

University of
South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru

2024

Quality Framework



**ADEILADU GWELL
YFORY
BUILDING BETTER
TOMORROWS**

Curriculum, Quality, and Partnerships

Academic Registry

University of South Wales

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Revision History

1. Introduction

1.1. PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

This document outlines the policies, guidelines and procedures that ensure the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities at the University of South Wales (USW). As a degree awarding higher education university, USW has overall responsibility for the academic standards and quality of the qualifications it awards, wherever and in what context those awards are conferred, including those awards validated for collaborative partners and through the exercise of this responsibility ensures that the standards of its awards are comparable to those of other UK Universities. Accordingly, USW has designed a robust quality assurance framework to:

- Enable the effective and efficient monitoring of academic standards and the quality of the student experience in relation to internal imperatives and external requirements.
- Ensure consistency whilst enabling and acknowledging diverse subject practices; and
- Provide a mechanism for critical review and, in doing so, highlight and promote good practice across the institution.

The Quality Framework is informed by the regulatory frameworks and USW 2030 Strategy.

1.2. REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

The Quality Framework is designed to align with the:

- UK [Quality Code](#) for Higher Education as set out by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and
- Commission for Tertiary Education and Research [Wales Quality Assessment Framework](#).

1.3. SCOPE

The Quality Framework applies to the whole academic portfolio of USW, including undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses, apprenticeships and academic partnership provisions. It applies equally to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD) and covers all provisions carrying USW credits at level 3 and above in the [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales \(CQFW\)](#). The Quality Framework covers the learning and teaching activities of the University. Among areas not covered are Research and Innovation (beyond the provision of research degree (taught) courses), admissions, student records, timetabling, assessments, IT, Student Services, Human Resources, Finance, Estates and Facilities, and all other non-academic services.

1.4. SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE

The provisions and guidance of this framework are augmented with specific documents that cover explicit activities and process within USW, such as the:

- Regulations for Taught Courses
- Academic Blueprint

- Research Degrees Regulations
- Academic Partnerships Framework
- Assessment Tariff
- USW 2030 Assessment for Learning Principles and Framework
- USW 2030 Curriculum Design Principles
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Staff Guidance

1.5. CONTACT

The Quality Framework is maintained by the Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships (CQP) team within the Academic Registry. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager is the owner of this document, Director of Academic Registry is the endorser and QAC has the approval authority. The framework is reviewed annually, and details of versions, dates and changes are summarized under 'Revision History' section at the end of this document. Comments/suggestions for improvement of this framework are welcomed: please reach out to quality@southwales.ac.uk.

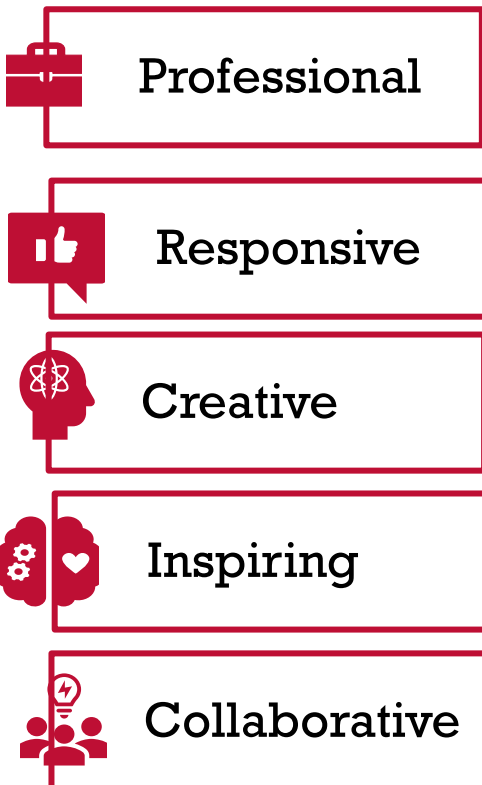
1.6. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Key terms and common abbreviations used in this framework are listed below:

- **Academic Standards:** The standards that an academic university sets and maintains for the award of academic credit or qualifications. At USW, it is the level of achievement a student must reach to gain an academic award.
 - **Continuous Monitoring:** An ongoing process of reflection on the previous academic year and action planning for the next academic year to support quality assurance and enhancement.
 - **Quality:** How well a university supports students to consistently achieve positive outcomes in learning, personal development and career advancement, while meeting the reasonable expectations of the students, employers, government and society in general.
 - **Quality Assurance:** A collective process by which a university ensures that the quality of educational process is maintained to the standards and academic experiences are fit for purpose.
 - **Quality Enhancement:** The process of taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities and develop a culture of improvement.
 - **Material Information:** Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) required complete information of the courses including their title and award, entry requirements, module structure, assessment methods, duration and mode of delivery, PSRB accreditations, total cost and related details.
 - **Students:** All students irrespective of background studying at any level and by any mode.
- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CQFW: Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales • CQP: Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships Team • CMA: Competition and Markets Authority • EEAP: External Examiner Approval Panel • FQAC: Faculty Quality Assurance Committee • HoLTSE: Head of Learning, Teaching, and Student Experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSS: National Student Survey • PSRBs: Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies • QAC: Quality Assurance Committee • QAE: Quality Assurance and Enhancement • RWCMD: Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama • USW: University of South Wales |
|--|--|

Institutional Context

At USW, our vision is to change lives and our world for the better. We will be a leading UK university, maximising positive impacts for students, partners and communities.



2. Quality at USW

USW's commitment to quality assurance and enhancement is of a holistic nature. The university articulates and subscribes to the core principles of the regulatory frameworks by establishing quality policy and principles that inspire USW's quality assurance and enhancement activities. In addition, the following quality provisions are informed by USW vision, mission, and values. This section provides the overview of quality assurance and enhancement expectations, requirements, and strategies in place to align with and embed regulatory and sector agreed principles.

2.1. QUALITY PROVISIONS

The quality provisions are the minimum requirements that set the basis of quality assurance and enhancement practices.

- 2.1.1. **Strategic oversight** of academic standards and academic quality is undertaken at the highest levels of the academic governance to 'ensure our students successfully complete their studies and secure employment in their areas of expertise'.
- 2.1.2. **Maintaining academic standards and high-quality of courses** is the responsibility of faculty and academic staff.
- 2.1.3. **Appropriate level allocation** of USW's awards is done in accordance with the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales.
- 2.1.4. **Validity and relevance of courses** is regularly reviewed and approved through proper procedures.
- 2.1.5. **Course and Module Specifications** are required from faculty teams to maintain definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements of their courses.
- 2.1.6. The **assessment of students** is robust, inclusive, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and credits are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- 2.1.7. **Student involvement** and partnership is central quality enhancement and students are engaged in assessing the elements of their 'excellent, inclusive, engaged student experience'.
- 2.1.8. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** considerations are embedded throughout to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed in their courses.
- 2.1.9. **External involvement** and peers' engagement is set up at appropriate intervals in the maintenance of USW academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.
- 2.1.10. **Continuous Monitoring** of quality assurance and enhancement processes and practices.
- 2.1.11. An **evidence-based approach** to quality assurance informs all key processes. The evidence comes from a wide range of quantitative indicators (data-driven) and qualitative information (benchmarking) to evaluate effectiveness, identify risks/issues and inform planned actions for improvement.

2.2. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Academic quality assurance at USW ensures that:

1. new awards/courses are of high quality and that the quality of existing awards is enhanced;
2. teaching is maintained at a high standard; and
3. students are achieving the course learning outcomes.

USW manages the quality of academic standards and student experience by putting in place the following internal mechanisms, including but not limited to:

- Design, development, and approval of new courses;
- Major and minor modifications and monitoring of taught courses;
- Periodic review and revalidation/ perpetual validations to confirm the relevance, currency, and quality of the courses;
- Student engagement and feedback through Staff Student Course Liaison Group (SSCLG) and representation in committees;
- Internal Quality Audits of specific aspects of provision across the university.

2.3. EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

USW incorporates external independent measures to assess and maintain the quality of academic standards and student success. These include, but not limited to:

- External Examiners for independent verification of academic standards and student achievement;
- External Panelists and Advisers are also appointed as required to offer impartial and, in some cases, specialist input into course design and delivery;
- Seeking and maintaining accreditation from relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs);
- External Audits of specific areas and processes such as HESA or UKVI, etc.

2.4. OVERVIEW OF QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The summary of USW's Quality Framework is presented in the below figure:



2.5. ALIGNMENT WITH THE QUALITY CODE

USW has aligned its Quality Framework with the overarching Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices cited in the Quality Code. The three principles for the **Strategic Approach** to Quality and USW's practices in place are illustrated below:

Principle 1

Strategic Approach to Quality and Standards

- University Vision and Mission guiding the Academic Standards and Quality Framework
- Academic Board Oversight
- Quality Assurance Committee and sub-committees
- External Examiners Report
- PSRB Accreditations
- Sector Engagement

Principle 2

Students as Partners

- Student Representation on Committees
- Engagement with (re)validation processes
- Student Union
- Student Staff Course Liaison Group (SSCLG)
- Student Voice Representative
- Student Evaluation and Feedback
- Student Meeting with External Examiners
- Support for students at partner institutions
- NSS Participation

Principle 3

Resourcing a High Quality Student Experience

- USW Strategy 2030
- Equity, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Environmental Sustainability Initiatives
- Student Support to Study

The next three principles for **Evaluating Quality and Standards** and USW's practices are illustrated below:

Principle 4

Using Data to Inform and Evaluate Quality

- Continuous Monitoring
- External Examiners' Annual Report
- Student Feedback
- SSCLG data
- Enrollment, attrition, grading and graduation data
- NSS results

Principle 5

Monitoring, Evaluating and Enhancing

- Regulations of Taught Courses
- Modifications to current courses/modules
- (Re)validations of courses
- Design and Approval of New Courses
- PSRB reviews

Principle 6

External Reviews and Accreditations

- USW Engagement with PSRBs
- External Examiners' Annual Report
- QAA Quality Enhancement Review
- External Adviser
- External Panelists

The final six Principles for **Implementing the Approach to Quality Enhancement and Standards** and USW's practices are illustrated below:

Principle 7

Design, Develop, Approve and Modify Programmes

- Course Approval, Suspension Closure Processes
- (Re)Validations
- Major and Minor Modifications
- Critical Reviews
- Curriculum Library

Principle 8

Operating Partnerships with other Organisations

- Academic Partnerships Framework
- Institutional Agreement and Memorandum of Cooperation
- Codes of Practice
- Partnership Register via SharePoint
- Abridged List of Collaborative Partners
- Partners' Quality Monitoring
- Procedures for Recognised Teachers

Principle 9

Recruiting, Selecting and Admitting Students

- Regulations for Taught Courses
- UKVI compliance
- Future Students
- Enquiries and Admissions
- Assessment and Progression
- Recognition of Prior Learning

Principle 10

Supporting Students to Achieve their Potential

- Student Support Fund
- Advice Zone
- Disability Service
- Wellbeing Services
- Study Skills
- International Student Advice Zone

Principle 11

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- Academic Blueprint
- Regulations for Taught Courses
- Exam and Progression Boards
- Assessment Life cycle
- Active Learning
- Digitally Enabled Education
- Student Code of Conduct

Principle 12

Operating Concerns, Complaints and Appeals Processes

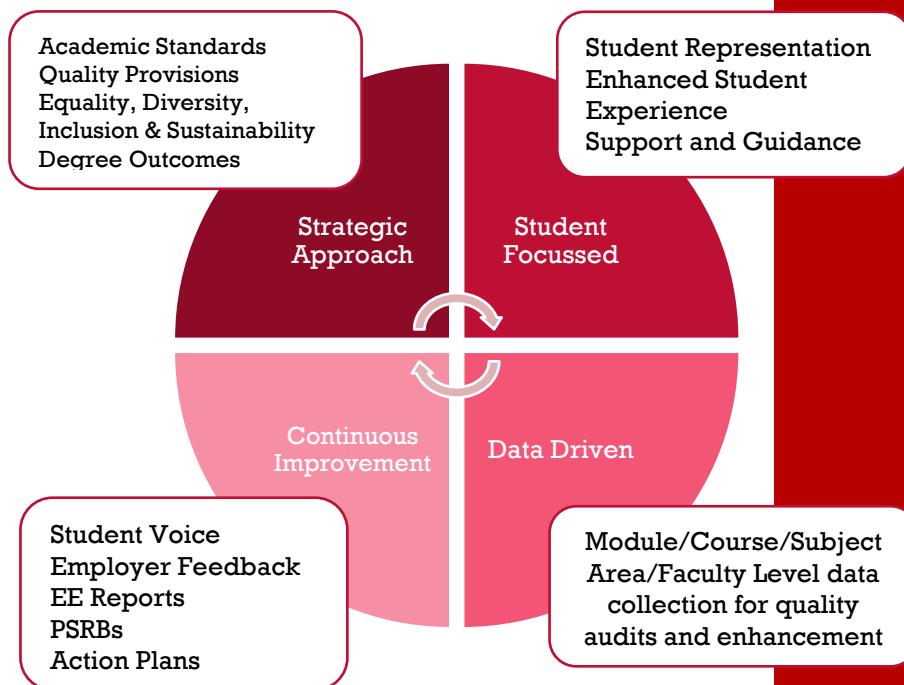
- Studnet casework
- Student Complaints Regulations
- Academic Appeals Process
- Mental Health Advice
- Counselling
- Extenuating Circumstances Process

2.6. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES

USW is committed to enhancing the quality of its provision through:

- 2.6.1. Periodic review and continuous improvement of the curricula.
- 2.6.2. Regular review and update of the quality processes and practices.
- 2.6.3. Seeking and maintaining accreditation from relevant PSRBs.
- 2.6.4. External Examiners' verification of academic standards and student achievement.
- 2.6.5. Systematic identification and dissemination of good practices.
- 2.6.6. Engagement with external networks and partners.
- 2.6.7. Data-driven and evidence-based quality audits.

Quality is Everyone's Responsibility



3. Roles and Responsibilities

USW has a mature and clearly articulated quality management framework, which resides under the remit of Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships (CQP) team. The Academic Board, as the principal body with responsibility for assuring quality in the academic work of the university, defines the standards and rules to which Faculties must work. Proportionate responsibility and accountability for academic standards and enhancing quality of taught courses are delegated to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), Sub-Committees, Faculties, CQP team, and to the USW course design, approval, review and closure processes. Staff are collectively responsible for maintaining academic standards at all levels.

3.1. Academic Board

The University's Academic Board is an integral part of the University's governance structure. The Academic Board has responsibility for general issues relating to the research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University and considers the development of academic activities of the University, advising the Vice-Chancellor and the Board of Governors thereon.

The Academic Board meets once each term, as well as jointly with the Board of Governors once a year. It maintains a schedule of core business, which includes approving proposed changes to regulations and procedures, receiving reports from the Quality Assurance Committee; Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee; and Research and Innovation Committee. Items are also received for assurance oversight to contribute to discussions aligned with the 2030 Strategy and its Critical Success Factors (CSFs). The Academic Board delegated its quality assurance and enhancement responsibilities to Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor as detailed below.

VICE CHANCELLOR'S ROLE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT	
USW Process	Responsibilities
Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE)	Responsible for academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement for all courses leading to an award of the University.
	Receive a summary of the University and the Partner continuous monitoring exercise which considers employer feedback (where relevant) from QAC.
	Consider reports from QAC.
Course Approval and Validations	Receive and consider the annual validation schedule from QAC.
PSRBs	Receive report on PSRB Activity from QAC.
Revalidation and Modifications	Receive the annual re/validation schedule from QAC.
External Examiners	Consider the Annual Summary Report from QAC which includes a summary of issues raised by and actions taken in response to External Examiners' reports.
Student Engagement in QAE	Consider a range of reports from QAC that include evaluations, actions and feedback mechanisms for numerous processes involving Student Engagement, NSS, Continuous Monitoring, SU Annual Quality Review, Student Charter.
	Sign the relationship agreement with the SU.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor has delegated responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement. The responsibilities are delivered in their capacity as the Chair of QAC.

DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR'S ROLE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT	
USW Process	Responsibilities
Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE)	Delegated responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement for all courses leading to an award of the University.
	Consider the Faculty/College reports and a summary of the Partner reports.
	Consider the outcomes of the Continuous Monitoring exercise across the USW Group through QAC.
	Submit a Quality Assurance and Enhancement report to Academic Board.
Course Approval and Validations	Annually approve the Faculties' / College's validation (and revalidation) schedule through QAC.
	Endorse new courses deemed high risk through QAC.
PSRBs	Receive applications to submit to a PSRB where considered high risk and receive updates on progress via QAC.
	Receipt of Institutional Level Register of PSRB.
	Receive an annual report on PSRB activity.
Revalidation and Modifications	Consider and approve courses for perpetual validation
	Receive outcomes of perpetual validation
External Examiners	Receive updates on External Examiner appointments.
	Consider, in QAC, an annual summary of issues raised in External Examiner reports and an associated institutional action plan.
Student Engagement in QAE	Consider a range of reports from QAC that include evaluations, actions and feedback mechanisms for numerous processes involving Student Engagement, including External Examiners, NSS, Continuous Monitoring, Annual SU report, Student Charter and submits reports to Academic Board.

3.2. Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)

Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) regularly reviews the quality framework, regulations, policies, and guidance to ensure high standards of academic quality and student experience. It also oversees the annual review processes for all levels of study, including academic partnerships, and manages the action plans. Similarly, the effectiveness of the External Examiners for taught courses is monitored as well as the results of Specific Checks and Thematic Reviews are also considered by QAC. QAC tracks various risk and performance indicators, such as course performance data, student feedback, and reports on complaints and appeals as well as the outcomes of external scrutiny by PSRBs. QAC revises and updates its Terms of Reference and membership on annual basis and a schedule of work is agreed during the first meeting of the academic year.

QAC receives and reviews reports from its sub-committees and measures the impact of different procedures in improving the student experience:

- Faculty of Business and Creative Industries Quality Assurance Committee
- Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Science Quality Assurance Committee
- Faculty of Life Sciences and Education Quality Assurance Committee
- Royal Welsh College Quality Assurance Committee
- Partnership Quality Sub Committee
- Regulations Sub Committee
- Student Casework Group
- Research Degrees Committee

- Major Modifications Committee
- External Examiner Approval Panel

3.3. Faculties

Faculties are responsible for day-to-day course management and learning and teaching process. Each Faculty has several subject areas that are grouped into different disciplines and expertise. Faculty Executives are responsible for ensuring the provision of appropriate instruction and adequate facilities in their subject areas, and for ensuring that the teaching and learning is of a high standard. The responsibilities of academic standards and quality enhancement is further delegated within the faculty (or College in the case of the RWCMD) to subject area (or equivalent), course and module in the following indicative manner:

DEPUTY DEAN'S ROLE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT	
USW Process	Responsibilities
Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE)	Oversee academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement at the subject level.
	Review risk rating for each course assigned by course leader for continuous monitoring.
	Overview of Continuous Professional Development and sharing of Good Practice.
Course Approval and Validations	Review the Initial Course Proposal Form (ICPF) prior to its submission for approval from the relevant Faculty Executive Committee.
	Receive and monitor Course Closure Action Plan from Course Leader via FQAC.
	Sign off the validation documentation on behalf of the Subject.
PSRBs	Receive PSRB activity (event reports) and update of Faculty level register.
	Approve the application to submit to PSRB.
Revalidation and Modifications	Take an overview of the course reports, identifying issues and trends.
	Sign off the critical review and, where required, the revalidation documentation, on behalf of the Subject.
	Coordinate the modification proposal with course/module leaders.
	Ensure FQAC approval based on proper documentation.
External Examiners	Take an overview of the External Examiner reports looking for issues and trends.
Student Engagement in QAE	Take an annual overview of the student feedback, NSS results, SSCLGs.

HEAD OF SUBJECT'S ROLE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT	
USW Process	Responsibilities
Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE)	Oversee academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement at the subject level.
	Review risk rating for each course assigned by course leader for continuous monitoring.
	Take an overview of the annual monitoring, NSS results, SSCLGs.
	Overview of CPD and sharing of Good Practice.
Course Approval and Validations	Review the Initial Course Proposal Form (ICPF) prior to its submission for approval from the relevant Faculty Executive Committee.
	Sign off the validation documentation on behalf of the Subject.

PSRBs	Review PSRB accreditation submissions within the Subject.
Revalidation and Modifications	Take an overview of the course reports, identifying issues and trends.
	Sign off the critical review and, where required, the re-validation documentation, on behalf of the Subject.
	Coordinate the modification proposal with course/module leaders.
External Examiners	Understand the EEs nomination process, and agree on the application before nomination is submitted to the EEAP for approval.
	Reviews Action Plans and reports, confirms satisfactory standards and oversees planned improvements.
Student Engagement in QAE	Take an overview of the Course monitoring, NSS results, SSCLGs.

COURSE LEADER'S ROLE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT	
USW Process	Responsibilities
Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE)	Oversees academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement at the course level, by monitoring the health, future challenges and developments of a course or group of courses.
	Where the course is also delivered through collaborative arrangements, the Course Leader's counterpart is also consulted.
	Engage with continuous monitoring and continuous professional development of faculty.
Course Approval and Validations	Complete the Initial Course Proposal Form (ICPF) by the proposer (usually the Course Leader) at least 18 months prior to the course commencement.
	Work with the Course Team to prepare the validation documentation.
	Where the course is also delivered through collaborative arrangements the Course Leader's counterpart is also consulted.
PSRBs	Correspondence with PSRB – Annual report/visits etc.
	Notification of accreditation.
	Contribution to accreditation schedule.
Revalidation and Modifications	Comment on PSRB relationship in Continuous Monitoring process.
	Reviews and creates actions in response to course and module evaluations (internal and external), ensures it is fed back to students.
	Course Monitoring - Employer Feedback.
	Work with the QASM and/or Head of Subject in order to submit proposed modifications for approval by FQAC and report to the next SSCLG.
External Examiners	Ensure that any proposed introduction, closure or modification to a module has no implications for any other course or partner.
	Discussions with other Course Leaders or partners must be evidenced in the submission to FQAC.
	Identify and recruit EEs. Fill out the EE nomination application.
Student Engagement in QAE	Review EE report, update the actions focusing on commendations, improvement and enhancements. Share EE Reports with Link officer and uploads to Blackboard.
	Chair SSCLG.
	Arrange a meeting of the SSCLG every term.

MODULE LEADER'S ROLE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT	
USW Process	Responsibilities
Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE)	Oversee academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement at the modular level by monitoring the health, future challenges and developments of a module or group of modules. Where the module is also delivered through collaborative arrangements, the Module Leader's counterpart is also consulted.
Course Approval and Validations	Contribute to discussions about course validation (or re-validation). Where the module is also delivered through collaborative arrangements the Module Leader's counterpart is also consulted.
PSRBs	Ensure module design including assessment is in alignment with PSRB requirements.
Revalidation and Modifications	Complete the Module Review Form and Action Plan throughout the cycle, taking account of any collaborative partner versions. Prepare Module Specifications post modification
External Examiners	Address any issues raised by the External Examiner in their continuous monitoring Module Report, which is updated following the Assessment Dialogues.
Student Engagement in QAE	Address any issues raised by students in their Module Review Forms ensuring feedback to students through Course Leader.

3.4. USW Staff

The understanding and commitment of staff are critical to maintaining and enhancing the quality of academic standards and student experience. USW fully recognises that all staff, both academic and support, are continuously reflecting upon and seeking to improve practices in all areas of work to advance learning, teaching and research in their disciplines as well as the quality of the student learning experience. The Quality Framework and the processes it incorporates are intended to be appropriate and meaningful vehicles to support reflection and to capture, recognise and disseminate the best practices.

3.5. Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships (CQP) Team

The Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships team within Academic Registry have delegated responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement. The team leads the ongoing review of university-level quality assurance policies and processes to ensure that academic standards set by USW are of high quality and quality assurance practices are efficient, effective and informed by data. As the custodian of quality assurance and enhancement, the team advises and guides colleagues in relation to academic quality levels and standards, policy development, initiatives and courses development, etc. The team manages the onboarding and guidance of External Examiners and coordinates their annual reports. Through QAC, the team shares the updates from the external regulatory environment in relation to academic quality and standards across Wales and the UK. In addition, CQP works with students as partners of the quality assurance processes and provides training and support to student representatives as required. The team collaborates with colleagues in faculties, Academic Registry, Student Services, and the offices of the Deputy Vice Chancellor and University Secretary to develop the strategic approach to ensure compliance with external bodies and regulators.

CQP'S ROLE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

**Course Approvals**

Initial advice, scrutiny and approval of course design and requirements.

**Revalidation**

Risk-based approach to assess and validate the courses offered by USW or partners.

**Modifications**

Oversee introduction or closure of modules, interim changes to existing modules/ courses, new pathways, etc.

**Critical Reviews**

Cyclical activity to monitor courses, modules, and subject areas.

**Course Closure or Suspension**

Sign off arrangements for course suspension or closure as required.

**PSRBs**

External Accreditations and keeping up with regulations of professional standards and regulatory bodies.

**Continuous Monitoring**

Course and Module level reporting with Action Plans.

**Quality Audits**

Thematic university wide reviews; annual checks for compliance and regulatory monitoring.

**External Examiners**

Onboarding and monitoring of External Examiners for quality assurance of teaching and learning.

**Policy/Guidance**

Guidelines and policies for sector led and institutional practices such as RPL, Microcredentials, etc.

**Student Engagement**

Liaise with student union and students' groups to hear their voice and involve them in quality matters.

**Faculty Engagement**

Liaise with all faculties to support and advise them in quality, PSRB and compliance matters.

**Regulations**

Assuring alignment with external standards and PSRB requirements.

**Staff Development**

Upskilling and reskilling QA staff by providing training.

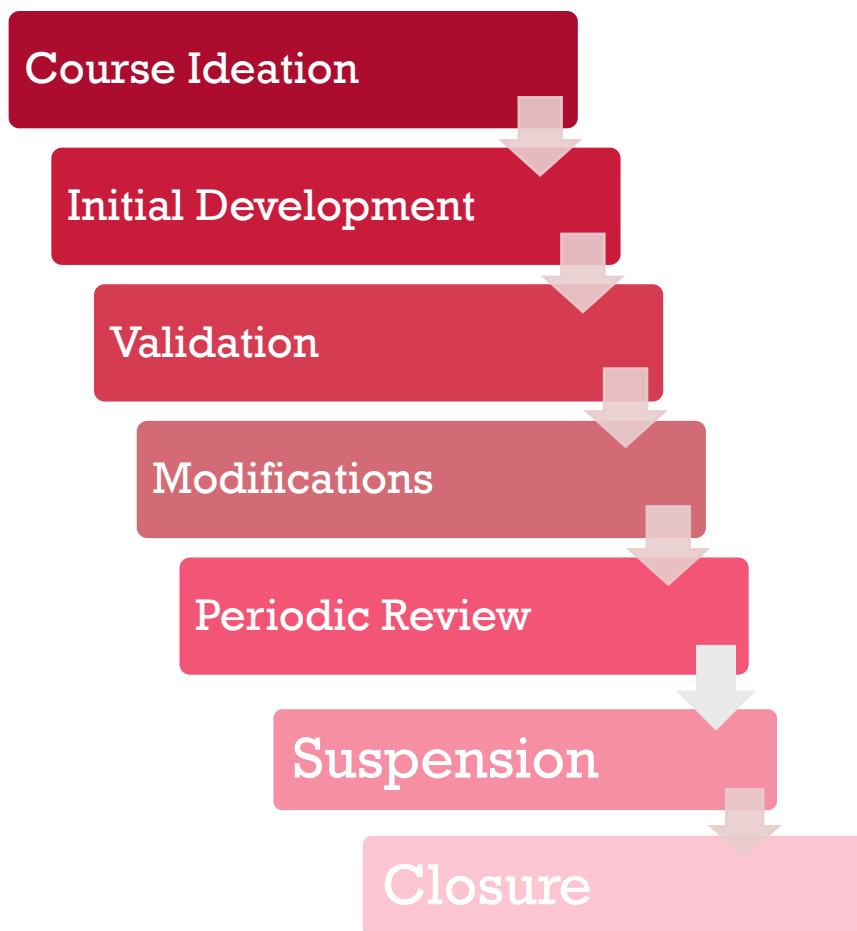
**Committees**

Committees' support including invitations, agenda, documents, etc.



*The quality assurance activities related to partners and academic partnerships are handled according to the **Academic Partnerships Framework**.*

Course Management

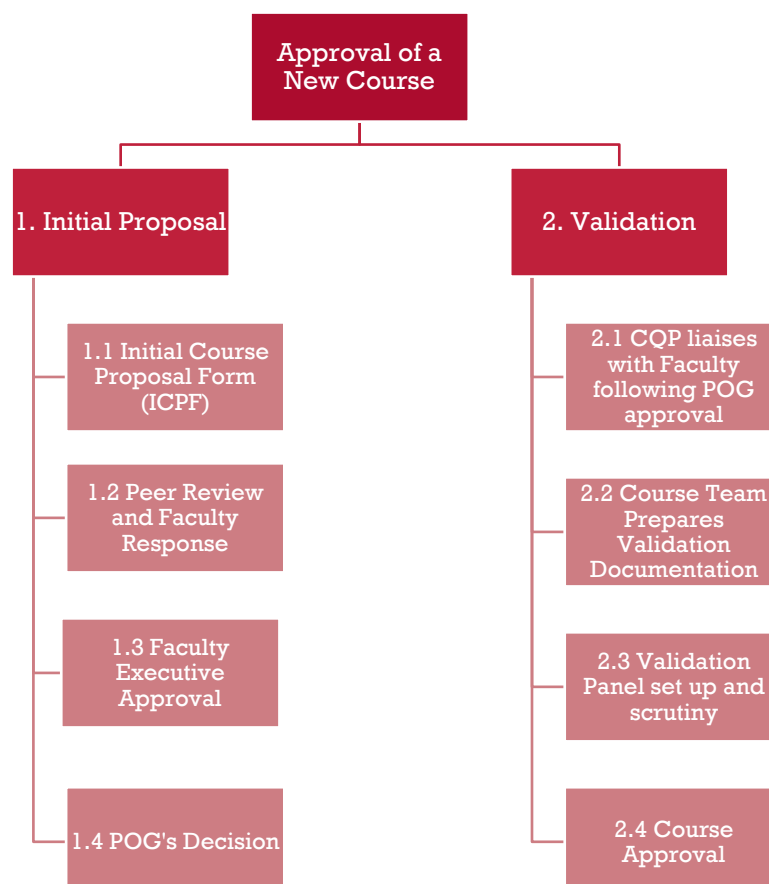


4. Curriculum Design and Management

A key component of USW's quality assurance framework is the way in which courses and modules are designed, approved, modified, monitored and reviewed. The process ensures that USW academic provisions meet the academic standards set by the university and the external environment, which includes the Medr, QAA and the various PSRBs. These standards are then maintained and monitored via the processes of delivery, assessment and review. Quality Framework draws on the practices, expectations, advice and guidance within the UK Quality Code and on relevant consumer protection legislation to support the timely approval of new courses as well as changes to existing courses and modules, while safeguarding academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities across the University and its partner institutions (preventing curriculum drift occurring through multiple small changes to courses over time). This section sets out USW expectations to ensure that faculties and CQP teams are empowered and clear on their responsibilities in taking the lead on the design, implementation, amendments, and day-to-day running of courses. Curriculum Development and Management policy should be referred to in addition to this section.

4.1. Course Design, Development and Approval

The course design and approval process are the quality assurance mechanism by which a proposed course is scrutinised in order to assure that it meets USW's expectations for quality and academic standards. This process, as illustrated below, is mandatory for all new undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses at USW including apprenticeships.



4.1.1. Curriculum Management Timelines

To allow sufficient time to fully develop a course once approved, ensure Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) compliance, and to successfully market a course following development and final approval, the following timescales are encouraged to adhere to:

Process	Deadlines for Approval
Initial Course Proposals	18 months prior to delivery of the course
Minor Modifications Courses starting in Autumn Courses starting in Spring	Last Thursday of June Last Thursday of September
Major Modification	6 months prior to next delivery of course
Re/Validation* Courses starting in Autumn Courses starting in Spring	Last Thursday of February Last Thursday of September
Suspension or Closure of course	4 months prior to next delivery of course

**This includes Validation via Addendum submissions and events for delivery of courses with partners.*

These are the recommended timescales to allow for the inclusion of information for UCAS and the university's website.

4.1.2. Initial Course Proposal

The preparation and submission of an Initial Course Proposal Form (ICPF) is the first stage of course approval which must start 18 months prior to the course commencement. Initial proposals for new courses go through agreed planning and consultation procedures prior to being presented to the University's Portfolio Oversight Group for approval to proceed to more detailed course design and development. The purpose of this initial approval stage is to allow the University to be assured of the quality and viability of the proposed new course before it proceeds to the next stage in the validation process and to permit initial publicity relating to the award. Courses cannot be advertised as being available in UCAS and College documents or online until they have been approved. In case the courses need to be advertised while the validation is in process after POG's approval, then it should be mentioned that this course will be available "subject to validation".

4.1.3. The Purpose of Validation

Validation is the process through which the University, as a degree-awarding body assesses a proposed course development and approves it as being of an appropriate standard and quality to contribute, or lead, to one of its awards. Validation considers the academic coherence and validity of the course as presented. As such, the purpose of validation is to confirm that the course:

- i. is consistent with internal reference points such as University's Strategic Plan, and Academic Blueprint, Regulations for Taught Courses, and Assessment Tariff, as appropriate.
- ii. satisfies the external reference points such as Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, Subject Benchmark statements and/or relevant PSRB requirements.
- iii. is appropriate in the light of market needs, student demand, employer expectations, and employment opportunities.
- iv. reflects the University's academic drivers and initiatives.
- v. is sufficiently resourced in terms of the availability of staff and physical and technology assets.
- vi. reflects current research and practice in the application of knowledge in the relevant discipline(s), technological advances, and developments in learning and teaching.

After initial approval has been granted by POG, the proposal can proceed to full course development. A Course Team must then be established, if it has not been already, prior to the validation event. Course development is a crucial stage in the process, and course teams are expected to allocate sufficient time and resource to enable the development of a high quality, coherent course. The course team is expected to consult widely to inform the design and development of the course, for example inviting input from industrial, business or community stakeholders and experts. This work will result in the production of documents for submission to the validation panel.

The templates for course development can be found on the CQP SharePoint site, along with the further guidance and support. Support is also available through the Faculty Heads of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (HoLTSE), the Associate Deans Student Outcomes and the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT). For undergraduate courses, the principles of the Academic Blueprint should be adhered to, including Course Identity, Course Options, Course Size, Module Credits, Learning Outcomes, Immersive Learning, Module Contact teaching hours, Assessment and Employability.

- **Validation Period:** The regular period of course approval is six years and requests to extend the validation period will only be given under exceptional circumstances. Applications supported by the QASM and/or Head of Subject must be made to the Chair of QAC via the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager. There must be a clear rationale for the proposal and the most recent continuous monitoring report should be appended to the request. Any extensions granted will be reported to QAC. More typically, courses will obtain an extension to the period of validation at the Critical Review stage of the Critical Review and Revalidation process. The maximum period of extension will typically be for two years through perpetual validation.

4.2. Modifications

At USW, it is understood that courses are dynamic and are subject to modifications from time to time in order to maintain currency and secure ongoing enhancement. The need for modifications will normally

arise as a result of feedback from students, student satisfaction questionnaires, comments from External Examiners or professional bodies, recommendations from progression boards, or other elements of continuous monitoring or review processes. Course teams are encouraged to submit modifications as soon as possible following feedback to ensure a process of continuous enhancement.

4.2.1. Significance of Modifications

A key aspect of managing course and module changes is ensuring that both applicants and students have adequate notice of any forthcoming changes to 'material information' of their course, and that they are consulted on the changes where appropriate. Material information as defined in the CMA publication UK Higher Education Providers – Advice on Consumer Protection Law (2023) includes:

- course title and award to be received on successful completion of the course
- entry requirements and/or criteria (both academic and non-academic)
- mandatory and requisite modules, and availability of optional modules
- the composition of the course and how it will be delivered (including balance between different types of contact hours and expected student workload)
- overall method(s) of assessment for the course (e.g. breakdown between exams, coursework or practical assessments)
- location(s) of study, including work placements
- length of course
- any professional, statutory or regulatory body accreditation
- total course costs (including tuition fees and other extra costs, for example for field trips, equipment or materials).

Proposals for modifications can be made at any point during the academic year prior to the stated deadlines in 4.1.1 but can only be implemented at the following session. The modifications affecting current cohorts are treated as 'exceptional'. Given that a modification could compromise the previously specified student experience and serve as grounds for a student's complain or appeal. Moreover, as the relationship between a university and its students is subject to consumer law (the student contract), In-Year modifications may impact the student experience and increase the risk of academic appeals and student complaints.

Course Leaders must ensure that any proposed introduction, closure or modification to a module has no implications for any other course or partner. Discussions with other Course Leaders or partners must be evidenced in the submission to F/CQAC.

4.2.2. Types of Modifications

Modifications can be major, minor or adjustments as listed below. The University takes a risk-based approach to managing course modifications. Additional requirements for assurance are needed where more substantive changes are requested. A holistic approach to the curriculum and assessment is expected through all modifications.

- **Major Modifications** include the changes that have a substantial impact on students and may need to be reflected in information made available to prospective students, and as such, may be considered 'material information' by the Competitions and Market Authority (CMA). Major modifications should be considered locally by the Faculty in the first instance and requires endorsement by the Deputy Dean before progressing to the MMC for approval. In cases that have a material change to the Universities portfolio, POG will consider MMC approvals before final approval is granted. Typical major changes would involve either of the following:
 - a change to the **course title and/or award**, or the addition of other award routes as part of an existing course where these have not already been approved (e.g. new points of entry and/or exit).
 - a change to the **duration** of the course (e.g. addition of a sandwich year).
 - a change in the **mode of delivery** of the course (e.g. the introduction of a part-time route or a move from face-to-face tuition to distance learning, new cohort start date).
 - the addition, or substantive revision, of a **work-based placement**.
 - the **addition/withdrawal/modification of modules** that results in changes to the intended learning outcomes of the overall course (as defined in the course specification), and/or a reduction in the range of options within the course.
 - Changes to **aims, learning outcomes or content** that have resource implications or affect the overall course philosophy.
 - Changes that could be seen to disadvantage students (e.g. reduction of contact hours)
 - the **addition of core modules**
 - the **withdrawal of modules**
 - Changes to **module title(s)**
 - the **systematic re-structuring** of a course or part thereof due to internal (e.g. periodic review) or external impact (PSRB requirements,) e.g. the re-definition of modules, changes to credit ratings and changes to levels or multiple Minor Modifications.
- **Minor Modifications** refer to the modules level changes where these do not affect the overall course learning outcomes or the balance of assessment methods i.e. coursework/written examinations/ practical examinations or the broad learning and teaching methods (i.e. scheduled learning and teaching activities, placement or guided independent study) as defined in the course specification. These are part of a course's inherent flexibility and usually affect a single module or small number of linked modules. Unlike major modifications, student consultation and External Examiners approval is not required for minor mods to be approved by FQAC. Minor changes may include following:
 - the addition of individual option modules for a future cohort of students
 - changes to the mode of delivery of a module or modules (e.g. the replacement of lectures with seminars)
 - rewording of a learning outcome as advised by the External Examiner to provide greater clarity to the students.

- change core module availability to optional and vice versa
- removing a core module from a course
- change to module level
- **Adjustments** refer to the changes that do not alter the substantial character or content of the module and do not affect the material information about the course. These types of changes are usually undertaken as part of routine updating processes and Module Leaders can adopt those after informing CQP team.
 - updates to indicative reading lists
 - minor changes to assessment tasks that do not affect the assessment information provided within the module specification (for example changes to essay titles)
 - minor editorial changes to correct errors in course or module documentation (for example to address typographical errors, to clarify wording or to address inconsistencies in the documentation).

4.2.3. Late/ In-Year Modifications

It is normal practice to implement modifications with a new cohort of students. If a situation occurs where a late or in-year modification is necessary, it will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and reported to Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). A request should be made to the CQP team, along with the supporting evidence outlined below and an explanation of the exceptional circumstances that have arisen for the late/in year change. This will then be considered by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager. If successful, the usual modification process steps should then be followed. Supporting evidence for modifications should include:

- Details of modification (including copy of old and new module descriptor or copy with tracked changes)
- Approval from External Examiner
- Evidence of consultation with students
- Information received by students (module handbook and assessment descriptors)
- Clarification if the students already studied the module or are there students currently studying the module and whether marks have been entered previously onto the system.

A modification that affects a current cohort is likely to be approved if:

- the faculty can provide evidence that no student involved will be disadvantaged by the change. That is, the change is minor and in terms of its impact on the student experience is either neutral or advantageous (and consequently unlikely to provide grounds for a complaint, or appeal – or any such move could be dismissed as unreasonable). For example, minor modifications that allow new research to be brought to the curriculum, which enable innovative learning, teaching and assessment methods to be introduced, or that specifically address the concerns of students, External Examiners, or PSRBs will normally be approved.

- students involved have been consulted and have given their consent for the change. Written consent from students/student representatives is likely to be a requirement in cases pertaining to changes to the assessment regime or assessment regulations. As far as is practicable, faculties should ensure they give sufficient time for: students to voice their concerns/consent; recording the students' view; and if applicable informing all students of the modification's approval and implications for their studies.

Updated module specifications should be included in the course handbook to ensure that there is an accurate and up-to-date central record. The Quality team should also be provided with any other updated course information to include in the course file. Students should be formally notified of the change(s) via the online learning environment, and applicants notified, where necessary, via the Admissions team (or equivalent at partner institutions).

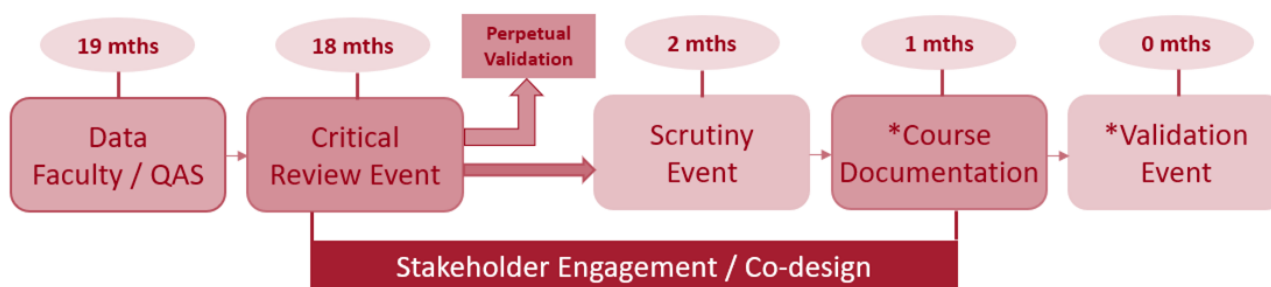
4.3. Course Review and Revalidation (CRR)

CRR process provides the mechanism through which the University regularly evaluates and confirms that its taught courses continue to be well designed and high-quality by reviewing the academic standards, content, validity, viability, and relevance of taught courses, with external input and student involvement. Revalidation is a periodic process through which the University scrutiny its existing courses to authenticate the maintenance of academic standards and quality assurance of awards. The key characteristics of CRR are that it is:

- a holistic and critical reflection of courses to ensure there is an enhancement of student experience.
- a peer review drawing on the expertise of internal colleagues and external professionals.
- an evidence-based, data driven process to verify that courses are strategically and academically fit.
- a risk-based confirmation that the University's agreed procedures are working effectively to enable attainment of intended learning outcomes by students, maintenance of academic standards, and the delivery of course specification.
- an opportunity to identify and share good practices in quality enhancement of teaching and learning.

All undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision is subject to CRR. It does not encompass research degrees, except for the taught section of the Professional Doctorate. All CRRs begin with a critical review which is undertaken by Course Teams. The critical review encourages Course Teams and faculty executives to engage with the concept of risk and to address the strengths and weaknesses associated with the course(s). The documentation is reviewed by the Critical Review Panel to determine whether it is required to move to revalidation. If a course demonstrates full engagement with all quality processes and is deemed to be low risk in a series of potential risk areas commented upon in the critical review, it can be permitted to extend its validation period for up to two years, referred to as Perpetual Validation. If a course is recommended for revalidation, then the process needs to take place. Below is the indicative timeline for revalidation of courses.

2030 Curriculum Revalidation Timeline



4.4. Course Suspension and Closure

The lifecycle of course has different stages from approval to closure. In certain situations, USW may decide to suspend delivery of a course or close a course. The University must consider the suspension or closure arrangements from the point of view of affected students, applicants and potential applicants, as well as from an academic and financial perspective. Course Closure and Suspension is considered a significant change according to consumer legislation. In order to ensure full compliance with the obligations under consumer protection law, applicants and students must be given the detailed information, advice and guidance to enable them to make well-informed decisions in the event of Course Closure or Suspension. The course must continue to be actively managed, and the quality assurance framework should continue to be followed with regard to student outcomes and course monitoring and External Examining for the duration of the teach-out phase. Ongoing monitoring must ensure that the equity of experience for learners on the course is maintained.

4.4.1. Course Suspension

A course will be suspended if an approved module or course ceases to be offered for admission for a specified period but continues to be retained within the University's portfolio. Where an entry point for a module or course is removed after the module or course has been offered for admission, this will also constitute a suspension. Current students on the course will not be impacted and the course will continue to run as validated. The precise period of suspension will be determined at the point of strategic approval, but this should be for no more than two years. Course or module suspensions allow faculty the time to evaluate course performance, before deciding to formally request its closure or apply major changes. However, there is still a requirement for a suspended course to be made available to students who return from a leave of absence. Courses suspended should be revalidated before new students enrol. Where the University has approved the termination of a collaborative academic partnership, the partnership-level teach out arrangements will be monitored through Partnership Closure Action Plan. Heads of Subject will be responsible for the implementation of teach out plans, including those relating to collaborative academic partners. There are several reasons that may trigger a course suspension, such as:

- a) Not enough applicants to ensure a high-quality student experience or to keep the course cost-effective.

- b) The outcome of a monitoring review requires it to be suspended due to concerns about the quality and academic standards of a course.
- c) Conditions arising from a revalidation have not been completed in time for the course to be approved.
- d) Lack of staff availability (permanent or fixed term).
- e) Changes required by an external organisation prompt suspension of a course.
- f) A course is being replaced.
- g) Changed strategic priorities require suspension of a course.
- h) Academic partner is closing.

When a course is suspended, following must be done:

- i. The Head of Subject (or nominee) to communicate with all students on the course (including those on an interruption and any students retaking modules) to explain support arrangements to enable progression.
- ii. The Admissions team to contact applicants and update UCAS as necessary.
- iii. The CQP team to inform External Examiners and external organisations such as PSRBs.
- iv. The Marketing and Future Student team to update the website and other marketing materials to indicate the course is suspended.

Course Reinstatement

If a course team wishes for a course to be reinstated and readvertised following a period of suspension, they should complete the Course Reinstatement Form. The decision to re-instate the course needs to be agreed and initially approved by the FQAC. The completed form must be submitted to the CQP team who will progress the proposal to the Portfolio Oversight Group (POG) for approval. A course may be reinstated in the following ways:

- i) A suspended or withdrawn course is approved to be reinstated from a date no later than two years from the date of the suspension/withdrawal of entry and there is no amendment to the course.
- ii) A suspended or withdrawn course is approved to be reinstated from a date no later than two years from the date of suspension/withdrawal and a proposal to modify or revalidate the course is progressed concurrently and completed within the deadlines set out 4.1.1.
- iii) A withdrawn course is approved to be reinstated, and revalidation of the course is progressed concurrently and completed within the set deadlines.

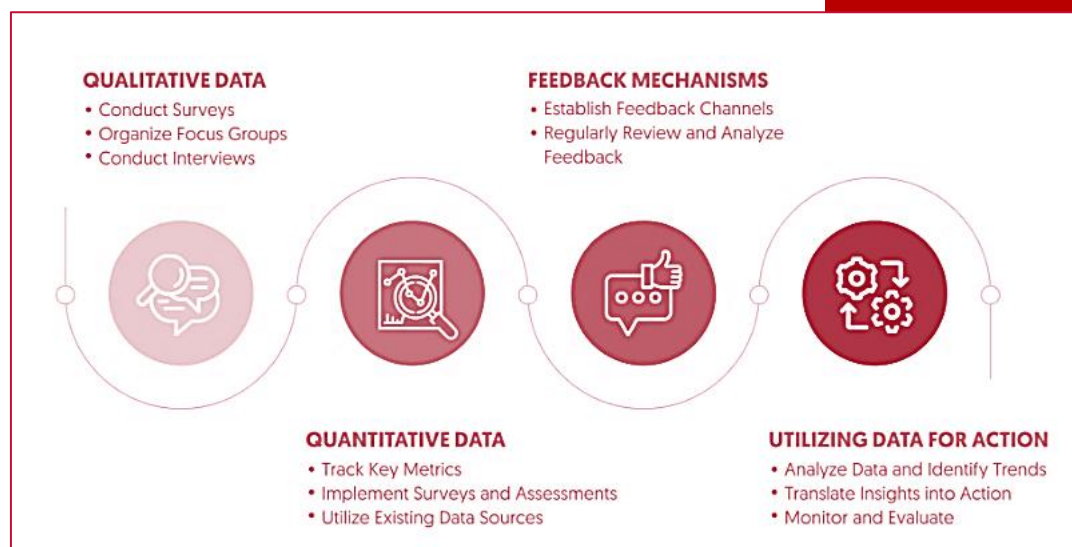
4.4.2. Course Closure

When a course is permanently withdrawn from the portfolio, it is considered as closed. Normally closure will involve the immediate cessation of recruitment activity and a clear announcement that the course has been closed. The course closure process is then followed for monitoring of the “teaching out” phase presented at FQAC, and relevant course closure actions plans. This is to ensure that current registered students (including those on leave of absence) can complete their award/degree.

It is best practice to propose a Course Closure or Suspension before the start of an application cycle. Where this is not possible, such proposals should be made, considered and approved in good time to allow applicants to find alternative provision. A decision to close a course must take full account of the needs of existing students (including those on a study break), applicants to the course and offer holders, including deferred applicants and deferred offer holders and should as far as possible, aim to support these students through to the completion of their intended study or put in place appropriate arrangements.

In considering closure of a course, the Head of Subject should liaise with all relevant stakeholders, including members of the course team, Marketing, Registry, Finance, PSRBs and Partners (where applicable). The Head of Subject must ensure that all students enrolled on the course are informed about the proposed closure, that the reasons for the proposal are explained, and that the implications are discussed with them at the earliest opportunity. Students should be informed of plans for running-out the course and provided with details of how the University will maintain the quality of the student learning experience during the teach-out phase.

From Quality Assurance to Enhancement



5. Data Driven and Evidence Based Enhancement

USW is committed to enhancing its academic standards and continuously improving student experience because a positive student experience contributes to student satisfaction, engagement, and success. In addition to addressing regulatory requirements, USW's approach to maintaining academic standards and enhancing quality is based on the view that it is good practice for any institution to reflect on its own performance (quality assurance) and consider ways of doing things better (quality enhancement). As such, continuous improvement provides faculties with a regular opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching portfolio, with a view to constant enhancement of provision for students. This section summarizes how USW aligns its practices with UK Quality Code's Principles regarding quality assurance, i.e., "providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, course and module levels. These analyses inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience."

5.1. USW Data and Quality Assurance

USW's 2030 Strategy has eight critical success factors (CSF) for which various elements of staff and student data is analysed and reported annually. Monitoring the staff and student data is key to helping USW identify key initiatives and actions while ensuring that USW is inclusive and welcoming for all. USW's business intelligence dashboards cover variety of insights related to applicants, enrolments, retentions, NSS results, HESA and UCAS performance, resource and estates usage, etc. These reports are indirectly supporting data-driven quality assurance and enhancement approaches within the faculties and the university as they focus on student enrolment, student experience, student attainment, and certain benchmarks. Faculties are encouraged to incorporate these insights in the annual quality monitoring reports. CQP uses relevant reports/dashboards as a resource for quality assurance and enhancement practices.

5.1.1. Data Protection

Every effort is taken at USW to ensure secure collection, storage and dissemination of data at all levels. Effective policies and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with Data Protection requirements. Staff are trained and encouraged to handle data according to set protocols and expectations and share their concerns or report an incident or breach if it occurs. Then the Data Protection Officer investigates such reports and mitigation steps are taken. The data reported via USW dashboards is usually aggregate and doesn't provide personal or sensitive information.

5.2. Continuous Monitoring

Continuous Monitoring is about reflecting on the previous academic year and action planning for the coming academic year. Annual quality monitoring has been designed by CQP to:

- be risk-based and data-driven, flexible and adaptable to the requirements of different faculties;
- help in identifying and solving thematic issues within faculties across the University;

- be reflective / evaluative, while summarising key points concisely and provide a robust framework for monitoring and review; and
- align with planning processes, to enable greater integration of curriculum developments with faculty priorities.

The annual quality monitoring process is therefore an evidence-based process, drawing on a range of relevant qualitative and quantitative evidence. It is intended to enable academic staff and Deputy Deans to easily identify issues affecting the learning experience that require action, and therefore to take timely action at the appropriate level to improve quality and standards.

5.2.1. Action Plans

For continuous monitoring and quality enhancement, faculties are expected to address relevant actions relating to their areas arising from the following:

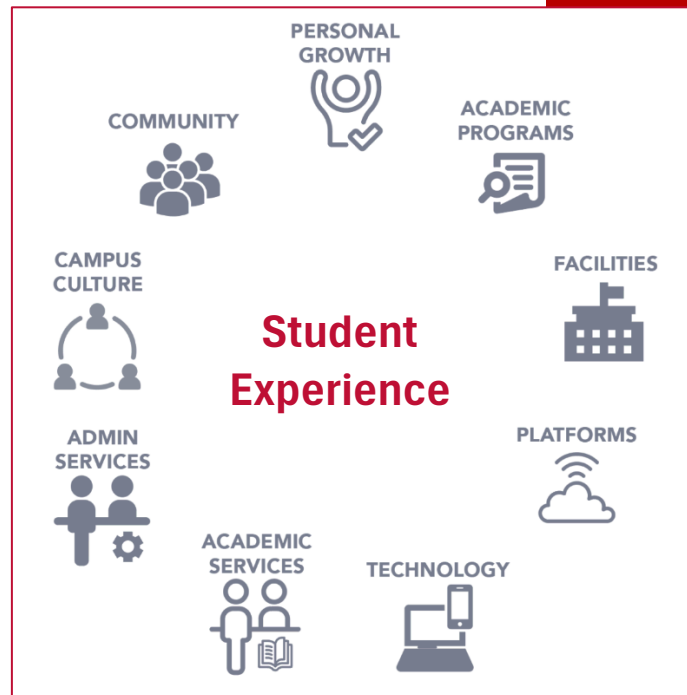
- Key observations based on dashboards data including but not limited to admission, progression and awards trends, graduate employment statistics, equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability, student complaints, etc.
- Review of the previous year's enhancements and areas identified for development in the new academic year
- SSCLG meetings
- Student Survey results
- External Examiner recommendations
- Periodic Course Revalidation
- Curriculum 2030 and SIG activities
- PSRBs Recommendations

5.2.2. Annual Quality Monitoring Reports

The annual reporting element of continuous monitoring is required to assure that ongoing reflection and enhancement is taking place at faculty level. An annual report is prepared by faculties on the set template which is presented to QAC. QAC has the overall responsibility for monitoring the faculty's progress against the requirements and recommendations set out in the action plans. After QAC, CQP will generate an institutional-level summary report. This report will constitute an annual overview of all reports and outcomes, identifying common issues and themes for the University to be published via CQP SharePoint for all USW staff. Rather than focus on achieving a 'threshold' standard, this approach aims to capture and disseminate best practice, whilst developing action plans that facilitate constant enhancement and progression.

In addition, USW publishes its Degree Outcomes Statement as expected by UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA). The degree outcomes statement analyses the University's degree classification profile by reviewing trends over several years and bringing together regulations and policies that protect academic standards. The data is provided by Planning Performance and Transformation team; the report is prepared by CQP to be approved by the QAC and the Academic Board.

Independent Validation



6. External Examiners

External examining provides a crucial means for maintaining academic standards and is an integral part of the University's Quality Framework. External Examiners offer informed, independent and comparative views of academic standards, assessment processes, course performance, and good practice and innovation. All taught courses and require an External Examiner. In addition to the External Examiners, USW engages with external experts as advisors or panel members. External experts provide a level of independence that is important in decision-making and ensuring that quality and standards are met. Within this group are Examiners, Advisers, and Panellists.

- **External Advisers:** They provide academic and professional expertise during the development and validation of new courses and at other relevant times. They can be called upon to provide academic, professional and industry/ employer/business expertise to inform course design and to contribute to lecturing or teaching at the university or in a professional setting, for example, workplace supervisors/ mentors for education, nursing, apprenticeships, and students on placement.
- **External Panellists:** They possess the relevant subject and pedagogic expertise at the appropriate academic level and no previous experience or involvement in the development of the course. They provide impartial and independent views on the design and structure of the course and its related documentation. The appointment of the external member is usually coordinated by CQP and the Course Team.

In this section, role, responsibilities, nominations and appointment of External Examiners is summarized, however, additional details are available on the dedicated site for the External Examiners.

6.1. External Examining System

External Examiners contribute to USW's quality assurance process by assisting the University in assuring itself about the comparability and appropriateness of academic standards and awards as indicated by the practice and experience of other similar higher education institutions. They also confirm that the assessment process is fair. Their feedback and advice inform other quality assurance processes such as course review and Revalidation. The principles underlying the External Examiner system at the University are that:

- the External Examiner system operates on an objective and impartial basis;
- an External Examiner is appointed to all courses contributing to an award (except Microcredentials or associate degrees);
- all newly appointed External Examiners receive necessary guidance via SharePoint site and additional support is available through trainings scheduled during the year;
- the normal term of office for an External Examiner will be four years with an extension of one year under exceptional circumstances;
- all External Examiners will complete and submit an annual report in the template set by USW;
- all External Examiner reports will be considered as part of wider quality assurance activities.

6.2. Role of External Examiners

The role of an External Examiner is to:

- offer an independent and comparative view of academic standards, assessment processes and course structures and ensure that relevant processes are conducted in accordance with the applicable USW regulations.
- assist USW in ensuring that its awards meet or exceed the academic standards stipulated in external points of reference;
- support USW in ensuring that the academic standards and achievement of students are comparable with other UK higher education institutions;
- contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by advising on good practice identified within USW and beyond.

More detail on the processes that underpin the External Examiner role is provided on the SharePoint.

6.3. Responsibilities of External Examiners

An External Examiner is expected to carry out certain duties in various areas that will enable them to fulfil the role, as summarised below:

Course Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice on matters of curriculum content, structure and balance of required components. • Observe the alignment of courses and modules with internal and external requirements.
Assessment and Marking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the discussion about moderation and marking. • Assure that academic standards and rigour of marking is maintained. • Recommend best practices or improvements in Annual Report.
Quality and Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the quality of student work and achievement in comparison to sector. • Observe the meeting or exceeding of academic regulations, PSRB requirements and overall quality assurance. • Guide newly appointed External Examiners, if required.
Student Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet student representatives (online or in person). • Allow student to share their feedback and perception of Academic Standards, Courses and their experience in general.
Assessment Dialogues/ Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure that university policies and procedures are fairly and consistently applied in assessment, moderation, and marking. • Subject External Examiners must attend a n Assessment Dialogue and at least one Progression/ Award Board during their tenure. Super Award External Examiners will be allocated to Progression/Award Boards as appropriate.
Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit an annual report and critically reflect on various aspects of learning, teaching, assessment and student experience. • Highlight good practices, recommend improvements and provide sector comparison. • Clarify if the faculty or course team considered previous recommendations and appropriate actions were taken.

6.4. Rights of External Examiners

In order to fulfil their role and responsibilities, External Examiners should normally:

- i. have access to appropriate documentation that sets out course regulations, assessment requirements and quality assurance provisions.
- ii. have access to the full range of assessed student work.
- iii. agree a sampling strategy to ensure that assessed work from all award categories, including the highest and lowest (including any failures) and borderlines are considered.
- iv. meet (online or in-person) with a group of students to discuss their experience of the course.
- v. attend (online or in-person) any relevant meetings, in particular, the Examination Board.
- vi. be consulted in advance about proposed changes to course(s), particularly where they affect the course award(s), title(s), outcomes or the assessment scheme, major changes to modules or course closure.
- vii. conduct, if felt necessary, and with the agreement of Course Team, an interim visit to the University to meet with course-related staff and students.
- viii. receive the formal External Examiner Induction (this is usually online).
- ix. receive a response from the faculty to External Examiners' Annual Report explaining how points raised are being addressed.

An online site has been set up to provide External Examiners with information, and to facilitate their role as External Examiner. This should be used to access supporting documentation. Moreover, an email address (extexam@southwales.ac.uk) is also assigned to support and communicate with the External Examiners. External Examiners' Reports are made available to students on the relevant course via Blackboard.

6.5. Nominations and Appointments

All External Examiners must be formally appointed to the role and sign an appointment form prior to starting the role following Right to Work checks and EEAP approval. The Head of Subject is ultimately responsible for ensuring that a sufficient number of External Examiners are appointed so that adequate expertise is available to cover all the major areas of the course(s) being examined, including the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. The nature and extent of the commitment required should be made clear to the nominee, particularly if a nominee is from outside the higher education sector (perhaps from industry for a practical course component).

6.5.1. Appointment Criteria

External Examiners should normally be able to show evidence that they meet specific appointment criteria set by the University. This is predominantly based around knowledge, competence, experience and qualifications in the subject area and an understanding of UK academic standards and quality assurance. Faculties and Course Teams are guided by the following criteria when considering External Examiner nominations:

- They have a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the course of study, or parts thereof, and have a good understanding of the UK higher education sector and meet PSRB criteria.

- They are appropriately experienced in course design and student assessment at the level of the award.
- They have the necessary academic experience and subject knowledge to assess standards in an effective manner, identify good practice and recommend enhancements to enable informed course development.
- They are experienced in acting as an External Examiner or are supported by USW in undertaking their duties, for example, through training and mentoring.
- They are impartial in judgement and wholly independent of the provider and its staff (including the governing body), and any relevant partners.
- They do not personally benefit from any student outcomes, nor have any connection to any student being assessed.
- They have had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively.
- They are drawn from a relevant variety of institutional or professional contexts and traditions in order that the course benefits from wide-ranging external scrutiny.
- They comply with all relevant employment legislation, including safeguarding, as appropriate.
- They normally hold a limited number of concurrent external examining engagements (for example either one or two).
- They must be eligible to work in and reside within the UK.
- They are fluent in English, and where courses are delivered and assessed in languages other than English (i.e., Welsh), fluent in the relevant language(s).

Exceptional Appointment

It may be necessary in exceptional circumstances to appoint an External Examiner who does not fulfil the above criteria (for example nominees from business, industry or the professions, or Welsh language provision, where the pool of potential External Examiners is restricted). Where this is the case, approval will be sought from the EEAP and reported to the next QAC meeting. Where an External Examiner who has no previous experience of the role is appointed, an existing External Examiner might be asked to act as a peer support for that individual. The main duty of the peer is to provide general advice and guidance.

Conflict of Interest

The nominated External Examiner and members of the faculty involved in the nomination should declare any conflicts of interests that should be given due consideration before the nominated External Examiner can be formally appointed. Appointments will **not** be made if a potential External Examiner is in any of the following categories or circumstances:

- A member of our governing body or one of our partners, delivery organisations or support providers, or one of our current employees or an employee of our partners, delivery organisations or support providers.

- Anyone with a close, professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the course.
- Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course.
- Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students enrolled on the course.
- Anyone significantly involved (within the last five years) or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the course(s) or module(s) in question.
- Former USW staff or students, unless a period of five years has elapsed, and all students taught by or with the External Examiner have completed their course(s)
- A reciprocal arrangement involving cognate courses at another higher education provider.
- The succession of an External Examiner by a colleague from the examiner's home department and provider.
- The appointment of more than one External Examiner from the same department of the same higher education provider.

6.5.2. Nominations' Approval

Nominations are received on standard University forms that provide a checking mechanism for issues such as reciprocity and conflicts of interest and are approved by the External Examiner Approval Panel (EEAP), a sub-group of QAC.

6.5.3. Induction and Training

Information concerning the induction and training of External Examiners is available online.

6.5.4. Apprenticeship External Examining

External Examiners appointed to USW apprenticeships should be suitably qualified to undertake the role. Each apprenticeship will normally have one External Examiner allocated to it, however the required balance of subject and practice expertise can be achieved, where appropriate, through the appointment of two External Examiners: one a subject expert and the other with practice expertise. The University provides opportunities for employers to receive and respond to External Examiner reports; this supports the University in developing ongoing assessment practices for apprenticeship provision.

6.5.5. External Examining of Collaborative Courses

The Partnerships Manual outlines consideration of External Examiner reports which relate to collaboration.

6.6. External Examiners' Annual Reports and Responses

External Examiners should submit an annual report using the approved University template. Where an External Examiner is appointed to cover different levels of courses and submitting a combined report, the report must cover all levels explicitly and clearly distinguish whether any suggestions apply for either or both levels.

6.6.1. Serious Concerns

Where an External Examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a course or courses and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Vice Chancellor, they may invoke QAA Concerns Scheme and/or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

External Accreditation



7. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

PSRBs are a diverse group of professional and employer bodies, regulators, and those with statutory authority over a profession or group of professionals. Accreditation usually entails an inspection of provision and/or scrutiny of course documentation. The benefits associated with the PSRBs include:

- accreditation or endorsement of courses that meet professional standards;
- membership services;
- promote the interests of people working in professions;
- provide a route through to the professions or are recognised by employers.

Faculties are expected to remain cognisant of relevant sector-wide benchmarks and PSRB requirements. Faculties and CQP collaboratively manage these processes as well as the engagement with PSRBs. CQP monitors actions in response to recommendations arising from these inspection reports.

7.1. External Reviews and Accreditation

The University sets the strategic direction for the faculties, with all faculties and partners expected to develop curriculums in line with this. The University and its Partners have a broad curriculum offer that reflects the needs of local communities and the local employment opportunities. The University works extensively and strategically with the Welsh and English Governments, and employers to develop curriculum opportunities that respond very effectively to labour market information and government priorities and have extended its subject delivery areas extensively in line with this.

A number of the University's courses are accredited by PSRBs. Professional accreditation is the official recognition awarded by an external professional or statutory body as the result of the University meeting specific standards or criteria. These criteria or standards may relate to the recognition of the academic standing of a course, the ability to produce graduates with professional competence to practice and/or preparation for professional status. Not all external recognition will be through a PSRB, or indeed result in a full accreditation. PSRBs have a varied and wide-reaching involvement in the delivery and monitoring of provision. Students are made aware of the accreditation status of a course through the course handbook which also contains information on any conditions required to ensure attainment of the professional recognition.

7.2. Engagement with PSRBs

USW engages with PSRBs at institutional and course levels. Each PSRB has its own process for granting accreditation, recognition and re-accreditation. Given the diversity of different PSRB requirements, there can be no "standard" process. However, collaboration and liaison of the activities is entrusted at faculty and CQP teams' levels.

7.2.1. Institutional Accreditation

Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships team within the Academic Registry is responsible for maintaining an overview of PSRB activity at USW. Specifically, they maintain and publish a schedule of PSRB activity. The team advises on USW quality assurance processes, policies and procedures and on variations to standard USW arrangements that may be necessary to align with PSRB requirements. For institutional review from QAA CQP arranges these accreditations and approval visits and receives reports and disseminate beyond the monitoring committee level, if appropriate. CQP also ensure that opportunities for enhancing the student experience as a result of PSRB engagements or reports are shared and acted upon by faculty.

CQP also ensure that PSRB requirements are addressed as part of the course approval and (re)validation processes with details included in the relevant course specifications. New PSRB accreditation arrangements may only be reflected within course and marketing literature when the PSRB has confirmed that all requirements have been met and accreditation has been secured.

The QAA is the Designated Quality Body (DQB) for quality assurance in UK higher education. QAA sets external reference points for higher education institutions in the UK. Institutions are expected to use these reference points when developing courses and when designing their own internal quality assurance and enhancement procedures. In this way, it is possible to make broad comparisons about academic threshold standards across different institutions. On behalf of Medr (formerly HEFCW), the QAA undertake Quality Enhancement Review (QER) of Welsh higher education providers as part of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales. It provides a distinctive approach to institutional review, developed to address the particular context of the Welsh higher education sector. USW engages with QAA on regular basis for reviews and other initiatives.

7.2.2. Course Level Accreditation

Responsibility for gaining and retaining of PSRB accreditation rests with the faculty within which eligible courses reside. Day-to-day liaison, pre- and post-accreditation, is managed at Faculty level by the Chair of FQAC who has delegated responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance. Colleagues are encouraged to engage with their subject areas nationally and where appropriate, internationally, and to take on external examining and/or other roles to ensure that our work continues to be informed by best practice in each subject area.

Due to the diverse nature of PSRBs their approach may vary in the mechanisms used for accrediting, recognising, or approving courses offered by the faculty and it is the responsibility of the relevant faculty Deputy Dean or nominee to notify relevant stakeholders. Faculty teams are expected to understand the accreditation criteria of PSRBs and to work with PSRBs and support staff in CQP and Academic Registry to achieve and maintain accreditation. Faculty is also responsible for setting up visits where this is required by the PSRB as part of the (re)-accreditation process.

7.2.3. PSRB Reports and Responses

As accreditation often requires faculties to submit course documentation for scrutiny, the University aligns this process as far as possible with that of the validation and revalidation processes. Following the initial and subsequent successful application to the PSRB, a copy of the outcomes report or formal notification providing confirmation of their decision with any conditions attached, should be shared with CQP and faculty Executive teams. The outcome report or letter and response should be considered by the relevant FQAC. The response reports should be accompanied by an action plan to provide details of the intentions for meeting any recommendations/requirements of the PSRB. The response to the outcomes report or letter should be signed off by the relevant Faculty Dean and sent to the PSRB.

Where accreditation/re-accreditation is subject to conditions and/or recommendations, the Course Leader should ensure that, alongside the formal outcome/report, CQP and QAC also receive an overview of how the course team intend to address any identified conditions and/or recommendations, including associated timescales. Faculty are responsible for updating PSRBs with details of course closures and suspensions as required.

7.2.4. Academic Partnerships and PSRBs

Courses offered in partnership with another higher education provider will not necessarily be offered as accredited; this will vary depending on the PSRB itself and the type of accreditation offered. Accordingly, a separate accreditation approval event may be required for a partner provider wishing to offer an existing accredited course. This is particularly required where there is a need to confirm that the levels of staffing and physical resources at the partner meet the PSRB's requirements. Partners should not assume that accreditation will automatically be extended to any franchise agreement and should ensure that applicants are aware of this limitation. Whilst there may be variation in the procedures agreed with an individual partner, the principles and processes which underpin USW's arrangements for the oversight of PSRB accredited courses will apply.

7.2.5. Accreditation Register

The register of the accreditations is maintained by the Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships Team in Academic Registry and includes a record of courses with PSRB status and a schedule of accreditation events. The Curriculum Quality and Partnerships (CQP) team are to be consulted at an early stage if a faculty is seeking new or re-accreditation for courses, and where reasonably possible attend PSRB visits for quality assurance purposes.

7.3. Cancellation and Withdrawal of Accreditation

Faculty must contact CQP immediately if (re)accreditation is withdrawn and/or the outcome of the (re)accreditation is anything other than full approval. The accreditation register will be modified accordingly. Should accreditation be withdrawn from any course or the status be altered in any way, the Faculty will inform all current students including, students on temporary withdrawal, offer holders or other potential students affected by the change to avoid any disadvantage to the student(s) as far as possible.

Students Are USW Partners

At the University of South Wales, we deliver courses that will change lives and our world for the better. This is education in practice, not just in theory.



8. Student Engagement

As recommended in Principle 2 of the UK Quality Code, USW takes 'deliberate steps to engage students as active partners in assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience'. This section details these steps and approaches for student involvement across USW activities. Student engagement refers to the participation of students in assurance and enhancement activities through their representation, feedback, and involvement in various processes and committees. Student engagement is a key part of external quality reviews for higher education providers and included as part of inspections by Estyn for all other tertiary sectors. The aims of student engagement activities are to:

- i. encourage and enable student involvement (student voice) in decision-making processes through both representation and feedback;
- ii. secure and sustain an environment in which all students, regardless of discipline, level of study, or background can participate fully in a high-quality educational community, and to fulfil their potential; and
- iii. provide a student-centred environment that encourages active participation in learning, including student involvement in the design of their learning experience.

8.1. Students as Partners

USW encourages staff and faculties to co-create, co-teach, co-research and co-develop with students as partners of their educational experiences. Most of the quality assurance processes require colleagues to work with students. Working with students as partners on educational development projects enables a more contextualised understanding of complex experiences students face and directly involves those affected by initiatives in shaping them, which is more likely to result in sustainable change. Some of the ways that staff and student work as partners include:

- Co-develop teaching resources
- Co-develop reading lists
- Co-create assessment criteria
- Learning and teaching co-researchers
- Students as teaching observers / evaluators
- Curriculum development consultants
- Peer-assisted support schemes
- Students experience evaluations and improvements

Some benefits for staff and students' partnership are listed below:

BENEFITS FOR STAFF	BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improves staff understanding of learning from student lens ▪ Potential to research and publish in educational development journals with students ▪ Work directly with students who have expertise in their learning experience ▪ Test assumptions and norms with students for more sustainable change ▪ Initiating change and improving the student experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership development ▪ Experience and development of skills such as problem-solving, interpersonal skills, communication, project management, research ▪ Recognition through a certificate or references ▪ Experience in initiating enhancement through research ▪ Employability development: portfolio and demonstrable experience for applications

8.2. Student Engagement Principles

The following principles are adopted to facilitate successful student engagement and involvement:

- i. The Student Charter, reviewed and agreed annually, outlines the students' relationship with USW and mutual expectations by:
 - demonstrating USW commitment to continually improving the quality of its services and recognizing in line with its strategy and mission that students are at the heart of the institution.
 - emphasizing the importance of belonging to a learning community, and of partnership working between staff and students.
 - supporting a strong and effective working relationship between the University and the Students' Union and symbolises the joint commitment to securing an excellent student experience.
- ii. The relationship agreement exists between the Students' Union and the University that is approved by the Board of Governors and is signed by both the Students' Union President and the University Secretary. The agreement is reviewed on an annual basis.
- iii. All students should be made aware of opportunities to engage in decision-making processes (SU elections, student representative elections, periodic review membership) and have a fair opportunity to participate in these.
- iv. All student representatives at course level, engaged in validation or periodic review processes should receive training and support in the role. Students feedback should be used to inform course reviews / revalidations.
- v. Students Union should be supported by USW staff to ensure the interaction and partnership work effectively although SU oversees the representation structure within the University.
- vi. Students are entitled to meet with the External Examiner that is allocated to their course and the Course Leader should facilitate this. Part of the External Examiner's reporting process includes questions as to whether they have had access to student feedback, either via module evaluations or via a meeting (online or in person) with the students.
- vii. Link officers are appointed to all collaborative courses and part of their role is to meet and discuss the courses with students and to ensure that students' concerns are being discussed in the relevant fora.

8.3. Student Engagement Approaches

USW has employed various modes and channels to allow student engagement and involvement in decision making and quality enhancement enabling student success as detailed below:

8.3.1. Students' Union

Responsibilities: The Students' Union at USW is responsible to ensure that:

- The processes for the election, training and support of all student representatives across all courses and locations are consistently in place: where possible student representatives are democratically elected by their peers.
- All student representatives have access to appropriate training and support.
- Elected student representatives are considered to be a representative voice for the student body.
- Student voice activities are embedded within all aspects of the institution's or collaborative partner institution's work and planning.

- Each course must have named Course Representatives by the third week of the academic year. Course Leaders will inform the SU who are the representatives.
- An accurate record of the names and details of Course Representatives by Course/ Subject/ Faculty is kept, and this data should be accessible upon request by all University staff who require this information for their role.
- Course representatives are facilitated to have space and opportunity to meet students on their course privately.
- Staff work with students to respond to their feedback and enhance their student experience.
- The students are briefed on the purpose of specific events.
- An Annual Report is produced at the end of each academic year that is presented to the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (LTEC). The report includes key outputs by the Students' Union, developments and reports on progress to actions within their annual plan. The Students' Union also produce an impact report for Academic Board. Any action outcomes are monitored by LTEC.
- Appropriate resources for students at collaborative partners are provided outlining how they can engage with the Students' Union and its services and how their voice is represented. Support/training materials are available online.

Roles: The Students' Union recognises the wide range of students that need to access the representation structure and continuously look to review the structures in place to ensure where necessary they are adapted to ensure they are accessible to all. There are four key roles that Student Union ensures for students' representation in a defined structure and to allow the student voice to be heard and enhance the student experience.

Full Time Officers

• USW students that have taken a year out of their studies or have recently graduated and are responsible for making high-level decisions for the Students' Union. They work a full academic year supporting activities, running campaigns and making sure the student voice is heard at the highest level. There are four positions:

- President
- Education Officer
- Welfare Officer
- Activities Officer

Student Voice Representatives (SVRs)

• SVRs work to enhance learning, teaching and student experience at Faculty level meetings. They give feedback to staff, propose solutions to problems and have an active role in the organisation and management of the faculty. They also chair Course Representative Assemblies, attend Student Voice Representative Forums, participate in campaigns, such as Change Week, and attend the Student Union's AGM. SVRs also act as student representatives on (re)validation event panels and provide their input into the course design and validation processes. They are elected during the Students' Union annual elections.

Course Representatives

• They work to improve the student academic experience, attend meetings and give feedback to their Course Management Team. As Students' Union Representatives, they also engage with Course Representative Assemblies and SSCLGs, and attend the Student Union's AGM. They are elected within their classes within the first three weeks of term starting. Course Leaders organise their cohorts' elections, and they usually are done via an online vote or a show of hands.

Student Council

• SC consists of part time Campaign Officers with powers to pass policy (about non-academic issues) and mandate its own Officers and the Sabbatical Officers of the Union. Student Council members are elected to their representative roles each year to represent each demographic and they meet no fewer than five times per Academic Year. Within their meetings, Student Council promote and suggest Students' Union activities, make real changes and improvements to student experience as well as run campaigns and attend national conferences.

8.3.2. Students Representation in Decision Making

Students' representation exists at all levels of decision making throughout the committee structure, including representation at the highest level - Academic Board and the Board of Governors. To ensure their attendance is meaningful and impactful students are a full member of any committees that they attend. Student Voice Representatives are responsible for representing their group of Course Representatives at a range of events, including Faculty Quality Assurance Committees, Faculty Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committees, course (re)validation and review events.

8.3.3. Student/Staff Course Liaison Group

The Student Staff Course Liaison Group (SSCLG) is Course Representatives' primary committee assisted by the Students' Union. SSCLGs provide a formal opportunity for the Course Leader and members of the Course Team to meet with Course Representatives for their respective courses.

- **Purpose:** SSCLGs provide a forum for students to raise/highlight good practice/concerns and issues they may have with their courses and a forum for the Course Leader / Course Team to respond to the issues raised and inform students what, if any, action they will take, closing the feedback loop. Course Leaders can also raise any issues that they may have too. Action points must be recorded and forwarded to Course Representatives, managers across the University via Continuous Monitoring reporting, and the Student Representation Team (who will send them to all relevant Student Voice Representatives). A copy of the notes/actions should also be uploaded on to the relevant course Blackboard site and be included in any 'You Said, We Did' notifications.
- **Membership:** SSCLGs should have a majority of student members with at least three undergraduate members and, where applicable, at least one postgraduate taught student. The Head of Subject and Course Leader must be members, along with the Course Management Team and staff responsible for delivery of the course. Head of Subject (HoS) and Head of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (HoLTSE) should have the opportunity to attend the meetings should they wish. It is recommended that staff from academic support services, for example Student Support and Library Services, should also be invited to attend specific meetings.
- **Meetings:** The Course Leader should arrange an hour meeting with the SSCLG and use the standard templates for the agendas and action points. Should Course Representatives not be able to attend the meetings then the views of their peers should be collected as normal and put forward in writing to the Chair by the Course Representative, for discussion.

8.3.4. Student Evaluation and Feedback

Informal and formal feedback is systematically and proactively gathered from students through a variety of mechanisms in relation to student experience related areas. Regular external benchmarking exercises are undertaken to identify areas for improvement and good practice for dissemination and to continue to enhance performance.

- **External Tools:** There are a range of surveys organized by external organizations that are available to students to complete relating to all types of study. The benchmarking data from these surveys is used in a number of ways from funding councils to published league tables. The surveys include the:
 - National Student Survey (undergraduate)
 - Postgraduate Teaching Experience Survey (PTES)
 - Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- **Internal Mechanism:** The students enrolled on a course with USW have the opportunity to feedback at module and course level. Feedback can be sent at any point during the year, completely anonymously and in either English or Welsh.
- **Students' Feedback from Partners:** USW recognises that it works with collaborative partners with different infrastructures and abilities to garner effective student feedback. By allowing for variance of collection method, USW recognises that the best quality data is made available to help ensure that the academic experience continues to be high-quality irrespective of where the course is delivered. With agreement from the University, if the collaborative partner has a sufficient infrastructure to be able to provide equivalent feedback, they may use a local system. The information will feed into Continuous Monitoring process and any third-party system must be open to interrogation by USW staff.

The feedback gained from these surveys is part of the evidence base that informs the Continuous Monitoring process. Following the publication of survey results and other forms of formal feedback, actions are identified to be added to course action plans in order to further enhance provision and address any issues highlighted by students which are reported through continuous monitoring processes. Action points from SSCLGs also feed into course action plans.

8.3.5. Student Involvement in Quality Enhancement

Students are involved in several quality enhancement processes such as course review, continuous monitoring, modification and revalidations.

- **Continuous Monitoring:** Students and the student voice are involved in continuous monitoring in a variety of direct and indirect ways. Student performance and feedback via surveys and formal meetings, form part of the evidence base upon which module and course leaders produce their reports and action plans.
- **Committees:** More directly, student representatives are members of College and Faculty Quality Assurance Committees, Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Board and the Board of Governors where they have an opportunity to contribute to approval of reports and action plans and hold the process to account.
- **Course Revalidation:** Student Voice Representatives are invited as paid members of each (re)validation panel to ensure that Student Representatives are given the opportunity to provide their input into the University's course design and validation processes.

In preparation for course validation events, Student Voice Representatives are required to read and scrutinise validation documentation, provide written feedback on the documentation and attend a panel validation event (and any pre-meetings associated with the event).

- **Modifications:** The modification to a course is only approved if evidence of student consultation is submitted by the faculty.
- **Periodic Reviews:** Students are also involved from the other side; supporting the course submission, current students or alumni are asked to meet with the panel during the event to discuss their experience of the course.
- **Monthly Meetings:** CQP and Student Records and Assessment representative hold monthly meetings with members of the Students' Union. The meetings allow for the further development of partnership working in relation to quality assurance and enhancement.

8.3.6. Students Training and Development

Enhancement arises through both routine quality processes and from specific quality enhancement and development activities. Enabling student development and achievement involves academic, professional, and support staff across the University and that students are key partners in the enhancement of the student experience. Therefore, they are trained and developed to be effective partners and representatives.

- **Student Representatives** are provided with training in quality processes and the opportunities to engage with them.
- **Full-Time Officers** have comprehensive training within the Students' Union over a two-week period. This training comes from Students' Union management and departments, and University staff. They also benefit from their handover/shadowing period with the outgoing Full-Time Officers.
- **Student Voice Representatives** have comprehensive training with the Student Voice Team in the Students' Union through a number of different mediums throughout their tenure. The Students' Union also provides the Student Voice Representatives with extra opportunities throughout the academic year to do additional training, such as research skills, teaching at Higher Education level, campaigning, gathering feedback, quality assurance in Higher Education, and many more.
- **Course Representatives** have comprehensive training with the Student Voice Team in the Students' Union. There are training sessions at the start of the academic year and for additional intakes during the academic year. There is an online provision for training to allow all to engage with the role. The Students' Union also provides the Course Representatives with extra opportunities throughout the academic year to do additional training.

Work Based Learning



9. Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) provides comprehensive guidance on work-based learning (WBL) policies. USW has incorporated key QAA recommendations to set out the quality expectations, practices and guidance for work-based learning and apprenticeships. This section summarizes the general policy and procedures for both work-based learning and apprenticeships, but these details should be considered in addition to the following:

- UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Work-based Learning
- QAA Degree Apprenticeship: Impact, Policy and Good Practice Guide 2024
- USW Apprenticeship Partnership Manual

9.1. Work-based Learning

At USW, it is a consensus that work-based learning courses/opportunities should be designed, monitored, evaluated and reviewed in partnership with employers, students and other relevant stakeholders (e.g., PSRB), and contain learning outcomes that are relevant to work objectives. Work-based learning should consist of structured learning opportunities with authentic activity and a supervised experience in the workplace. The QAA guidance sets out minimum expectations about academic standards, course design and student support for work-based learning provisions and USW policies and procedures are designed accordingly as illustrated below.

Collaboration	Quality Assurance	Formal Agreements	Student Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USW courses are designed in partnership with employers, students, and other stakeholders, ensuring learning outcomes are relevant to work objectives and opportunities are inclusive, safe and supported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USW ensures that courses are well-designed to provide a high-quality academic experience and the core practices are regularly reviewed to maintain academic standards and quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-based opportunities should be underpinned by formal agreements outlining the activities required and assigning the areas of responsibility. All parties understand and respect the respective roles and responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USW ensures that from admissions to completion, students receive adequate information, support and guidance on the expectations and obligations of work-based learning. Courses enable students to demonstrate their engagement in a professional work environment and enhance their ability to appraise their performance.

- 9.1.1. Where possible, all courses should include real world experience as part of their curriculum, with an aim to enable students to demonstrate their engagement in a professional work environment and enhance their ability to appraise their performance so as to be prepared for graduate employment opportunities. Where placements are not possible, simulated work experience or live briefs may be an appropriate substitution.
- 9.1.2. The Academic Blueprint, which applies to all of the University's single honours bachelor's degrees, identifies two models for employability: the inclusion of a 20-credit employability module within courses which allows students to access 70 hours of relevant work

- experience and a fully embedded approach to professional practice and employability (usually for courses which have PSRB requirements).
- 9.1.3. The Professional Practice and Employability module allow flexibility to accommodate longer, or shorter work placements are achieved.
 - 9.1.4. All single honours undergraduate degree courses should satisfy the learning outcomes related to their professional practice and work experiences and enable them to identify gaps and plan for future development, and they should create and evaluate an action plan for their career aspirations.
 - 9.1.5. **Live work-based projects** offer a learning opportunity that involves employers in the commissioning of 'live' briefs or projects and may often be used to supplement placements or to provide real world experience where a formal placement might not be available. Partnership between the University and Employers create life-like experiences for the students to work on, providing opportunities to apply their learning to real issues faced by members of the relevant workforce. Included in this is the student enterprise agenda where students can be encouraged to take a lead on projects that tackle social issues or work entrepreneurially on commercial briefs that require them to use a particular vocational skill within their course.

9.2. Apprenticeships

The University has responsibility for both assuring the quality of the apprenticeship training it provides and for the academic standards and quality of its apprenticeship qualifications. The UK Quality Code is clear that we can be flexible in the design and application of internal quality assurance processes to ensure that these are appropriate to the different timescales and contexts within which USW may need to operate, and which can support the central role that employers play in apprenticeships. It is acknowledged that this can be achieved without undermining the broad principles that underpin the assurance of academic standards and quality, including those of the Education Inspection Framework.

The QAA, in collaboration with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), oversees the EQA of apprenticeships to ensure that end-point assessments are fair, consistent, and robust. An apprenticeship integrates on-the-job training with academic study; therefore, the course design and related assessment of apprenticeships are guided by the principles laid out in the USW Apprenticeship Partnership Manual.

REVISION HISTORY

This section provides the details of review and subsequent versions of this document as well as issue and approval dates.

Version	Issue Date	Author	Summary of Changes	Approved By/ Date	Next Review
10	Sep 2024	Sarosh Azhar	New name and format. Content changes to align with Quality Code 2024	QAC/ Nov 2024	Aug 2025
9	Jul 2023	Nicola Poole	Annual review and update	QAC/ Sep 2023	Jul 2024
8	Feb 2023	Nicola Poole	Minor Changes	N/A	Jul 2023
7	Apr 2021	Hayley Burns	Annual review and update	QAC/ Apr 2022	Jul 2022
6	Sep 2021	Nicola Poole	Annual review and update	QAC/ Sep 2021	Jul 2022
5	Sep 2020	Nicola Poole	Annual review and update	QAC/ Sep 2020	Jul 2021
4	Jul 2019	Nicola Poole	Annual review and update	QAC/ Sep 2019	Jul 2020
3	Dec 2018	Chris Laity	Annual review and update	QAC/ Dec 2018	Jul 2019
2	May 2017	Chris Laity	Annual review and update	QAC/ Nov 2017	Jul 2018
1	Aug 2016	Mary Hulford	Quality Manual created	QAC/ Aug 2016	Jul 2016