

## **Academic Quality and Standards Policy**

### **Aims of the Policy**

The aims of this policy are to ensure the:

- safeguarding of academic standards, and the
- assurance and enhancement of academic quality

of all the school awards and/or credit bearing provision, however offered. The policy will also apply where appropriate to non-credit bearing academic provision. The policy complements other relevant policies and strategies, including the Curriculum Design Policy, and the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy from Middlesex University.

### **Definitions of terms used in this policy**

#### **Academic standards**

The safeguarding of academic standards is the process whereby the school ensures that all awards of the school qualifications and/or credits are made on the basis of the achievement of appropriate academic standards.

*Academic standards of taught programmes* are concerned with the appropriateness of intended programme or unit of credit learning outcomes (in relation to programme or unit of credit aims, content and qualification level), the appropriateness of the syllabus (in relation to learning outcomes), and the effectiveness of assessment (in relation to the measurement of the attainment of learning outcomes).

#### **Academic quality**

*Academic quality* includes those activities that make a contribution to the nature of a student's academic experience including:

- learning, teaching, academic guidance and assessment practices;
- the deployment of learning resources; and
- other mechanisms that determine the quality of a student's engagement with the school, including:
  - student recruitment and admission;
  - progression advice and programme planning;
  - personal development planning;
  - careers advice and guidance;
  - pastoral support;
  - provision of information; and
  - student academic appeal, complaint and grievance procedures.

*Academic quality assurance* is the process whereby the school ensures that the quality of the learning opportunities offered to students are at an appropriate level.

*Academic quality enhancement* describes the explicit processes put in place to improve the student experience over time. A key element of the process of enhancement is the identification and adoption of good practice.

In practice, the school academic quality practices and procedures will usually involve

elements of both assurance and enhancement.

### **Safeguarding of standards**

Principles relating to the safeguarding of standards are as follows.

For all programmes or units of credit:

- standards will be at an appropriate level for the qualification
- standards will satisfy the requirements of relevant governmental, professional and statutory bodies and similar organisations; and
- academic standards will be regularly monitored and reviewed, so as to ensure currency and relevance of such standards.

For taught programmes or units of credit:

- principles underpinning aims, learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment will be those as defined in the Curriculum Design Policy from Middlesex University; and
- the views of recognised domain experts external to, and independent of, the school will be sought when standards are established, monitored or reviewed.

### **Assuring quality**

Principles relating to academic quality assurance are as follows.

- the quality of the student experience will meet the requirements of relevant governmental, professional and statutory bodies, and similar organisations;
- assurance will be informed by robust programme approval, monitoring, review and student feedback processes which explicitly identify and take action to resolve any issues related to the students' academic experience;
- assurance activity will focus on areas where it is judged there is most risk, with areas judged to be sound receiving a commensurately lower level of scrutiny;
- students will be involved in the process of programme development, monitoring and review; and
- the views of external assessors will be taken into account when the quality of programmes is established or reviewed.

### **Enhancing quality**

A key priority for the school will be to enhance the student experience on a continuing basis. In achieving this aim:

- there will be an explicit demonstration of improvement, and therefore measures of the quality of the student experience will be established and regularly monitored;
- where possible, such measures will be based upon already existing data sets such as those derived from quality monitoring reports, student feedback, progression and achievement data etc;
- changes made to improve the student experience will be determined on the basis of sound evidence that they are likely to be effective; and finally,
- it is recognised that any changes made in the spirit of enhancement may themselves pose a risk to quality and where necessary, appropriate contingency plans should be put in place to address any such issues, should they arise.

This policy is based on the Academic Quality and Standards Policy from Middlesex University, which was approved by Academic Board at its meeting on 18th June 2008, it is due for review by June 2013.