

Union

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT POLICY

Approved by Academic Board January 2018

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CONTENTS

1. DEFINITION AND AIMS
2. VALUES AND PRINCIPLES
3. SPECIFIC AREAS OF ENHANCEMENT
 - 3.1. STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND SUPPORT
 - 3.2. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT ENHANCEMENT
 - 3.3. LEARNING RESOURCES ENHANCEMENT
 - 3.4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT
 - 3.5. EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT
 - 3.6. COMMITTEE AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION
 - 3.6. WEBSITE AND THE CLOUD
4. COMMUNICATION OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

1. DEFINITION AND AIMS

Union School of Theology is committed to ensuring that students have a high-quality learning experience. The Quality Enhancement Policy documents the School's strategic approach to providing quality enhancement, with a particular emphasis on the arrangements for improving the student learning experience.¹ UST recognises that a reflective and enhancement-oriented approach is needed in order to adapt to the ever-changing nature of the student population, the context of higher education, and the wider social, economic, political and technological context.² It follows the ADRI quality cycle:³ We document our **A**pproach (informed by our educational philosophy and in line with Open University and QAA expectations), **D**eploy our operations

¹ Quality Enhancement Review (QER) Handbook Wales (Oct 2017), Introduction.4, Section 1.20.

² QER Handbook Wales, Section 1.25.

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ADRI>

according to our policies and philosophy, Review our data (covering all aspects of our operations), and seek to make Improvements to our approach and deployment on the basis of the careful analysis of triangulated data which is collected, reviewed and acted upon by various committees. The quality enhancement work of the SEC, ATRACC and QAC is reviewed annually by the AB. Each of the tools used to review any particular aspect of UST's operations are designed by teams and reviewed by a particular committee. The QAC guides and oversees these activities, providing support as needed.

2. VALUES

The following core values and principles underpin the School's strategic priority to continually enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- a. **Inclusion.** The School seeks to continue to develop and enhance an accessible learning environment where everyone is valued and treated with respect, regardless of gender, race, age, disability or mode of study. [See UST Equal Opportunities Policy]
- b. **Support.** The School seeks to enhance the support for all students, staff and the training needs of local churches.
- c. **Involvement.** The School seeks to promote a partnership between staff and students to create a student-centred learning environment where both are involved in identifying and developing enhancement opportunities.
- d. **Excellence.** The School strives to maximize the personal and academic potential of students and identify the factors that can contribute to positive learning experiences.
- e. **Passion.** The School is passionate about equipping students for a range of Christian ministries by integrating theory and practice, and continually enhancing its ability to do so.
- f. **Reflective practice.** UST evaluates and reviews its policies, practices and review mechanisms in the light of external benchmarks such as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and the *QAA Theology and Religious Studies Subject Benchmark Statement* with a view to adopting and promoting best practice.

3. SPECIFIC AREAS OF ENHANCEMENT

3.1 STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND SUPPORT

3.1.2. A key focus of the school is to ensure a quality learning experience for all our students. Various mechanisms are in place to ensure that we listening to the student voice and act upon it as needed. Student are involved in formal and informal data collection activities, and play a role in decision-making committees. Our student data collection cycle is appended as **Appendix 1**. Highlights are noted below.

3.1.3. With a view to enhancing the learning experience of students, UST ensures student representation at all levels of its academic structure. Students are thus involved as important stakeholders in every aspect of the School's operations. They become partners in the formulation, implementation, operation and evaluation of the School's taught programmes.⁴ Student representatives are part of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), Student Experience Committee (SEC), Academic Teaching Research and Curricula Committee (ATRACC) and the Academic Board (AB). Through involvement in these committees they provide valuable input, contributing to the identification and also execution of enhancement opportunities.

3.1.4. Formal feedback is collected in module feedback and the student satisfaction survey. Alumni surveys are also conducted on an annual basis (**See Appendix 1**).

3.1.5. Informal feedback is gathered by lecturers in classes and gatherings and also by the Tutor for Women and Student Welfare, who is part of the Student Experience Committee. Lecturers can pass informal feedback on to committee heads as needed. When a particular issue is identified requiring student input, a focus group is organised as necessary: for example, prior to proposed programme changes.

3.1.6 Policies are developed and communicated to students, with a view to ensuring a consistent and fair approach. Equality Impact Assessment checks are documented in all policy reviews. By providing expected timings, and flowcharts we seek to ensure that students know where they are in a particular process, what the next steps are and who they can approach concerning particular issues.

3.1.7. Personal tutors are assigned to all students, who invest in their personal and professional development, and identify areas of enhancement within their programmes.

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Enhancement

3.2.1. The Teaching and Learning Policy outlines our approach to ensuring our teaching is engaging and of a high quality. Our Assessment Strategy outlines our approach to assessment and feedback, and the quality assurance mechanism associated with these. Specific quality enhancement highlights from these are noted below

3.2.2. Our module review documentation covers questions on teaching, assessment and feedback.

⁴ QER Handbook Wales, Section 1.28-29; UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Expectation B5.

3.2.3. Our Student satisfaction survey also covers questions on teaching, learning and assessment.

3.2.4 Reports from External Examiners help us ensure we are meeting quality expectations in the areas of assessment, feedback and moderation practices.

3.2.5. Our commitment to quality feedback is provided in Appendix 6 of Our Assessment Strategy.

3.2.6. Peer observation of teaching provides opportunity for identification of enhancement opportunities. Best practice in this area is shared on the Union Cloud VLE with a view to the extension of enhancement through the institution.

3.2.7. Peer review of assessment is facilitated through our peer auditing of assessment (Appendix 7 of our Assessment Strategy).

3.2.8. The Quality assurance mechanism governing management of our module pages and learning resources on the Cloud is documented in the Public Information Quality Assurance Framework. Following the Procedures outlined in this document helps us ensure that materials provided to students are up to date and that our web presence is current and easy to navigate.

3.2.9. The SEC is tasked to review soft academic skill provision, and ensure that students are helped to manage academic reading, writing and thinking.

3.2.10. A quality assurance mechanism, outlined in the Learning Communities Handbook governs all aspects of the Learning Communities, including the training of lead mentors, and receiving and analysing their feedback.

3.2.11 We analyse progression and retention statistics, student mark profiles, and student academic appeals and complaints cases to ensure that we are aware of any issues or worrying trends which may require further investigation and response.

3.3. Learning Resources Enhancement

3.3.1. The Librarian reviews requests and data trends, and seeks to respond to issues through developing a strategy to ensure learning resources keep pace with student requirements.

3.3.2. Technology updates for enhancement are driven by student feedback, trends in the field, faculty input and strategic resource allocation priorities.

3.4 Staff Development

The School seeks to enhance the work of its staff, as outlined in its Staff Development Policy. Highlights are noted below:

3.4.1. Academic staff are encouraged to participate in relevant academic conferences and other forums. This helps ensure the delivery of teaching that is delivered from the forefront of the discipline, and facilitates quality research supervision for research students, as well as enhancing the learning experience of students.⁵

3.4.2. Academic staff are encouraged to seek HEA Fellowship. This process facilitates ongoing critical reflection on pedagogical practices, and enhances their professional capacities.

3.4.3. The annual review for all staff facilitates reflection on staff training needs and areas for development

3.4.4. An annual calendar of staff development activities is developed by the QAC. This covers mandatory training, training in specific areas needed by particular members of staff, as well as strategic training.

3.4.5. Staff self-report on their training activities and can request training through the request mechanism in place.

3.4.6. An annual return on our Prevent training is submitted to HEFCW.

3.5 External Engagement

UST is committed to enhancing its programmes and the learning experience of students through its connections with wider educational networks and frameworks. This includes –

3.5.1. Reference to QAA documentation and the Quality Code for Higher Education as we develop policies and procedures, and keeping abreast of developments in the field.

3.5.2. Using the feedback of external examiners as part of a commitment to external scrutiny and comment, and drawing on expertise to enhance teaching and learning

3.5.3. Maintaining external representation on the Academic Board and Quality Assurance Committee to draw on external knowledge and to facilitate enhancement.

3.5.4. Valuing and acting upon input and suggestions from our validator (The Open University) and the QAA resulting from visits, events and regular communication.

3.5.5. Strategic alignment with the wider vision of Union and the place of the school within the Union ecosystem (Mission, Publishing and Research).

3.5.6. Requesting input from pastors, academics and mentors when embarking on strategic developments, or programme changes.

⁵ Academic Staff Development Policy.

3.6. COMMITTEE AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION

3.6.1 Each of the tools used to review any particular aspect of UST's operations are designed and reviewed by a particular committee, with input from the QAC as needed

3.6.2. The Development Team ensures that committees are meeting and reviews potential agenda items as necessary.

3.6.3. Each committee and team is reviewed annually in order to check that it is running effectively, and to ensure that any concerns expressed in these data can be acted upon to ensure each aspect of the School's operations is being run as desired.

3.7. WEBSITE, IT DEVELOPMENTS AND THE CLOUD

3.7.1. QA procedures associated with updates and changes to the UST website and Cloud pages are provided in the Public Information Quality Assurance Framework. These mechanisms give UST confidence that it providing up to date information to students.

3.7.2. Data processing impact assessments are carried out as necessary – particularly when introducing a new tool into UST (e.g., a new student management system).

3.7.2. An annual item on the QAC agenda is GDPR compliance of our student management system and confirmation of ongoing compliance with UK regulation.

4. Communication of Quality Enhancement

4.1 External examiner reports and headlines from committee meetings are provided on the Cloud so that students know what developments have been made in line with their feedback.

4.2. Examples of best practice are placed on the Union Cloud VLE so that faculty and students can be aware of them.

4.3 Highlights from module reports and the student satisfaction survey are made available to students, along with our responses to these.

Version	Author	Review Date	Reason for change	Equality Impact Assessment check (and comment)	AB Approval date *
1.1	Iain McGee	May 2023	Extensive rewrite to ensure that all current QA practices are noted in one location.	Checked	23 rd May 2023

Appendix 1 Formal and Informal Student Feedback – Annual Cycle

UST values feedback (particularly triangulated feedback) from its student body. It believes such feedback can make it aware of where particular enhancements in the student experience can be made. The UST response might be in resource re/allocation or adjustments to its operations and even in its strategy. Students are provided access to collective summary feedback on the Cloud (the Student Satisfaction Survey and Module Feedback) and are given access to our responses in the ‘You said...We did’ page, also on the Cloud.

The data are collected as per the schedule provided below. As noted, core data are typically analysed and discussed in relevant committees, from which actions are taken as required

Formal Student Feedback Mechanisms

Tool	Delivery	Focus	Ownership / Responsibility for administration	Committee responsible for analysis and response
Student Satisfaction Survey	April (Annual)	All aspects of the student experience (including induction and orientation)	Student President, with support as necessary from UST staff	<p>Student Experience Committee</p> <p>It is recognised that analysis of disaggregated data are particularly valuable in enabling us to see whether a particular issue is context specific (e.g., a particular learning community)</p>
Module Feedback	Mid-module and end of module	All aspects of the module – teaching, materials, assessment, feedback	Programme Co-ordinator and Officer	<p>Academic Teaching, Research and Curriculum Committee</p> <p>It is recognised that analysis of disaggregated data are particularly</p>

				valuable in enabling us to see whether a particular issue is context specific (e.g., a particular learning community)
Committee meetings	N/A (For frequency of meetings see ToRs)	Students are represented at all levels of committees and their voice is actively encouraged in these meetings.	Chairs of AB, QAC, SEC, ATRACC	No specific analysis: ongoing engagement
Strategic plan	Every 5 years	Involving students in strategic direction discussion	Provost	N/A
Alumni Survey	September (annual)	Focus on how training has helped post-graduation in ministry contexts, and enables the school to track the future paths of its alumni	Pastoral Dean	Student Experience Committee

Informal Student Feedback Mechanisms

Informal feedback is gathered by lecturers in classes and gatherings and also by the Tutor for Women and Student Welfare, who is part of the Student Experience Committee. Lecturers can pass informal feedback on to committee heads as needed. When a particular issue is identified requiring student input, a focus group is organised as necessary: for example, prior to proposed programme changes.