Quality Enhancement Review

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About the Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for Quality Enhancement Review (QER) and has links to the QER handbook and other informative documents.[1] You can also find more information about the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).[2]

About this review

This is the Technical Report of the QER conducted by QAA at Cardiff Metropolitan University. The Review Visit was originally scheduled to take place during May 2020. This was after the national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the

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Overarching judgement about Cardiff Metro politan University

Based on the information presented, the review team judges that:

- Cardiff Metropolitan University meets the requirements of the ESG Part 1 for internal quality assurance.
- Cardiff Metropolitan University meets the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

This is a positive judgement, which means the provider has robust arrangements for securing academic standards, managing academic quality and for enhancing the quality of the student experience

underrepresented in higher education, including those with protected characteristics and those who have experienced socioeconomic and/or geographic disadvantage, particularly in areas of economic disadvantage in South Wales. Student experience, including enhancing the student journey, is a key focus; increasing the number of students studying through the medium of Welsh is a strategic goal. Employability is a strategic priority and CMU offers strong support for entrepreneurship, embedded within the curriculum and strengthened by input from the Centre for Entrepreneurship located on its Llandaff Campus.

7 The University is particularly focused on addressing local and global challenges by contributing to the development of inclusive economic growth and a sustainable environment for future generations in line with the *Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*.

1.4 Commentary on the preparation for the review, including how the provider and students worked in partnership in review preparation

8 Following an initial lead by the Senior Quality Advisor in the Quality Enhancement Directorate (QED), the University established a Project Board led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Engagement) working in partnership through monthly meetings with the Students' Union and the Student Voice and Engagement Lead. CMU adopted a collegial approach to the preparation of documentation and the Change Report was written by a consultant with input from key members of staff.

9 The University asked the review team to consider five areas of focus, selected to reflect areas of current and future enhancement: Student Engagement, and Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility (both drawing upon the University's eponymous thematic strategy); and Partnership (drawing in part from CMU's *Looking Out International Strategy).* Two further areas of focus had been chosen by the University as areas where there were identified challenges: The Use of Data to Drive Quality; and Graduate Employability.

1.5 Brief summary of the nature and rationale for the particular areas of focus of the review in the self-evaluation

10 The University proposed five areas of focus, selected to reflect areas of enhancement at different levels of development: Student Engagement; Partnership; Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility; The Use of Data to Drive Quality; and Graduate Employability.

11 Student engagement is a key focus of the University's strategic plan. CMU is committed to investment in the student journey to enhance its student experience through a focus on improving learning, teaching and student support on campus, reaching out to its partner colleges in Wales and integrating its global partners. Partnership is an essential element in the Strategic Plan and CMU engages with a number of partners that are seen as crucial to achieving its transnational education, research, civic engagement, community development and innovation ambitions. Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility is a key CMU strength, the strategy based on four pillars: being at the heart of the community; transforming lives; empowering active citizens; and growth and prosperity.

12 Two further areas of focus were chosen as areas where there were identified challenges. While data systems at CMU are regarded as mature and well-understood, the University seeks to enable staff and students to benefit from a holistic view of the data that is available across the institution to enhance decision-making and as a vehicle for enhancement. The University is developing its Graduate Employability agenda to enable students to better understand their transferable skill sets and to expand knowledge about opportunities available to them beyond their degree subject and beyond the local and traditional labour markets.

1.6 Summary of the provider 's follow- up to t he previous review

13 The previous QAA institutional review (hybrid model) in 2014 resulted in five recommendations and a number of areas of good practice. The University developed an Action Plan in consultation with staff and the Student Union (SU)

2 Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1 Strategic approach to enhancing the student experience

19 The provider's approach to enhancing the student experience is governed by its Student Engagement Strategy. The Strategy was created in 2018 and is closely aligned with the institution's overarching Strategic Plan and the objectives of the Fee and Access Plan. The Strategy is designed to promote three core aims - strengthening partnership working with students; embedding a student-centred approach to service delivery; enhancing the physical, social, cultural and recreational environment - and is structured into four thematic areas: curriculum, portfolio, co-curriculum and environment. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Engagement) is responsible for overseeing the Strategy's implementation. A network of key staff and university teams, including the Quality Enhancement Directorate (QED) and Associate Deans for Student Engagement (ADSEs), work closely with the Students' Union and are critical to the strategy's implementation.

20 The Strategy is underpinned by the Student Engagement Policy which was approved in 2019, following a consultation period with staff and students. The Policy contains seven guiding principles for student engagement including: that the University's approach will focus on success; all taught programmes will include equitable engagement opportunities for all; student engagement data will be used to support student learning; and regular contact will be maintained with each student. The team found that the University is making good progress with respect to student engagement and is on a positive trajectory. Work against the principles in certain areas - for instance, induction and personal tutoring - is well developed and viewed positively by students we6u0()2.7 (oped and v)-2 (i)2.6 (ea-2 (i6 (l)2.6)166 (t)

between students and the governing body, helping to ensure that decisions are taken based on a sound understanding of the student experience.

24 The institution has a range of committees and reviews which involve students, including Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs), Annual Programme Reviews (APR) and Validation; and Periodic Review panels. Its approach to its partnership with students in managing the quality of learning is summarised in its Student Participation in Quality Processes Policy which sets out the broad approach to student participation in quality processes. Students participating in panels are sourced through the Students' Union and appointed by the Quality Enhancement Directorate. The number of panellists has grown modestly since 2018-19.

25 The team was provided with numerous other examples of collaboration with

two-week Summer School to coincide with Adult Learners' Week, preparatory courses for

students to enter the field of education, along with joint initiatives to support employability.

2.8 Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

54 The provider's approach to enhancing the student experience is governed by its Student Engagement Strategy, underpinned by its Student Engagement Policy. The University's approach to enhancing the student experience is student-centred and is effective; the strategic framework for enhancing the student experience is regularly reviewed and includes significant consultation with students. The role of the Associate Deans Student Engagement is key in consolidating student engagement across the University and the partnership with students. Complemented by the work of the Students' Union through its student representation structure, particular attention is paid to the needs of its diverse student population. This has been particularly evident in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The University has provided evidence of its support to students in their development as learners including a Personal Tutoring Policy ensuring consistency across the University, a Learning Analytics dashboard, and the development of EDGE (see paragraph 43) as core elements of the student experience. Library and IT services are commended for their proactive support. The review team noted the positive experiences of students studying through the medium of Welsh, including work-based learning in the fields of health and education.

3 Supporting the enhancement of learning and teaching

3.1 Strategic approach to forward planning, including the use of information to identify priorities designed to enhance learning and teaching, and approaches to implementation and evaluation

55 The University systematically uses a range of measures centred on the Strategic Plan 2017-18 to 2022-23, associated enabling strategies and Measures of Success to track annual progress relating to financial sustainability, student satisfaction, retention and outcomes, access, learning and teaching, research and innovation and staff. These are discussed at programme, school, university management and Board of Governor level in order to help the University inform its priorities. The University's strategic approach to forward planning is set out in a number of thematic strategy documents alongside the Strategic Plan.

56 Strategies are monitored by the Board of Governors, informed by regular formal reports from Management Board and Academic Board and by the SU Officers, Vice-Chancellor and other senior staff. There is a comprehensive range of documentation demonstrating the mapping process that has been undertaken to the ESG Part 1 and the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

57 The Strategic Plan links to a range of strategies designed to focus on key aspects - for example, the Research and Innovation Strategy, the Looking Out International Strategy, the Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility Strategy, People Strategy, Digital Strategy and the Finance Strategy. There are also clear links to all school strategies - for example, in the School of Management strategy there are stated links to financial stability, research and innovation, internationalisation and civic engagement. In addition, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy ensures that the key foci of university-wide strategies are embedded in curricula, with links to professional standards and the skills of staff.

58 The review team met with senior staff, and members of the Board of Governors, who confirmed the use of a range of sources of data to evaluate performance and identify priorities designed to enhance learning and teaching.

59 The review team heard that performance against key performance indicators is monitored continuously, and indicators are updated annually, linked to the Programme Enhancement Plan (PEP) process, previously Annual Programme Review (APR). The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Student Engagement holds overall responsibility for quality enhancement, with Deputy Deans and Associate Deans for Student Engagement at school level. The Quality Enhancement Directorate (QED) supports schools in enhancement activities, ensuring staff are developed to deliver innovative teaching and enhance the student learning experience. The QED maintains a close relationship with the Students' Union in order to enhance the student experience, including through joint projects. The review team found that this is a particularly effective approach and commends the impact of the Quality Enhancement Directorate (QED) initiatives in ensuring the consistent management and enhancement of the quality of the student learning experience.

3.2 Approaches to managing change in approaches to learning and teaching

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3.3 Approaches to supporting innovation, identifying and sharing good practice

64 The review team found that the University is committed to enhancing the student learning experience by supporting innovative approaches and, in particular, having processes which identify good practice for dissemination, for example, through workshops, seminars and peer mentoring. The team met with senior and teaching staff at the visit, including staff from partner institutions, who confirmed the ethos of support across the organisation, for students and staff, and the identification and dissemination of good practice.

65 The University's approach to the support of innovation and the identification and sharing of good practice is based on its enhancement-led Strategic Plan and the role of the Quality Enhancement Directorate (QED). Quality processes are designed to identify good practice, for example, in Programme Enhancement Plans (PEPs), which feed into school and management reporting systems in addition to dissemination via QED workshops and online reporting.

66 The University's Quality Enhancement Directorate (QED) was formed in 2018, integrating quality assurance and quality enhancement and providing support to schools in their continuous enhancement. The QED works in partnership with the Students' Union, working on a number of initiatives to enhance the student experience. A Quality Enhancement Conference takes place each year highlighting good practice from across the University and is also open to local and TNE partners.

67 The University has a longstanding Staff Peer Learning and Development Scheme which was updated recently to emphasise the enhancement ethos and is managed by the QED. The scheme is designed to provide support and opportunities for reflection and also to identify good practice and development opportunities. While face-to-face activity is currently curtailed, staff confirmed that online activity continues, with much appreciated IT support, including for partner organisations.

68 The review team found that there is an ethos of identifying and sharing of good practice at the University which has been enhanced during the pandemic by increased use of online portals to share presentations and events, many at school level but then shared globally.

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opportunities are available via the CPD pages on the QED website, plus a range of workshops and sessions through the academic year. Staff are encouraged to learn or improve their Welsh language skills. All training opportunities are also available to

78 External examiner reports broadly confirm that the currency, relevance and coherence of programmes are appropriate and aligned with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ) and Subject Benchmark Statements. Any concerns raised by external examiners are addressed through team responses to the report, in Programme Enhancement Plans, and through formal reporting mechanisms at school and management level. Good practice is similarly noted for dissemination through the reporting processes and at seminars, workshops and annual enhancement conferences.

79 The review team found that the developing use of data based on student characteristics, engagement and outcomes across the University through data dashboards, together with timely student support, and robust and effective reporting processes, is leading to effective enhancements of learning and teaching.

4 Academic standards and quality processes

4.1 Key features of the provider 's approach to managing quality and how students are involved in contributing to the manag ement of the quality of learning

80 Responsibility for the quality of the student learning experience and for the standards of the awards made to students lies with the Academic Board. Academic Board is accountable to the Board of Governors for these matters and provides an Annual Assurance Report which, in turn, allows the governors to confirm that the University has complied with the five HEFCW quality assurance governance statements. Academic Board delegates detailed oversight of quality and standards to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) which is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Student Engagement currently and, for the last two years, by the Director of Learning Enhancement. The Pro-Vice Chancellor also chairs the Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement Committee (LTSEC) which is responsible, on behalf of Academic Board, for overseeing all aspects of the quality enhancement of taught programmes. LTSEC is a more discursive body than (A)1.9-2.1 ( )000.002 Tc (c)-2 S qualy lhand . Theaught fd S fyhing a (The)10x.8hanc0.007.6 ()-

student progression are used by the Deputy Deans of the schools to produce annual Student Experience Improvement Plans (SEIPs). At the institutional level, the ADSEs from all five schools lead a Student Voice Group (see paragraph 27), which includes representation by student union officers, that considers all sources of student opinion and monitors the outcomes of actions plans.

4.2 Key features of the approach to setting, maintain, reviewing and assessing academic standards

83 The University has in place, a range of procedures to ensure that the standards of the awards it makes are aligned with sector requirements and benchmarks. These include: assessment regulations that require robust and effective assessment; assurances from external examiners that standards applied are comparable with those in the higher education sector; programme approval and revalidation procedures that use external advisers to test whether courses and qualifications are aligned with the FHEQ qualification descriptors, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, and professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements where appropriate; and that these procedures are consistent with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The policies and procedures for setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards are set out in volumes 1 and 2 of the Academic Handbook which is currently being reviewed.

84 Evidence is gathered across 11 dimensions to demonstrate maintenance of the standards of awards and support for student learning. These are reported to Academic Board, and subsequently to the Board of Governors and follow a model suggested by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) covering key indicators such as the judgements and reports of external examiners, evaluations by PSRBs, the outcomes of internal periodic and annual reviews of programmes, student assessment outcomes, a wide range of measures of student satisfaction and experience, and evaluations of student engagement in academic governance. Measures of learning support for students are also collated and evaluated by professional service departments, such as QED and Library and Information Services, which report on the quality of taught and research degrees delivered both at the University and its collaborativs ittrt on provoov oi and (i)29 (P(o)10.(ov)-2 (ng) [(C)2be4 (on S)2 (er)-6 ((er)-6 (e(m)-5(degr)

the new system was working well and allowing modules and programmes to be monitored during the course of the academic year and adjusted more quickly where problems of quality or standards were emerging. A review of the implementation of the new annual monitoring system by QED was planned to take place in spring 2021 and would allow AQSC to determine which elements of the PEP process and which elements of the APR process should be retained in the future.

4.3 Use of external reference points in quality processes

87 The University's management of quality and standards applies policies and procedures designed to meet a range of external academic reference points. These are principally: the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Part 1; the quality assurance national frameworks (FHEQ, CQFW and Subject Benchmark Statements); and the advice and guidance set out in the 12 thematic sections of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). Remapping exercises had taken place regularly to ensure the University's policies and practices remained consistent with these external reference points.

88 The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 resulted in various additions and amendments to the regulatory and quality frameworks applied by the University. In particular, in June 2020, HEFCW issued the circular 'CV-19 Impact on HE Providers: Funding, Regulation and Reporting Implications W20/11HE'. This asked universities to observe the Quality Code together with CV-19-related supplements. Also, in June, the QAA published a series of guidance and briefing notes to assist providers in observing the Quality Code while adapting to the pandemic. The University revised its policies to take account of these changes to reporting and regulatory requirements.

4.4 Commentary on action taken since the previous review and identification of matters arising from the Prior Information Pack not otherwise explored

89 The constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic required changes to student assessment from March 2020. Due to the exceptional and unprecedented constraints on student gatherings during the pandemic, Academic Board agreed that module leaders could change assessment types during the upcoming assessment period. New assessment procedures were put in place that involved two main changes. Firstly, a 'no detriment' safety net policy was applied to 2019-20 modules where the module delivery had commenced no later than 30 June 2020. This policy ensured that students' final academic year average marks were no lower than the average attained through formal assessment completed prior to 20 March 2020. Secondly, formal seated examinations were replaced with online assessments and electronically submitted open-book examinations together with the opportunity of an automatic two-week extension to the original submission date for any written work. These changes were put in place to allow students time to make any necessary adjustments to their ways of working. The changes to assessment methods and examination arrangements were communicated to, and agreed as appropriate by, external examiners, relevant PSRBs and the Students' Union. The Student Union President and Vice-President, as full members, also attended the monthly meetings of the Board of Governors and the Combined Academic Board - the latter being the merged Academic Board and Management Board, done to streamline decision-making in light of the pandemic - and contributed to the decision-making on teaching and assessment during 2020.

90 The pattern of undergraduate degree results in the summer of 2020 was reported to LTSEC in October 2020. The proportion of upper honours (first and second honours classifications) awarded in 2019-20 to all UK-based undergraduate students increased to 79.9%, representing a 9% rise on the previous academic year. The sector average for upper honours in 2018-19 was 76.7%. The increase in 2020 followed rises in the previous three

the team confirmed that they have effective access to online teaching and learning, including lectures and seminars, and to a VLE providing the information and resources they needed to pursue their programmes of study and to submit their work for assessment. These systems have become fundamental in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the transfer of

responses to the report, in Programme Enhancement Plans, and through formal reporting mechanisms at school and management level. Good practice is similarly noted for dissemination through the reporting processes and at seminars, workshops and annual enhancement conferences.

100 The review team found that the developing use of data based on student characteristics, engagement and outcomes across the University through data dashboards, together with timely student support, and robust and effective reporting processes, is leading to effective enhancements of learning and teaching.

4.7 Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standard0 Td [(E)1 (f)735.4 Tm

105 The University identified partnerships as an area of strength for this review; senior staff informed the team that these strengths included the University's values as an institution in providing opportunities to students who would not normally have access to British higher education, the University's global outlook, the mobility between partners and the opportunities for partners to feed into curriculum design and development.

111 The University sets out its policies and procedures for complaints and academic appeals in its Academic Handbook. Students studying through partners are expected to raise complaints with their institutions and,

Modern University of Business and Science (MUBS) Lebanon. This resulted in a tailored partnership review, robust action plan and careful monitoring through the University's committee structure, with actions resulting in improvements in the quality of the student experience.

121 Appropriate exit strategies are also in place for the termination of a partnership. Currently, the University has three partnerships in teach-out including a long-standing partnership with the London School of Commerce (LSC), expected to be completed in March 2021 for taught programmes and September 2022 for research degrees. The team noted the regular and detailed reporting through the University's committee structure, ensuring robust oversight of these teach out processes.

122 The team found that moderators and link tutors are central to, and enhance, the operational oversight of, and provision of academic support for, collaborative partnerships; this model of academic support has recently been reviewed. In discussion with staff at the University, the team established that, in general, moderators (subject specialists) work at programme level and link tutors at partnership level - the latter supported by subject specialists within their schools. Moderators and link tutors normally visit partners at least twice a year, recently communicating electronically, and produce two reports, the first being developmental and the second a full report, reporting on academic standards, the quality of the student learning experience and noting any actions necessary to enhance provision; an overview of these reports which identifies strengths and areas for improvement is presented to CPC. Link tutors and moderators are members of partner programme committees which are attended by partner student representatives and meet with students during their visits (see paragraph 72); they also deliver partner staff training, supplementing those activities offered by the University such as the Annual Partner Conference. The role carried out by moderators and link tutors is highly valued by partners.

123 Assessment tasks are set and internally moderated by partners and then moderated by the moderator or link tutor prior to being sent to the external examiner. Wherever possible, the same external examiner is used for the home programme and its franchise. External examiners confirm equivalence of standards across home and collaborative provision and partner staff see and respond to external examiner reports. An annual review of examiners' reports across home programmes and partner provision is presented to AQSC and CPC, summarising good practice and areas for improvement.

124 As noted above, the University has an appropriate and effective management and governance structure for the oversight of collaborative partnerships; its procedures for approval, monitoring and review are long standing, and in some instances have been enhanced since the previous review. Procedures are generally the same as for on-campus provision with additional mechanisms in place as appropriate. Diligent oversight of quality and standards is maintained when teach-out is in progress and where serious concerns were raised in 2019 in relation to one TNE partnership, appropriate and timely action was taken. The team commends the well-embedded and robust oversight of TNE partnerships which ensures that academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience are not at risk.

125 Further education college partnerships are generally subject to the same oversight mechanisms as noted above. During the review visit, the team spoke with students from the University's two current further education college partners. Students from one partner expressed satisfaction with their learning experience. However, the team found that four students on a programme franchised to the other partner were very dissatisfied with their experience and, in particular, with the way complaints had been handled, how their voices are heard, and with the turnover and quality of some teaching staff. The team heard from the University that some students on this programme had been very vocal from the start of the

year and how close contact had been maintained with students at school and programme levels. Minutes of the June 2020 programme committee show a number of issues had been raised by students. This dissatisfaction was also reflected in the 2018-19 NSS outcomes with overall satisfaction in 2018-19 being 27 per cent. In 2019-20, after action was taken to address the 2018-19 outcomes, overall satisfaction increased to 64 per cent, although this is still below the sector average. No issues were raised in the most recent external examiner