Section 1: BIMM Institute ADQA Manual Introduction

This manual brings together all the key generic policies and procedures that ensure the standards and quality of BIMM Group's provision. It is essential reading for all staff and particularly part-time staff who may need guidance on policies in order to talk to students from an informed position.

Part-time responsibilities are, of course, less than full-time staff; nevertheless from the students' point of view all teaching staff represent 'the face' of the institution. It is important that procedures are understood so that student concerns can be addressed reliably and consistently.

Defining Standards, Quality and Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) defines academic standards and quality in the following ways:

Threshold academic standards: are the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for the award of academic credit or a qualification. For equivalent qualifications, the threshold level of achievement is agreed across the UK.

Academic standards: are the standards that individual degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of their academic credit or qualifications. These may exceed the threshold academic standards. They include the standards of performance that a student needs to demonstrate to achieve a particular classification of a qualification, such as a first-class honours degree classification in a certain subject or the award of merit or distinction in a master's degree.

Academic quality: refers to how and how well the higher education provider supports students to enable them to achieve their award. It covers learning, teaching and assessment, and all the different resources and processes a provider puts in place to help students progress and fulfil their potential.

Quality assurance: is the process for checking that the academic standards and quality of higher education provision meet agreed expectations.

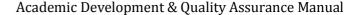**Who is responsible for academic standards and quality?**

Individual universities and other organisations that are legally entitled to award degrees are ultimately responsible for the academic standards and quality of higher education courses leading to their qualifications. These degree-awarding bodies are independent and self-governing. They remain responsible for their qualifications regardless of where a course is delivered or who provides it on their behalf.

Higher Education (HE) at BIMM

HE provision at BIMM is centred around three year degree courses validated or approved by awarding institutions (universities). The responsibility for ensuring academic standards lies with BIMM Group's awarding institutions who follow the expectations laid out by the UK Quality Code (UKQC) for Higher Education published by the QAA. There relevant organisation for BIMM Group's Irish college is the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI): http://www.qqi.ie/.

Key features of the UK Quality Code

The Quality Code sets out the formal expectations that all UK HE providers reviewed by QAA are required to meet. It is the nationally agreed, definitive point of reference for all those who deliver or support UK HE courses.

Why is the Quality Code important?

The Quality Code gives individual higher education providers a shared starting point for setting and maintaining the academic standards of their higher education courses and awards, and assuring the quality of the learning opportunities they provide for students.

This makes it possible to ensure that higher education provision and learning outcomes are comparable and consistent at a threshold level across the UK.

The purpose of the Quality Code is to:

- Safeguard the academic standards of UK higher education;
- Assure the academic quality of learning opportunities that UK higher education offers;
- Promote continuous and systematic improvement in UK higher education;
- Ensure that information about UK higher education is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

What are the key values of the Quality Code?

- Every student is treated fairly and with dignity, courtesy and respect;
- Every student has the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of their learning experience;
- Every student is properly and actively informed at appropriate times of matters relevant to their course of study;
- All policies and processes relating to study and courses are clearly explained and transparent;
- Strategic oversight of academic standards and academic quality is at the highest level of academic governance of the provider;
- All policies and processes are regularly and effectively monitored, reviewed and improved;
- Sufficient and appropriate external involvement exists for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities;
- All staff are supported, enabling them in turn to support student learning experiences.

What does the Quality Code contain?

The Quality Code has a general introduction which explains its purpose and nature. The main body of the Quality Code consists of three Parts (A, B and C) which address academic standards, academic quality, and information respectively:

- Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards;
- Part A consists of three Chapters which describe the various aspects of how academic standards are set and maintained for higher education qualifications awarded by UK degree-awarding bodies;
- Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards;
- Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards;
- Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards;
- Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality;
- Part B consists of 11 Chapters which look at a distinct aspects of academic quality;
- Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval;
- Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education;
- Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching;
- Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement;
- Chapter B5: Student Engagement;

- Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning;
- Chapter B7: External Examining;
- Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review;
- Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints;
- Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others;
- Chapter B11: Research Degrees;
- Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision. Part C is shorter and is not subdivided. It addresses how providers produce information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

What are Expectations?

- Expectations express key matters of principle that the higher education sector has identified as essential. They make clear what UK higher education providers are required to do, what they expect of themselves and each other, and what students and the general public can therefore expect of providers.
- Part A contains seven Expectations. Each of the 11 Chapters of Part B contains a single Expectation, as does Part C.
- Individual providers should be able to demonstrate that they are meeting the relevant Expectations effectively, through their own management and organisational processes, taking account of the unique needs, traditions, culture and decision-making processes of their organisation.

What are Indicators of sound practice?

- Indicators of sound practice help higher education providers reflect on how they might meet the relevant Expectations.
- They describe actions or approaches that providers have agreed illustrate sound practice.

What is explanatory text?

- Each Expectation in Part A and each Indicator in Parts B and C is accompanied by explanatory text which explains why it is important and describes a range of ways in which the Expectation or Indicator might be addressed and demonstrated.

How has the Quality Code been developed?

- The Quality Code has been developed in consultation with the UK higher education sector and is owned, maintained and published by QAA. QAA works with the sector to ensure that the Quality Code remains up to date, through an ongoing process of review and revision.

What doesn't it cover?

- The Quality Code relates to the learning and teaching activities of higher education providers, including research degrees.
- Among the areas it does not cover are other forms of research activity and non-academic provision such as accommodation and estates management.

What if I'm concerned about the quality of a programme?

- If you are a student you may find it helpful to discuss the matter with your student representative body, such as a students' union (if applicable). Your university or college will have an internal complaints process which you should follow. If you remain dissatisfied having completed all stages of the internal process, you may be able to take the matter to an external complaints body. In England and Wales this is the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (www.oiahe.org.uk).

If you are a member of staff

- You may find it helpful to discuss the matter with the Academic Development & Quality Assurance team. There will also be an internal complaints procedure for staff.

If you are a member of the public

- You should contact the relevant university or college to raise your concern.

- Whether you are a student, member of staff or member of the public, if you believe that your concern relates to a serious systemic failing in the way a higher education provider manages the standards or quality of its higher education provision, you may be able to raise the matter through QAA's Concerns Scheme: www.qaa.ac.uk/complaints/concerns.
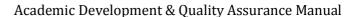
Find out more about the Quality Code

- The Quality Code is available on the QAA website along with guidance, good practice and other resources. If you have any questions you can talk to your students' union, your university or college's quality assurance office, or contact QAA.

BIMM College Staff Roles - Quality Assurance

Of course we are **all** responsible for quality assurance, but below is a summary of the formal breakdown of quality management in HE at BIMM:

- **Executive Principals:** Members of the BIMM Group Executive Management team with executive responsibility for all aspects of the delivery of the curriculum and academic standards and quality, and the quality and enhancement of the student experience within their group of colleges.

- **College Principals:** Overall responsibility for the delivery of the curriculum and management of established College staff and tutors.

- **Heads of Student Services:** Responsible for all student support issues and general administration. Chair of the Mitigating Evidence Committee (MEC).

- **Head(s) of Education:** Responsible for the standards and quality of HE courses and liaison with HE partner institutions. Also samples marking through verification process and observes teaching.

- **Student Support Officers:** Responsible for all student support issues.

- **Exams Officers:** Manage and support assessment and exams, support the work of the exam boards working closely with the HE Administrator.

- **HE Administrators:** Receive student module assignments and distributes to markers, enter marks and check arrays with Module or Course Leaders, prepares matrices for boards, minutes meetings, posts finalised marks.

- **University Partner contacts**: Main points of contact with awarding bodies; general overview of quality assurance and development for HE and relevant provision.

- **University Link Tutors:** Support BIMM HE teams, monitor quality and report to awarding bodies.

- **Course Leaders**: Lead the delivery of and monitor quality and sample marking for relevant courses, manage Module Leaders, co-ordinate assessments and re-sits with Module Leaders.

- **Heads of Department (HODS)**: Manage the alignment of subject based curriculum areas, delivery of teaching and the student engagement and quality of creative outputs in their department.

- **Module Leaders (MODS)**: Oversee the academic and practical modules, including the preparation of lesson plans, notes and assessment in consultation with Course Leaders. Also sample marking and check grades prior to exam boards.

- **Tutors**: Update lesson plans, prepares notes, delivers content and acts as first marker for taught modules.