Quality Assurance Framework

Scope

The Quality Assurance Framework sets out City's approach to assuring academic standards and enhancing the quality of education provision leading to an award or credit from the University. It identifies the principles by which the overarching Framework is managed and developed.

Anyone applying, managing, or developing elements of the Framework should do so with reference to the approach and principles laid out in this policy.

Date approved/re-approved: *June 2012 (terminology last updated October 2020)*

Date for review: 2020/21

To be read in conjunction *with the Student Policies and Regulations, Validated and Institutional Partnerships Handbook* and *Quality and Standards Short Guide.*

Quality Assurance
Framework

The Quality Assurance Framework underpins the University's commitment to academic excellence; it exists to support the continual improvement of our education and the broader student experience at local and strategic levels. The Framework was originally designed to ensure that City delivered on the vision for education laid out in *The City Strategic Plan 2012-16* and meet the expectations laid out in the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education.*

The Quality and Standards Framework applies to all taught and research degree programmes provided through City, its partnerships, and validated provision. It covers:

- all provision leading to an award of the University
- all provision leading to an award of credit by the University.

The *Student Policies and Regulations* and *Validated and Institutional Partnerships Handbook* and are the means by which the Framework is articulated.

This policy lays out our approach to the management of quality, standards and enhancement and the principles by which the Framework will continue to be developed. Anyone applying, managing, or developing elements of the Framework should do so with reference to the approach and principles laid out in this policy.

Our approach

At the core of the Framework is a systematic approach to academic standards and quality. The approach requires:

- the clear articulation of **academic standards** and the provision of an environment which enables students to meet them
- robust **quality assurance** mechanisms which evidence how we support our students in meeting the academic standards we have set and subsequently judge their achievement against these standards
- a focus on **academic quality** through regular analysis of how well we deliver on our commitment to academic excellence and the provision of high-quality education
- a commitment to continuous **quality enhancement** embedded within every aspect of our provision.

The *Quality and Standards Short Guide* provides an overview of our Quality Assurance Framework and the definitions we use for academic standards, quality assurance, academic quality and quality enhancement.

Our stakeholders

The participation of our stakeholder groups is crucial in defining, assuring, and improving the quality of our educational provision. Our students and the Students'

Union are significant stakeholders in the University. Other key stakeholders are: future students; academic and professional staff; employers; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies with whom we engage; partner organisations; validated partners; placement providers; and our alumni.

The University regularly reviews quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms to ensure they are fit for purpose and continue to meet the needs of stakeholders.

Our principles

While our approach is comparable with any high-quality Higher Education Institution, the principles embedded in our Quality and Standards Framework reflect the distinctiveness of the University and support the realisation of City's vision for its future:

Enhancement
Our policies and procedures promote a culture of reflective practice and provide mechanisms for continuous improvement in both process and quality. Enhancement requires the systematic collection and use of feedback and data; quality benchmarking; input from internal and external experts; continuous engagement with our students as partners; fostering collaborative approaches; acting on lessons learned and building on best practice.

Student Voice
Engagement with our students and their representatives is central to our approach. Students can expect to be able to contribute to local and strategic discussions about the quality of education at the University and wider developments impacting on their experience. The Framework supports a variety of formal and informal mechanisms for seeking feedback from students at key points within the student lifecycle including student surveys, module evaluations, student representation on key decision-making bodies and, importantly, through the strong relationship City enjoys with its
Students' Union.

Our students can expect to be informed of how their collective feedback has been used to inform the development of educational provision and the broader University community both for themselves and future students at the University.

Communication
The Framework facilitates communication of needs and priorities from across the University, channelling these to the appropriate decision-making bodies within the governance and executive structures, enabling representation, and clearly articulating how decisions will be communicated back to stakeholders.

Information can be presented via a variety of media and formats suitable to

our different stakeholders, but content should always be valid, reliable, useful, and accessible. Our stakeholders can expect to be provided with information concerning:

- how academic standards are set, assured, reviewed and enhanced at programme, School and University level;
- what is expected of them and what they can expect as members of the community at City.

Flexibility

City is proud of the diversity of its staff and students, academic programmes, professional and business partnerships, and research and enterprise portfolios. The Framework facilitates interdisciplinary approaches and collaboration across professional, academic and institutional boundaries, allowing us to maximise the potential of our students and the University. (The Framework currently enables partnership arrangements; validated provision; accreditation and recognition through professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and the use of placements, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, internships, special study schemes and student mobility schemes). Flexibility in approach requires clear lines of accountability to maintain consistently high-quality academic standards and enable regular assurance and enhancement work.

Consultation

The Strategic Plan highlights the importance of partnership, community and collaboration in enabling us to achieve our goals for education, research and enterprise. The Framework is developed, managed and reviewed using a range of consultative processes which draw on the expertise and experience of our staff, students, partners and wider academic and professional communities.

Externality

City measures its success and defines its agenda for educational provision not just in relation to the standards set by the academic sector, but against the needs and aspirations of the businesses and professions it serves. Programmes are required to seek relevant professional accreditation wherever possible.

The University has identified student futures, community, enterprise, research, innovation, internationalisation and diversity as being key to its strategic vision for the future. The principle of externality requires that the Framework supports sustained and regular engagement with our partners.

Our expectation

The Quality Policy and Principles require adherence to the policies and procedures that combine to form the Quality and Standards Framework. Guidance is provided to support the application of the principles.

Appendix A

Applying the principles

The following demonstrate some of the ways in which the principles should be practically applied when developing, reviewing and improving educational provision:

- consult regularly with your stakeholder groups through a range of media and fora;

- regularly collect and use qualitative and quantitative data to support review and action planning;

- reference relevant internal and external benchmark standards, innovations, best practice examples and research from the academic, professional and business sectors;

- draw on the expertise of academic and professional services staff during decision-making;

- consult with external experts from academic, professional and business backgrounds;

- reference relevant student feedback and actively seek the views of students on specific developments;

- use collaborative approaches that foster innovation, creativity and the sharing of good practice;

- clearly articulate responsibilities for collecting feedback and management data, identifying 'lessons learned', action planning, decision-making and dissemination;

- ensure that print-media and technologies are used with the needs of stakeholders in mind; clear sign- posting is crucial and personalisation should be used wherever possible;

- use a blend of formal and informal feedback mechanisms to maximise engagement (formal mechanisms are articulated through the Framework but can be supplemented e.g. via one-to-one feedback, Moodle groups, Twitter feeds, the Student Blog and events at Programme, School and University level)