Key Themes within the Quality Framework

1.5.1 Responsibility and Accountability

As described in 'roles and responsibilities' below[2], the management of academic standards, quality assurance and quality enhancement is based on five tiers of operation: University; faculty (or College in the case of RWCMD); subject area; course; and module. Managers are empowered to ensure that responsibility for quality is located at the appropriate level, within their area(s). The aim is to ensure that accountability for quality and enhancement is located as close to the point of delivery where that is possible.

1.5.2 Risk Management

We continue to adopt a risk management approach to quality that enables us to build competence and resilience whilst focusing on enhancement as a means of supporting innovation and disseminating good practice.

A risk management approach:

   a)   Enables us to assess future potential risks and make a proportionate response to any risks that may arise.

   b)   Builds a culture of effective judgement at all levels of quality assurance and enhancement.

   c)   Directs resources to generate the greatest impact and allows appropriate risk taking where outcomes are considered to be good.

   d)   Considers past performance of a tier of operation or a partner, but also considers competence of the course team, subject area, faculty or partner moving forward, to manage risks and deliver improvement, mindful of the contexts within which it is operating now.

   e)   Recognises that 'one size fits all' is not an efficient or effective style of management.

   f)   Ensures that attention can be given to areas that are in most need.

We continue to use Risk-rating (High, Medium and Low) in our Quality Framework to assign and clearly represent a level of risk that in turn triggers different levels of oversight of an activity/area. This may result in interventions, drawing on different expertise or resource from within the University or externally.

1.5.3 Externality

Externality is central to our approach to quality assurance and enhancement. External and independent expertise is obtained at key stages in our processes for setting and

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[2] This section already exists in the manual and is therefore not duplicated here

maintaining academic standards. It is sought to verify that our academic standards are set in accordance with the national and appropriate European reference points but also to confirm that our internal requirements are being consistently implemented. Where external panellists are used in key activities, the University will endeavour to appoint an external panellist who is currently, or has recently been, employed by a higher education institute to support an external panellist from an employer or industry context.

Staff are expected to remain cognisant of relevant sector-wide benchmarks and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements. Colleagues are actively encouraged to engage with their subject areas nationally and where appropriate, internationally, and to take on external examining and/or other roles to ensure that our work continues to be informed by best practice in each subject area.

The University sets the strategic direction for the faculties, with all faculties and partners expected to develop curriculums in line with this. The University and its Partners have a broad curriculum offer that reflects the needs of local communities and the local employment opportunities. The University works extensively and strategically with the Welsh and English Governments, and employers to develop curriculum opportunities that respond very effectively to labour market information and government priorities and have extended its subject delivery areas extensively in line with this.

The University of South Wales' Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy is aimed at assuring and developing the highest standards in teaching, learning and assessment. These processes have been aligned to external reference points, inclusive of her Majesties Inspectorate Estyn (Wales) and Ofsted (England) where relevant.

1.5.4 Enhancement-led

We continue to maintain our academic standards and assure academic quality by reviewing strategy, policy and practice in relation to quality assurance but there is an increased and deliberate focus in the Quality Framework on enhancement of learning opportunities, leading to improvements in the student experience. There is alignment between the Quality Framework and University strategies to improve learning opportunities (e.g., Academic Blueprint, Assessment Tariff and 2030 Curriculum Design Principles). Additional guidance can be found in section 9.

1.5.5 Students as Partners

We are committed to hearing and responding appropriately to the student voice and to engaging students as partners in improving learning opportunities. The Quality Framework aims to engage all students individually and collectively in the assurance and enhancement of their educational journey, encouraging them to be active and engaged in shaping and enhancing their learning experiences. We have a strong commitment to students as partners in their educational experience, drawing upon the principles outlined in the Quality Framework and good practice shown in the Student Partnership in Welsh Higher Education and Further Education Institutions - HEFCW report to underpin our work. Additional guidance can be found in section 9.

1.5.6 Roles and Responsibilities

The management of quality assurance and enhancement is based on five tiers of operation: University; faculty (or College in the case of the RWCMD); subject area (or equivalent); course; and module. Their indicative responsibilities are outlined in the table below:

TIER	GATE KEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	STUDENT VOICE
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor	Responsible for academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement for all courses leading to an award of the University. The Board is supported by members of the University Executive, the Principal of RWCMD, Deans and Directors/Heads of Corporate Services. The Vice Chancellor may convene, as necessary, other groups to address issues concerned with quality assurance and enhancement.	Academic Board	SU President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Delegated responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement.	Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (LTEC)	SU Education Officer
Gateway 4: Faculty/ College	Deputy Dean / Principal of RWCMD	Oversees academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement at the Faculty/College level, assisted by members of the Faculty/College Executive.	Faculty/College Quality Assurance Committee (F/CQAC), Faculty/College Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (F/CLTEC)	Student Voice Representative
Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject (or equivalent)	Oversees academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement at the subject level.	F/CQAC, FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group, F/CLTEC	Student Voice Representative
Gateway 2: Course	Course Leader	Oversees academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement at the course level, by monitoring the health, future challenges and developments of a course or group of courses. Where the course is also delivered through collaborative arrangements, the Course Leader's counterpart is also consulted.	F/CQAC, F/CLTEC, Student Staff Course Liaison Group (SSCLG) or equivalent.	Course Representative

Gateway 1: Module	Module Leader	Oversees academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement at the modular level by monitoring the health, future challenges and developments of a module or group of modules Where the module is also delivered through collaborative arrangements, the Module Leader's counterpart is also consulted.		All students

Table 1: Indicative Roles and Responsibilities for Academic Standards, Quality and Academic Services

We are supported in the management and implementation of our quality processes by the Quality and Academic Services (QAS) Team, as part of Academic Registry, and by Registry Services at the RWCMD. Each Faculty has a Quality and Academic Services Manager (QASM) assigned to it by the Head of Quality and Academic Services (QAS). The College has an Academic Registrar and a Quality and Registry Officer whose roles encompass this work.

1.6 Structure of University Courses

Undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses comprise modules usually worth 20 credits or multiples thereof. Each 20-credit module represents 200 notional learning hours. Any courses which depart from this structure will require special consideration by the Quality Assurance Committee via FQAC.

Full details concerning the structure of courses can be found in the Regulations for Taught Courses, available on the Academic Registry website, and the Academic Blueprint guidance, available on our Faculty SharePoint websites.

1.7 Key Dates

Process	Last date for Submission/Event
Initial course proposals – e.g. introduce a new course	18 months prior to delivery of the course
Modification – e.g., introduce or close modules Interim modifications to existing modules and/or courses	3 months prior to next delivery of course
Major modification – e.g., introduce a new pathway	4 months prior to next delivery of course
Re/Validation* Courses starting in Autumn Term Courses starting in Spring Term	End of February End of September
Suspension or closure of course	4 months prior to next delivery of course

Table 2: Key Dates
*This includes Validation via Addendum submissions and events for delivery of courses with partner organisations

These are standard dates and may vary dependent on delivery pattern.

2. COURSE APPROVAL

2.1   Introduction

2.1.1 The purpose of course approval is to assure ourselves that:

- appropriate academic standards have been set in respect of new courses and have been maintained in respect of courses undergoing re-validation;
- that a high-quality educational experience has been planned for students on new courses and has been maintained and enhanced in respect of courses undergoing review;
- that curriculum design is cognisant of developments within the discipline and that the content remains current in respect of course review.

2.2 Approval Stages

2.2.1 There are two stages for course approval:

- Initial Course Proposal Approval
- Validation

2.3 Initial Course Approval

2.3.1 There are a number of stages that an initial course proposal goes through, before it is able to progress to validation.

2.3.2 It includes the completion of the Initial Course Proposal Form (ICPF) by the proposer (usually the Course Leader) at least 18 months prior to the course commencement

2.3.3 Following review by the Head of Subject, the form is submitted to the relevant Faculty Executive Committee for approval. Following this approval, it is circulated for peer review by representatives from relevant departments across the institution. The peer review period usually lasts two weeks and the proposer is given the opportunity to respond to comments, prior to the submission of the proposal to the Portfolio Oversight Group (POG).

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Course proposer     Faculty              Peer Review          Faculty respond     Submission of
completes Initial   Executive    Approved commences for a    to comments         the Initial Course
Course Approval     Committee             period of two       made during         Approval form to
form                considers form        weeks               Peer Review         the Portfolio
                                                              process             Oversight Group
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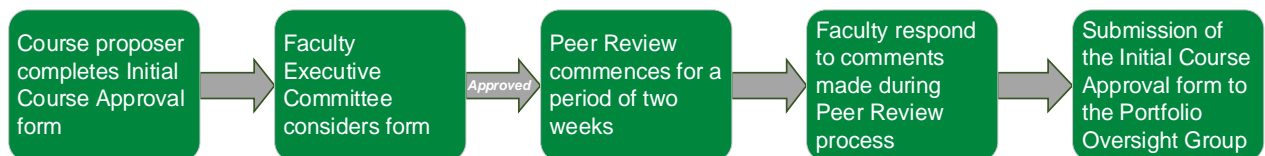
Figure 1: Initial Course Approval Stages

2.3.4 POG has four options: Approve, Approve with conditions, Review or Reject.

- Approval means the proposal is approved to go forward to a validation event and confirms the risk level as outlined in 2.4.4. Approval may be granted with or without conditions.

- Review means that the proposal form is returned to the development team with comments. The development team can then make changes and resubmit to POG.
- Reject means that POG informs Quality and Academic Services and the development team of its decision not to proceed any further with the proposal.

Further information can be found in [Guidance for Initial Course Approval.](#)

2.3.5 Initial course proposals associated with tenders would also be required to follow the Initial Course Approval process prior to any formal submission. In recognition of the often-short timescales required for submission, a sub-group of Portfolio Oversight Group has been formed to review these applications in a timely fashion.

2.4   Validation

2.4.1 Following confirmation of POG decisions, the Quality team will liaise with course leads to take forward development proposals for validation. All course development activity presents risks and these must be understood and addressed. To do this, a risk-based approach is implemented that identifies and considers the internal and external context, and the capacity, capability and prior experience of the development team in order to determine the level of risk each development presents.

2.4.2 We operate a risk-based approach to the approval, known as 'validation,' of new provision. Course proposals are assessed based on risk and the validation requirements will be determined by the level of risk identified. Low and medium risk provision will be approved by the Faculty. High risk provision will be assessed by an appropriate level of governance, often a panel chaired by a Quality Assurance Committee member, and an enhanced level of scrutiny will be carried out.

2.4.3 The focus on enhancement at the academic development stage defines the University's approach to validation. If risks to a development are identified, we are committed to empowering the development team to address them.

2.4.4 The validation process incorporates a risk management approach and therefore provides a level of scrutiny that is proportionate to the potential risk to which the development exposes the institution. POG will confirm the level of risk assigned to the proposal by the Faculty. A list of questions assist this decision:

- Does the course align with the USW 2030 Strategy?
- Are new curriculum areas involved?
- Are there any high-risk student route implications?
- Is there any external collaboration involved?
- Is a new partner involved where high risk has been identified?
- How many new (unvalidated) modules are involved and do they contribute to the degree classification?
- Are there any PSRB requirements?
- How many subject areas are covered?

2.4.5 There are three standard types of validation event which are linked to the three levels of risk:

Level of Risk	Type of Event	Proposal Type
High	University Validation	Proposals for subject areas which are a new or an innovative curriculum for the University, and where a high level of risk has been identified. Proposals which have high risk Student Route implications (the target market being international students). Proposals involving a new collaborative partner where a high level of risk has been identified. For example, the partner has limited experience of delivering UK HE.
Moderate	FQAC Validation	Proposals for courses that have not been identified as high risk. Proposals involving an existing partner where the developments are in a new subject area.
Low	FQAC Paper based (not an option for proposals involving collaborative partners)	Proposals for a short course award or where the proposal is considered generally low risk.

Table 3: Validation Risk Levels

2.4.6 Once proposals are approved by POG, courses can be advertised as 'subject to validation'. More detail is provided in Guidance on the Validation Process.

2.4.8 Contingency Guidelines - Validation events put at risk at short notice

Unforeseen circumstances do arise and may put validation events at risk. Postponing an event should be seen as the last course of action as it may impact on planned recruitment or be difficult to rearrange. Some scenarios which might put an event at risk would include the absence of the appointed Chair, absence of panellists or the absence of the Course Leader. There are, however, some situations where short notice postponements would be unavoidable. These include insufficient members of the course team or the absence of Faculty Executive Committee members. In some cases, it might be appropriate to proceed with the event, investigate options for remote attendance, rearrange the agenda or seek written comments from stakeholders following the event.

2.4.9   Course Specific Regulations

Course specific regulations are typically requested due to PSRB/Employer requirements. There is a section where course teams can request a course specific regulation within the validation document. However, these are to be approved by the Regulations Sub-Committee in advance of the event, where possible. More detail is provided in Guidance for Course Specific Regulations.

2.4.10 Extension to Validation

The normal period of course approval is six years and requests to extend the validation period will only be given for exceptional circumstances. Applications supported by the QASM and/or Head of Subject must be made to the Chair of QAC via the Head of Quality and Academic Services (QAS). There must be a clear rationale for the proposal and the most recent continuous monitoring report should be appended to the request. Any extensions given will be reported to QAC.
More typically, courses will obtain an extension to the period of validation at the Critical Review stage of the Critical Review and Revalidation process. The maximum period of extension will typically be for two years, and further information is provided in section 8.2.

2.4.11 Development of the Course

After initial approval has been granted by POG, the proposal can proceed to full course development. A Course Team must then be established, if it has not been already, prior to the validation event. The templates for course development can be found on the Faculty SharePoint sites, as can the further guidance and support. Support is also available through the Faculty Heads of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (HOLTSE), the Associate Deans Student Outcomes and the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT).

For undergraduate courses, the principles of the Academic Blueprint should be adhered to, including Course Identity, Course Options, Course Size, Module Credits, Learning Outcomes, Immersive Learning, Module Contact teaching hours, Assessment and Employability. Details on the Academic Blueprint can be found on Faculty SharePoint websites.

2.4.12 Validation Panel Composition

Validation panels should normally comprise the following members:

- A **Chair** who has knowledge and experience of QA events and mechanisms, independent of the validating subject;
- Two **internal members** of suitably qualified staff who have independence from the validating subject, one of whom should be independent from the Faculty/College;
- One **student member** who has received training on the QA process;
- One **External Member** who has the relevant subject and pedagogic expertise at the appropriate academic level and no prior involvement in the development of the course. Further guidance can be found in section 6.

Panels may contain more than one external member, for example, if one of the members is from industry or if there are multiple courses being validated within one event. However, this should be agreed with the subject in advance of the event.

- A **Reporting Executive** who is drawn from QAS will advise on regulatory and procedural matters and is a full member of the panel;

2.5 Roles and Responsibilities

2.5.1 At USW and RWCMD, indicative key responsibilities for course validation are assigned as follows:

TIER	GATEKEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	Student Voice
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor	Receives the annual validation schedule from QAC.	Academic Board	SU President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	Gives approval annually for the Faculties' / College's validation (and review and re-validation) schedule.	QAC	SU President
		Validates new courses deemed high risk		SU President
Gateway 4: Faculty	Dean / Principal of RWCMD	Produces the Faculty/College Portfolio Plan which includes the future direction of the curriculum.	Strategic Planning Discussions	Student Voice Representative
		Gives initial Faculty/College approval to proceed with developing new courses.	Faculty Executive Committee (or equivalent) / Academic Board for RWCMD	
	F/CQAC Chair, RWCMD / Principal, RWCMD	Validates new courses (and reviews and re-validates existing courses) deemed low or medium risk.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative
	Chair of the Course Validation / Review & Revalidation Panel	Recommends to QAC or F/CQAC as appropriate, validation (or re-validation) of the course, with or without conditions / recommendations or recommends that validation is withheld and commendations.		Student Panellist
Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject/ Associate Dean (or equivalent)	Signs off the validation (or re-validation) documentation on behalf of the Subject.	Subject Management Team (or equivalent)	
Gateway 2: Course	Course Leader	Works with the Course Team to prepare the validation (or re-validation) documentation. Where the course is also delivered through collaborative arrangements the Course Leader's counterpart is also consulted.	F/CQAC, via the Course Validation (or Critical Review / Revalidation Panel)	Course Representative, SSCLGs or equivalent

Gateway 1: Module	Module Leader	Contributes to discussions about course validation (or re-validation). Where the module is also delivered through collaborative arrangements the Module Leader's counterpart is also consulted.		LOOP, NSS, SSCLGs or equivalent

Table 4: Indicative Roles and Responsibilities for Course Approval

2.6 Degree Apprenticeships

2.6.1 Section 4.4 describes the features of Degree Apprenticeships in the Welsh and English models. This section summarises additional requirements for degree apprenticeships in course approval. Further detail is provided to course teams developing degree apprenticeships in Guidance for Course Approval and Re-approval.

2.6.2 An indicative list of additional matters to be considered when approving degree apprenticeships is provided below:

- How initial assessment and recognition of any prior learning is recognised and reflected within the apprenticeship;
- How apprentices will be appropriately represented within the University's standard representation mechanisms;
- Which degree apprenticeship model has been followed;
- Consideration of the QAA Higher Education in Apprenticeships Characteristics Statement, and Education Inspection Framework (English Apprenticeships);
- That courses, including the training provision, constitute an appropriate preparation to enable apprentices to meet the nationally approved Apprenticeship Standard or Framework;
- Whether the Apprenticeship Standard or Framework knowledge, skills and behaviours or equivalents have been mapped to the learning outcomes of the proposed degree apprenticeship;
- How accessibility to student support services by students who are also employees may be achieved;
- Whether appropriate discussion and agreement has taken place with employers about the commitments they are signing up to, including the release of apprentices for any off-the-job training and providing a working environment that enables apprentices to achieve the skills and learning outcomes of the proposed degree apprenticeship;
- Who will support learning and how are they qualified, supported and developed;
- Whether arrangements for the provision of individual learning plans by the course team have been made;
- Whether the model requires an integrated or separate end-point Assessment (English Apprenticeships), and to confirm the end-point assessment organisation;

- Whether all those who are involved in assessment have undertaken appropriate training and are competent to undertake their various roles and responsibilities.

2.6.3 In addition to the usual validation submission documents, validation panels may also wish to consider:

- The Apprenticeship Contract/Tri-Party agreement (Wales);
- The Apprenticeship Commitment Statement (England);
- The Apprenticeship Learning Agreement template;
- A mapping of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard or Framework knowledge, skills and behaviours to the learning outcomes of the proposed degree apprenticeship course;
- A mapping of course content to any PSRB requirements.

2.6.4 Appropriate contextualisation should also be included in the Course Specification for a Degree Apprenticeship and any other additional information should be included within the appendices to the validation documentation.

3. EXTERNAL RECOGNITION OF COURSES

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 A number of the University's courses are accredited by professional and statutory Bodies (PSRBs). Professional accreditation is the official recognition awarded by an external professional or statutory body as the result of the University meeting specific standards or criteria. These criteria or standards may relate to the recognition of the academic standing of a course, the ability to produce graduates with professional competence to practice and/or preparation for professional status.

3.1.2 Not all external recognition will be through a PSRB, or indeed result in a full accreditation agreement.

3.1.3 PSRBs have a varied and wide-reaching involvement in the delivery and monitoring of provision.

3.1.4 The University maintains a record of courses with PSRB status, including a schedule of accreditation events.

3.1.5 Students are made aware of the accreditation status of a course through the course handbook which also contains information on any conditions required to ensure attainment of the professional recognition.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

3.2.1 Indicative roles and responsibilities relating to external recognition of courses is as follows:

TIER	GATEKEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	STUDENT VOICE
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor / Board of Directors for RWCMD	Receives report on PSRB Activity from QAC.	Academic Board	Student President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Receipt of applications to submit to a PSRB where considered high risk and receive updates on progress Receipt of Institutional Level Register of PSRB. Receipt of Annual report on PSRB activity.	QAC	Student President
Gateway 4: Faculty	F/CQAC Chair, RWCMD	Receipt of PSRB activity (event reports) and update of Faculty level register Approval of application to submit to PSRB.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative
Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject / Associate Dean (or equivalent)	Reviews PSRB accreditation submissions within the Subject.	Subject Management Team	
Gateway 2: Course	Course Leader	Correspondence with PSRB – Annual report/visits etc. Notification of accreditation. Contribution to accreditation schedule. Comment on PSRB relationship in Continuous Monitoring process.	F/CQAC FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group	Student Voice Representative Course Representative
Gateway 1: Module	Module Leader	Ensures module design including assessment is in alignment with PSRB requirements.	FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group	Course Representative

Table 5: Indicative Roles and Responsibilities for External Recognition of Courses

3.3   Process and Records

3.3.1   The register of the accreditations is maintained by the Quality and Academic Services Team in Academic Registry. They also ensure that there is an overview of such partnerships at University level. Day-to-day liaison, pre- and post-accreditation, is managed at Faculty level by the Chair of F/CQAC who has delegated responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance.

3.3.2   As accreditation often requires faculties to submit course documentation for scrutiny, the University aligns this process as far as possible with that of the validation and revalidation processes described in section 2 and 8.

3.3.3   More detail regarding procedures is provided in Guidance for PSRB accreditation and reaccreditation.

4. WORK-BASED LEARNING

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section applies to any credit-bearing provision involving a period of time in the workplace.

4.1.2 The Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance presents work-based learning as a continuum, as outlined below, with the level of integration varying by activity along the continuum.
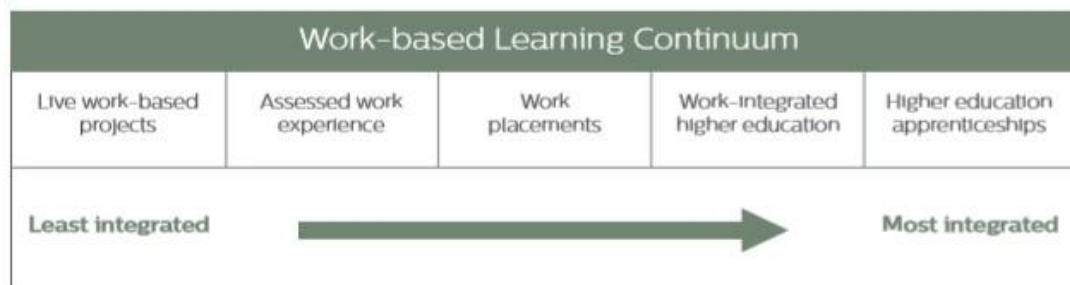

Figure 2: Work-based Learning Continuum

4.2 Key Principles (as outlined in [QAA Advice and Guidance](#))

4.2.1 Work-based learning courses/opportunities should be designed in partnership with employers, students and other relevant stakeholders (e.g., PSRB), and contain learning outcomes that are relevant to work objectives.

4.2.2 Work-based learning should consist of structured learning opportunities with authentic activity and a supervised experience in the workplace.

4.2.3 Work-based opportunities should be underpinned by formal agreements outlining the activities required and the assigning the areas of responsibility (e.g., health and safety and safeguarding).

4.2.4 Specific issues in relation to the workplace environment are considered and dealt with appropriately, including informal agreements where appropriate.

4.2.5 Work-based learning is delivered through a meaningful partnership between students, employers and the University.

4.2.6 Work-based learning opportunities enable students to apply and integrate areas of subject and professional knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable them to meet course learning outcomes.

4.2.7 All parties understand and respect the respective roles, responsibilities and expectations of the University, employer and student, and appropriate training and support is provided where required. Roles in assessment should be clearly defined and standard quality mechanisms applied, and where necessary support provided (e.g., moderation). The production of clear information should be made available to students, so they can understand the obligations of work-based learning and an informed decision can be made regarding course/work-based learning opportunities.

4.2.8   The University and employer acknowledge that individuals have unique needs within the University and the workplace, and should collaborate to ensure opportunities are inclusive, safe and supported.

4.2.9   Work-based learning opportunities are designed, monitored, evaluated and reviewed in partnership with employers.

4.2.10 Where possible, all courses should include real world experience as part of their curriculum, with an aim to enable students to demonstrate their engagement in a professional work environment and enhance their ability to appraise their performance so as to be prepared for graduate employment opportunities. Where placements are not possible, simulated work experience or live briefs may be an appropriate substitution.

4.2.11 Further information may be found in the Policy for Placement and Work-based Learning.

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

4.3.1 Indicative roles and responsibilities for work-based learning are as follows:

TIER	GATEKEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	STUDENT VOICE
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor / Board of Directors for RWCMD	Receives a summary of the University and the Partner continuous monitoring exercise which considers employer feedback (where relevant) from Quality Assurance Committee.	Academic Board	SU President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	Considers the Faculty/College reports and a summary of the Partner reports.	QAC	SU President
Gateway 4: Faculty	F/CQAC Chair, RWCMD / Principal of RWCMD	Prepares Faculty/RWCMD reports.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative
Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject / Associate Dean (or equivalent)	Takes an overview of the course reports, identifying issues and trends.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative
Gateway 2: Course	Course Leader	Course Monitoring - Employer Feedback.	F/CQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group	Course Representative
Gateway 1: Module	Module Leader	Module Evaluation – placement review.	F/CQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group	LOOP or equivalent student / apprentice

				feedback mechanism

Table 6: Indicative Roles and Responsibilities for Work-Based Learning

4.4 Degree Apprenticeships

4.4.1 The QAA UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance on Work-based Learning describes higher education in apprenticeships as being at the most work-integrated end of the work-based learning continuum. Degree apprenticeships combine working with studying. Apprentices are employed throughout the duration of the course and spend part of their time studying with the University (on campus, off campus, blended or online) and the rest with their employer. This can be on a day-to-day basis or in blocks of time, depending on the course and requirements of the employer.

4.4.2 An apprenticeship can take between three to six years to complete, depending on the duration agreed at validation. It is about entry or progression to a recognised occupation and involves testing the apprentice's occupational competence through formative and summative assessment, which might be continuous or end point assessment (EPA) (English model).

4.4.3 The University offers provision in both England and Wales so advice and guidance about the requirements for each will be provided to faculties when they are establishing apprenticeships. In 2019, the QAA produced a Higher Education Apprenticeships Characteristics Statement for further guidance.

4.4.4 The University has responsibility for both assuring the quality of the apprenticeship training it provides and for the academic standards and quality of its degree apprenticeship qualifications. The UK Quality Code is clear that we can be flexible in the design and application of internal quality assurance processes to ensure that these are appropriate to the different timescales and contexts within which we may need to operate, and which can support the central role that employers play in apprenticeships. It is acknowledged that this can be achieved without undermining the broad principles that underpin the assurance of academic standards and quality, including those of the Education Inspection Framework.

4.4.5 Quality assurance mechanisms for, and matters for consideration in relation to, degree apprenticeships are specifically noted in each of the relevant sections of the Quality Manual.

4.5 Key information – Degree Apprenticeships in Wales

4.5.1 Requirements for completing a degree apprenticeship are set out in the relevant Apprenticeship Framework, commissioned by the Welsh Government and will include a level 6 degree qualification that is recognised by employers.

4.5.2 A full degree apprenticeship will be a minimum of three years in duration; however, it may need to be longer to ensure that the apprentice has sufficient time to meet the Apprenticeship Framework requirements while working. The duration of each apprenticeship will be agreed at validation.

4.5.3 Three regional skills partnerships (developed by the Welsh Government) identify the skills needs of Wales. HEFCW / Commission for Tertiary Education-funded institutions are represented on the groups and have committed to improving access, equality and equity of opportunity through flexible learning pathways.

4.6 Key information - Degree Apprenticeships in England

4.6.1 Individuals can only be employed as apprentices in England if they are working towards the achievement of an approved Apprenticeship Standard.

4.6.2 Each Apprenticeship Standard defines the occupation and sets out the occupational profile, as well as the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required to perform an identified job role.

4.6.3 Every Apprenticeship Standard is devised by a consortium of employers that meet the requirements of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). These are known as Trailblazers, who employ people and operate in the relevant industry sector. Trailblazer groups for Degree Apprenticeships will include representatives from higher education providers.

4.6.4 Trailblazers also devise the way in which the required duties and KSBs are assessed. KSBs are embedded and continuously assessed throughout the apprenticeship and independently assessed at end-point assessment. This is outlined in the end-point Assessment Plan (EPA Plan).

4.6.5 Apprenticeship standards are employer-led: employers set the apprenticeship standards; create the demand for apprentices to meet their skills needs; contribute towards the costs or fund the apprenticeship through the levy; and are responsible for employing and training the apprentice. Only one Apprenticeship Standard can be developed for an occupation.

4.6.6 To deliver apprenticeships in England involving higher education, providers must be registered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) and compliant with Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF).

4.6.7 To assess end-point assessments within integrated degree apprenticeships, providers must be listed on the Register of End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAO). The End-point Assessment Organisation acts independently of the degree apprenticeship delivery. The external quality body responsible for quality assuring EPAs is the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

4.7 Live Work based projects

4.7.1 These projects can be based within the workplace or within the University learning space. It is learning that involves employers in the commissioning of 'live' briefs or projects and may often be used to supplement placements or to provide real world experience where a formal placement might not be available. Partnership between the University and Employers create life-like experiences for the students to work on, providing opportunities to apply their learning to real issues faced by members of the relevant workforce. Included in this is the student enterprise agenda where students

can be encouraged to take a lead on projects that tackle social issues or work entrepreneurially on commercial briefs that require them to use a particular vocational skill within their course programme.

4.8   Work Placement Learning

4.8.1   The Academic Blueprint, which applies to all of the University's single honours bachelor's degrees, identifies two models for employability: the inclusion of a 20-credit employability module within courses which allows students to access 70 hours of relevant work experience and a fully embedded approach to professional practice and employability (usually for courses which have PSRB requirements).

4.8.2   All single honours undergraduate degree courses should satisfy the following learning outcomes (which are developed for level 5 but may be uplifted to level 6 if required):

Upon successful completion of this module the student should be able to:

a) Reflect on the nature of professional practice in their discipline and identify the gaps between their work-related capabilities and disciplinary expectations (LO1);

b) Reflect upon the way their work experiences or role has contributed to their professional practice, using this to develop future personal/professional development. (LO2);

c) Develop and critically appraise an action plan of their experience and skills developed within the context of a graduate recruitment process and informed by their career plans and aspirations. (LO3).

4.8.3   Flexibility to accommodate longer or shorter work placements is achieved through the Professional Practice and Employability module.

4.8.4   Further information may be found in the [Policy for Placement and Work-based Learning](#).

4.9   Work Integrated Higher Education

4.9.1   Integrated work experience is often found within courses that include substantial and sometimes regulated periods of practice-based learning, for example, healthcare. They still need to follow the key principles such as formal agreements, support whilst on work experience and assessment designed to test their learning in the workplace.

5. CONTINUOUS MONITORING

5.1   Introduction

5.1.1   The underlying principle of the continuous monitoring process is that data and information is reviewed as it becomes available. Its purpose is to:

- Assure module and course quality

- Enhance the student experience
- Identify and disseminate good practice
- Promote reflective practice among course and module leaders
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken to resolve any identified areas for development
- Define, manage and mitigate risk ratings for courses
- Allow for continuous review of courses
- Provide an annual reporting point for Academic Board and Quality Assurance Committee
- Provide a source of evidence for the Board of Governors' Annual Assurance Statements

5.1.2   The output at module and course level is a report and action plan which is updated throughout the academic cycle. The course action plans are monitored regularly by F/CQAC sub-groups to ensure that actions are being taken to address any areas identified as requiring development and to disseminate good practice.

5.1.3   At subject, faculty/college and university level, an annual report and associated action plan are produced. These are monitored and reviewed by F/CQACs, QAC, Academic Board and, through the Annual Assurance Statements, the Board of Governors.

5.1.4   A risk rating for each course is assigned through this process by the Course Leader and reviewed by the Head of Subject, and may be used to inform other processes, such as portfolio or strategic planning. Further detail on the continuous monitoring process may be found in Continuous Monitoring Guidance.

5.2   Roles and Responsibilities

5.2.1   All staff who are involved in the delivery of courses at all levels will be expected to contribute to the continuous monitoring process, including collaborative partners, and for the purposes of degree apprenticeships, employers, where appropriate. At USW and the RWCMD, indicative key responsibilities in relation to continuous monitoring are assigned as follows:

TIER	GATEKEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	STUDENT VOICE
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor	Receives a summary of the University and the Partner continuous monitoring exercise from Quality Assurance Committee.	Board of Governors / Academic Board	SU President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	Considers the Faculty/College reports and a summary of the Partner reports.	QAC	SU President
	Head of Quality and Academic Services	Prepares a summary of Partner Overview Reports.	QAC via Partnership Quality Sub-Committee (PQSC)	SU President

Gateway 4: Faculty	Senior Auditor of Faculty/College Quality Assurance Committee (F/CQAC)	Audits the Faculty/College's continuous monitoring Exercise.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative
	Deputy Dean / F/CQAC Chair / Principal, RWCMD	Prepares a Faculty/College Report and Action Plan.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative
Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject	Takes an overview of the course reports, identifying issues and trends.	Subject Management Team (or equivalent)	
Gateway 2: Course	University's Course Leader	Completes the Course Report and Action Plan throughout the cycle, taking account of any collaborative partner versions.	F/CQAC, FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group, SSCLG (or equivalent)	Course Representative and other student feedback mechanisms
	Partner's Course Leader (or equivalent)	Completes the Course Report and Action Plan for the Partner exercise throughout the cycle and also passes it to the University's Course Leader for incorporation into the overall Course Report.	Partner's oversight Group, F/CQAC, FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group, SSCLG (or equivalent)	Course Representative or equivalent and other student feedback mechanisms
Gateway 1: Module	University's Module Leader	Completes the Module Review Form and Action Plan throughout the cycle, taking account of any collaborative partner versions.	F/CQAC, FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group, SSCLG (or equivalent)	Students Course Representative and LOOP
	Partner's Module Leader (or equivalent)	Completes the Module Report and Action Plan for the Partner exercise throughout the cycle and also passes it to the University's Module Leader for incorporation into the overall Module Report.	Partner's oversight Group, F/CQAC, FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group, SSCLG (or equivalent)	Students Course Representative and LOOP or equivalent

Table 7: Indicative Roles and Responsibilities for Continuous Monitoring

5.3 Risk Rating

5.3.1 The implementation of a risk management approach that enables Course Leaders and Heads of Subject to be predictive rather than presumptive about the future performance of a course is an essential component of Continuous Monitoring. The course risk rating is therefore used for constructive purposes to indicate when action is required and is not an absolute judgement of the course.

5.3.2 The risk rating is based on academic judgement, informed by qualitative and quantitative data and information. [Guidance for Continuous Monitoring Risk Rating](#) provides a risk matrix with indicative examples of what may constitute a High, Moderate or Low risk for each type of data or information a course leader considers through the cycle. The overall risk rating is arrived at by judgement, and not a formula.

5.4 Degree Apprenticeships

5.4.1 Additional requirements for degree apprenticeships in relation to continuous monitoring are as outlined below.

5.4.2 The regular monitoring and review of degree apprenticeship courses will ensure that the appropriate learning opportunities continue to be available to apprentices. In degree apprenticeships, the learning and training environment may be multi-location and will involve a number of parties in terms of design, delivery and assessment, including, for example, the employer and workplace mentors. In addition, there may also be a requirement for external monitoring and review.

5.4.3 All those involved in an apprentice's learning and training experience are included in monitoring and review processes.

5.4.4 The continuous monitoring process is able to support multiple intakes across the academic year as module and course leaders are expected to regularly update their reports and action plans as information and data becomes available to them.

5.5 Student Voice

5.5.1 Chapter 9 of the Quality Manual sets out the University's commitment to and mechanisms for capturing the Student Voice in terms of engagement with quality processes. We aim to ensure we are flexible about how and when students talk with us, and timely in how we and our students take action where required.

5.5.2 Students and the student voice are involved in continuous monitoring in a variety of direct and indirect ways. Student performance and feedback via surveys and formal meetings form part of the evidence base upon which module and course leaders produce their reports and action plans. More directly, student representatives are members of College and Faculty Quality Assurance Committees, Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Board and the Board of Governors, where they have an opportunity to contribute to approval of reports and action plans and hold the process to account.

6. EXTERNAL EXPERTISE

6.1   Introduction[3]

6.1.1   External experts are individuals who are not directly involved with a course and who can provide independent and impartial comment and input to a course design, its management, monitoring, evaluation and review. External experts will provide a level of independence that is important in decision-making and ensuring that quality and standards are met. There are a variety of sources which we can access for external expertise, including:

- **External adviser:** they provide academic and professional expertise during the development and validation of new courses and at other relevant times. They can be called upon to provide academic, professional and industry/employer/business expertise to inform course design and to contribute to lecturing or teaching at the university or in a professional setting, for example, workplace supervisors/ mentors for education, nursing, apprenticeships, and students on placement.

- **External panellist:** someone who has the relevant subject and pedagogic expertise at the appropriate academic level and no previous experience or involvement in the development of the course. They provide impartial and independent views on the design and structure of the course and its related documentation. The appointment of the external member must be approved by the Head of Learning and Student Experience (HOLTSE). .

- **External Examiner:** they provide impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on our standards and on student achievement in relation to those standards. External Examiners confirm that we consistently and fairly implement our own policies and procedures to ensure the integrity and rigour of assessment practices. They also comment on the quality and standards of the courses in relation to the national standards and frameworks and comment on the reasonable comparability of standards achieved at other UK providers with whom the examiner has experience. External Examiners review and also comment on good practice and make recommendations for course design enhancement. The nomination of an external examiner is normally approved by the Head of Subject, prior to submission to the External Examiner Working Group for approval.

Where utilised in our other mechanisms, the role of external experts is described in that section. This section is focused on External Examiners.

6.1.2   External Examiners play a vital role in providing comments and recommendations upon the following:

- Our standards and student performance in relation to those standards.
- The consistent and fair application of policies and procedures ensuring the integrity and rigour of our academic practices.

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[3] This chapter has been informed by the Advice and Guidance of the External Expertise theme of the QAA UK Quality Code

More detail on the processes that underpin the External Examiner role is provided in the [External Examiner Handbook](#).

6.2 Roles and Responsibilities

6.2.1 At USW and the RWCMD, indicative key responsibilities in relation to the management of External Examiners are assigned as follows:

TIER	GATEKEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	Student Voice
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor	Considers the Annual Summary report from Quality Assurance Committee which includes a summary of issues raised by and actions taken in response to External Examiners' reports.	Academic Board	SU President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Receives updates on External Examiner appointments. Considers an annual summary of issues raised in External Examiner reports and an associated institutional action plan. Considers the outcomes of the Continuous Monitoring exercise across the USW Group and submits a report to Academic Board which includes a summary of issues raised by and actions taken in response to External Examiners' reports.	QAC	SU President
	Head of Quality and Academic Services	Confirms that all the issues identified have been addressed appropriately.		
		Confirms that External Examiners have been appointed in line with the appropriate procedures.		
Gateway 4: Faculty	Dean	Approves the final responses to reports from the relevant External Examiners.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative
	F/CQAC Chair	Considers the outcomes of Continuous Monitoring across the Faculty / College, including the issues raised by External Examiners.		
		Nominates new External Examiners to Quality Assurance Committee.		
Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject / Associate Dean (or equivalent) or nominee	Takes an overview of the external examiner reports looking for issues and trends.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative
Gateway 2: Course	Course Leader	Formulates a response to the External Examiner's report. Any required actions form part of the continuous monitoring process.	FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group	Meetings with External Examiners

		Proposes new External Examiners to the Dean/Principal, RWCMD.	External Examiner Approval Panel	
Gateway 1: Module	Module Leader	Addresses any issues raised by the External Examiner in their continuous monitoring Module Report, which is updated following the Assessment Boards.	Assessment Board, FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group	

Table 8: Indicative Roles and Responsibilities for the management of External Examiner activity

6.3 Nominations

6.3.1. Super Progression and Award External Examiners are responsible for maintaining oversight of the academic standards and quality processes of the University's Progression and Award assessment boards and associated processes.

Role Requirements:
- Attend a selection of pre-allocated Progression and Award examination boards per year to provide an oral report, and submit an annual report within four weeks of the boards taking place;
- Provide informative comment and recommendations on whether the assessment process is conducted in line with the relevant policies and regulations;
- Undertake training, as required;
- Potentially mentor new External Examiners, as requested.

6.3.2 Subject External Examiners are appointed to courses under one of three models:

- There is a one-to-one relationship between the one External Examiner and one course.
- An External Examiner is appointed to more than one course.
- A course has more than one External Examiner appointed to it because of the specialised nature of the course or a requirement of a PSRB[4].

6.3.3 Nominations for External Examiners are made by the Head of Subject or nominee, who are required to demonstrate that the nominee fulfils the following criteria:

- They have a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the course of study, or parts thereof, and have a good understanding of the UK higher education sector.
- They are appropriately experienced in course design and student assessment at the level of the award.
- They have the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge to assess standards in an effective manner, identify good practice and recommend enhancements to enable informed course development.
- They are experienced in acting as an External Examiner or are supported by USW in undertaking their duties, for example, through training and mentoring.
- They are impartial in judgement and wholly independent of the provider and its staff (including the governing body), and any relevant partners.

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[4] Professional, Statutory, Regulatory Body

- They do not personally benefit from any student outcomes, nor have any connection to any student being assessed.
- They have had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively.
- They are drawn from a relevant variety of institutional or professional contexts and traditions in order that the course benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny.
- They comply with all relevant employment legislation, including safeguarding, as appropriate.
- They normally hold a limited number of concurrent external examining engagements (for example either one or two).
- They are fluent in English, and where courses are delivered and assessed in languages other than English (i.e., Welsh), fluent in the relevant language(s).
- They meet applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.

6.3.4 It may be necessary in exceptional circumstances to appoint an External Examiner who does not fulfil the above criteria (for example nominees from business, industry or the professions, or Welsh language provision, where the pool of potential External Examiners is restricted). Where this is the case approval will be sought from the Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and reported to the next committee meeting. Appropriate steps will also be taken to provide training and support to the External Examiner.

6.3.5 Appointments will **not** be made if a potential External Examiner is in any of the following categories or circumstances:

- A member of our governing body or one of our partners, delivery organisations or support providers, or one of our current employees or an employee of our partners, delivery organisations or support providers.
- Anyone with a close, professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the course.
- Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course.
- Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students enrolled on the course.
- Anyone significantly involved (within the last five years) or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or module(s) in question.
- Former USW staff or students, unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the External Examiner have completed their course(s)
- A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate courses at another higher education provider.
- The succession of an External Examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and provider.
- The appointment of more than one External Examiner from the same department of the same higher education provider.

6.4 Terms of Office

6.4.1 The terms of office of an External Examiner are as follows:

- The duration of an External Examiner's appointment will normally be for four years, to enable them to assess four successive cohorts of students and will normally begin on 1 September and end on 30 November.
- However, should their services as an External Examiner be no longer required during any year because, for example, the modules they are responsible for have been phased out, their appointment will end.
- An extension of one year, and exceptionally up to two years, may be approved to ensure continuity.
- An External Examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but only after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.
- External Examiners normally hold no more than two External Examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time. It is current practice that the University does not normally allocate over 25 modules to an external examiner.
- All External Examiners are entitled to submit their resignation for any reason. The University requests sufficient notice in order to make revised arrangements. The University reserves the right to terminate the contract of any External Examiner, subject to the agreement of the Academic Registrar.

6.4.2 Nominations are received on standard University forms that provide a checking mechanism for issues such as reciprocity and conflicts of interest, and are approved by the External Examiner Approval Panel, a sub-group of QAC.

6.4.3 Where we have appointed an External Examiner who has no previous experience of the role, an existing External Examiner might be asked to act as a mentor to that individual. The main duty of mentors is to provide general advice and guidance.

6.4.4 Subject External Examiners must attend a Subject Board each year and at least one Progression/Award Board during their tenure. Super Award External Examiners will be allocated Progression/Award Boards as appropriate. Where they are unable to attend, a member of the Regulations Sub-Committee will attend in their place. Further details about reporting are provided in section 6.8 below.

6.4.5 The responsibilities and duties of External Examiners are set out in the External Examiners Handbook.

6.5 Induction and Training

6.5.1 Information concerning the induction and training of External Examiners is available in the External Examiner Handbook.

6.5.2 External Examiners are also directed to the Quality and Academic Services website where they can access current information relevant to their role along with the Handbook.

6.5.3   Following appointment, External Examiners will have access to Blackboard, to enable them to view module content. Course teams (typically the Course Leader) are responsible for providing External Examiners with course specific information, including relevant course handbooks, course and module specifications and, where appropriate, details of professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) information including that related to continuing PSRB accreditation (e.g., fitness to practise requirements).

6.6   Verification of assessment

6.6.1   Assessments are normally made available to External Examiners for comment prior to the Assessment Approval Event as outlined in the [Assessment for Learning Principles and Framework](#) available on the Assessment Lifecycle Hub.

6.7   Sampling of marked assessment

6.7.1   The Course Leader is responsible for providing the External Examiner with samples of student assessments in advance of the appropriate Subject Board, facilitated by the University Link Officer where collaborative partner student performance is also being reviewed.

6.7.2   Course teams should agree with their External Examiner the nature and extent of the sample of student work that will be provided. Course teams must be mindful of the minimum sample sizes (except where professional or statutory requirements require more than the totals below) set by the University when discussing this with their External Examiner:

For modules that count towards award classification *(note: this is all modules at levels 5, 6 and 7 for most courses, only HNCs, HNDs and FDs will require level 4 modules to be included):*

- The sample should include the questions/exam paper/assessment brief.
- The sample should cover the full range of assessment types.
- The sample should consist of assessments from each location of study and be clearly labelled with the partner's name where the location is not USW.
- The sample should have two pieces of assessment from each band (including narrow fails and complete fails F1/F2) *(note: we are not demanding that they review two pieces per band, only that the sample include them in case they wish to make any comparison).*
- The sample should include evidence of how moderation has taken place.
- The sample should include a marking scheme for the module.

6.7.3   Please note that all assessed work should be made available to External Examiners, so they may demand a larger sample if they so wish. Course leaders are responsible for collating samples and providing these to External Examiners.

6.8 Reporting

6.8.1 External Examiners are full members of assessment boards and submit an annual report to us that provides clear and informative feedback on those areas defined for the role. The report must be submitted within four weeks of the board attended.

6.8.2 Their reports will:

- Confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled (where evidence was insufficient, they give details).
- State whether issues raised in previous reports have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction.
- Address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body.
- Give an overview of their term of office (when concluded).

6.8.3 External Examiner reports are received and scrutinised by the Head of Quality and Academic Services (or nominee), who acknowledges receipt and notifies the External Examiner that a full response will be forwarded when completed. Copies of the report are forwarded to the Head of Subject, Course Leaders via the Quality and Academic Services Registry Officer or nominee, with an indication of matters the Head of Quality and Academic Services (QAS) expects to see addressed. It is the responsibility of the Link Officer to forward the report to collaborative partners. The Dean writes an initial response to the subject External Examiner within eight weeks of receipt of report. However, where matters of serious concern are raised by the External Examiner, the Head of Quality and Academic Services (QAS) will request an immediate response from the Dean of Faculty or equivalent. More detailed consideration of the report takes place through the Continuous Monitoring exercise (see section 5).
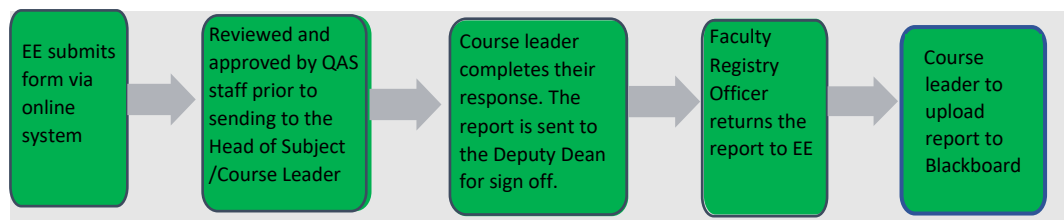

Figure 3: Subject External Examiner Report Process

6.8.4 Issues which require action at institutional level are identified in the annual External Examiner summary report prepared by the Head of Quality and Academic Services (QAS). An associated institutional action plan is subsequently produced.

6.8.5 The Partnerships Manual outlines consideration of External Examiner reports which relate to collaboration.

6.8.6 Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a course or courses and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Vice Chancellor, they may invoke QAA Concerns Scheme and/or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

6.9 Degree Apprenticeships

6.9.1 The University ensures that all External Examiners appointed to its degree apprenticeships are suitably qualified to undertake the role. Each apprenticeship will normally have one External Examiner allocated to it, however the required balance of subject and practice expertise can be achieved, where appropriate, through the appointment of two External Examiners; one a subject expert and the other with practice expertise. Also, where required for English Apprenticeships, External Examiners will also be required sample end-point assessment (EPA) elements such as the Evidence-Based Research Project.

6.9.2 The University provides opportunities for employers to receive and respond to external examiner reports; this supports the University in developing ongoing assessment practices for apprenticeship provision.

6.9.3 All EPA assessment elements will be signed-off by an Independent Assessor who is occupationally knowledgeable, and who will be supplied by the USW end-point Assessment Organisation that has not been involved in on programme delivery. This individual will have had no direct involvement in mentoring or supervising the employment or training of the Apprentice to ensure a level of independence and impartiality. This individual will be professionally qualified as an assessor in line with sector requirements.

7. COURSE AND MODULE MODIFICATIONS

7.1. Introduction

7.1.1 The need for modifications will normally arise as a result of feedback from students, student satisfaction questionnaires, comments from External Examiners or professional bodies, recommendations from assessment boards or other elements of continuous monitoring or review processes.

7.1.2 Proposals for modifications can be made at any point during the academic year prior to the stated deadlines below (7.2) but can only be implemented at the beginning of the next academic session. Consultation is necessary with students who may be affected. Student Staff Course Liaison Groups (SSCLGs) provide a vehicle for discussing these proposals and see evidence of students' agreement. Proposals must take account of CMA requirements and the need to consult with students.

7.2. Modification deadlines

7.2.1 Proposals to introduce or close modules must be received three months prior to the next delivery of the course, with exception to major modifications which must be received 4 months prior to the next delivery of the course. The deadline for interim modifications to existing modules, for example, changes to assessment methods, is three months prior to the next delivery of the course. The process needs to be completed by this date i.e.
approved by FQAC. Key dates are available in the table on page 9.

7.2.2   Course/Modules Leaders must work with the QASM and/or Head of Subject in order to submit proposed modifications for approval by F/CQAC and report to the next SSCLG. Under no circumstances should Course Leaders or Module Leaders ask for any modifications to be undertaken by Student Administration or amendments made to the website by Future Students without prior approval by F/CQAC.

7.3.   Late/In year Modifications

7.3.1   If a situation occurs where a late or in-year modification is necessary, it will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and reported to Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

7.3.2   A request should be made to the Faculty QASM (or nominee), along with the supporting evidence outlined below and an explanation of the exceptional circumstances that have arisen for the late/in year change. This will then be considered by the Head of Quality and Academic Services (QAS). If successful, the usual modification process steps should then be followed.

7.3.3   Supporting evidence should include

- Details of modification (including copy of old and new module descriptor or copy with tracked changes)
- Approval from External Examiner
- Evidence of consultation with students
- If in year, what students have received (module handbook and assessment descriptors)
- Answer the following questions - have students already studied the module or are there students currently studying the module? Have marks been entered previously onto the system?

7.4.   Modifications Matrix

7.4.1   A modifications matrix exists which determines the approval process, which is dependent on the type of modification. Different types require different levels of approval, which in turn affects the supporting evidence needed, method of recording, method/level of consultation with students and who should be informed following the modification proposal being accepted.

7.4.2   Types of modification can range from module aims, module learning outcomes, assessment (category/type/weighting) to adding/removing a module from a course structure.

7.4.3   Course Leaders must ensure that any proposed introduction, closure or modification to a module has no implications for any other course or partner who might make use of it. Discussions with other Course Leaders or partners must be evidenced in the submission to F/CQAC.

Further guidance on the modification matrix and procedures is found in Guidance for Modifications and the Modifications Information Document

7.5   Major Modifications

7.5.1   Proposals to amend the following aspects of a course are considered to be significant changes and are required to be submitted to the Major Modifications Committee for consideration:

- Course Title
- Course Aims
- Course Learning Outcomes
- New pathways (including the introduction of a Foundation Year)
- New mode of study

7.5.2   Proposals must be approved by F/CQAC before being submitted to the Major Modifications Committee. Where appropriate, decisions made by the Major Modifications Committee are ratified by the Portfolio Oversight Group.

8. COURSE REVIEW AND REVALIDATION

8.1.   Introduction

8.1.1   Course Review and Revalidation (CRR) is the process whereby the University assures itself of the maintenance of academic standards and quality of its provision.

8.1.2   The CRR process ensures the threshold standards for the University's qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks to deliver high quality courses.

8.1.3   CRR seeks to identify both current and future means of enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. It is an opportunity for Course Teams to think holistically and strategically about their provision and longer-term aims and objectives. It provides an opportunity for the University to assure itself that its provision demonstrates awareness of the diverse needs of its learners. It also allows for both internal and external feedback and expertise to inform course content and uses both internal guidance and external reference points. It facilitates continuous improvement of provision and is proportionate to risk.

8.1.4   Course Review is undertaken on a risk-assessed basis normally within a **six-yearly cycle**. Courses/provision presenting a greater level of risk undertake course review more regularly and receive a greater level of scrutiny.

8.1.5   CRR encourages Course Teams and Senior Managers to engage with the concept of risk and to address the strengths and weaknesses associated with the course(s) under review. The following risk factors are examples of key areas that should be considered:

- The market – changing patterns of student and employer demand; student performance, external engagement (including PSRBs), currency of curriculum and other factors associated with the particular provision;

- The regulatory environment – current and future developments in Government policy; funding regulations; the requirements of external quality assurance bodies and those of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs);

- Institutional – current and future operation of the University's quality management systems; management arrangements and institutional and Faculty priorities, including the USW 2030 Strategy.

8.1.6   Review Teams will focus their enquiries on three core themes:

- **Academic Standards:** The use made of internal and external review; External Examiners; management information; PSRBs; the QAA UK Quality Code, including Subject Benchmark Statements, and other reference points in respect of: Curriculum, Assessment and Student Achievement;

- **Quality of Learning Opportunities:** The use made of internal and external review; External Examiners; management information; PSRBs; the QAA Quality Code, including Subject Benchmark Statements; learning and teaching strategies; research which informs learning opportunities; and other modes of study, such as Distance Online Learning in respect of: Learning and Teaching, Student Support and Guidance and Learning Resources (including staff development);

- **Maintenance of Standards and the Enhancement of Quality:** The Course Team's approach to the quality assurance of its provision and the effectiveness of this approach. The use made of quantitative data and qualitative feedback from students, External Examiners, employers and other stakeholders in a strategy of enhancement. The arrangements in place for ensuring consistency in the monitoring of academic standards and the quality of the student experience wherever they are based.

8.1.7   All undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision is subject to CRR. It does not encompass research degrees, except for the taught section of the Professional Doctorate.

8.1.8   All CRRs begin with a critical review which is undertaken by Course Teams. The documentation is reviewed by the Critical Review Panel to determine whether it is required to move to revalidation, as described in section 8.2.

8.2.   Perpetual Validation

8.2.1   Under the risk-based critical review process, a course that demonstrates full engagement with all quality processes and is deemed to be low risk in a series of potential risk areas commented upon in the critical review can be permitted to extend its validation period for up to two years, referred to as perpetual validation.

8.2.2   The critical review documentation incorporates risk rating categories and proposed measurements which are arrived at using KPIs such as institutional benchmarks, to

assure that the relevant course meets quality assurance and standards requirements, as well as USW strategic drivers.

8.2.3 Once the critical review documentation is completed, the Critical Review Panel makes a decision based on the outcome as to whether a full review and revalidation is required, a proportionate process or event can be completed, or the course can continue without further action. The Critical Review Panel consists of Chair – Head of Quality and Academic Services, Faculty Quality Assurance Committee Chairs (or nominee), at least one Head of Learning and Teaching and Student Experience and a student representative from the relevant course.

8.2.4 Where a course is required to revalidate, the process outline in Section 2.4 is followed.

8.3. Indicative Key Stages of CRR

2030 Curriculum Revalidation Timeline

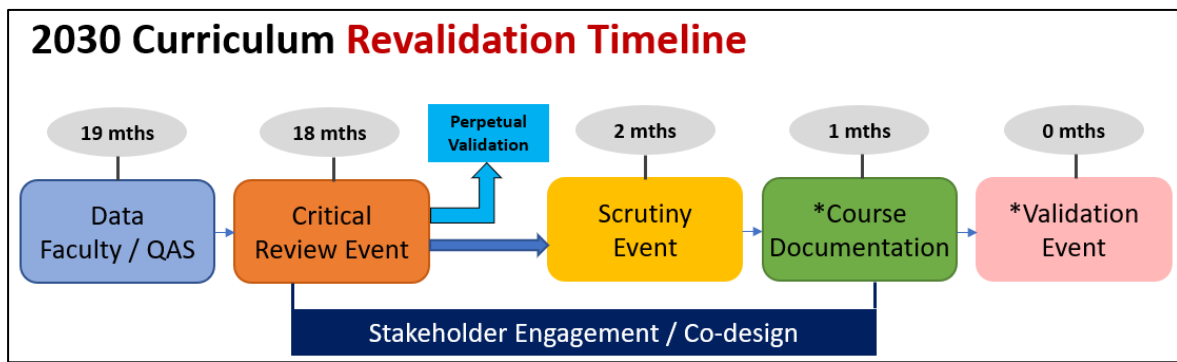| 19 mths | 18 mths | Perpetual Validation | 2 mths | 1 mths | 0 mths |
| Data Faculty / QAS | Critical Review Event | | Scrutiny Event | *Course Documentation | *Validation Event |
| | Stakeholder Engagement / Co-design | | | | |

Figure 4: 2030 Curriculum Revalidation Timeline

8.3.1 These are standard timings and may vary dependent on event requirements. Further information on process and procedures may be found in the Guidance for Review and Re-validation.

8.4. Course Closure and Suspension

8.4.1 Decisions to close a course will be approved by the Portfolio Oversight Group following consideration by the Faculty Executive Committee or equivalent. Where closure is approved, a Course Closure Action Plan (available on the Faculty SharePoint site) must be completed by the Course Leader and received and monitored (where appropriate) by F/CQAC.

8.4.2 The standard deadline for approving course closures is the end of April in the preceding year. Further information on what supporting documentation is required is available in Guidance for Course Closure.

8.4.3 Decisions to suspend a course will be approved by the Portfolio Oversight Group following consideration by the Faculty Executive Committee. Where suspension is approved, QASMs are notified and they ensure relevant systems are updated as appropriate.

8.5 Roles and Responsibilities

8.5.1 At USW and the RWCMD, indicative key responsibilities in relation to course review and revalidation are as follows:

TIER	GATEKEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	Student Voice
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor	Receives the annual re/validation schedule from QAC	Academic Board	SU President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	Gives approval annually for the Faculties' / College's re-validation schedule Receives outcomes of perpetual validation	QAC	SU President
		Considers courses eligible for Perpetual Validation	Critical Review Panel	Student Feedback
Gateway 4: Faculty	F/CQAC Chair, RWCMD / Principal, RWCMD	Re-validates existing courses deemed low or medium risk	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative,
	Chair of the Revalidation Panel	Recommends to QAC or F/CQAC re-validation of the course, with or without conditions / recommendations or recommends that validation is withheld.		Student Panellist
Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject	Signs off the critical review and, where required, the re-validation documentation, on behalf of the Subject.	Subject Management Team (or equivalent)	
Gateway 2: Course	Course Leader	Works with the Course Team to prepare the critical review and, where required, course re-validation documentation. Where the course is also delivered through collaborative arrangements the Course Leader's counterpart is also consulted.	F/CQAC, via the Course Validation / Review & Revalidation Panel	Course Representative, SSCLGs or equivalent
Gateway 1: Module	Module Leader	Contributes to discussions about the critical review and, where required, course re-validation. Where the module is also delivered through collaborative arrangements the Module Leader's counterpart is also consulted.		LOOP, NSS, SSCLGs or equivalent

9.   STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH QUALITY PROCESSES

9.1   Introduction

9.1.1   As outlined in the 2030 Curriculum Project the student experience is people-centred and relationship-based. Personal interactions are valued and the aim is to involve all staff, students and other stakeholders such as employers. Improving the experience that students receive is at the heart of the University's values.
We are committed to listening and responding appropriately to the student voice and to take the relationship to a further level by engaging students as partners in improving learning opportunities. Student engagement has two elements. This chapter focuses on student engagement in quality and enhancement activities, The Quality Code was revised in 2018 and within the list of common practices linked to expectations for quality is that the provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.

This enhancement can only come from meaningful participation of students in these processes and it needs to capture voices of all students, irrespective of location, mode of delivery, level of study or discipline. There are many processes across the university that involve students and staff through different types of partnership with an aim to evaluate, review, create and feedback on actions that enhance the student experience.

9.1.2   We aim to ensure we are flexible about how and when students talk with us and timely in how we and our students take action where required. As such, our approach is underpinned by the following principles:

- We, and all of our staff, recognise that students are partners in their learning and treat all students with consideration and respect
- We provide our students with regular and consistent opportunities to feedback on all aspects of the educational experience, including via:
  - Institutional participation in externally benchmarked surveys (such as NSS);
  - Module evaluation for all modules (to include LOOP);
  - Engagement with (re)validation processes, including any proposed changes to your programme of study;
  - Regular student feedback opportunities and / or meetings across campuses;
  - Student Staff Course Liaison Groups[5] (SSCLGs).
- Wherever, whenever and however our students choose to communicate with us, it is managed in the right place in a timely manner
- Engagement with students in relation to their student experience is on both an individual and collective basis and we, collectively and consciously, choose the most efficient and effective way of talking with and responding to each other
- We are prompt in listening and responding to our students
- Effective communication leading to positive change is co-created by us and our students working together as equal partners

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[5] More detail is provided in *Guidance for Student Staff Course Liaison Groups*.

- In order to support opportunities for all, the processes need to be accessible to all, which in turn needs them to be varied

The processes that underpin are broken down into a number of sections
- Student Evaluation and Feedback
- External Examiner
- Link Officers
- Student representation and relationship with Students' Union
- Attendance at meetings
- Engagement with Review processes
- Training and development

9.2 Roles and Responsibilities

9.2.1 At USW and the RWCMD, indicative key responsibilities in relation to the student engagement with quality processes are assigned as follows:

TIER	GATEKEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	Student Voice
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor	Considers a range of reports from QAC that include evaluations, actions and feedback mechanisms for numerous processes involving Student Engagement, including External Examiners, NSS, Continuous monitoring, SU Annual Quality Review, Student Charter. Signs the relationship agreement with the SU.	Academic Board	SU President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Considers a range of reports from QAC that include evaluations, actions and feedback mechanisms for numerous processes involving Student Engagement, including External Examiners, NSS, Continuous monitoring, Annual SU report, Student Charter and submits reports to Academic Board.	QAC	SU President
	Head of Quality and Academic Services (QAS)	Confirms that all QAS processes include SE.		SU Education
		Confirms that feedback mechanisms are in place.		SU Education
Gateway 4: Faculty	F/CQAC Chair / Principal of RWCMD	Considers the outcomes of Continuous Monitoring.	F/CQAC	Student Voice Representative / Course Representative
	F/CQAC Chair / Principal, RWCMD	Considers the outcomes of Continuous Monitoring.		

Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject (or equivalent)	Takes an overview of the Course monitoring, NSS results, SSCLGs.	Subject Management Team	Student Voice Representative
Gateway 2: Course	Course Leader	Reviews and creates actions in response to course and module evaluations (internal and external), ensures it is fed back to students.	F/CQAC FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group or equivalent	Course Representative
		Chair SSCLG Course Committee.	SSCLGs (or equivalent)	Course Representative
Gateway 1: Module	Module Leader	Addresses any issues raised by students in their Module Review Forms ensuring feedback to students occurs, feed up to Course Leader.	Assessment Board, FQAC Continuous Monitoring Sub-Group	Course Representative LOOP

Table 9: Indicative Roles and Responsibilities for Student Engagement in Quality Processes

9.3 Student Representation and relationship with the Students' Union

9.3.1 Student Representation Structure

9.3.1.1 The student representation structure within the University is overseen by the Students' Union. It is their responsibility to ensure that:

- Consistent processes are in places for the election, training and support of all student representatives across all courses and locations. Where possible student representatives are democratically elected by their peers.
- All student representatives have access to appropriate training and support.
- Elected student representatives are considered to be a representative voice for the student body.
- Course representatives are facilitated to have space and opportunity to meet students on their course privately.
- Staff work with students to respond to their feedback on the experience and enhance their student experience.
- Students are briefed on the purpose of specific events.
- Student voice activities are embedded within all aspects of the institution's or collaborative partner institution's work and planning.
- Each course must have named Course Representatives by the third week of the academic year. Course Leaders will inform the SU who are the representatives.
- An accurate record of the names and details of Course Representatives by Course/ Subject/ Faculty is kept and this data should be accessible upon request by all University staff who require this information for their role.

9.3.1.2 They are, however, supported by staff within the institution to ensure the interaction and partnership work that is necessary for the structure to work occurs.

9.3.1.3 There are four key roles that the Students' Union are responsible for that ensure that students' representation has a defined structure to allow the student voice to be heard and enhance the student experience.

Full Time Officers - Full-time Officers are USW students that have taken a year out of their studies or have recently graduated and are responsible for making high-level decisions for the Students' Union. They work a full academic year supporting activities, running campaigns and making sure the student voice is heard at the highest level. There are four positions: President, Education Officer, Welfare Officer, and Activities Officer.

Student Voice Representatives (SVRs) - SVRs work to enhance learning, teaching and student experience at a Faculty level for current and future students. They have equal say at Faculty level meetings where they give feedback to staff, propose solutions to problems and have an active role in the organisation and management of the faculty. They undertake research into students' issues within USW in order to make recommendations to improve the student experience. As Students' Union Representatives they also chair Course Representative Assemblies, attend Student Voice Representative Forums, participate in campaigns, such as Change Week, and attend the Student Union's AGM. SVRs also act as student representatives on (re)validation event panels, scrutinising paperwork and providing their input into the University's course design and validation processes. They are elected during the Students' Union annual elections.

Course Representatives – they work to improve the student academic experience at USW. They attend meetings and give feedback to their Course Management Team, propose solutions to problems and actively engage in the organisation and running of their course. As Students' Union Representatives, they also engage with Course Representative Assemblies and SSCLGs, and attend the Student Union's AGM. They are elected within their classes within the first three weeks of term starting. Course Leaders organise their cohorts' elections, and they usually are done via an online vote or a show of hands.

Student Council - Student Council consists of part time Campaign Officers with powers to pass policy (as it relates to non-academic issues) and mandate its own Officers and the Sabbatical Officers of the Union. Student Council members are elected to their representative roles each year to represent each demographic and they meet no fewer than five times per Academic Year. Within their meetings, Student Council promote and suggest Students' Union activities, make real changes and improvements to student experience as well as run campaigns and attend national conferences.

9.3.2 Support for students at partner institutions

The Students' Union provide resources for students at collaborative partners outlining how they can engage with the Students' Union and its services and how their voice is represented. Support/training materials are available online. The Students' Union recognises the wide range of students that need to access the representation structure and continuously look to review the structures in place to ensure where necessary they are adapted to ensure they are accessible to all.

9.3.3 Students' Union Annual Report

The Students' Union produces an Annual Report at the end of each academic year that is presented to the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (LTEC). The report includes key outputs by the Students' Union, developments and reports on progress to actions within their annual plan. The Students' Union also produce an impact report for Academic Board. Any action outcomes are monitored by LTEC.

9.3.4 Monthly meetings Students' Union /QAS

Members of the Quality and Academic Services team hold monthly meetings with members of the Students' Union. The meetings allow for the further development of partnership working in relation to quality assurance and enhancement.

9.3.5   Student Charter

9.3.5.1 The primary document that outlines the students' relationship with us, and our mutual expectations, is the Student Charter. The Student Charter is reviewed annually by all parties and then endorsed by Academic Board. It covers all of our HE students, within the USW Group and within collaborative partner institutions. By having a Student Charter in place, we demonstrate our full commitment to continually improving the quality of our services and, in line with our strategy and mission, recognise that students are at the heart of our institution.

9.3.5.2 The Student Charter emphasises the importance of belonging to a learning community, and of partnership working between staff and students. It also emphasises the importance of a strong and effective working relationship between the University and the Students' Union and symbolises the joint commitment to securing an excellent student experience.

9.3.6   Relationship Agreement

9.3.6.1 The relationship agreement exists between the Students' Union and the University. The agreement is reviewed on an annual basis and approved by the Board of Governors and is signed by both the Students' Union President and the University Secretary.

9.4   Attendance at meetings

9.4.1   Student representation exists at all levels of decision making throughout the committee structure, including representation at the highest level - Academic Board and the Board of Governors. To ensure their attendance is meaningful and impactful students are a full member of any committees that they attend.

9.4.2   Student Voice Representatives are responsible for representing their group of Course Representatives at a range of events, including Faculty Quality Assurance Committees, Faculty Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committees, course (re)validation and review events.

9.5   Student/Staff Course Liaison Group

9.5.1   The Student Staff Course Liaison Group (SSCLG) is a University process that is assisted by the Students' Union. It is Course Representatives' primary committee to attend. SSCLGs provide a formal opportunity for the Course leader and members of the Course Team to meet with Course Representatives for their respective courses.

9.5.2   Its remit is to provide a forum for students to raise/highlight good practice/concerns and issues they may have with their courses; and also provide a forum for the Course Leader / Course Team to respond to the issues raised and inform students what, if any, action they will take, closing the feedback loop. Course Leaders can also raise any issues that they may have too. Action points must be recorded and these should be forwarded to: Course Representatives; managers across the University via Continuous Monitoring reporting, and the Student Representation Team (who will send them to all relevant Student Voice Representatives). A copy of the notes/actions should also be uploaded on to the relevant course Blackboard site and be included in any 'You Said, We Did' notifications.

9.5.3   In terms of membership, there should be a majority of student members with at least three undergraduate members and, where applicable, at least one postgraduate taught student. The Head of Subject and Course Leader must be members, along with the Course Management Team and staff responsible for delivery of the course. Head of Subject (HoS) and Head of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (HoLTSE) should have the opportunity to attend the meetings should they wish. It is recommended that staff from academic support services, for example Student Support and Library Services, should also be invited to attend specific meetings.

9.5.4   There should be a meeting of the SSCLG every term arranged by the Course Leader. It is not expected that these meetings would take more than an hour. There are standard templates for the agendas and action points.

9.5.5   Should Course Representatives not be able to attend the meetings then the views of their peers should be collected as normal and put forward in writing to the Chair by the Course Representative, for discussion.

9.6   Student Evaluation and Feedback

9.6.1   We systematically and proactively gather informal and formal feedback from our students through a variety of mechanisms in relation to student experience related areas. We also undertake regular external benchmarking exercises to identify areas for improvement and good practice for dissemination and to continue to enhance performance.

9.6.2   Externally there are a range of surveys that are available to students to complete relating to all types of study. These include the National Student Survey (undergraduate), the Postgraduate Teaching Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). All of which are run by external organisations. The benchmarking data from these are used in a number of ways from funding councils to published league tables.

9.6.3   Internally, students enrolled on a course with USW have the opportunity to feedback at module and course level via an online system called Loop. Feedback can be sent at any point during the year, completely anonymously and in either English or Welsh.

The feedback gained from these surveys is part of the evidence base that informs the Continuous Monitoring process.

9.6.4 Following the publication of survey results and other forms of formal feedback, actions are identified to be added to course action plans in order to further enhance provision and address any issues highlighted by students which are reported through continuous monitoring processes. Action points from SSCLGs also feed into course action plans.

9.6.5 USW recognises that it works with collaborative partners with different infrastructures and abilities to garner effective student feedback. By allowing for variance of collection method, it recognises that the best quality data is made available to help ensure that the academic experience continues to be high-quality irrespective of where the course is delivered.

9.6.6 On these grounds, student at collaborative partners have two potential ways to provide feedback to USW. The second of these is only available to strategic alliance partners and must have approval via QAC.

a) They can provide feedback via LOOP;

b) With agreement from the University, if the collaborative partner has a sufficient infrastructure to be able to provide an equivalent experience to Loop, they may use a local system. The information will feed into Continuous Monitoring process and any third-party system must be open to interrogation by USW staff.

9.7 External Examiners

9.7.1 External Examiners are a key element in the processes the University uses to assist the enhancement of the student experience and the maintenance of academic standards. Their externality allows for an objective view of how courses are being run to be recorded and a comparison with the standards of similar courses that are being offered in other institutions of which they have knowledge.

9.7.2 Students are entitled to meet with the External Examiner that is allocated to their course and the Course Leader should facilitate this. Part of the External Examiner's reporting process includes questions as to whether they have had access to student feedback, either via module evaluations or via a meeting with the students (which does not have to be face to face).

9.7.3 All External Examiner reports should be accessible to students. They should be uploaded to an area on Blackboard.

9.8 Link Officers

9.8.1 Link officers are appointed to all collaborative courses. Their efforts ensure that course quality and academic standards achieved by students are maintained at an appropriate and acceptable level (in line with the FHEQ) and that quality enhancement takes place. One part of their role is to meet and discuss the programme with students and to ensure that students' concerns are being discussed in the relevant fora.

9.9   Engagement with review processes

9.9.1   Students are involved in a number of review processes including course review through to continuous monitoring, the modification process and revalidation. Students and the student voice are involved in continuous monitoring in a variety of direct and indirect ways. Student performance and feedback via surveys and formal meetings, form part of the evidence base upon which module and course leaders produce their reports and action plans. More directly, student representatives are members of College and Faculty Quality Assurance Committees, Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Board and the Board of Governors where they have an opportunity to contribute to approval of reports and action plans and hold the process to account.

9.9.2   In order for a modification to a course to be approved evidence of student consultation must be submitted.

9.9.3   In line with the QAA's Student Engagement Advice and Guidance, USW seeks to ensure that "arrangements exist for effective representation of the collective student voice at all organisational levels including decision-making bodies". Student Voice Representatives, therefore, are invited as paid members of each (re)validation panel to ensure that Student Representatives are given the opportunity to provide their input into the University's course design and validation processes. In preparation for course validation events, Student Voice Representatives are required to read and scrutinise validation documentation, provide written feedback on the documentation and attend a panel validation event (and any pre-meetings associated with the event). Students are also involved from the other side; supporting the course submission, current or alumni students are asked to meet with the panel during the event to discuss their experience of the course.

9.10   Training and development

9.10.1   Student Representatives are provided with training in quality processes and the opportunities to engage with them.

9.10.2   Full-Time Officers have comprehensive training within the Students' Union over a two-week period. This training comes from Students' Union management and departments, and University staff. They also benefit from their handover/shadowing period with the outgoing Full-Time Officers.

9.10.3   Student Voice Representatives have comprehensive training with the Student Voice Team in the Students' Union through a number of different mediums throughout their tenure. The Students' Union also provides the Student Voice Representatives with extra opportunities throughout the academic year to do additional training, such as research skills, teaching at Higher Education level, campaigning, gathering feedback, quality assurance in Higher Education, and many more.

9.10.4   Course Representatives have comprehensive training with the Student Voice Team in the Students' Union. There are training sessions at the start of the academic year and for additional intakes during the academic year. There is an online provision for training to allow all to engage with the role. The Students' Union also provides the Course Representatives with extra opportunities throughout the academic year to do additional training.

9.10.5 The Students' Union works in partnership with the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team and a range of other professional and academic staff to provide the training and guidance.

10. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 The term quality enhancement refers to any activity which strongly focusses on the deliberate steps taken to improve the student experience. Quality enhancement and quality assurance are very closely linked. Quality Enhancement has increased its presence over the last decade. The updated Quality code 2018 defines enhancement as the process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is a common theme to many of the core practices. The sector in Scotland has carried out Quality Enhancement Led Reviews since 2003, and HEFCW (Commission from Tertiary Education from April 2024) included a Quality Enhancement Review in the Quality Assurance Framework for Wales in 2018, representing a significant shift and culture change. In order for enhancement to occur it needs to be underpinned with a range of strategies and processes and not just individual pockets of good practice.

10.1.2 This section outlines how the University, in accordance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, promotes continuous and systematic enhancement of the student educational experience. It also details how the University uses a range of student feedback and quality enhancement processes to inform and improve the student educational experience strategically, for both current and future cohorts. A key companion piece to the USW 2030 Strategy at USW that supports this work is the 2030 Curriculum Project, which focuses on a journey of student success. The plan is underpinned by themes of aspiration, connectedness, graduate attributes and an approach to learning focused on action and problem solving.

10.1.3 Combined with a risk management approach to quality, a focus on enhancement enables us to support innovation and build competence and resilience; to encourage risk-taking with appropriate mitigation rather than seeking to avoid risk.

10.1.4 There is a culture of enhancement within the University, with all staff across academic and professional departments engaged with and responsible for the enhancement of the student experience. As detailed in this section, a variety of formal mechanisms are in place to encourage reflection on performance, to identify areas for enhancement and improvement, and to monitor the impact of any action taken. In addition to such formal mechanisms, enhancement also occurs more informally because of the supporting culture that encourages developmental activity and sharing of good practice embedded within institution. Processes are in place to support the development and innovation of the curriculum and are supported through CPD.

10.1.5 Enhancement arises through both routine quality processes and from specific quality enhancement and development activities. It is accepted that enabling student development and achievement involves academic, professional, and support staff across the University and that students are key partners in the enhancement of the student experience.

10.1.6 The routine quality processes that support the continuous and systematic enhancement of the student experience include course review and revalidation and continuous monitoring and are overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee. One of the aims of these processes is to encourage and provide an avenue for the sharing of good practice across all areas of the University. Processes are informed ever increasingly through the use of data – retention, learner analytics, module monitoring, NSS, internal survey. There is a wealth of information that institutions hold and which can be used in order to produce and enhance the student experience. The provision of this data for use in quality processes is supported by a number of departments, including Academic Registry and Planning and Performance.

10.1.7 Key to enhancement is the University's strong commitment to students as partners in their educational experience; this provides opportunities for students to be involved in improving and supporting learning. As a result, the University closely collaborates with its students to create strong and vibrant learning communities where all students are able to fulfil their individual potential. To assist with the review and enhancement of the curriculum and wider student experience the University systematically seeks student feedback in key areas to inform its strategic approach to enhancement and to ensure that action taken is informed by student feedback. A fuller account of the student partnership work can be found in section 9.

10.1.8 Feedback may be formal or informal and takes a variety of forms, including participation in national surveys, covering every level of provision, to enable the external benchmarking of performance; the use of module and course level questionnaires to assist with reflection at module and course level; the consistent gathering of student feedback responses at meetings or in class settings as a tool for evaluation and to inform action for improvement.

10.1.9 More specific enhancement and development activities, including response to NSS results, are overseen by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (LTEC) (more detail is available in the committee's terms of reference). These activities are supported centrally by Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) and by Heads of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (HOLTSEs) within faculties. Areas include Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), innovation and professional development and accreditation through the various routes to gaining HEA Fellowship and the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (PgCTLHE).

10.1.10 Activities include seminar series, online toolkits and Faculty/Subject specific events. More information can be found on the CELT website. The activities provided are reviewed by FLTEC and LTEC on an annual basis.

10.1.11 Staff are encouraged to collaboratively design USW distinctive curricula in response to our mission covering all stages of the student journey. This is supported by a number of policies including assessment tariff, assessment for learning and the academic blueprint. These are reviewed at any points where the curriculum is created or changed such as modification, validation or course review and validation.

10.1.12 The assessment dialogue and approval event which each course is required to hold is an opportunity for the student experience to be enhanced. The purpose is to allow

course teams to have a clear view of the whole assessment experience for students. This conversation should inform recommendations for minor modifications and therefore should be held prior to the final submission date for modifications at the end of June, allowing time for the modification to be processed.

10.1.13 The Quality and Academic Services Team facilitate a number of sessions alongside CELT colleagues about the relationship between quality assurance and quality enhancement. The sessions include how the quality processes in place (e.g., course review and revalidation) impact the roles of others and how, through their interaction with the processes, the student experience can be enhanced.

10.2   Roles and responsibilities

There are a wide variety of ways in which quality enhancement is managed and undertaken at the University. As such, the following represents an indicative set of key responsibilities:

TIER	GATEKEEPER	ACTIVITY	GATEWAY	STUDENT VOICE
Gateway 5: University	Vice Chancellor	Considers reports from LTEC and QAC.	Academic Board	Student President
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Submits a report to Academic Board which includes a summary of issues raised by and actions taken in response to External Examiners' reports.	QAC, LTEC	Student President
	Head of Quality and Academic Services	Provides link between QAC and LTEC (Secretary to both) Delivery on institution wide projects.		SU Education
Gateway 4: Faculty	F/CQAC Chair / Principal of RWCMD	Considers the outcomes of Continuous Monitoring across the Faculty / College, including areas of good practice and CPD.	F/QAC, F/CLTEC	Student Voice Representative
	Heads of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience	CPD arrangements for faculty.		
		Report to LTEC on enhancement activity within faculty and areas of good practice.		
Gateway 3: Subject	Head of Subject / Associate Dean (or equivalent)	Overview of CPD Sharing of Good Practice.	Subject Management Team	
Gateway 2: Course	Course Leader	Engage with CPD opportunities.	DPR	
		Continuous monitoring.	F/CQAC FQAC Continuous	Course Representative

			Monitoring Sub-Group	
		Consideration of External Examiner responses.	F/CQAC FQAC	Course Representative
Gateway 1: Module	Module Leader	Addresses any issues raised by the External Examiner in their Module Review Forms which are updated following the Assessment Boards.	Assessment Board and Continuous Monitoring	All students – meeting with External Examiners
		Engages with CPD opportunities.	DPR	

Table 10: Indicative Roles and Responsibilities for Quality Enhancement