UCD Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement Policy
v2.4, 15 November 2018

Policy owner	UCD Quality Office	**Approval date and body**	ACEC (13 December 2018)

1.   Purpose

University College Dublin is a dynamic community of students, scholars and staff committed to performing at the highest standards. The University's aim is to provide a stimulating and innovative environment for teaching, learning and research. The University wishes to assure quality teaching, learning, research and service delivery through a regular review and improvement process. Its approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement, as set out in this policy, is to learn from best practice, locally and internationally, and benchmark against leading research universities.

The aim of the University's quality assurance and quality enhancement policy is to enhance the effectiveness of its core activities of learning, teaching, research and their effective management. This policy also extends to UCD's collaborative and transnational arrangements. The policy addresses all areas of University activity taking cognisance of their contribution to, and alignment with, the University's Strategic Goals.

UCD is committed to embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across all of its activities in line with University strategy and the *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*[1]. This ensures that the entire University community can work and learn in an environment that is inclusive and is defined by dignity and respect. The University wants to ensure that everyone in UCD is treated fairly. The University recognises that integrating Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into policies and decision-making structures will help achieve a positive teaching and learning experience for staff and students. UCD acknowledges that this will allow it to build on its core values as an institution and continue to deliver a world-class learning experience for students and an inclusive work environment.

2.   Definitions

As defined in the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)*, "Quality assurance (QA) is a term generally used to describe the processes that seek to ensure that the learning environment (including teaching and research) reaches an acceptable threshold of quality. QA is also used to describe the enhancement of education and training provision and the standards attained by learners."[2] Quality enhancement is the process of continuous improvement. The University operates an integrated system for quality assurance and enhancement which contributes to the achievement of the University's strategic objectives.

3.   Scope

The University is responsible for the academic standards of awards made in its name, and for ensuring that the quality of learning experiences is adequate and appropriate, to enable students to achieve these standards. In order to discharge those responsibilities, the University has a range of systems and procedures for assuring and enhancing the academic standards of awards and the quality of its educational provision. These mechanisms include:

- Regular Peer Review of Academic and Support Units;
- Robust programme approval and curriculum review processes;

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[1] UCD Document Library – *UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*
[2] Section 1.5, *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)*

- Robust approval, monitoring and review of collaborative taught programme arrangements;
- Module evaluation;
- Extern Examiner Reports;
- Established procedures for the appointment of staff and a comprehensive range of programmes for their ongoing professional development;
- Student Representation; e.g. Student/Staff Consultative Committees of equivalent; and membership of cross-institutional committees, such as Academic Council Quality Enhancement Committee; University Programme Board; and UCD Governing Authority;
- Systematic student participation and feedback in QA/QE processes;
- Regular review of QA/QE processes.

The University's implementation of its quality assurance and quality enhancement procedures, also enable it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act, 2012*.

4.   Principles

The *UCD Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement Policy* is guided by the following principles:

4.1 Quality teaching, learning, research and support services, and continuous improvement are core values. Quality assurance and continuous improvement are understood to be the joint responsibility of staff, management, and the collegial and governance bodies of the University.

4.2 Benchmarking and evidence based approach. The University evaluates its achievements against appropriate national and international benchmarks. Its quality assurance processes are evidence-based, where outcomes and feedback from stakeholders (including students, staff, employers and the community, as appropriate) will provide the basis for analyses and conclusions on which improvements are planned.

4.3 Collegiality. The University's processes reflect the principles of rigorous peer review, as we aim to identify areas for improvement, to foster collaboration and exchanges of best practice and to encourage an ethos of critical self-evaluation.

The key features of the University's quality assurance and enhancement process are:

4.4 A commitment to widespread involvement of staff, students and stakeholders in the quality assurance process;

4.4.1   Critical self-evaluation and rigorous peer review of academic and service areas by Review Groups whose membership will be diverse and include both internal University staff and external members, all of whom will be independent of the unit under review. In the case of an external review of the effectiveness of the institution's quality assurance/quality enhancement processes, the Review Group membership will comprise a student and peer experts, all of whom will be external to UCD;

4.4.2   Methodical collection of evidence relating to quality assurance activities, including, as appropriate: service satisfaction and student experience, benchmarking against external reference points;

4.4.3   External assessment of professional programmes as appropriate, through accreditation and international review;

4.4.4   Multiple avenues for student and staff input to quality assurance and quality enhancement such as: Periodic School Quality Review; Module Evaluation and Programme Review;

4.4.5   Publish impartial and objective reports of quality reviews of academic and service units;

4.4.6   Provision of opportunities and support for the continuing professional development of staff.

4.5 Robust and accountable University governance, management and decision-making relating to the quality assurance and quality enhancement policy framework.

    4.5.1   Effective organisational structures to oversee quality assurance processes and the development and implementation of quality improvement plans;

    4.5.2   A regular cycle of reviews of academic and service providers;

    4.5.3   A process for monitoring the progress of implementing recommendations arising from Quality Review Reports;

    4.5.4   A commitment to identify, share and implement examples of good practice, across the University;

    4.5.5   The University will periodically monitor the effectiveness of its quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms to ensure that they are operating in accordance with best practice.

4.6 A commitment to assessing outcomes and processes against the highest external standards

    4.6.1   Formal links with a number of the world's leading universities; national and international benchmarking of academic standards and service provision;

    4.6.2   National and international benchmarking of quality assurance processes with comparable research-led universities;

    4.6.3   The University will work constructively with external agencies, in particular Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

5. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of all relevant parties are outlined as follows:

- **Academic Council Quality Enhancement Committee (ACQEC)**
  As detailed in its terms of reference[3], the ACQEC will act with authority delegated by Academic Council, in order to make decisions in the area of quality assurance and standards; will approve institutional quality assurance developments which articulate with University Strategy or policy and/or with external Quality Assurance requirements; will provide strategic direction to relevant University staff and committees on institutional and national quality assurance developments; will oversee the delivery of the University Quality Assurance Framework within its remit, by receiving and considering relevant reports, identifying trends/issues and recommending appropriate action, as required; will lead strategic enhancement activities relating to the University's Quality Assurance Framework; and will lead the University's engagement and appropriate with external Quality Assurance Frameworks, and ensure appropriate compliance with such Frameworks.

- **UCD Academic and Support Units**
  As detailed in the Quality Review Process Guidelines[4], Periodic Quality Reviews of Academic and Support Units are conducted on a 7-year cycle. The University's strategic and holistic approach to academic and support unit review acknowledges that the various aspects of a unit's operations (strategy and organisation, teaching and learning, research and resources, core services) are inter-related and ensures that members of the unit come together to reflect upon what they are trying to achieve in all aspects of their work, and how these different areas of activity impact upon one another. All members of the unit are included in the review and are expected to engage, as appropriate, in discussions and the preparation of all materials, as a collegial activity.

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[3] ACQEC Terms of Reference
[4] UCD Quality Review Process Guidelines

- **UCD Quality Office**

  UCD is a dynamic community of students, scholars and staff committed to performing at the highest standards. The University's aim is to provide a stimulating and innovative environment for teaching, learning and research. The University assures the quality of its teaching, learning, research and service delivery through a range of quality mechanisms including a periodic review and improvement process. The UCD Quality Office is a unit within the UCD Office of the Registrar and Vice-President for Academic Affairs which provides advice and assistance to staff and units undertaking periodic quality review.

  Under the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012)*, Irish universities are required to establish formal quality review procedures. The UCD Quality Office ensures that UCD meets its statutory obligations and is aligned with relevant national and international Higher Education Quality Frameworks, including the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* and the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*.

The University regularly reviews its approach to quality, to ensure that it remains appropriate and fit-for-purpose. The effectiveness of the University's approach to quality is benchmarked and evaluated through ongoing reflection on, for example:

- Mapping UCD practice to relevant external references, such as the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)* and the QQI *Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners (2015);*
- Outcomes of external QQI Institutional Review;
- Outcomes of other external reviews by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs);
- Feedback from external and internal quality reviewers;
- Reports from Extern Examiners;
- Student feedback;
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) agreed with the Higher Education Authority.

6.   Related documents

Implementation of this policy supports University compliance with:

- *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012*;
- QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines, 2016;*
- *UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, 2018.*

UCD's *Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement Policy* is also aligned with other associated external guidance, including:

- *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015 (ESG);*
- QQI *Sector Specific QA Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies, 2016;*
- QQI *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015;*
- QQI *Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines, 2016.*

7.   Version history

This policy was approved by the Academic Council Committee on Quality (ACCQ) on 16 June 2010 and minor editorial updates have been made on an ongoing basis and these have been approved by ACCQ. The name of the ACCQ was changed in 2017 to the Academic Council Quality Enhancement Committee (ACQEC). On 8 November 2016, the University Management Team (UMT) approved a new *UCD Policy Management Framework*[5] which requires all University-level policies to be approved by Governing Authority, Academic Council, Academic Council Executive Committee or the University Management Team. This policy has

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[5] UCD Policy Management Framework

therefore been updated in accordance with the new *UCD Policy Management Framework* and submitted to the appropriate committee for approval.

Version and Date	Status/Committee
v1.0, 16 June 2010	Academic Council Committee on Quality (ACCQ)
v2.0, December 2017	Minor editorial updates made on an ongoing basis and approved by ACCQ (or ACQEC)
v2.1, 5 September 2018	Minor editorial updates from the UCD Director of Quality
v2.1, 17 October 2018	Academic Council Quality Enhancement Committee (ACQEC)
v2.2, 18 October 2018	Addition of EDI text to section 1 as follow-up to ACQEC
v2.3, 15 November 2018	Editorial updates following further feedback from ACQEC, the University Secretariat, and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager
v2.4, 15 November 2018	Editorial updates from the UCD Director of Quality
v2.4, 13 December 2018	Academic Council Executive Committee (ACEC) (**approved**)