

QAA Review Findings: University of Cambridge Action Plan, Final Draft for publication

Recommendation	Deadline	Action plan
<p>The University should meet the expectation for external participation in the course approval process across all programmes, as set out in the Quality Code (para 1.21)</p>	<p>Start of 2013-14</p>	<p>We have reviewed the expectations for externality as set out in indicator 3 of the Section B1 of the Code of Practice (reproduced below).</p> <p>All major changes to courses and the introduction of new programmes require approval in a number of stages which involve advice from those not directly involved in developing the programme itself, including academics from cognate disciplines and student representatives. New courses are ultimately subject to approval by the General Board on the recommendation of its Education Committee. This ensures oversight of standards at institutional level with input external to the Faculty concerned.</p> <p>However, to provide additional independence and objectivity, we will also introduce a requirement for all requests for approval of a new course to be accompanied by a supporting statement from an external adviser with appropriate subject expertise. It will be for the Faculty concerned to decide who to approach to provide this support, but they might, for example, be a member of an existing External Advisory Committee, or by an academic colleague from another institution who might be nominated as external examiner if the new course were to be approved.</p>
<p>The University should establish a central mechanism to secure institutional oversight of the fitness-</p>	<p>Start of 2013-14</p>	<p>The University is satisfied that arrangements for oversight of its published information for prospective undergraduates are appropriate, but will keep them under review.</p>

<p>for-purpose, accessibility and trustworthiness of published information (para 3.7)</p>		<p>Responsibility for published information for prospective graduates about graduate-level degree programmes rests with the Board of Graduate Studies. The Board will be requested to review arrangements to ensure the accuracy and consistency of information, and in particular the relationship between information in the Course Directory and that published on Faculty/Departmental websites.</p> <p>Responsibility for information for current students about their courses rests with Faculties and Departments. The Education Committee will set out its expectations in terms of fitness-for-purpose, accessibility and accuracy of this information, and any requirements for reference to information provided by the central University through the Student Gateway. The Education Committee will exercise institutional oversight of this published information through the usual QA processes.</p> <p>The University does not have the authority to determine the content of College websites.</p>
<p>The University should take deliberate planned steps to ensure that the nature and purpose of enhancement is clearly identified and agreed across the institution (para 4.7)</p>	<p>Start of 2013-14</p>	<p>We note that the review team was satisfied that the University met UK expectations for enhancement of student learning opportunities, but that further action is recommended.</p> <p>The University does not accept the QAA's definition of enhancement as "deliberate steps [...] at institutional level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities" if understood in the narrow sense implied in the report.</p> <p>The University aims to provide an education to all of its students of the highest level of excellence. This is borne out by a number of indicators including levels of retention rates, student satisfaction,</p>

		<p>and the employability of our graduates. The University could not deliver on this objective without continuous efforts to improve and innovate. Enhancement is at the root of our Learning and Teaching Strategy. The approach the University takes to enhancement is based upon the strongly-held conviction that academic staff and students are most effective in an environment that is supportive and participative rather than directive and managerial. This conviction directly reflects the University's democratic governance arrangements. It has long been the historic, and legal, situation for the Collegiate University and has been a successful arrangement providing high quality learning and teaching opportunities to students. This formula also works within the University; between its Schools, Faculties, Departments and the 'centre'.</p> <p>Thus there is a deliberate dual-prong approach to delivering enhancement at Cambridge: (1) Faculties, Departments and Colleges are encouraged, as resources permit, to take responsibility for their own enhancement. This means that they can develop improvements that are most meaningful to their students; (2) for an issue that cuts across the University, such as transition to University, supervisor training, gender attainment, and the experience of postgraduate taught students, it will consult appropriately and take action centrally. Greater central direction of enhancement activity would not be desirable or effective in a Cambridge context.</p>
<p>The University should ensure that its expectation that external examiners' reports for taught programmes are shared with all students is implemented across the University (para 1.11)</p>	<p>January 2014</p>	<p>The Education Committee will remind Faculties and Departments of the General Board's requirement that External Examiners' reports (redacted if necessary) are made available to all students on the course, and will monitor through the usual QA processes.</p>

<p>The University should take steps to collate and analyse the results of Faculty and Departmental student surveys as part of their routine annual quality monitoring (para 2.23)</p>	<p>End of 2013-14</p>	<p>The format of the AQU will be revised to include a request for a summary of results of Faculty and Departmental student surveys (other than lecture questionnaires) along with an outline of the Faculty/departmental action in response. A summary of any emergent themes and significant concerns will be included as part of the summary AQU report to GBEC, and action taken as appropriate.</p>
<p>The Deputy Academic Secretary ensures institutional compliance with OIA findings. Recent feedback from the OIA indicates that the number of complaints received about the University is less than the average for an institution of its type. However, the University has no oversight of appeals or complaints raised within the individual Colleges and has no immediate plans to effect this. The review team recommends that by the end of the 2013-14 academic year the University should ensure that it is informed of the nature and extent of complaints and appeals within Colleges (para 2.36).</p>	<p>End of 2013-14</p>	<p>The University will initiate discussions with the Colleges, through the Senior Tutors' Committee, subject to any University legal advice, on the most appropriate way of collecting, collating and making use of OIA judgments in respect of College provision.</p>
<p>The University, Colleges, Faculties and Departments should work collectively to put in place an integrated system of support for international students, particularly during induction (para 2.55).</p>	<p>Start of 2014-15</p>	<p>Work is being undertaken by the International Student Team, in collaboration with the Senior Tutors' Committee and with iCUSU and international student societies, to develop induction and support for international students. Representatives of Faculties, Departments and the Colleges will be consulted in the development and dissemination of good practice.</p>