



Quality Handbook

October 2023

Contents

MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY AND STANDARDS	3
WHAT'S NEW FOR 2023.....	8
TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK	14
PROGRAMME DESIGN AND APPROVAL (VALIDATION AND MINOR MODIFICATION PROCESSES)	15
ADMISSIONS.....	24
LEARNING AND TEACHING.....	25
STUDENT SUPPORT, LEARNING RESOURCES, LIBRARY AND CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES, INFORMATION, EDUCATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT	29
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT.....	32
ASSESSMENT	34
EXTERNAL EXAMINING	40
PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW	43
COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS.....	45
ACADEMIC COLLABORATIVE PROVISION	50
RESEARCH DEGREES	52
PUBLIC INFORMATION	53
ENHANCEMENT.....	55
ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE	57
PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODIES (PSRB).....	58
Appendix 1: Glossary.....	60

MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY AND STANDARDS

This Quality Handbook summarises the ways in which quality and standards are managed at the University of Cumbria. Quality matters to the University's reputation, to our students and to stakeholders. This handbook is intended to provide you with a one-stop reference point for the University's quality framework.

Definitions

Academic standards describe the standards that degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of academic credit or qualifications.

Academic quality considers how well the learning opportunities made available to our students enable them to achieve their award.

At Cumbria, the programme validation process assures that the UK threshold academic standards are met through the alignment of our awards to qualification and level descriptors set out in the [University Academic Regulations](#). These align to the national framework for higher education qualifications. Academic standards are monitored through the University's marking, moderation and assessment processes and effective use of External Examiners.

Quality assurance involves ensuring that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning resources are provided to students.

The National Context

The Office for Students

It is important that English higher education delivers a high-quality academic experience for all students and that qualifications awarded are credible. This means that providers need to meet the requirements of the Office for Students (OfS) for the quality and standards of the courses they offer. To register, and stay registered, with the OfS providers must show that they offer high quality higher education. The OfS conditions of registration are designed to make sure high standards are maintained.

There are three types of conditions of registration:

- Initial conditions
These are the conditions providers must meet to become registered.
- General ongoing conditions
These are the conditions providers must meet to stay registered. Most conditions apply to all registered providers.
- Specific ongoing conditions
Specific ongoing conditions are those that the OfS may decide, based on a risk assessment, to impose on an individual provider in order for it to register or to remain registered with them. They vary between providers but might, for example, require a provider to take a particular action to remain financially sustainable, or

improve its student outcomes, or work on a particular aspect of access and participation. Specific conditions may change if the level or type of risk changes.

The OfS regulatory framework provides the detail in respect to both the initial and general ongoing conditions.

Quality processes at the University of Cumbria align to the OfS regulatory framework and it is recommended that this Handbook is read alongside the regulatory framework, with especial reference to the **B Conditions – Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students.**

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is the Designated Quality Body of the OfS and has developed the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) as a key reference point for UK higher education, protecting the public and student interest, and championing UK higher education's world-leading reputation for quality.

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education providers. It makes clear what higher education providers are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what students and the general public can expect of them. The Quality Code covers all four nations of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), and all providers of UK higher education operating internationally. It protects the interests of all students, regardless of where they are studying, or whether they are full-time, part-time, undergraduate or postgraduate students.

The Code is based on three elements that together provide a reference point for effective quality assurance:

1. Expectations which clearly and succinctly express the outcomes providers should achieve in setting and maintaining the standards of their awards, and for managing the quality of their provision.
2. Practices representing effective ways of working that underpin the delivery of the expectations and will deliver positive outcomes for students. These include:
 - a. Core practices that must be demonstrated by all UK higher education providers as part of assuring their standards and quality
 - b. Common practices that will be applied by providers in line with their missions, their regulatory context and the needs of their students. These are practices common to the underpinning of quality in all UK providers but are not regulatory requirements for providers in England.
3. Advice and guidance which will help providers to develop and maintain effective quality assurance practices.

In place of evidence based external reviews, Higher Education institutions are now required to sign off for themselves their internal quality processes and procedures. At

Cumbria, this process takes the form of an annual report, signed off by the Board of Directors, declaring that the University's policies, processes and procedures are rigorous and fit for purpose against the Quality Code's expectations for standards and quality.

The report is underpinned by the work and reporting throughout the year of the Board of Directors' Academic Governance Committee (AGC), and the University's senior academic committees, Academic Board (AB) and the Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee (SSQAC).

The Academic Governance Committee is responsible to the University Board for providing detailed advice and guidance to the Board on all matters relating to academic governance, and specifically the quality of students' experience and the standards of the University's academic awards.

Academic Board is the University's most senior deliberative committee, with responsibility for issues relating to:

- Academic strategy and planning
- Academic standards and the validation and review of courses
- Learning and teaching and the curriculum
- Research and scholarship
- Academic regulations
- Assessment and examination
- Criteria for admissions
- The award of qualifications and honorary academic titles
- The student experience
- Student support and conduct

The Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee is responsible to Academic Board, acting on behalf of the Board to oversee matters relating to quality, standards and the student experience, but subject to the approval of the Board especially in relation to the approval of regulations, policies and processes. The Committee promotes innovation and good practice in learning, teaching and assessment, and ensures effective student engagement in the development and enhancement of the student learning experience.

Managing Quality and Standards at the University of Cumbria

The Quality and Standards team in Academic Registry is the gatekeeper of the University's framework for managing quality and standards, and owner of this Quality Handbook.

The management of standards and quality is a shared responsibility managed through the effective implementation of the University's regulations, procedures, processes and policies. Heads of Institutes are responsible for ensuring that provision within their Institute complies with the University's quality framework.

Key Reference Points

This Handbook is underpinned by the University's [Academic Regulations, Procedures and Processes which cover:](#)

Academic Regulations

- **Awards of the University** (Principles, University of Cumbria Awards, Title of Awards, Validation and Review, Withdrawal of Approval/Programme Closure, Academic Collaborative Provision)
- **University Credit Accumulation and Transfer Framework** (General, Learning Hours, Modules, Programmes, Core Elements of Learning, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Internal Credit Accumulation)
- **General Regulations** (Student Registration, Mode of Study, Registration Period, Work-Related Learning and Work-Based Learning, Attendance)
- **The Admission of Students** (Scope, General, Falsification and Misrepresentation, Appeals and Complaints for Applicants)
- **Assessment** (Scope, Principles, General, Probity in Assessment Practice, Module Assessment, Submitting Assignments, Examination Arrangements, Module Reassessment, Students with Disabilities and/or Specific Disabilities and/or long-term illness, Academic Malpractice, Composition and Responsibilities of Assessment Boards, Extenuating Circumstances and Poor Performance, Compensation of Assessment Requirements, Limits on Waiver and Compensation)
- **Student Progression** (General, Assessment Boards for Progression, Transfer to Higher Award, Failure to Progress, Progression from Foundation Degrees, Termination of Study, Interruption to Study and Student Wellbeing)
- **Programme Awards and Results** (General, Recommendation for Award, Classification of Awards, Alternative Awards, Ægrotat Awards, Results)
- **Appeals Against Assessment Board Decisions** (General, Grounds for Appeal, Process)
- **External Examiners** (General, Appointment of External Examiners, Responsibilities of External Examiners)

Academic Procedures & Processes

The Regulations are supplemented by the University's Academic Procedures and Processes, which cover:

- Academic Board Approved Variations to Academic Regulations for Specific Programmes
- University Quality and Level Descriptors
- University Wide Grade Descriptors
- Procedures Governing the Marketing and Moderation of Assessments

- The Conduct of Assessment
- Policy & Procedures Governing Academic Malpractice
- Extenuating Circumstances Procedures
- The Conduct & Operation of Assessment Boards
- Transcripts & Certificates
- Roles & Responsibilities in External Examining
- Criteria for the Appointment of External Examiners & Procedure for Early Termination of Contract
- Guidelines for the Selection & Approval of Potential External Examiners
- Procedure for Appointing External Examiners
- Reporting Procedures for External Examiners
- Information for External Examiners
- Academic Appeals Procedures
- Procedure for the Award of Credit for Prior Learning (APL)
- Degree & Award Ceremony Procedures
- 4 Week Rule Procedures

Useful sources of information are as follows:

StaffHub [Academic Regulations](#)

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2023

Academic Strategy

Our academic strategy has been developed to deliver the objectives and KPIs of the T2030 strategic focus 1: Students and graduates.

"Our academic strategy, and the support strategies and plans which deliver it, will be the prime vehicle in achieving our objectives and ambition (covering academic, practice-based, applied research and knowledge exchange focus, portfolio focus, academic and employer partnerships and pipelines, programme design, learning and teaching, curriculum focus, student value proposition, student support, and academic career and development)."

The strategy has five themes:

1. Learning, teaching and assessment
2. Student experience and achievement
3. Research and knowledge exchange
4. Academic portfolio
5. Academic staff development

The academic strategy outlines the university's key strategic direction, focus and actions to achieve the Towards 2030 academic related ambitions and goals. The following three -year rolling action plans will articulate this further and generate the associated implementation plans and any required changes to regulations, policies and guidance:

- Learning, Teaching & Assessment
- Applied Research & Knowledge Exchange
- Student Support & Wellbeing
- Portfolio and Pipeline
- Apprenticeships

In addition, the academic staff development theme actions will be implemented and monitored through the Academic Strategy and Planning Committee and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. The academic strategy can be read [here](#)

Teaching and Learning: A Summary of Key Changes

Generative Artificial Intelligence (e.g. ChatGTP)

A University Working Group was established in 2022/23 to consider developments in relation to Generative Artificial Intelligence has produced University Guidance on this fast developing and fast changing technology. Guidance has been developed to help staff to consider how GAI is being, or could be used, in learning, teaching and assessment. The Guidance includes Top Tips, updates on developments including detection tools, initial guidance on referencing and signposting to useful internal and

external resources. It is important for you to consider how AI may impact on your learning, teaching and assessment practice as there is no one-size fits all solution. All academic staff are encouraged to read the full guidance which is available on the CAPE Toolkit [here](#). Student Guidance has now been developed and is available [here](#).

Resources continue to be added to the CAPE Toolkit, including the Learning and Teaching Fest Panel Session on AI, so please continue to refer back to the Toolkit.

From 2023/24, a minor change has been agreed to the malpractice regulation, alongside introducing the requirement for students to include a declaration that work submitted for assessment is their own (see later section on Regulation Changes).

New Personal Tutor Policy

In May 2023, Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee approved an updated Personal Tutor Policy. The main policy changes involved:

- Provide further clarity on its scope (particularly in respect of Apprenticeships and Collaborative Provision)
- Clarifying how the role may combine with the Tripartite Review process for apprentices
- Clarifying expectations of the timing of collection of Personal Tutor information and when this information will be available through the student records system
- Setting out Roles and Responsibilities (new section)

The updated Policy is available [here](#).

Changes to Academic Regulations/Procedures and Processes

The table below summarises a small number of changes to Academic Regulations, Procedures and Processes. Updated Regulations and Procedures and Processes are available here. Students will be advised of these changes through the Student Global, and External Examiners and Collaborative Partners have been updated:

Reference and Area of Change	Nature of Change and Rationale
F10.2	Whilst the current regulations are broad enough to encapsulate the use of generative artificial intelligence, having explicit reference within the regulations (and

Introduction of specific reference to Artificial Intelligence e.g. ChatGPT	<p>accompanying P&P) will help further raise student and staff awareness and understanding about its unauthorised, or unacknowledged use.</p> <p><i>F10.2 Malpractice includes all forms of cheating, plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, and falsification and impersonation (including unattributed content created by artificial intelligence or any other content generating technology)</i></p>
Appendix 3a University wide grade descriptors	<p>Following Academic Board's approval of the Threshold Statements of Proficiency in the English language (December 2022), these will be included as a new section in the P&P (making clear that these apply only to written coursework).</p>
Appendix 3b Marking and Moderation	<p>The following statement from Collaborative Provision Procedures and Processes will be added, for completeness:</p> <p><i>"The University academic link will actively engage with the Partner as part of its operation of the assessment process and be involved in the moderation of assessment for programmes running at the Associate Partner."</i></p>
Appendix 3c The conduct of assessment	<p>1. Following Turnitin's removal of the declaration banner as part of online submission process, from 2023/24 we will be asking students to include a declaration as part of their assessment/cover page, stating the work being submitted is their own work:</p> <p><i>"I declare that the material contained in this assessment is the result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL published and unpublished sources. I confirm that I have reviewed the guidance at [link] on academic integrity to ensure I understand the requirements."</i></p> <p>The following text will appear on StudentHUB Malpractice pages:</p> <p><i>"When you submit work for assessment, you are required to include a declaration that you have followed these guidelines and that the work is your own, including a bibliography and references that show how you have used the work of others. The material referenced must include everything you have used, for example words, images, film or audio found in printed books and journals, content accessed online, material generated by any online service or Artificial Intelligence, and information received through personal contacts (such as interviews and surveys)."</i></p> <p>This requirement should be made clear in assessment briefs.</p> <p>2. The following paragraph (which appears in Appendix 3c) will be added to ensure that requirements are fully understood when planning assessment:</p> <p><i>"Where there is no physical evidence for assessment (eg non-text-based assignments), appropriate systems should be in place to enable internal and external moderation activity. This could be through joint observation of performance or presentation, or capturing of performance or presentation by audio or visual</i></p>

	<i>recording mechanisms. In these cases, the sample size should be as set out in section 2.4."</i>
Appendix 5 Academic Appeals	To clarify the route of appeal for students deregistered under the 4-week rule, the following addition will be made: 1.3.1.5 NEW [other numbering to then be updated] <i>Students may lodge an appeal at any point in the academic session against withdrawal from their programme of study, when the withdrawal results from non-attendance/non-engagement via the 4-week rule process. An appeal against a decision to withdraw a student from a programme of study, which is taken outside a Board of Examiners meeting, must be submitted to the Student Casework Team within 10 days of the date of notification of withdrawal.</i>
Appendix 8 4-week rule	Again, to clarify the route of appeal for students deregistered under the 4-week rule, the following change will be made: <i>3.1.3 A student wishing to appeal the 4-week rule decision should do so by writing formally to the Student Casework Team stating clearly the grounds under which they wish to appeal this outcome. SAAS with reasonable explanation for their absence and assurance of future appropriate engagement.</i>

Assessment of Proficiency in English – Office for Students Requirements

The Regulator of Higher Education in England, the Office for Students, introduced updated Conditions of Registration in May 2022, which included the following statement:

"In respect of each higher education course, academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner which appropriately reflects the level and content of the applicable higher education course."

To meet the Regulator's new requirement, for delivery commencing on or after 1 August 2023, all summative written coursework must include an assessment of proficiency in the English language. It is recognised that the existing marking criteria on some assignments may already address this and have a percentage of marks awarded accordingly. Where a written assignment does **not** already include marks for technical proficiency in English, the assignment's assessment and marking criteria will need to be reviewed to ensure that up to 5% of marks for all written coursework for all taught provision (Levels 3–7) is assigned to the assessment of technical proficiency in the English language, using new level-specific threshold statements as the basis for the allocation of marks.

The new threshold statements and guidance on their application (including mark allocations) are available on the CAPE Toolkit [here](#).

Key Points:

- This change applies to written coursework only, not to exams / practical assessments / oral presentations / performances etc
- Feedback on the written coursework should include, where relevant, signposting resources available through Skills@Cumbria
- The total marks awarded for technical proficiency in English may only exceed 5% of the assignment where technical proficiency in English forms part of a module learning outcome

The Skills at Cumbria Team has reviewed student-facing resources e.g. [Writing at University | MyCumbria](#), to enable clear signposting to relevant resources.

Retention of Assessed Work – Office for Students Requirements

The Regulator expects us to retain students' assessment for 5 years after completion of the course. There is no action you need to take for student work that is submitted online (Tii/BlackBoard and PebblePad) as the system will take care of the issue. However, please note:

- This requirement means that we can no longer give examination scripts back to students. Consideration should therefore be given to how student feedback on examinations will be provided (e.g. drop-in sessions) and this information made clear to any students taking formal examinations as part of their programme.
- Students submitting work in the form of artefacts/creative works/posters will continue to retain their work as it is their own intellectual property, but from 2023/24 onwards, students should be asked to take an image/photo of the work and submit it online via Tii/BlackBoard for the purpose of record keeping only i.e. the artefact will be assessed in 'real' life but the image will be retained incase required at a later stage. Students should be advised of the need for this within assessment briefs. The CAPE Toolkit provides information on how to set this functionality up within Tii/BlackBoard.
- Other assessed work which is recorded (e.g. OSCEs/performances/vivas), normally through MS Teams recordings, at present has 90 days retention applied. Recordings should not be saved/moved to (encrypted) pen drives. You will get reminders when the 90 days is approaching and should change the retention date manually to prevent deletion. NOTE: IT Services is exploring whether the 90 days default should be reviewed, any update will be shared asap. For further guidance on Teams Recordings and how to manage see [here](#).

Assessment Brief Checklist

The Assessment Brief Checklist has been updated to provide a prompt and reminder of the developments set out in this summary guide, as follows.

- (For modules with summative written coursework as an assessment) Does the marking criteria include assessment of English language proficiency, either through an existing ILO or application of the threshold standards for technical proficiency in English?

- Are arrangement for providing feedback clear (including providing feedback on examinations, the scripts for which can no longer be returned to students)?
- (In cases where the assessment is an artefact) Does the brief advise students of the need to submit an image of the artefact online, for retention purposes only (**not** marking)?
- Does the assessment brief make clear the requirement for students to include as part of their assessment/cover page, a declaration that the work submitted is their own work?

The updated checklist for 2023/24 is available [here](#).

New Module Evaluation Report

The Module Evaluation Report was updated in 2022/23, simplifying and streamlining the template and providing more guidance on requirements for exception reporting (for high and low performing modules) through the Quality Enhancement Boards.

The new template also provides information on newly available data which can now be accessed following confirmation of module outcomes through the Module Confirmation Board. This gives you access to summary data on module outcomes, searchable by Module Code. SSQAC approved in September to retain mid-module evaluation but to remove end of module evaluation and that we introduce a mid/in-year student survey that seeks student feedback at programme/student experience level.

The new template and associated guidance can be found [here](#).

A Task and Finish Group has been set up in 2023/24, chaired by the Dean for Student Success, to agree on the content, format, operation, technology and reporting of the module.

Academic Calendar

The Academic Calendar for 2023/24 has now been approved by Academic Board and can be viewed [here](#).

Information on the University approved monthly standard start dates for 2023/24 can be found here. The 2022/23 standard start dates can be found here. Full time UG, PG programmes would be expected to start during one of the following intakes – September, January or March. If programmes in this category wish to utilise one of the other specified intake points, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) approval is required and the form that can be found here should be completed and submitted to email: NonstandardStarts@Cumbria.ac.uk.

TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) is a national exercise, introduced by the government in England. It assesses excellence in teaching at higher education providers, and how each higher education provider ensures excellent outcomes for their students in terms of graduate-level employment or further study. The TEF assesses at 'provider level', which means that each provider of higher education (normally a university or college) is given a single award for their undergraduate provision.

The TEF is seen as a way of:

- Better informing students' choices about what and where to study
- Raising esteem for teaching
- Recognising and rewarding excellent teaching
- Better meeting the needs of employers, business, industry and the professions.

Taking part in the TEF is a condition of OfS registration and includes four judgement categories (a new 'Requires Improvement' category was introduced for 2023 in addition to Gold, Silver and Bronze).

For franchised provision, the quality of provision will be assessed at the provider that delivers the teaching.

The University of Cumbria has been awarded an overall rating of Silver in the 2023 TEF.

The overall rating of Silver reflects that "the student experience and outcomes are typically very high quality and there may be some outstanding features". The scope of the TEF covers the university's full-time and part-time undergraduate student population, with data covering a four-year period. As an indicator of the population involved, there were approximately 8500 students considered under the key outcomes metrics. The level of UG study was classified as either; first degree (Hons or ordinary degree) or other undergraduate (Level 4/5 courses such as foundation degrees). The majority of the university's students were in the first-degree category. Apprenticeship students were not included in this exercise as these are relatively new programmes not yet having four years of data for the completion and progression metrics. The TEF assessment also considers narrative submissions from the university and the Students' Union.

The result, which will be in place for at least four years, means that we have achieved a key performance indicator in reaching our T2030 objectives for students and graduates, and have done so substantially ahead of the original target date of end of 2027/28.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

Office for Students: [What is the TEF?](#)

PROGRAMME DESIGN AND APPROVAL (VALIDATION AND MINOR MODIFICATION PROCESSES)

The approval and ongoing review of modules and programmes is one of the principal mechanisms through which the University secures academic standards and ensures the quality of learning opportunities within programmes of study that lead to a University of Cumbria qualification.

The approval of Academic Collaborative Provision (ACP) delivered through Associate Partners follows the same processes. The University's Processes and Procedures for the Approval and Management of Academic Collaborative Provision should also be referred to.

Responsibility for approving the University's taught academic programmes is discharged through the Standing Validation Panel (SVP) which acts on behalf of Academic Board. The SVP comprises experienced academics from across the University who may act as Chairs and Panel Members of validations.

Validation panels fulfil their role by judging proposals against the University's Threshold Criteria for Validation. These Threshold Criteria provide the benchmark against which new proposals are measured. These criteria have been developed to ensure that the University's portfolio satisfies the external requirements expected by the QAA, PSRBs and other relevant bodies and frameworks.

Programmes are tested against the University's Curriculum Design Framework (CDF). The CDF can be found within the CAPE toolkit [here](#) for reference.

The University's validation processes (including Minor Modification and Subject Level Periodic Review) seek to assure the continuing appropriateness and currency of the existing programme (e.g., if a new or revised subject benchmark has been introduced).

Academic Board maintains oversight of the University's validation activity through its sub-committee, the Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee (SSQAC). SSQAC considers and approves the membership of the SVP on an annual basis. It also receives an annual summary report of validation and revalidation activity and outcomes of re-approval panel meetings.

The validation processes are managed by the Quality and Standards Team in Academic Registry.

Categories of validation approval

Validation – Validation is the process used to describe the approval of new substantive programmes (as described in the Academic Regulations (B2.1), other than 'Other Awards'). It is a 2-stage process, with Institute Sign-off followed by the Validation Event.

Revalidation is the mechanism for the continuing approval of existing programmes which are seeking to make substantial changes.

Revalidation follows the same 2-stage process as Validation with Institute Sign-off and subsequent Validation Event.

Subject Level Periodic Review is the mechanism for the continuing approval of all programmes and modules within a subject-group which are seeking to make no changes or a limited amount of change through Periodic Review. Subject Level Periodic Review is the preferred method of Periodic Review to be applied to all of the University's credit-bearing provision including ACP and HLA programmes, and the existing Re-approval process will be phased out as an outcome of introducing the Subject Level Periodic Review process from 2019-20 onwards. The only anticipated exception may be where a significant amount of change is proposed or where PSRB procedures require that a separate programme level revalidation event takes place.

Franchise – is where the University approves an Associate Partner to deliver an academic programme which the University owns ("Franchise Model") or approves an Associate Partner to deliver a part of an academic programme which the University owns, normally up to 50% ("Shared Delivery Franchise Model"). Franchise approval events largely follow the same 2-stage process as Validation. However, where the provision is already validated as a university programme, the process will focus on the partner's delivery, management, and student support arrangements.

Minor Modification – Minor Modification is the process by which validated programmes and/or modules can be changed during their validated period, ahead of their next scheduled Subject Level Periodic Review. Such changes could involve changes to programme content, structure or other delivery arrangements. Minor awards of 60 credits or less (defined in the Academic Regulations (B2.1) as 'Other Awards') may also be approved through the Minor Modification Process.

The University's validation approval process is divided into three phases:

1. Planning phase
2. Development phase
3. Validation phase

1. Planning phase (Programme Initiation)

The Planning Phase is overseen by the Academic Portfolio Manager, as set out in the University's Processes for Programme Initiation. This gated process comprises two stages:

Stage 1 - Outline rationale





On approval of Stage 2, the proposal proceeds to the Curriculum Design and Development phase.

2. Development Phase - Curriculum Design and Development

This phase describes the period used by the proposing team to design and develop the programme and produce the programme documents.

Following successful completion of Stage 2 of the Programme Initiation Process, a validation officer from Quality and Standards is assigned to the validation event. A standing validation panel chair and panel member are assigned by Quality and Standards officers for specific events according to their availability and validation experience. Quality and Standards ensure that there are no conflicts of interest (the SVP Panel and Chair are sourced from a different Academic Institute to the proposing Institute).

The validation officer will liaise with the programme team to develop a timeline of activities and deadlines. This will include the following:

- Date of Institute Scrutiny meeting and Sign-off
- Deadlines for document submission for Institute Scrutiny and Sign-off
- Date of Validation Event
- Deadlines for document submission for Validation Event
- Any permitted variations required by PSRB accreditation/approval procedures

At this point, the validation officer will liaise with the proposer to confirm the name of the External Team Member (as captured in Stage 2 of programme initiation), to identify an External Panel Member¹ and to identify any PSRBs to be involved and ascertain their requirements and deadlines for the event.

Proposing teams are required to seek views of students to inform programme development. The following list provides a number of ways in which input could be achieved (note: this is not exhaustive, and a team could use more than one of these mechanisms):

- Using existing students drawn from cohorts in the same or similar subject area
- Programme Student Reps from a similar subject area
- Students from the Cumbria Student Mentor Scheme (refer to [website](#) for more details)
- Students engaging with the University Career Ahead scheme (refer to [website](#) for more details)

¹ For details about the External Panel Member and External Team Member, refer to the Guide to Validation.

- Student Reps from across the University (for more information, refer to the [Student Union](#))

There is guidance to help support students who are approached. This includes a range of exemplar questions that students might be asked.

Institute Sign-off

Institute scrutiny provides a formal check of the readiness of the proposal to come forward to the validation event.

The date of the Institute scrutiny meeting is confirmed by Quality and Standards following completion of Stage 2 of the Programme Initiation Process.

The meeting takes place between the Validation Officer and the Institute's Heads or Leads for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience and student Recruitment and Portfolio. Additional attendance by representatives from Apprenticeship team, the Integrated Foundation Year Lead, or the Institute Director may be necessary where applicable. Administrative support is provided by Quality and Standards, with action notes taken from the meeting.

The programme team will be expected to present their fully completed documentation by the agreed deadline date. Failure to submit documents by the agreed deadline will result in the validation event being postponed until the next academic year. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). In the case of new provision, the Academic Institute must notify potential applicants as soon as possible, being mindful of consumer law.

The Institute may make one of the following recommendations as an outcome of the scrutiny meeting:

- Proceed to validation subject to housekeeping only
- Proceed to validation subject to substantive actions and housekeeping, Dean for Student Success, and Quality Assurance Manager alerted
- The Institute also retains the right not to proceed with the meeting if the documentation submitted requires significant further development

Where the Institute identifies that substantive action is required, this will necessitate further discussions with the Director of Institute, Dean for Student Success and Quality Assurance Manager to agree whether the proposal can be progressed within the original timescales or if it will require deferral to the next academic year.

The deadline for resubmission of all validation documents will be reconfirmed at the scrutiny meeting. This will normally be at least 3 weeks before the validation event.

The Institute Heads / Leads are responsible for confirming that they are satisfied that all actions and housekeeping identified through the scrutiny meeting have been addressed. If the institute is not satisfied that this is the case, this will result in the validation being postponed until the next academic year. In the case of new provision, the Academic

Institute must notify potential applicants as soon as possible, being mindful of consumer law.

No scrutiny event will take place for any Academic Collaborative Provision (ACP) for which the Associate Partner has not already been approved by Academic Board.

3. Validation Phase

The Validation event is managed by the designated validation officer in Quality and Standards.

As a minimum, Validation Panels comprise²:

- A Chair (drawn from the SVP)
- At least one Internal Panel Member (drawn from the SVP but out with the proposing team's Institute³)
- One External Panel Member (see below)
- One Student Reviewer, drawn from a panel of trained student representatives
- The validation officer, who will act as secretary to the meeting

To enable the validation panel to comment on the appropriateness of the subject and curriculum content, an independent External Panel Member attends as a member of the Validation Panel. The External Panel Member is not involved in the development phase and is different to the External Team Member⁴.

An External Panel Member is not normally required for Franchise events where the programme has already gone through the University's validation process that included external input. In such instances, it would be expected that the relevant External Examiner provide external commentary on the ability of the Associate Partner to deliver the validated programme. However, an External Panel Member would be required for Franchise events where the programme is not already validated.

Validation documentation

The proposing team is required to submit a validation document set to the validation officer in the agreed timeframe. The document set comprises:

- Validation Briefing Document
- Programme Specification
- Programme Operating Guide
- Module Descriptor Forms (MDFs)
- Programme Handbook (for validations with PSRBs)
- Work-based Learning / Placement Handbook (where relevant)

² Where appropriate, validation panels may vary in size. Quality and Standards is responsible for agreeing the exact panel size. Typically, variants will be due to PSRB attendance, for complex validations or where the validation is seeking to approve substantial changes to an existing programme.

³ This is essential to the integrity of the process (Guiding principle 1, [UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Course Design and Development](#)).

⁴ Guiding principle 3, [UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Course Design and Development](#). See also the Guide to Validation for details about the External Panel Member role.

- Links to online staff profiles for university staff involved in the delivery of the programme (and staff CVs for external staff, such as ACP proposals, PSRBs, etc.)
- Critical Review (for revalidations)

For Degree / Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes, the HLA versions of the Validation Briefing Document, Programme Specification, Operating Guide, MDFs and Programme Handbook must be used. A separate Work-based Learning/Placement Handbook is not required, as the content has been incorporated into Section 3 of the HLA version of the Programme Handbook.

The following additional documentation is also required for HLA proposals:

- A Programme Handbook
- An Employer and Mentor Handbook
- A Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSB) mapping tool
- APTEM learning plan
- APTEM module ILO mapping

For Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), the HTQ versions of the Briefing Document, Operating Guide, MDFs, and Programme Handbook must be used.

The following additional documentation is also required for HTQ proposals:

- A Programme Handbook
- Application Form
- Evidence of Employer Engagement
- KSB Mapping to the qualification
- Assessment appraisal and sample of assessment

Where there are multiple target awards proposed as part of a larger framework of interrelated programmes, the team should also provide:

- A mapping of the modules and awards, clearly identifying shared modules.

For Collaborative proposals, the Collaborative versions of the Briefing Document, Programme Specification, Operating Guide, MDFs, and Programme Handbook must be used.

For collaborative proposals, the following is also required:

- A Programme Handbook
- An Operational Manual for delivery
- Institutional Agreement
- Memorandum of Co-operation or other programme-level agreement
- Academic Staff CVs

The following additional documentation may be required for informational proposals:

- Statement from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) or other suitable representative from the University Senior Leaders' Team.

The validation officer and validation chair must also have received a copy of the Programme Initiation form in order to check continued compliance.

Proposals involving PSRB accreditation/approval may also require additional supporting documentation such as professional standards/competences mapping. Validation officers will consult with relevant accrediting bodies on behalf of programme teams in order to establish their requirements in advance.

Proposals involving top-up degrees should also include the Programme Specification(s) for any feeding foundation degrees already validated (for information only).

The validation officer will circulate the document set to the validation panel and ask for comments to be returned. This will normally be 2 weeks prior to the event. Note: Earlier deadlines may be required by PSRBs.

The Validation Meeting

Validation events take the form of a meeting between the validation panel (including PSRB representatives as appropriate) and the proposing team.

For Apprenticeship and PSRB events, individual sessions may also be held during the validation event with present and past students, employer representatives, assessors and service users as relevant. The event is led by the validation chair and facilitated by the validation officer.

Outcomes of the Validation Event

At the end of the meeting, the validation panel is required to make a decision about whether to validate the proposal, to agree any conditions and enhancements and to identify areas of good and best practice.

In making its decision, the potential outcomes open to the validation panel are:

- To approve the proposal unconditionally.
- To approve the proposal subject to satisfying minor conditions and responding to any enhancements. Where this is the case, documents must be resubmitted within 3 weeks of the event.
- To approve the proposal subject to satisfying major conditions and responding to any enhancements. Where this is the case, documents must be resubmitted within 6 weeks of the event.
- To defer the proposal for a year. In cases where conditions are excessive in number or scale, the Chair will refer the proposal back to the Academic Institute for further detailed redevelopment before re-presenting to a new Validation Event in the next academic year.
- To not approve the proposal

Conditions are 'deal breakers.' They must be satisfied before the proposal can be signed off. As such, conditions should relate to the Threshold Criteria for Validation (the Curriculum Design Framework from 2021). There are no specific limits to the number of

conditions that can be set. However, in setting conditions, the validation panel must be mindful of the overall integrity of the proposal and the ability of the proposing team to complete the work. The proposing team is required to address conditions and respond by completing the response column of the validation report.

Enhancements are recommendations from the panel for the proposing team to consider. The proposing team is not required to adopt an enhancement, but they are required to respond to it and demonstrate that they have considered the proposal.

The proposing team is required to respond to enhancements by completing the response column of the validation report.

Good Practice

Where the validation panel identifies areas of good practice, these should be responded to in the response column of the validation report. Responses will typically indicate how areas of good practice might be disseminated. Note the distinction between *Good* and *Best* practice:

- Good Practice – Practice which goes above and beyond expected levels and/or exceeds policy expectations. This might be the development of an innovative new practice or initiative which it is considered other areas of the University may wish to adopt.
- Best practice – Practice which far exceeds expected levels and or/policy expectations, and which may be considered worthy of interest and dissemination beyond the University.

Housekeeping

Housekeeping records any minor errors, spelling mistakes, etc., identified by the validation panel. These are listed at the end of the validation report. A standard condition requires the programme team to address areas of housekeeping.

Subject Level Periodic Review

Subject Level Periodic Review is the mechanism for the continuing approval of all programmes and modules within a subject-group which are seeking to make no changes or a limited amount of change through Periodic Review. Subject Level Periodic Review is the preferred method of Periodic Review to be applied to all of the University's credit-bearing provision including ACP and HLA programmes, and the existing Re-approval process will be phased out as an outcome of introducing the Subject Level Periodic Review process from 2019-20 onwards. The only anticipated exception may be where a significant amount of change is proposed or where PSRB procedures require that a separate programme level revalidation event takes place.

Subject Level Periodic Review follows a similar process to the second stage of Validation and Revalidation, i.e. a validation event with an attending Chair and panel drawn from the Standing Validation Panel. In reaching its decision and recommendations, the Panel takes into account relevant Annual Monitoring Returns (AMRs), External Examiner Reports and other key programme data from the Data Management service for the preceding three-year period.

Minor Modification and Minor Awards

The Minor Modification and Minor Awards process provides a mechanism for the ongoing enhancement of programmes and modules within the validated period and for the approval of new academic awards of up to 60 credits.

During the lifetime of a programme, the programme team may wish to make minor modifications to the programme or individual modules. These may be for a variety of reasons, but typically to:

- Ensure continuing currency of programmes in light of developments in the sector (such as industry practice and pedagogy).
- Responding to feedback from staff, students or the external examiner.
- Responding to changes in the external environment such as PSRB requirements or government policy changes.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

StaffHub [Academic Regulations](#)

StaffHub [Academic Collaborative Provision page](#)

StaffHub [Validation page](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

ADMISSIONS

Admissions entry requirements are reviewed annually by senior management and academics to take account of any changes to professional body requirements. Reviews also consider competitor information and general intake trends across the portfolio.

The University's Admissions Policy and Procedure outlines the process for the admission of students to the University. It is informed by relevant legislation and sector good practice e.g. SPA, Equality Act. Admissions to the University are managed centrally to ensure consistency of practice, knowledge and experience.

The Policy and Procedure is available on the website and is reviewed formally bi-annually and more regularly when new regulatory requirements come in. The Policy gives a comprehensive description of the University's approach to equality and diversity throughout the admission process and sets out the roles and responsibilities with the Service and Institutes.

Within the Admissions Policy and Procedure all staff involved in the administration of admissions, and those involved in selecting and interviewing applicants, undertake regular training to ensure their continued professional competence is maintained. Training includes attendance at compulsory University sessions e.g. Equality and Diversity, Disability Awareness. All academic staff involved in admissions work should complete the University' compulsory sessions on an annual basis.

The UK Recruitment and Outreach Team within Marketing and Recruitment are members of the Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA) and receive training from them. In the case of international recruitment, dedicated admissions staff are trained in all relevant aspects to meet regulatory requirements e.g. UKVI Compliance.

With some academic collaborative provision, the admissions process is devolved to the Associate Partner. In such cases, the Associate Partner is responsible for operating admissions in accordance with the arrangements set out in the Memorandum of Cooperation. Ongoing compliance with this is checked through University Admissions team audits which are reported into Annual Partnership Reviews (APRs).

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Admissions Policy](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

LEARNING AND TEACHING

This Chapter is under review and will be republished over 2023/24 academic year
The University of Cumbria is committed to providing an excellent learning experience to all our students. The [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy](#) (LTAS), 2017-22, provides the principles and expectations for the development of our learning community in the coming years. The LTA Strategy is organised around 4 themes:

1. Excellence in Learning and Teaching
2. Responsive Learner Support
3. Employability & Graduateness
4. Developing Digital Capabilities of Students and Staff

And aims to:

- Develop confident, resilient and socially aware learners
- Provide an environment for the development of professionally relevant, research informed and innovative programmes
- Champion our values of respect, professionalism, aspiration and integrity
- Support staff in the development and enhancement of their role in providing excellence in higher education

The strategy embeds University of Cumbria Graduate Attributes as a mechanism for ensuring that students completing a programme of study at the University are provided with the skills and knowledge relevant to the global workplace.

The [Student Charter](#) reflects the collaborative relationship between the University, our students and our Students' Union. It applies equally to all students enrolled on University of Cumbria programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate, apprenticeship learners and those studying at a distance as well as on campus) and sets out the mutual expectations and obligations between the University and Students, reflecting its core values of respect, professionalism, aspiration and integrity. Staff should, through induction processes, ensure that students are made aware of their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and to shape their learning experience (an area highlighted in the Student Charter), committing to their studies and working hard to achieve their potential.

Learning and teaching practice at Cumbria is enhanced through a range of activities and policies including:

- Individual research and scholarship
- University staff engaging in External Examining at another institution
- The CPD Framework for Academic Staff (supporting the achievement of the University's target that all academic staff achieve Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA))
- The requirement for all new members of teaching staff without a HE teaching qualification to undertake the University's PGCert in Learning and Teaching for Higher Education
- The Peer Review of Learning Teaching and Assessment

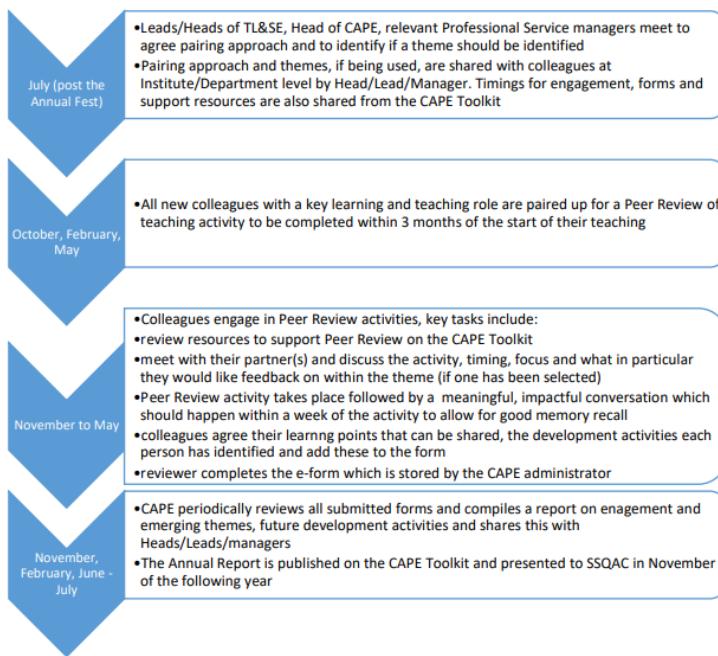
Peer Review of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA)

The University's [peer review of learning teaching and assessment policy](#) contributes to the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment and supports the personal and professional development of academic staff and other staff who support learning and teaching.

Peer review of LTA contributes to the on-going reflection on practice that is expected of all academic staff and other staff involved in the support of learning and teaching.

All full-time and part-time members of academic staff must be peer reviewed every year (this includes any HR30 contract staff who are delivering above 30 hours a year). Staff involved in the support of learning and teaching (for example learning advisors) must also be peer reviewed every year. A reminder that the revised Peer Review of LTA Policy is available on StaffHub Corporate Library [here](#).

The outline timeline is provided below:



Colleagues are reminded that teaching practice should be reviewed at least every other year. Those involved in provision subject to Ofsted inspection (i.e. Apprenticeships and ITE) may wish to focus on this element during 2023/24 given that, during Inspection, teaching sessions will be observed by Inspectors so internal Peer Review provides a good opportunity to feel more confident in this context.

The opportunity has been taken to streamline the online form for reporting back on Peer Review outcomes. The Reviewer not the Reviewee is asked to complete the form but content should be agreed between them before submission. Information from the online forms will be used, in confidence, to identify emerging themes and development needs and revise the CPD offer as appropriate. An anonymous summary will be presented to SSQAC annually (providing oversight of implementation, good practice and areas for

development). Reviewees are invited to share the forms with line managers and their Lead or Head of TL&SE or as part of the PPDR process.

Learning and Teaching in Placement Settings

Many of the University's programmes are accredited by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PRSBs) and such programmes often include placement learning which requires the involvement of staff from a placement setting in mentor or assessor capacity. The University's [Placement Learning Policy](#) sets out the baseline requirements for placements which includes appropriate training and development for such staff. It also sets out baseline requirements relating to the roles and responsibilities of the placement providers, University staff and students themselves.

The University defines 'placement' as a period of work experience, either paid or unpaid:

- Which is undertaken as an integral part of the student's programme
- Where the student is enrolled at the institution during this period
- Where there is the transfer of direct day to day supervision of the student to a third party

[adapted from UCEA 2009 definition]

[Placement Handbook templates](#), to be completed by academic leads for placement, provide detail concerning how the student should be prepared for placement, including competencies to be developed associated with any requirements of individual Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

Monitoring Outcomes

The University, through its annual monitoring processes, monitors information and data to improve student progress and achievement through the enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices. The Deliberative Committee structure provides a key role in monitoring action plans arising out of the annual monitoring, NSS and other relevant data.

Timely Feedback on Student Assessment

Timely and meaningful feedback on student assessment is key to enabling students to achieve their potential and the University requires feedback on assessment to be provided to students within a maximum of 20 days. The University strongly encourages the use of formative assessment and this is something which is explored in detail through the validation process.

All feedback on summative assessment must be provided electronically to facilitate ease of access for students and timely feedback. Advice and guidance on appropriate forms of electronic feedback can be found [here](#).

Personal Tutor Role

Establishing supportive, rewarding relationships with academic staff from an early point in a student's programme is strongly linked to student engagement and improving the achievement and retention of students; particularly non-traditional entrants to Higher Education. Personal tutoring is seen as a key element in realising these objectives. The purpose of the Personal Tutor role is set out in the University's [Personal Tutor Policy](#).

Procedures for assuring the Personal Tutor role are published in the programme handbook. The Personal Tutor Policy sets out minimum entitlements for students (with additional support being provided in Levels 3 and 4 to support students' transition to HE).

Information to Students

Students should be provided with clear and accurate information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them. The University manages this through the use of standardised templates for Module Guides, Programme Handbooks, and Placement Handbooks. These are all available [here](#).

The University has a set of baseline criteria for Programme Blackboard sites and Blackboard Module sites, available [here](#).

The online [Student Handbook](#) is a key source of advice and guidance to students.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Centre of Academic Practice Enhancement \(CAPE\) CPD page](#)

[Academic Regulations](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

STUDENT SUPPORT, LEARNING RESOURCES, LIBRARY AND CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES, INFORMATION, EDUCATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Professional services work collaboratively with academic Institutes and students to advise on opportunities and good practice to ensure accessible and transparent support for their needs is provided, in line with relevant strategies and policies including the Student Achievement Strategy, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, Library Plan and the Employability Plan.

[IT support and facilities](#) for students include: The [Student Hub](#) enabling access to email, timetables and library systems; student loan laptops, MACs and PCs; dedicated computer rooms and labs; [assistive technology](#); multi-media support; printing and photocopying services; and to [educational software discounts](#). Extensive Wi-Fi coverage is provided across main areas, fully-networked halls of residence, access to the international [Eduroam](#) network and 24/7 access to IT facilities at the Lancaster, Ambleside and Fusehill Street campuses. A dedicated IT Service Desk is available where students and staff can talk to someone by phone, or an [online service](#) is available for students and staff to log their own calls from anywhere at any time.

Library Services

The [Library Strategy 2019-2022](#) outlines the library's aim to provide digitally enabled resources, spaces and services that facilitate and enrich learning, teaching and research.

The library learning resources and collections are managed through close liaison between professional librarians and academic Institutes in line with the university's [Library Resources Management Policy](#) and [Reading List Principles](#).

All library and learning resources and systems can be accessed via the Library tile of the Student Hub and include: electronic books, journals, packages, as well as print, which can be searched via the library discovery service called [OneSearch](#). Subject specific [e-resources](#) can be searched via [subject pages](#). Module reading lists can be accessed via the [online reading list system called OneList](#). Researchers can access support via the [library and research pages](#). The [RefWorks referencing management system](#) provides students and staff with a valuable tool for collecting and managing their sources and creating reference lists and bibliographies. Library Services also manage and administer [Insight](#), the institutional research repository for the University of Cumbria.

Physical library spaces offer enquiry desks, bookable study spaces; printing, scanning and photocopying facilities, and students and staff have access to real-time personalised [Ask a Librarian](#) service between 17:00 and 09:00 UK time during the week and round the clock at weekends and UK bank holidays.

Academic skills and Information Literacy support is provided within and around the curriculum to help students to develop and achieve their potential. Academic staff are encouraged to engage with the [Skills@Cumbria Framework](#) which signposts how library services can work with institutes to support students. Key elements of the academic skills

provision, such as searching, referencing and academic writing, are often embedded within programmes and delivered through workshops and tutorials and online as appropriate.

A suite of [Head Start – online study skills courses](#) are available to support students at different levels of study, including: apprentices, level 3/4 entry, level 5/6 direct entry students, HND to degree top-ups, and those studying at postgraduate level.

All on-course students have access to a wide range of online skills support which can be accessed via the [skills tile](#) of the Student Hub; [library and academic skills advice and guidance](#) are also available from highly qualified library and academic advisers via email, appointment, workshop, [SkillsTV](#) and [webinar](#) via the [Skills@Cumbria pages](#) and the [Student Enquiry Point](#).

[LinkedIn Learning](#) offers students and staff the opportunity to develop digital skills and digital capabilities through the completion of a range of videos and courses. These are supplemented by suggested self-study resources and guides that are available through the [Digital Skills page](#).

Library Services provides copyright advice and guidance to [staff](#), [students](#) and [post-graduate researchers](#). Please note that the information contained within these copyright pages is not intended and should not be construed as legal advice.

Student Support

The [Student Enquiry Point](#) is a user-friendly, online system that gives students and staff access to all student [support teams](#):

- [Careers and Employability](#) provides support, advice, resources and opportunities to current students and recent graduates to help them develop and achieve their career goals. Students are also supported post-graduation, for up to 3 years, with access to the full range of careers and employability services including Alumni networking events.
- [Chaplaincy](#) provides a safe place, a listening ear and personal support to all students and staff, regardless of beliefs.
- [Counselling and Wellbeing](#) are staffed by qualified Mental Health Case Workers, and trainee Counsellors and Psychotherapists.
- [Disability and Specific Learning Difficulty \(SpLD\)](#) support our students to participate effectively in their chosen programme of study and all areas of university life.
- [International Student Support](#) works with new and returning International and non-UK students to ensure they have a positive learning and social experience.
- [Money Matters](#) advice team help our students to plan their finances and manage their money whilst studying.
- [Sports and Fitness Facilities](#) support students and staff to stay physically fit and well.
- [Student Accommodation](#) services provide advice for all our residential students and for those looking to rent private accommodation.
- [Student Engagement Co-Ordinators](#) (SECs) works closely with the institutes to ensure students are engaging successfully with their course and are having a positive learning experience. SECs support students to access specialist support and services across the university. Early identification of students at risk of failing is key, such as poor or intermittent attendance, repeat Student Progress Reviews

or prolonged Extenuating Circumstances. Referrals from tutors to the SECs can be made via the Student Enquiry Point.

Staff can also use the [Student Enquiry Point](#) to raise a cause for concern about a student's academic progress, their wellbeing or behaviour, or if you feel they are a potential risk to themselves or others.

Physical Student Enquiry Points are available at the library front desks and in The Barn at Ambleside.

The [Student Hub Portal](#) also provides students with all the information they need about accessing support during their programme of study.

Student Support coordinates the development of a [suite of induction portfolios](#) which introduce key resources, systems, and support services to new students, and provide events during the year to check in with students and remind them of the wide support available.

On-course programmes such as the Peer Support Scheme (Pilot running in 2022-23) and the [Career Ahead Employability Award](#) ensure that students get the most out of their time at the University of Cumbria and utilise a model of students supporting students to develop a sense of belonging and community responsibility, in addition to allowing students to develop transferrable skills which enhance their employability.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Student Charter](#)

[Safeguarding \(including Prevent\)](#)

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The University of Cumbria takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Student Representatives and Staff Student Forums

Student Representatives play a key role in quality assurance and enhancement, providing a formal mechanism to feedback on course related matters and other issues impacting on the student experience. The University's student academic representative system is managed by the University of Cumbria Students' Union (UCSU).

Student academic representatives represent their cohorts at programme level. They are key members of Staff/Student Forums which provide an accessible forum for the debate and discussion of matters relating to the student academic experience across a set of programmes.

Programme teams should work with their Student Academic Representatives to ensure that:

- Student representatives are elected each year.
- Representatives are invited to Staff/Student Forums (and other informal meetings) and are actively encouraged to shape the agenda and lead discussions in meetings.
- Reports from Staff/Student Forum meetings including action points are shared with Representatives through Programme Blackboard sites.

Further information on Staff/Student Forums can be found [here](#).

Internal Evaluation

Students also provide feedback on their learning experience in a range of other internal mechanisms. The University's Policy on [Student Evaluative Feedback](#) sets out the University's expectations in relation to student evaluation of modules and programmes. The University requires student evaluation for all modules.

External Evaluation

Students also engage in a range of external surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS) which is completed annual by students in their final year of undergraduate study, providing prospective students with important information on student satisfaction. The results of the NSS are freely available to prospective students (and other stakeholders) through the [Discover Uni website](#). Other external surveys include the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Learner Survey, this being completed by learners on an Apprenticeship Programme.

Programme Design, Development and Approval

The University's validation procedures require student engagement, ensuring that proposals consider the student voice and can demonstrate that student feedback has informed the proposal, whether for a new development, for revalidation or when

considering changes to programmes. A student reviewer also forms part of the panel for validation.

Committees

There is student representation across the range of committees within the University with reports from the University of Cumbria Students' Union forming a standing agenda item for a range of committees including Academic Board and Academic Governance Committee.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Online Student Handbook](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

ASSESSMENT

The University's strategic approach to assessment is underpinned by the LTA Strategy.

Assessment strategies for programmes are designed to demonstrate that learning outcomes have been achieved and are approved through the formal validation process. Programme Specifications identify overall learning outcomes and demonstrate where these are embedded within specific modules.

The University's assessment processes are governed by the Academic Regulations and the agreed marking and moderation procedures, as laid out in [Appendix 3b of the Academic Regulations](#) as well as University Grade Descriptors and Qualification and Level Descriptors.

To ensure that assessment processes are rigorous, reliable and fair, all credit bearing student work (i.e. marks which count towards the student's final award) and non-credit bearing professional practice work is subject to a moderation process.⁵ Essentially, moderation is the process in which student work is moderated by an independent marker to check that marking standards are appropriate and have been applied consistently and fairly. Further information on marking and moderation of student work can be found [here](#).

Where programmes of study lead to qualifications of professional bodies, full account is taken of any professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) requirements, which will take precedence over the University's academic regulations, and which must be approved at the point of validation. Detail on variations to Academic Regulations approved by Academic Board can be found at [Appendix 1 of the Academic Regulations](#).

All validated modules have defined assessment methods which must be clearly identified and linked to the learning outcomes. Module assessment normally takes the form of a combination of formative or summative work undertaken by the student. All students will receive a Module Guide which will set out the assessment criteria and requirements for that unit of study, including dates by which the student can expect timely provisional marks and feedback on their work.⁶ Students will also have access to a Programme Handbook and comprehensive information within the on-line [Student Handbook](#).

Moderation of Assessment Tasks. As set out in the University's Curriculum Design Framework, text-based assignment questions must be rotated on a 3 year cycle in order to maintain a robust assessment approach and to ensure that in-programme plagiarism is minimised. This means that each assessment (e.g. essay question, performance title, exam question) cannot be used more than once in any 3-year period. Programme teams must keep their own records of the rotation of assessments. The University operates a process of moderation of assessment tasks and briefs across the programme, which includes a check on this requirement. This process is managed within Academic Institutes, but an example of the baseline template is available [here](#). This moderation process is sampled by Heads of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience.

⁵ Guiding Principle 1 & 2, UK Quality Code [Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#).

⁶ Guiding principle 7, UK Quality Code [Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#).

Moderation of Assessed Work. The University's Academic Procedures and Processes (3b) set out the requirements for the moderation of student work which ensure the consistency, fairness and appropriateness. Evidence of moderation is required in order for module marks to be confirmed by the Module Confirmation Board, using the mark submission process.

Students have a responsibility for submitting assessments in accordance with the published deadlines, however a clear system for handling and granting extensions of time for submitting assignments is in operation (see below). The University operates a strict Code of Conduct in relation to the behaviour of examination students, and a copy of this is made available to all examination candidates.

The Assessment and Awards Team (in Academic Registry) is responsible for the administration of assessment and awards, including formal exams, professional body registrations and the issuing of certificates and transcripts. They are also responsible for managing the academic appeals, formal student complaints, malpractice and student disciplinary and extenuating circumstances processes. This team supports the University Assessment Boards where all progression, award and any issues with a profile are confirmed. The Assessment and Awards Team is based at both the Lancaster and Brampton Road campuses and specific queries can be relayed to the Team via Assessment@cumbria.ac.uk.

Assignment submission

Students may be required to submit work in a number of different formats for example: assignments, which may be; essays, portfolios, projects or other types of coursework. All coursework is governed by [Appendix 3c 'The Conduct of Assessment'](#) of the University of Cumbria Academic Procedures and Processes. Further information on submission of assignments (including format, penalties for late submission, and electronic submission, can be found [here](#). A sliding scale of penalties is applied where students exceed the word count and additional penalties are imposed where the word count is both exceeded and falsified ([Appendix 3c, 3.5.1 & 3.5.2](#)).

Electronic submission

The document '[Online submission and feedback on coursework](#)' on StaffHub provides staff guidance to ensure that online submission of assignments works efficiently and securely. These procedures and guidelines relate to any form of assignment that can be submitted via the internet in a digital format. This may include images, video, websites, blogs, wikis and other multi-media work (if the work is an appropriate file size) as well as conventional word-processed assignments. Online feedback can also be used for presentations and physical artefacts that cannot be submitted online.

Module Reassessment

Unless prohibited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB), undergraduate students have the right to reassessment (although see exceptions at Academic Regulations, Reg F8). Reassessment is required in the area of failure only. The pass mark for any module in reassessment is capped at the pass mark (40% for undergraduate; 50% for postgraduate). Following University Assessment Boards, Assessment Contracts are drawn up for students who have an excess of 40 credits outstanding to be recouped via

reassessment or if there is a confirmed case of malpractice within the assessment item (Academic Regulation F8.3).

Extensions

Authorised extensions to submissions may be agreed by the module tutor for valid reasons. The student must submit a fully completed extension form, available online [here](#). An extension may be given for up to 2 weeks (14 days including 10 working days). No penalty will be applied to the mark, provided the work is submitted to the re-negotiated deadline. The agreed extension must allow for the work to be marked, moderated and presented to the Module Assessment Board. Extensions are not permitted on reassessment or deferred assessment (Reg F6.2.3).

Extenuating Circumstances

In determining assessment recommendations, the Assessment Board will take into account validated and properly submitted claims from students who believe that their performance has been adversely affected by extended or exceptional extenuating circumstances which have not been (fully) addressed through the extension scheme. The extenuating circumstances form is available [here](#). Full details governing the process for extenuating circumstances can be found in the [Academic Regulations, F12](#) and in [Appendix 3e](#).

Compensation

Compensation relates to marginal performance and may be applied at the discretion of the University Assessment Board (UPAB). The rules and limits on compensation are set out in the [Academic Regulations](#) (F14, F15).

Students with Disabilities and/or Specific Learning Disabilities

Where a student is unable, through disability or long-term illness, to be assessed through normal coursework methods, the Module Leader (through the Module Assessment Board Chair), may vary assessment methods accordingly so that students are not disadvantaged ([Academic Regulations, F9.3](#)). Additional exam arrangements can be made for students with disabilities or unforeseen medical circumstances (and only when a student has been through a formal disability assessment), in line with the Equality Act 2010. A range of reasonable adjustments can be made in appropriate cases to ensure that students have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement in assessment, e.g. separate rooms, computers, specialist software, large print papers, extra time and use of electronic devices⁷. [Contact SASS](#) through the webpages for further details regarding eligibility for additional exam arrangements.

Anonymous marking

As part of its commitment to fairness in assessment practice, the marking of examination scripts is anonymised (Appendix 3c, 1.4.1). The University is currently piloting the use of anonymous marking in coursework, and this continues to be evaluated, although it is recognised that this process will not be practicable for some assessment tasks (e.g. art projects and work-based learning). The University routinely engages in dialogue with students with regard to anonymous marking practice⁸.

⁷ Inclusive Assessment (Guiding principles 2,4 & 9), UK Quality Code [Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#).

⁸ Marking and Moderation (Guiding principles 1 & 2), UK Quality Code [Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#).

Coursework turnaround and feedback to students

The University policy is for all assessment to be turned around within 20 working days (excluding public holidays and periods of University closure) so students should not have to wait longer than 20 working days for initial feedback on assessments - in some cases feedback will be received much sooner, dependent on the type of assessment task; this may be after internal moderation, but prior to external moderation and ratification by the University Assessment Board (students will be advised that feedback is provisional). The University supports the principle that timely feedback is crucial to help students improve on subsequent assessment tasks and final outcomes.

Academic Malpractice

The University regards any attempt by a student to gain an unfair advantage in assessment as a serious academic offence that undermines the academic standards of the University. Academic malpractice in any form of assessment will be penalised and may lead to the award not being conferred or to the termination of a student's programme. Malpractice includes all forms of cheating, plagiarism (including ghost writing), collusion, fabrication, falsification and impersonation. Students are made aware of the academic regulations in respect to malpractice, and the importance of academic integrity, at the start of their programme. A University guide on plagiarism 'Cite Them Right' is available for students on-line from the Skills@Cumbria tab on Blackboard⁹. Students are required to confirm ownership of each piece of assessment submitted. Malpractice can be considered to be either minor or major malpractice and the full procedural detail can be found in [Appendix 3d](#) to the Academic Regulations.¹⁰

Assessment Boards

The University operates Module Confirmation Boards (which confirm module marks) and University Progression and Award Boards (which make decisions on progression and award). Quality Enhancement Boards provide a forum for the discussion of module/programme performance and interrogation of data and trends with an emphasis on quality enhancement activity at module and programme level.

The assessment board schedule for all 2023/24 activity for MCBs, QEBs and UPABs can be found [here](#).

Module Confirmation Boards (MCBs)

- Confirms module marks
- Confirms marking and moderation has been carried out appropriately
- Confirms appropriateness of marking standards
- Identifies any recommendations for fails or special cases
- Receives extenuating circumstances and malpractice outcomes
- Membership: Chair (Programme Leader or Principal Lecturer) and Officer from Academic Registry
- Usually operates at subject level

⁹ Academic Integrity (Guiding principle 10), UK Quality Code [Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#).

¹⁰ Academic Integrity (Guiding principle 10), UK Quality Code [Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#).

Quality Enhancement Boards (QEBs)

- Receives and considers data on student performance and outcomes at module and programme level
- Identifies and considers quality and standards issues arising from the assessment exercise
- Makes recommendations to enhance assessment practice e.g. consider changing the assessment method from XX to XX type
- Does not make decisions on student outcomes, instead is focussed on quality enhancement discussions
- May exceptionally make recommendations to the UPAB if it identifies something new
- Membership: Chair (normally LTSE lead), Officer from Academic Registry, Subject Examiners, Module Leaders and Programme Leaders, CP Programme Leaders
- Usually operating at Institute Level

University Progression and Award Boards (UPABs)

- Considers the progress of continuing students and awards for completing students
- Considers the profile of marks for each student at progression point and those of completing students to confirm the award outcome including classification
- Membership: Chair (Institute Director), Officer from Academic Registry, Chief External Examiner (to be appointed from Subject Examiners), Relevant Programme Leaders (University and Partners), Relevant Module Leaders and Assessment and Awards Manager (Academic Registry) or their nominee
- Usually operating at Institute Level (may be some crossover to manage business)

Award Classifications

Full detail on award classifications can be found in Section H of the [Academic Regulations](#).

Accreditation of Prior Learning

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is the process used to assess and formally recognise learning which has taken place in the past. Such learning may have been:

- Undertaken at another educational institution where qualifications and academic credits were achieved – referred to as prior certificated learning [APCL]
- Achieved from experiences outside the formal education and training systems (e.g. work/ life experience), or via non-credit bearing courses (e.g. in-house training) – referred to as prior experiential learning [APEL]

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is the process of considering an applicant's prior certificated or experiential learning, in order for them to gain advanced standing on a programme. The credit or experience to be used for APL must be relevant to the applicant's programme of study. For the University to consider a claim for APL, the applicant must be applying to, or registered on, a programme at the University.

APL claims are usually dealt with during the admission process to a programme¹¹. However, they can also be considered when a student is already studying on a programme.

¹¹ Recognition of prior learning (Guiding principle 2 & 3), UK Quality Code [Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#).

APL is administered by the APL Officer who sits within the Assessment, Awards and Compliance Team (in Academic Registry). Any specific queries relating to the APL procedures and processes should be made through the APL Officer in the first instance via: apl@cumbria.ac.uk or by telephone to: 01524 590856.

APL guidance for staff is available [here](#) and information for students is available [here](#). APL procedures and processes are governed by [Appendix 6](#) of the [Academic Regulations](#).

The External Examiner Role in Assessment

The system of External Examining is a distinctive feature of Higher Education in the UK. All University modules are appointed an External Examiner. As independent experts from other academic institutions (or sometimes from industry or a professional field) External Examiners are suitably qualified to provide advice on the academic standards of the awards, programmes and/or modules to which they have been assigned and can provide informed guidance on good practice and opportunities to enhance programmes based on comparability of similar awards offered at other higher education institutions of which they have experience.

The changes to the Assessment Board processes do not change the role of the Subject Examiner but they do result in them being invited to attend a Quality Enhancement Board rather than the 'old' Module Assessment Board, from November 2021 onwards. External Examiners are not expected to attend the new Module Confirmation Board as, rather than expecting them to attend lengthy boards focussed on the processing of marks across a wide subject area, we are developing our processes for the confirmation of external examiner moderation to enable them to confirm their satisfaction with marking, moderation and standards (or raise concerns) through an online form/process. External Examiner attendance at the new Quality Enhancement Board will enable more detailed and meaningful discussions with academic teams on student outcomes, data and trends, placing the emphasis on quality enhancement.

Chief External Examiner

The changes to the Assessment Board processes also bring in a new role of Chief Examiner, to be drawn from the pool of our Subject Examiners.

We have sought applications from our current Subject External Examiners who are experienced in managing the assessment process and in applying Academic Regulations.

More information about the procedures and processes for External Examining can be found within the Appendices to the Academic Regulations (Appx 4a to Appx 4f) on the website [here](#).

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Academic Regulations](#)
[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

EXTERNAL EXAMINING

External examining plays an important part in maintaining nationally comparable standards within higher education institutions. It also contributes to the enhancement and development of our programmes and provides an external process for monitoring fair practice in the assessment of students' academic performance. The main purposes of the external examining system are:

1. To ensure that all of the awards of the University meet the standards expected by the University and the standards of similar awards elsewhere. Such verification of standards will require reference to national subject benchmarks, national qualifications framework as well as University programme specifications and marking criteria;
2. To ensure the effectiveness of the University's academic regulations, assessment processes and procedures and their fair application to the cases of individual students;
3. Where appropriate, to ensure that the accreditation requirements of any professional or statutory body are met.

Categories of External Examiner

The University has two categories of External Examiner, operating with distinct remits:

Subject External Examiner – responsible for a set of modules within a cognate area, a discrete award, or a combination of modules which may be shared across a range of pathways or awards. These External Examiners attend Quality Enhancement Boards which are involved with the module marks (not individual student profiles). Only one External Examiner should be appointed to any one module.

Chief External Examiner – responsible for helping the institution to ensure that the assessment processes are sound, fairly operated and in line with the institution's policies and procedures (and comparable with procedures applied elsewhere in the sector). This role is not subject related, but the Chief Examiners are appointed from our pool of Subject External Examiners. Chief External Examiners consider full student profiles of completing students or consider profiles of students at progression points.

Further detail on the roles and responsibilities of External Examiners can be found within the procedures to the Academic Regulations at:

Appx 4a: [Roles and responsibilities in External Examining](#)

Appx 3f: [The conduct and operation of Assessment Boards](#)

Additional summary guidance for staff concerning their role in relation to External Examiners (programme-level induction, roles and responsibilities etc.) can be found [here](#).

Appointment of External Examiners

The Quality Assurance Team in Quality and Standards supports the appointment process from the initial stages through to appointment. Further information can be found within the procedures to the Academic Regulations at:

Appx 4b: [Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners and procedure for early termination of contract](#)

Appx 4c: [Guidelines for the selection and approval of potential External Examiners](#)

Appx 4d: [Procedures for appointing External Examiners](#)

The process and templates relating to External Examiner appointments (and/or extension to remit or term of office), can be found on the StaffHub Corporate Library [here](#). In order to ensure a satisfactory spread of Externals from other institutions, the University maintains a record of existing External Examiner appointments and this is available [here](#) under 'Nomination and Appointment'. The University cannot approve appointments where reciprocal arrangements exist, e.g. where a University of Cumbria staff member is an external examiner in the corresponding department at that institution. Quality and Standards has a list of external examiner posts currently held by staff [here](#), to ensure that we do not have reciprocal arrangements.

External Examiners are provided with an [External Examiner Handbook](#) and other relevant information needed to fulfil their role. Additional information can be found within the procedures to the Academic Regulations here:

Appx 3b: [Procedures governing the marking and moderation of assessments](#)

Appx 4f: [Information for External Examiners](#)

The [Minor Modification Guidance](#) document on StaffHub provides additional guidance in cases where External Examiners may be required to approve modifications to existing programmes during the lifespan of the programme or module.

External Examiner Induction

On-line Induction presentations for External Examiners are provided on our website and provide the general information they will need to carry out their role. These induction materials are in addition to the programme-level induction, which must be carried out by the Programme Leader, soon after the External Examiner has been appointed (a Summary Guide is provided to staff to outline the threshold requirements of programme-level induction). Information relating to induction can be found [here](#). Where External Examiners are taking up their first role as an Examiner, they will be appointed a mentor to provide additional support and guidance during their initial year in post. Further details on mentorship can be found in Annex 1 to [Appendix 4d](#) of the Academic Regulations.

External Examiner Reports

The Quality and Standards team receives all External Examiner Reports, including reports concerning collaborative partners, and circulates these as appropriate. Responses to reports are tracked and logged by Quality and Standards (joint responses are required in the case of collaborative provision). The reporting procedures for External Examiners can be found at: Appx 4e: [Reporting procedures for External Examiners](#)

Recommendations arising from External Examiner reports are monitored through Programme and Institutional annual monitoring mechanisms. An annual summary of key themes and issues arising from External Examiner Reports is considered through the University's deliberative committee structure on an annual basis. A summary of outcomes is also shared with External Examiners.

Confidential Reports

External Examiners may submit a confidential report where they feel there are matters which may jeopardise the academic quality and standards of a programme. Confidential reports are handled separately and responded to by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic).

Student involvement with External Examiner Reports

The QAA UK Quality Code relating to External Examining states that External Examiner reports should be made available to all students. The University makes all Subject External Examiner reports available to students via internal module level Blackboard sites. External Examiner details are also available to students via Module Guides.

The Code states that students should not make direct contact with an External Examiner and this message is being reinforced through student representative briefings, however if a student does make contact, we ask the External Examiner not to engage in dialogue with the student but to instead forward the email/details of the contact made to the University via email (externalexaminers@cumbria.ac.uk). We will then, through Programme Leaders, remind the student that they should not make any further contact with the External Examiner. If there are continued attempts to contact the External Examiner, then Student Code of Conduct procedures may be instigated, but we hope this would not be necessary.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Academic Regulations](#)

[University procedures and processes for managing academic collaborative provision](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

Annually monitoring of programmes of study delivered by the University ensures the continuing standards and quality of the University's academic provision. Programme monitoring considers comprehensive evidence on programme performance and the student learning experience. It also enables the identification of good practice for wider dissemination within the University for the purposes of quality enhancement. Annual monitoring at programme level aligns to Institute One Plans.

Annual monitoring is at the centre of the University's approach to managing quality and standards and is based on the premise that:

- Colleagues at all levels of the University are responsible and accountable for maintaining standards and maintaining and enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities
- Shared responsibility and accountability require open discussions between Academic Institutes, Professional Services and the University Executive Group
- Annual monitoring takes place within a cycle that runs the length of the academic year, with participation from academic Institutes, collaborative partners, professional services and management teams, enabling a holistic consideration of how the University maintains standards and enhances the quality of student learning opportunities

Aims of annual monitoring and review

The annual cycle enables:

- Careful review of feedback received from students, external examiners and the teaching team
- The programme team and Institute to reflect on key performance indicators that have become available during the academic year
- Programme leaders and Directors of Institute to reflect on and discuss achievements and challenges of the previous academic year alongside plans for future academic developments
- The programme leaders to agree actions for feeding into the Institute One Plan that ensures the standards and quality of the programmes delivered
- Institute level actions to be identified through Programme level monitoring that will be addressed and monitored through the Institute One Plan

Categories of Annual Evaluation and Review

Student feedback

Student feedback can be gathered through a number of formal mechanisms:

- [Module Evaluation Questionnaire](#) (including mid-module evaluations). The University uses a standard Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) across its taught provision, for completion by students
- The MEQ is [run via the Blackboard](#) site, and should be deployed for each module.
- [Programme Evaluation Questionnaire](#) (including end of module surveys)
- Student-Staff Forum
- Student representatives

- [National Student Survey](#)
- Other student surveys as detailed in the [Student Voice Strategy](#)

Further information and guidance is available in the [Student Evaluative Feedback Policy](#)

Module Evaluation Report

Module evaluations should incorporate more than student feedback, they should also include reflections from the module leader and/or teaching team, any feedback from External Examiners and a review of module outcomes and student performance. A Module Evaluation Report should be completed by the Module Leader after each instance of module delivery. The completed reports will also help inform Programme-level Annual Monitoring reports and should be available for discussion at Institutional Committees and Management Groups

Annual monitoring at Programme level

Further detail on the University Policy and Procedure for annual monitoring and review can be found [here](#).

Annual Monitoring Action Planning

Actions identified through programme level annual monitoring should be captured in the Institute One Plan.

Annual Monitoring for Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

Institutes offering professional programmes may also be required to provide external monitoring reports for PSRBs, e.g. Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council. Such reports are approved at Institute level but may also be received by Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Board as appropriate.

Annual Monitoring of collaborative provision

Collaborative partner organisations delivering University of Cumbria provision adhere to standard processes and procedures. Collaborative Programmes are subject to additional monitoring in the form of Annual Partnership Review which looks at the range of provision across each of the University's Associate Partners.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Academic Regulations](#)

[University procedures and processes for managing academic collaborative provision](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

An Academic Appeal is a request for reconsideration of a decision made by the University Assessment Board. An appeal can be made by any student who is enrolled on a programme of study at the University of Cumbria or by recent graduates if within the stipulated timescale. All appeals will be dealt with confidentially unless disclosure is necessary to progress the appeal. Timescales will be identified and must be adhered to by the University and the student¹². Consideration of academic appeals must fall within one of the following categories:

- Where there has been or could have been material administrative error or regulatory or procedural irregularity which has affected the student's results
- Where significant new evidence concerning extenuating or mitigating circumstances, which for good reason had not been available to the MAB, has been produced (for example a medical condition which had not been diagnosed at the time of the Board); or where insufficient weight had been given to extenuating circumstances. Appeals on these grounds will be referred to the EC Panel
- Where unfair treatment or discrimination is alleged as part of the assessment process which for good reason had not been considered previously under the University Complaints Procedures

Appeals claims will be ruled invalid in the following circumstances:

- Disagreement with any mark or grade or placement assessment result will not constitute grounds for an appeal. An appeal which disputes the academic or professional judgement of the MAB, properly exercised, will not be regarded as valid; similarly, an appeal may not be based on a questioning of any individual examiner of the assessment board
- Appeals for reconsideration/ remarking of any component of assessment, however borderline, will be ruled invalid, unless a case for irregularity is being claimed
- Appeals submitted outside the specified deadlines will be ruled invalid
- Appeals by a third party will be ruled to be invalid unless the appellant is seriously incapacitated
- Where there has been any anomaly in the assessment process, as under section 1.3.1 (i) above, which has already been reported to and taken account of by the MAB, this shall also be ruled invalid

¹² Information is clear and transparent (Guiding principle 3), UK Quality Code, [Concerns, complaints and appeals](#).

- Where new evidence for illness or extenuating circumstances is brought forward after the meetings of the MAB, and there is no evidence of good reason as to why it had not been reported to the MAB previously, the appeal shall be ruled invalid
- Appeals against allegations of malpractice will only be valid if based on grounds of material administrative error or regulatory or procedural irregularity
- Vexatious, frivolous or fraudulent appeals will be dismissed immediately and may result in disciplinary action against the appellant. The appellant will be advised in writing as to why the application is an abuse of the appeal process

Procedure for Appeal

The student must make an appeal in writing, identifying the grounds for appeal, and must provide relevant documentary evidence, to the Secretary of the Appeals Panel in the Academic Registry within TEN working days of the official publication date of the results. Students may indicate the form of remedy they are seeking. The appeal should be submitted on the appeal form available [here](#) and on the University website.

There are two stages to the Academic Appeals procedure:

- Stage 1 – An appeal made on grounds of material administrative error, or regulatory or procedural irregularity will be dealt with by an independent University Assessment Board Chair. Whilst an appeal made on grounds of extenuating circumstances (ECs) will be referred to the EC panel and finally an appeal made on grounds of unfair treatment or discrimination will be referred into the formal student complaint process (as outlined below) unless considered previously under this procedure
- Stage 2 – where an appeal is denied at Stage 1, the student has the right to submit a written appeal to the Secretary of the Appeals Panel within TEN working days of notification of the outcome of Stage 1. A Stage 2 appeal is then considered by the Appeal Panel

A student whose case is under consideration via an internal appeal shall have the right to continue with their programme where they have sufficient academic credit to progress and provided that they are not in debt to the University or subject to fitness to practise procedures, until such time as a decision has been reached.

Disagreement with any mark or grade will not constitute grounds for an appeal. Complaints outside this definition should be made through the [University's Complaints Procedure](#).

Upon completion of the final stage of an academic appeal the student will be provided with a Completion of Procedures letter advising them that they may pursue the matter further by submitting a Scheme Application form to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (www.oiache.org.uk).

Research Students

Appeals in respect of research students will be dealt with under University of Cumbria regulations, unless the student is registered for a Lancaster University award, and in such instances LU procedures for research degrees will apply. Advice on making an appeal (or a complaint) is available from the Graduate School.

The Academic Regulations and procedures for academic appeals are reviewed¹³ on a regular basis and any changes are approved through Academic Board.

Full details on academic appeals can be found within the [Academic Regulations](#) (Section I) and in the accompanying procedures and processes at [Appendix 5](#).

Complaints Procedures

Students are encouraged to raise concerns informally wherever possible, so that these can be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible for all concerned. The [University's Complaints Procedures](#) enables students to make a formal complaint about the quality of educational provision and/or related services. The University aims to seek resolution of a complaint through an open and fair approach at the earliest opportunity¹⁴. In this spirit, the University encourages informal resolution of a complaint wherever possible and may offer remedy at any stage of the process where applicable. Formal complaints are investigated by a Complaints Investigation Officer who will conduct an investigation with relevant members of staff. Formal complaints are subject to defined timescales and formal correspondence¹⁵.

Definition of terms:

- Complaint: the legitimate expression of dissatisfaction regarding the quality of a programme of study or University service. The term can be used interchangeably with 'concern'. In this context, 'legitimate' does not imply that the complaint will be upheld but that it conforms to due process and merits investigation.
- Informal complaint: A concern or complaint that may be raised verbally or in writing (including email), directly with a member of Academic or Service staff related to the nature of the complaint. Informal complaints are not subject to or defined by timescales and formal correspondence as applied with a formal complaint.
- Formal complaint: A concern or complaint made in writing, by completing and submitting a Formal Complaint Form. Formal complaints are submitted to the Student Procedures Team (email: Studentprocedures@cumbria.ac.uk) and undergo a validity assessment.

Where a student wishes to make a formal complaint they should consider contacting the [Students' Union](#) for impartial guidance and advice¹⁶.

¹³ Guiding principle 3, UK Quality Code, [Concerns, complaints and appeals](#).

¹⁴ Guiding principle 8, UK Quality Code, [Concerns, complaints and appeals](#).

¹⁵ UK Quality Code, [Concerns, complaints and appeals](#).

¹⁶ Guiding principle 4 UK Quality Code, [Concerns, complaints and appeals](#).

Student Code of Conduct & Adjudication Procedure

The [Student Code of Conduct](#) outlines the University's expectations relating to the behaviour of its students in meeting social responsibilities, legislative and regulatory requirements, professional expectations and standards. The Student Code of Conduct applies to all students enrolled on a programme of study offered by the University of Cumbria whether or not the registration enrolment leads to a final award, wherever the student is based and regardless of the level or mode of study. It extends beyond the immediate University community, services and facilities and includes activities within placements and the wider community. The Code sets out the procedures to be taken when a student allegedly breaches one or more elements of the Student Code of Conduct and provides detail on matters of suspension from study; [fitness to practise](#); and procedures concerning Police involvement and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements.

Students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with this procedure, which should also be read in conjunction with the [University's Student Social Media Policy](#) (under Student policies and procedures) and [guidelines for using social media](#) as a student of the University of Cumbria.

Under the Student Code of Conduct, an allegation, complaint, concern or grievance may be made against a student by:

- Another student
- A member of staff of the University
- A University representative, including mentors, placement-related staff and other agents of the University

An allegation made by a member of the public may also be considered where there is sufficient and appropriate information.

Complaints, grievances or allegations made by a student's parent, relative, friend or other third parties, cannot be pursued on behalf of that student or learner, unless written consent is received from the relevant student.

The Adjudication Procedure informs students that where a complaint, grievance or allegation is raised, enquiries and/or investigations will take place to identify whether or not the Student Code of Conduct has been breached. Students are also informed of the range of sanctions that may be considered in the event of a breach.

Students may request a review of the outcome of an adjudication, where there are grounds. The procedure for responding to a request for review depends on the method of adjudication, grounds and information provided by the student.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA): The OIA is an independent organisation that students can apply to if, after exhausting all internal options, they remain dissatisfied with a decision made. Information about the OIA can be found online: www.oiahe.org.uk.

Student Anti-Harassment and Bullying

Students on professional programmes should be aware of the [Fitness to Practise policy](#) and professional standards expectations and that where a complaint is made against a student, it may be necessary to instigate a fitness to practise meeting with a student.

The Academic Registry conducts annual review and evaluation¹⁷ of the Complaints Procedures and an annual report is submitted to Academic Board to reflect usage, systematic issues, amendments and recommendations for change.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Academic Regulations](#)

[Appendix 5 – Academic Appeals Procedures](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code](#)

¹⁷ Guiding principle 2, UK Quality Code, [Concerns, complaints and appeals](#).

ACADEMIC COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

The role of partnership working is embedded throughout the University's Strategic Plan. The University uses the term 'academic collaborative provision' for specific types of partnership activity. These are:

- Franchised programmes delivered by non-degree awarding bodies (approved as an Associate Partner) through a variety of models.
- Validated programmes delivered by non-degree awarding bodies (approved as an Associate Partner) through a variety of models.
- School Direct arrangements with school alliances to deliver the University's PGCE programme(s).
- School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) arrangements with schools to deliver the University's PGCE programme with QTS under a more devolved arrangement than School Direct.
- Qualifications awarded by more than one degree awarding body (approved as an Associate Partner). These are awards such as Joint, Double and Dual Degrees.
- Flying Faculty arrangements for international arrangements (approved as an Associate Partner).
- Articulation Arrangements.
- Guaranteed Progression.

Regardless of who is delivering a programme, the University of Cumbria retains responsibility for the academic standards of its awards. The University's awards will be delivered and managed by Associate Partners in accordance with University's Academic Regulations and the University's Academic Processes and Procedures, although bespoke arrangements may be approved to manage awards granted by more than one degree awarding body.

University-wide oversight of collaborative provision is maintained through the Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee (CPSC), which reports to the Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee. The Terms of Reference and Purpose are detailed in the University's Committee Handbook.

Individual programmes approved for delivery by an Associate Partner will have a university 'home' in an Academic Institute. Within that Institute, an academic will take a 'link tutor' role and be responsible for the day-to-day management of partnership arrangements at programme level.

The Head of Collaborative Provision in Academic Registry is responsible for managing the quality assurance arrangements for the University's Academic Collaborative Provision (ACP).

Academic Registry provide University administrative support to each collaborative partnership.

Approval of Collaborative Provision

The University has detailed processes for the [approval and management of ACP](#). There are Threshold Criteria for Institutional Approval of different forms of collaborative provision. These have to be satisfied through an institutional approval process prior to any

programme-level approval taking place. An institutional approval panel is convened from the membership of CPSC and SSQAC. A small team from the University visits prospective partners and produces a site visit report that informs the approval process. The prospective partner submits a set of documentation as evidence that it satisfies the threshold criteria. This is considered by the institutional approval panel.

With all prospective partnerships, the University will undertake due diligence enquiries to determine whether or not to progress the approval of the proposed partnership. This is undertaken in a manner proportionate to the volume, complexity and nature of the activity, to the type of delivery organisation or support provider involved, and to the associated risks.

Collaborative Provision is a complex and high-risk area of activity for the University, as elements of responsibility for the management of quality and standards are devolved to a third party. No commitments should be made to entering new potential partnerships prior to consideration by CPSC.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Academic Regulations](#)

[University procedures and processes for managing academic collaborative provision](#)

RESEARCH DEGREES

Postgraduate Research Degrees

Doctoral degrees are qualifications rooted in original research: the creation of new knowledge or originality in the application of knowledge. The doctorate is therefore unique in the array of qualifications offered by higher education providers. The key reference points for doctoral degrees are the doctoral qualification descriptors included in the frameworks for higher education qualifications (for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and for Scotland) and QAA's Characteristics statement for Doctoral Degrees (2015).

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education states the expectation that Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees. There are eighteen indicators set by the QAA, which form the structure of our Postgraduate Research Code of Practice. The indicators reproduced in the code along with commentary on how the principles underpinning each indicator are delivered at the University of Cumbria.

The Postgraduate Research Code of Practice sets out the provision made for our research degrees to meet the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. It can be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice for research, which sets out the principles of good research conduct and integrity expected of all researchers at Cumbria. The Research Degrees Handbook guides research students through their research degree journey. It outlines the responsibilities for both students and supervisors.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[QAA Research Degrees page](#)

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The University provides a range of information to prospective and current students, alumni and other stakeholders. The University publishes key information in a number of ways, and increasingly its website and online learning environments are used to provide information and guidance to students.

The University website contains programme webpages which provide an overview of the programme, detail of module titles and other key information. In addition, the Programme Specification is linked to from the programme webpage. Website information is managed by the Marketing and Recruitment service.

The Office for Students guidance: [Protecting Students and Consumers](#) is a practical guide that aims to help providers present good quality information to prospective students. The guide takes into consideration research into student information needs and decision making and has consulted the advice published by the Competition and Markets Authority.

It is important that students are provided with clear and accurate information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them. The University manages this through the use of standardised templates for Module Guides, Programme Handbooks and Placement Handbooks. These are all available on the StaffHub Corporate Library.

The University has a set of baseline criteria for Programme Blackboard sites which are available [here](#).

Consumer Protection Law

The increasing role of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) makes it more important than ever for us to ensure that our published information is correct and that only minimal changes are made to our published portfolio of programmes and that these changes are timely and only implemented on presentation of evidence of our student engagement and consultation. This includes prospective students offered a place on one of our programmes. A short guide to implications of CMA on higher education providers is available [here](#).

DiscoverUni

The DiscoverUni record replaces the Unistats record (which replaced the KIS record), which has been collected since 2012/13 from Higher Education Providers (HEPs) and Further Education Colleges (FECs).

The DiscoverUni record is collected to aid prospective higher education students in making a decision about what and where to study. DiscoverUni collection provides comparable information about full or part-time undergraduate courses and contains information that prospective students have identified as most important to inform their decisions about future study. The emphasis of the coverage of the DiscoverUni record is for any undergraduate course that someone can register for in the next academic year.

The DiscoverUni record collects data about full and part-time undergraduate courses available for application for the next academic year, which is then joined to other datasets,

such as National Student Survey outcomes, to generate a range of course information for publication on the [DiscoverUni website](#).

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[Programme documentation templates, including the Module Guide, Programme Baseline standards for programme Blackboard sites](#)

ENHANCEMENT

This Chapter is under review and will be republished over 2023/24 academic year

Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy

The LTA Strategy supports the University's vision:

"To be recognised as a catalyst for individual and regional prosperity and pride with national and international relevance, reach and impact."

by raising the aspirations and educational attainment of our learners. We will achieve this through the provision of an accessible and relevant environment for learning, teaching and research. We will focus on building progression routes into higher education, into employment and throughout careers for the "lifelong University of Cumbria learner".

UK Professional Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education

The University seeks to encourage dynamic, creative and sustainable practitioners, and staff demonstrating the sector UK [Professional Standards Framework \(UKPSF\) for Teaching & Supporting Learning in Higher Education](#), and where appropriate to their role, the Researcher Development Framework. To achieve these institutional aims, all staff involved in teaching and the support of learning are assisted and enabled through one of two different mandatory routes for professional development:

- Initial Professional Development route (IPD):
A taught postgraduate award in Learning & Teaching for Higher Education is designed to develop individual professional competence and increase the overall capacity of academic staff within the University for teaching excellence, research and leadership. The Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) focusses on learning, teaching and assessment, and is accredited by the HE Academy against UKPSF Descriptor 2 (Fellowship).
- Continuing Professional Development route (CPD):
A Higher Education Academy accredited continuing professional development CPD Scheme, designed to support experienced individuals in the demonstration of their achievement of UKPSF Descriptors 2 and 3, and with future opportunity for Descriptor 4.

The University's commitment to the enhancement of learning and teaching is reflected in the strategic decision to aim for all academic staff to achieve UKPSF Descriptor 2 (Fellowship of the HEA). Quality and Standards provides support and development to staff in support of this target and runs workshops throughout the year to enable colleagues to learn more about the UKPSF and to prepare their portfolios for submission.

Learning and Teaching Fest

The University hosts an Annual Learning and Teaching Fest. This one-day event is attended by staff from across the University (academic and professional services) and the Fest is used as an opportunity to i) showcase and disseminate best practice, ii) stimulate cross

programme and Institute networking and iii) see what other institutions are doing to enhance learning and teaching (through an external speaker/keynote).

Since July 2014, each L&T Fest has showcased the innovative and excellent practice of colleagues within the University and also with our partners. Each event is linked with a theme and colleagues are asked to submit proposals for presentations, workshops and posters in the spring of each year.

Excellence Awards

Each year, Excellence Awards are awarded. These awards showcase and reward excellence in learning and teaching, research and enterprise. Award recipients are asked to present to the annual Learning and Teaching Fest and to share their good practice.

CAPE Toolkit

[Toolkit](#) is the dedicated website for the Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement. It has been developed to be an accessible vehicle for the hosting of best practice materials and resources. The Toolkit allows members of staff to search for resources by category e.g. assessment and to access key internal and external documents related to LTA.

Toolkit was launched in June 2019 and is updated frequently with new resources and information related to learning and teaching enhancement.

Targeted Support and Development

CAPE works closely with Heads of Institute to support academic areas in meeting the targets set out in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Academic Institutes and Professional Services are asked to identify their academic development and enhancement needs at the start of each academic year to form part of a larger staff development plan that is planned for delivery during the academic year.

ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

The structure for academic governance is the mechanism by which academic policies are discussed and decisions reached that enable the achievement of the University's goals. The structure for academic governance also forms part of the regulatory framework within which the University operates. Further information and guidance can be found on the [Committees page](#), and by contacting the University Secretary, Vice Chancellor's Office.

The University Board of Directors receives regular reporting and institutional level quality assurances throughout the year to confirm that the University continues to satisfy the ongoing conditions of its registration with the Office for Students.

Deliberative and Executive Committee Structures

The University has deliberative and an executive committee structure, which can be viewed on the [here](#).

Deliberative committees are where the University's core academic business is discussed, and academic policy and strategy determined. They are concerned with ensuring the academic rigour, health and vibrancy of the University. Academic Board is the senior deliberative committee, and as such it also provides regular reporting to the Academic Governance Committee (AGC) of the University Board.

Executive committees are concerned with the effective management and operational requirements of the University, including the deployment of resources. The Vice Chancellor's Executive is the senior executive committee.

Each Institute may have other working and focus groups which reflect the particular nature of its business.

Additional Groups

In addition to the deliberative and executive committee structures, the University uses various Panels, Steering/Advisory Groups, Task and Finish Groups and Forums. Their smooth running is essential to the success of the University as an academic institution.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

Published Minutes of [Academic Board](#) and [University Board](#)

[Statutory, Legal and Governance Information](#)

[Records Management](#)

PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODIES (PSRB)

The University of Cumbria may apply to PSRBs to accredit its professional programmes and in doing so the University recognises the PSRBs right to monitor and review those programmes via annual or periodic review and through re/validation.

PSRBs have their own quality standards relating to the professional elements of a programme of study and may have specific requirements, for example in relation to the amount of hours a student works in practise, the number of credits a student has to receive before progressing or completing, or even a minimum average mark to be attained across the programme of study. In cases where the PSRBs requirements are in contravention of the University's academic regulations, the PSRBs requirements take precedence, and these must be approved at the point of validation.

PSRBs and the Validation Process

In accrediting a professional programme of the University, a PSRB may attend the validation event or the University may apply for accreditation once approval has been granted through our processes, or after the programme has run for a period of time.

Where PSRBs attend a validation event they will scrutinise the programme against their own professional quality standards and may make their own specific conditions prior to approval being granted. In such cases the validation will be signed off by both the University Validation Chair and the PSRB. The programme is not deemed approved until both signatures are obtained.

PSRBs will usually send representatives to the validation event who will scrutinise the programme and report back to the professional body on their findings, making recommendations for approval or not. PSRBs may also have their own requirements in relation to validation documentation and may also work to different timescales and may potentially require the validation documentation significantly earlier than normal University timescales.

Where programmes of study lead to qualifications of professional bodies, full account is taken of any professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) regulatory requirements, which will take precedence over the University's academic regulations, and which must be approved at the point of validation.

PSRBs and Review

Annual or periodical monitoring by these bodies is managed largely within the Institute with support and guidance from Quality and Standards. When a PSRB report is received by the Institute, it is considered by the Head of Teaching, Learning and Student Experience and any staff with responsibility for the management of the provision, and copied to Quality and Standards. Any issues which have arisen will be detailed within an action plan which should be appended as a response to the report. Outcomes of such reports are also monitored through the University's standard annual monitoring procedures.

The report, the response and any accompanying action plan will be considered by SS&QA Committee which also considers institutional-wide issues highlighted in the report or

accompanying response/action plan. Quality and Standards maintain a register of PSRB activity.

Other useful sources of information are as follows:

[PSRB's - University Procedures for Engagement.pdf](#)

Appendix 1: Glossary

AB	Academic Board
ACP	Academic Collaborative Provision
AGC	Academic Governance Committee
AMR	Annual Monitoring Return
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
APR	Annual Partnership Review
ASPC	Academic Strategy and Planning Committee
CAPE	Centre of Academic Programme Enhancement
CDF	Curriculum Design Framework
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPSC	Collaborative Provision Sub Committee
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DL	Distance Learner
DLA	Degree Level Apprenticeship
EC	Extenuating Circumstances
EE	External Examiner
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HELOA	Higher Education Liaison Officers Association
HEP	Higher Education Provider
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HLA	Higher Level Apprenticeship
IPD	Initial Professional Development
LTAS	Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy
MAB	Module Assessment Board
MEQ	Module Evaluation Questionnaire
MDF	Module Descriptor Form
MER	Module Evaluation Report
MMF	Minor Modification Form
MMP	Minor Modification Panel
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PI	Programme Initiation
PPL	Partnership Programme Leader
PRSB	Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body
PVS	Pre Validation Scrutiny
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
Q&S	Quality and Standards
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SCITT	School Centred Initial Teacher Training
SD	School Direct

SLPR	Subject Level Periodic Review
SPA	Supporting Professionalism in Admissions
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
SSF	Staff Student Forum
SSQAC	Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee
SV	Student Voice
SVP	Standing Validation Panel
TEF	Teaching Excellence & Student Outcomes Framework
UAB	University Assessment Board
UCSU	University of Cumbria Students Union
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Framework
UKVI	UK Visas & Immigration
UPL	University Programme Leader
VCO	Vice Chancellor's Office
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
VO	Validation Officer

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