

SETTING AND MAINTAINING ACADEMIC STANDARDS POLICY

15 The University's courses are regulated by, among others, the Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Bar Standards Board.

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This policy sets out the qualifications frameworks and sector-recognised standards used by the University to assure the standards of awards.

UK and European reference points for academic standards

- 20 Reference points are agreed requirements or points of comparison which are used by degree-awarding bodies to ensure consistency in academic standards.
- 21 **In order to secure threshold academic standards, the University:**

- 24 The following key reference points are used by the University:
- 24.1 *The Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England* (OfS) that sets out the overall approach to regulation, including standards.
 - 24.2 *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ)*, that sets out the different qualification levels and national expectations of standards of achievement
 - 24.3 *The Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England (Credit Framework)*.
 - 24.4 Guidance on qualification characteristics (eg *Statement* and *Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body*)
 - 24.5 *The Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement*.
 - 24.6 *Subject benchmark statements* which set out the nature and characteristics of degrees (generally bachelor's with honours) and the outcomes graduates are expected to achieve in specific subject areas.
- 25 The relationship between these key reference points used by the University is shown in the table below:

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The Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England¹ (Credit Framework)

34 The University considers and takes account of the *Credit Framework* which provides guidance on the use of credit in the design of programmes leading to the main higher education qualifications awarded in England and Northern Ireland and complements the FHEQ.

35 Credit is a measure of both the amount of learning expected (the number of credits) and its depth, complexity and intellectual demand (the credit level).

36 Within the UK, one credit represents ten notional hours of learning (an estimate of how long it will take a typical student, on average, to achieve the learning outcomes including not only formal contact hours but time spent in preparation for classes, private or independent reading and study, revision and the completion of assessment).

37 The University uses this guide as a basis for setting the credit value of a module or programme before it is offered to students.

38 Credit is awarded when the specific set of learning outcomes for a module or programme have been successfully achieved as demonstrated through completion of assessment to a threshold standard.

39 Within the context of the minimum credit values set out in the credit frameworks, the University may structure programmes in whatever ways are appropriate to the achievement of the aims of the qualifications, their strategic approaches to teaching and learning, and the characteristics of the associated student groups.

40 Credit frameworks potentially facilitate the transfer of credit between programmes and between providers but this process is not automatic. The University

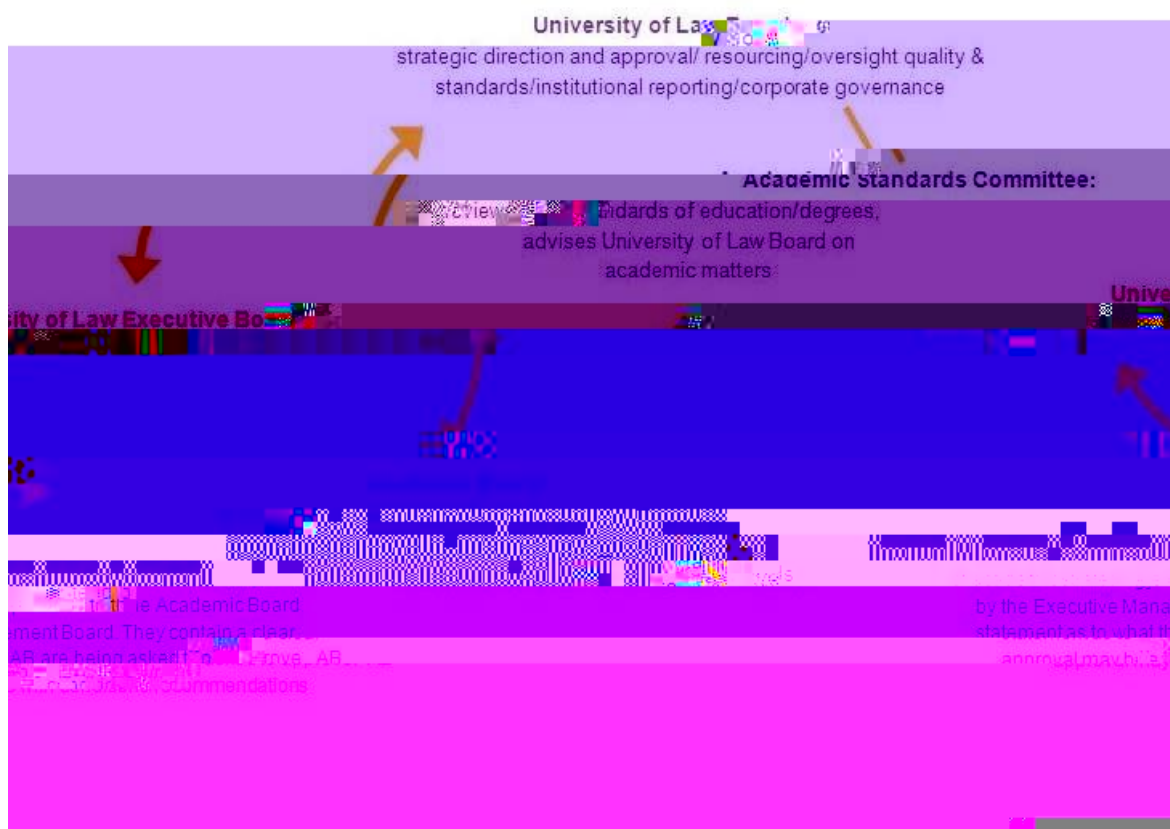
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53 The membership of the Academic Board comprises ex officio members, internal members, four external members from academic higher education or professional education (at least two of whom should be from a legal background) and four students from the current or recent student body.

54 The University has mechanisms in place to ensure that decisions on academic standards and quality of learning opportunities are taken separately from those which relate to business and development (though they may run in parallel) in order that academic standards are not compromised by business imperatives.

55 The interface between academic and corporate governance is shown in the diagram below:



Procedural approach

Awards Framework

56 The University's Awards Framework sets out the qualifications that can be awarded, any defining requirements or characteristics for their design and, where academic credit is used, definitions of the volume and level of credit for those

qualifications. The Awards Framework is consistent with the requirements of the *FHEQ* and the *Credit Framework*.

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programme sets out the intended learning outcomes and attributes for the programme as a whole. The definitive record is set out in a Definitive Course

- (a) an explanation of what makes the programme distinctive
 - (b) assessment regulations
 - (c) student support
 - (d) methods for evaluating standards achieved and the quality of the academic experience, including consideration of feedback
- 67 The Definitive Course Document is used as the reference point for the delivery of the programme by teaching staff, its assessment by internal and external examiners, by PSRBs as appropriate, by QAA reviewers and in subsequent monitoring and review. The Definitive Course Document is updated as and when any amendments to the programme or qualification, or its learning outcomes, are made through authorised approval processes.
- 68 For every module or individual unit of learning that leads to the award of credit or contributes to a qualification there is a Module Descriptor which is a formal record of the module's indicative content and structure, assessed learning outcomes, developmental learning outcomes, its assessment scheme and its credit rating. The Module Descriptors form part of the Definitive Course Document.

Design and approval of modules, programmes and qualifications

69 The University establishes and consistently implements processes for the approval of programmes that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in line with the UK Awards Framework.

Key aims and practices

70 The University is responsible for the formal approval of academic programmes leading to its awards.

Procedural approach

71 The University ensures, through rigorous formal programme approval in accordance with its policies under Q1: Course Design and Development, that programmes meet or exceed UK threshold academic standards. UK threshold academic standards are secured by:

71.1 locating each programme at the appropriate level of the [FHEQ](#)

- 71.2 ensuring that the proposed learning outcomes are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor in the [FHEQ](#)
- 71.3 taking account of guidance on qualification characteristics
- 71.4 assigning credit values, where UK credit is awarded, in alignment with the [Credit Framework](#)
- 71.5 taking account of any relevant [subject benchmark statements](#)

72 The University has policies for curriculum design and development which enable it to set academic standards above the threshold. Formal approval processes ensure that these are appropriately set by testing whether proposed modules, programmes and qualifications, the detail of which is set out in the Definitive Course Document, meet the requirements of the Awards Framework and other relevant regulations.

73 In order to secure standards, approval processes are used to determine whether the assessment scheme adequately tests the intended learning outcomes.

74 Approval will be granted for a specified period after which re-approval will be required. The re-approval process in accordance with University policies under Q1: Programme Design and Development, must re-affirm that the UK threshold academic standards, and the University's own academic standards, continue to be met.

Assessment of learning outcomes

75 The University ensures that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **UK threshold academic standards and the University's own academic standards have been satisfied.**

Key aims and practices

- 76 Assessment is used to judge student performance against the standards set.
- 77 For the purposes of the award of credit and/or qualifications, assessment is used to give students the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the relevant learning outcomes, providing robust evidence that module learning

points, using qualitative and quantitative management information (for example, student progression, completion and achievement data, external examiner reports) and other comparative data of their choosing to support these activities.

Externality

86 In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, the University uses external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the University are appropriately set and maintained.**

Key aims and principles

87 External expertise is sought when new programmes are being developed and approved and when existing programmes are being periodically reviewed. External examiners are appointed for all award bearing programmes (and usually for non-award bearing programmes) to confirm that the University's programmes are designed, delivered and assessed to the appropriate academic standard.

Procedural approach

88 The University ensures that external and independent expertise is obtained at key stages of the processes for setting and maintaining academic standards. External expertise is sought to verify not only that threshold academic standards are set by rigorous reference to the [FHEQ](#), the [Credit Framework](#), [subject benchmark statement\(s\)](#) and any other appropriate reference points, but also to confirm that the

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