
1 An overview of quality assurance and enhancement activity at Middlesex University

1.1 Academic quality and standards

Middlesex University is committed to ensuring that students have a high-quality learning experience, secure positive student outcomes and that the standards of qualifications are set at appropriate levels. The university implements policy, processes and enhancement activities to support fulfilment of the Office for Students (OfS) requirements under the “B3” quality conditions of regulation.

In the past QAA institutional and collaborative audit has placed confidence in the soundness of the University’s management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards. Similar confidence was placed in the capacity of the University to continue to secure and maintain quality and standards in the future. These judgements represented the highest level of confidence that can be placed in an institution, and were a positive endorsement of the academic standards and quality at Middlesex on which the university continues to build.

1.2 The University’s approach to the management of academic quality

The University’s approach to managing academic quality comprises several key elements:

- the management structure of the University;
- the deliberative structure of the University;
- the University’s academic quality/regulatory processes.

A description of each of these elements is presented in the following sections.

1.2.1 The management structure of the University

1.2.1.1 University Executive

The University Executive is led by the Vice-Chancellor.

Overall management responsibility for the quality and standards of all Middlesex awards lies with the Vice-Chancellor; the fulfilment of this responsibility is a key responsibility of the PVC Education and Student Experience. In the case of collaborative provision, the Chief Operating Officer also plays a significant quality and standards management role.

1.2.1.2 Faculties

The University's Academic Structure is based upon four Faculties. Each Faculty is led by an Executive Dean, a member of the Executive.

Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries

Faculty of Business and Law

Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education

Faculty of Science and Technology

The Faculty Executive Deans are responsible for the leadership and management of the faculties as well as contributing to overall University leadership. Depending on the size and composition of the faculty, one or more Deans and Deputy Deans support

the Executive Dean in the management of the faculty. Deputy Deans have management responsibility for one or more of the following functional areas:

- curriculum development;
- student experience
- learning, teaching and assessment;
- international development;
- research;
- partnerships; and
- business and community interaction.

Deputy Dean titles and allocation of responsibilities may vary between faculties.

Academic departments

The academic structure of each faculty is divided into a number of discipline-based academic departments which focus on: the development and delivery of associated academic programmes, research and business development. All academic staff are assigned to an academic department. A head of department leads each department. Groups of closely related programmes are headed by programme directors, who have responsibility for the overall management of the programmes, assisted by programme leaders with responsibility for the operational management of one or more programmes within this group. Faculties, departments and programmes are supported by administrative and technical staff, located both in central professional services and within faculties or departments.

1.2.3 University Services

1.2.3.1 Taught and research provision management and support

Several University services are concerned with the management of academic provision. These services are listed below.

Academic Registry

Academic Registry provides a broad range of professional administrative services for the University. Academic Registry:

- provides taught programme and departmental administration across all faculties
- provides administrative support for research degrees
- manages the admissions process (with Marketing)
- administers central student record keeping,
- is responsible for the University's academic regulations and assessment processes
- manages academic misconduct cases, academic appeals and student complaints (the latter responsibility is shared with LSS)
- is responsible for the overall assurance of research degree provision

Information on Academic Registry is available from their intranet site:

<http://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/ouruniversity/services/academic-registry/what-we-do/team-responsibilities/index.aspx>.

Academic Quality Service

The Academic Quality Service:

- leads on the development of the University's quality assurance and enhancement strategies, policies and procedures for taught programmes, and ensures their implementation;
- provides administrative support for the quality assurance of taught programmes across the University;
- provides taught programme quality assurance/enhancement guidance, support and training to staff across the University and in partners; and
- is the University's representative and key point of contact for external academic quality bodies such as the QAA

Specific details concerning AQS and academic quality are available at:
<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/Strategy/quality-standards/index.aspx>

Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement

The Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement supports the development of strategy and practice in teaching and supporting learning. It works in conjunction with the faculties to provide guidance, support and staff development to academic and academic-related staff across the University on issues ranging from effective teaching practice through curriculum design and distance education; it also takes a lead on the development of the University's learning framework, the VLE and provides associated staff development and support. CAPE takes an active role in reviewing student feedback to inform enhancement activity both in faculties and centrally across the University.

CAPE also acts as the University's main liaison with external bodies such as the HEA and MdxSU.

Centre for Academic Partnerships

The Centre for Academic Partnerships co-ordinates the development and management of collaborative partnerships, working closely with faculties, services and partners to support delivery of the provision. Academic Partnerships also manages the administration, data and finance for collaborative, articulation, exchange and study abroad partners. Information on Academic Partnerships is available from their intranet site: <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/business/partners/index.aspx>

1.2.3.2 Learning resources and student support

Library & Student Support

Library and Student Support brings together all aspects of generic student support into a single service, complementing the discipline-specific academic support provided in faculties, the programme support provided by the Academic Registry, and support for student and graduate employment delivered by the Employability Service. Specifically it manages

- UniHelp - for all general student enquiries – on campus and remote support
- Student money, welfare, visa & immigration advice
- Wellbeing services – disability, dyslexia, mental health and counselling
- Progression and Support team – to improve student achievement, progression and retention
- Library services – collections, electronic resources, information skills
- Copyright advice and support
- Core e-books for students project
- Research repository and research data management
- Learner Development Unit (LDU) – academic writing and numeracy support
- Student Learning Assistants
- Student IT support, including myUniHub

1.2.4 The University deliberative structure

1.2.4.1 Academic Board and its sub-committees

Academic Board has overall responsibility for the University's academic provision, provides direction as to the development of the University's portfolio, and ensures academic quality and standards. Academic Board has the following sub-committees directly reporting to it:

- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Assurance Committee
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee
- Portfolio Development Committee
- Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Committee
- Student Experience Committee
- Honorary Degrees Board

Further information on Academic Board is available from the university website: [Vice Chancellor and Executive | Middlesex University \(mdx.ac.uk\)](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/vice-chancellor-and-executive)

1.2.4.2 Faculty Committees

Each faculty has established a committee structure in line with the terms of reference of Academic Board. Faculty committees consider issues relating to academic planning, programme development and management, the assurance and maintenance of academic standards and the quality of the student experience; and issues relating to the quality assurance and enhancement of research degree provision. The precise structure and constitution of the committees vary from faculty to faculty in order to best meet local circumstances; nonetheless the overall committee structure and functions at faculty level must fulfil all Academic Board requirements. Faculties may also choose to establish further sub-committees for specific purposes if they wish. The requirements with respect to faculty committees are detailed in Guidance 1(i).

1.2.5 The University's academic quality/regulatory processes.

1.2.5.1 Overview of the process of quality assurance and enhancement of Middlesex provision – taught provision

The Assurance Committee has oversight of the effectiveness of implementation of quality procedures and academic regulations, and receives reports on all key quality and regulatory activities. It aims to ensure congruence between the University's academic regulations, academic procedures and related processes; and external requirements such as the OfS conditions of registration and regulatory framework, Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) obligations on providing information, Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework, and other relevant external expectations. The Assurance Committee also receives reports from external quality agencies (e.g. the QAA), and from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

All new partners are institutionally approved before becoming collaborative partners of the University. Collaborative partner institutions are evaluated annually against key risk indicators, and may also be subject to institutional review if, at any time, the University has significant quality concerns related to the partnership. After the first year of operation of a new collaborative link, AQS conduct a partnership enhancement review designed to enhance quality assurance practices in the partner, and to inform development of the University's collaborative quality processes.

Programme proposals are first approved at faculty level, so as to ensure that the proposed programmes are compatible with faculty plans, and that only sound proposals are put forward for University approval by the Portfolio Development Committee (PDC), which ensures that programmes are consistent with the University framework for qualifications, that there is a sound business case for the programme, that the programme can be supported within the framework of University resources (for University programmes), and that the programme is compatible with the University's existing or planned portfolio. If approved, programmes then move to the validation stage.

Establishing that programme standards are appropriate, and that the quality of the student experience can be assured are the principal concerns of programme validation. A key element of both the validation and review process is the externality provided by External Assessors during the process. The University also actively encourages the involvement of students and professional bodies in the validation or review process.

The security of assessment is assured by a clear assessment process, which is supported by guidance provided by Academic Registry. Assessment is undertaken by either the University or partners (depending on the nature of the link).

The External Examiner system is one of the principal means whereby the University maintains central oversight of the ongoing maintenance of programme standards. AQS appoints and monitors the performance of External Examiners, receives and reviews their reports and reports to the Assurance Committee on the External Examiner system.

Student achievement is monitored in a number of ways including consideration at assessment boards, as part of the educational monitoring and enhancement (EME) process, and by the Assurance Committee. Most partners follow the University's assessment regulations. Regulations relating to academic appeals are also usually those determined and followed by the University.

Students provide an important view as to the quality of provision and the University actively seeks student opinions so as to enhance the quality of the student experience. All programmes operate Programme Voice Groups to elicit and respond to student comments. In addition to considering the results of external surveys such as the NSS and PTES, the University also surveys students on a regular basis. Partners apply the same or similar feedback processes. Consideration of such feedback is undertaken at programme level, and feeds into the EME process, with more generic themes identified as part of higher-level reports on student feedback. Teaching observations and staff development and training also serve to identify enhancement opportunities.

A reflective view of quality and standards is provided by the EME process which draws different sources of academic quality data together, and which allows the University to identify and address standards and quality issues at programme, departmental, faculty or University level. EME also provides a vehicle for identifying good practice for University wide dissemination. EME requires each department to engage with data and produce and update action plans in support of enhancements to provision and student experience/outcomes.

A long-term view of standards and the achievement of students is provided by six-yearly programme reviews, which report on the continuing validity of the curriculum aims and outcomes, content, assessment, teaching and learning methods, as well as on student achievement.

The quality processes of the University also include procedures for accreditation, and for establishing and monitoring articulation agreements. Partner arrangements for accreditation are subject to approval by the University.

1.2.5.2 Research programmes

Research student provision is similarly subject to processes and regulations designed to assure standards, and ensure and enhance the quality of the students' experience.

1.2.5.3 Maintenance of academic quality procedures and academic regulations

The University has well-established academic quality/regulatory processes and structures, which are defined within the Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook (LQEH)ⁱ, and the University Regulations. The academic quality procedures and academic regulations for all programmes are developed and maintained, in consultation with faculties, by AQS (in the case of taught programme procedures) and Academic Registry (in the case of research programme procedures and all academic regulations). Changes to the procedures and regulations are usually made on an annual basis, and are approved by the Assurance Committee.
