Aligning City’s Quality and Standards Framework to Internal and External Drivers - Policy Review Update

**Summary**

The launch of City’s Vision and Strategy 2026 with a new set of strategic ambitions focusing on progression, student satisfaction and employability necessitated a review of the Education and Student Strategy to ensure appropriate alignment. Concurrently, the passing of the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) included initiatives designed to encourage the enhancement of quality in teaching, learning and research across the sector. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has oversight of consumer protection law and its application to the higher education sector, and the Office for Students has been introduced, taking up its role as the higher education regulator in April 2018.

It is against this landscape of internal and external change that a review of City’s quality and standards framework was necessary, building on and strengthening existing practice whilst focusing on the student experience and outcomes. Four policies were identified to be simultaneously reviewed: Programme Approval, Programme Amendments, Periodic Review and Programme Suspension/Termination.

Consultation with Schools has now taken place, and this paper outlines the next steps in revising the policies and guidance, and included plans for implementation of the revised policies.

**Recommended actions**

Educational Quality Committee is asked to:

- **note** the update for aligning our quality and standards framework to internal and external drivers
Aligning City’s Quality Assurance and Standards Framework to Internal and External Drivers – Policy Review Update

1) Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update Educational Quality Committee on the ongoing work to align City’s quality assurance and standards framework with our Vision and Strategy 2026, the refresh of Education and Student Strategy 2026 and the recent rapid change in the external regulatory landscape. The work has been undertaken with reference to the quality assurance implications of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) compliance and the requirements of the HEFCE Annual Provider Review (APR). HEFCE’s revised approach to quality assurance from 2016/17 included significant reform and encouraged self-regulation, underpinned by the view that ‘quality’ is part of an overall approach to regulation and cannot in future be considered separately. Further changes in regulation are expected at the end of February when the Office for Students publish their guidance, however, the majority of the current review is based on the known internal and external drivers. This review will also ensure that alignment to City’s Credit Framework is included as a consideration for programme approval, amendment and periodic review and will consider recent sector guidance relating to promoting good academic practice in programme design in the light of the increasing proliferation of ‘essay mills’.

2) Policy Review

In response to the different internal and external drivers Student and Academic Services did an initial analysis which identified four policies (Programme Approval, Programme Amendment, Periodic Review and Programme Suspension/Termination) to be reviewed as a priority. These policies are closely related and have CMA implications due to communicating changes within programmes to students.

In September 2017 the Education and Student Committee approved the scope of the review and the Boards of Studies consultation paper. Consultation was then undertaken with Boards of Studies, School PARCs, the Students’ Union and School quality teams.

Initial alignment of the Annual Programme Evaluations (APEs) form has taken place to capture relevant information aligning with the strategy. This will be kept under review alongside this project.

3) Project plan and next steps

Student and Academic Services received detailed responses from all of the Schools and LEaD. And are currently drafting revised policies and guidance for the four policies. These drafts reflect on the comments made during the consultation, sector best practice and ensuring alignment to external requirements. The policies also note the previous comments made by Education and Student Committee on ensuring that KPIs such as progression and data are embedded within these processes, as well as expanding the policy and guidance on programme approval regarding flexible course delivery.

One of the key aims of the revisions is to simplify the guidance and make it more accessible to both staff and students. It is proposed that short guides will be produced aimed at programme teams, students and quality teams to ensure appropriate information is communicated.
The revised policies and guidance will be presented to Associate Deans (Education) and School quality teams (through the Quality Forum) to provide feedback before formal submission to Educational Quality Committee and finally Senate in May 2018.

4) Implementation

The revised policies and guidance will be implemented for the 2018/19 academic year. To ensure that programme directors and school quality teams are aware of changes Student and Academic Services have identified a number of methods of training and communication:

- **Guidance** – the guidance will be updated to be streamlined and user friendly. Short guides will be designed aimed at students, programme teams and quality staff.
- **Quality Forum** – Student and Academic Services will run a session for school quality teams on the key changes to the policies and guidance.
- **Workshops** –
  - Workshops will be run for programme teams looking to introduce new programmes, outlining the approval process and best practice.
  - Workshops will be run for UPAC panel members to outline changes and training will be provided for new UPAC members.
  - Workshops will be run for programme teams undergoing periodic review to help guide them through the process, in particular focusing on how to run a productive development day and write a reflective report. Training will be provided for Periodic Review panel members.

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