Hugh Baird COLLEGE

Higher Education Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Support Strategy

2021-2025

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Quality Assurance:

UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Disseminated by:

Staff Development

College Website

To be read in conjunction with: HE Strategy

HE Student Protection Plan

HE Student Support Policy

HBC Research and Scholarly Activity Policy

University of Central Lancashire Academic Regulations

University of Cumbria Academic Regulations

Liverpool John Moore's University Academic Regulations

HBC Quality Framework and Calendar

To inspire, challenge and transform lives.

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To inspire, challenge and transform lives.

1. Vision

In pursuing its strategy, the College acknowledges the requirement to work within key regulatory and academic frameworks and expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018). To this end, the College seeks to meet the definitions of "High Quality" provision, ensuring the deployment of effective, level appropriate and industry led delivery, posing breadth, depth, pace and challenge. Furthermore, the strategy seeks to ensure that all individuals are supported throughout the Student Life Cycle through the development of staff and an inclusive approach to the curriculum offer, in addition to the provision of appropriate pastoral and academic support mechanisms.

Higher Education students at the College should therefore expect:

- A learning experience that challenges and creates excellent career opportunities

- To learn from highly committed, knowledgeable, and skilled staff

- High quality physical and supportive learning environments that utilise up to date technology to foster and develop learning

Key aim:

Ultimately the aim of the College is to produce graduates who:

- Are motivated and self-directed critical thinkers, capable of independent enquiry

- Possess both sound academic knowledge and vocational expertise

Objectives:

Drawing from both the wider College vision, the University Centre HE strategy and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Learning and Teaching), the key objectives of this teaching and learning strategy are to:

1. Provide an environment in which all students can enjoy their learning, be ambitious and have very high standards of academic and personal achievement which will enable them to progress to employment or further study.
2. Develop resources and inclusive learning environments that are of a consistently high quality, support the evolution of HE at the College, promote sustainability and inspire learning.
3. Effectively deploy systems that ensure all students receive the necessary support to continue and complete their education.
4. Focus on graduate skills and employment-based learning to ensure students are work ready on graduation both from a National and global perspective.

5. Stretch and challenge of all students to raise aspirations and Educational Gain.
6. Invest in knowledge economy through staff development and research with a College support and funding commitment.
7. Deploy effective mechanisms for both student and Institutional evaluation of delivery and provision.
8. Ensure successful digital teaching and learning and digital access

2. Approach to Teaching, learning and Support

The overarching concept underpinning the approach to Higher Education is that of independent learning which Candy (1991) suggests involves the self-development and construction of knowledge along with evaluatory and critical reasoning skills. This is a fundamental cornerstone of Higher Education and a philosophy that is set at the heart of the College's HE approach. Acknowledged within this Strategy is the recognition of a student body encompassed by a Widening Participation agenda. To effectively address identified need, therefore, there will be a continued emphasis on designing and implementing learning experiences from which students can continue to learn effectively and independently. It has long been acknowledged that FE institutions have a great deal of expertise which can be utilised effectively within Higher Education (LSDA, 2003) and, to this end, a range of approaches will be adopted based on the collective Institutional experience. In particular, the relatively small group size and close student-teacher working relationship that this cultivates are positive features of the University Centre environment which will be used to implement high impact active learning methods such as guided lectures, blended activity, seminars, role-play, simulation, peer teaching and collaborative learning activities.

In terms of student transition between levels it is acknowledged that the journey towards independent learning is a graduated one requiring approaches to support this developmental process. At level four, traditional approaches such as lectures, seminars and active learning methods encourage the accumulation of a sound knowledge base whilst the incorporation of guest speakers, visits and live briefs will ensure an effective vocational context. The initial step from level three to level four is often a challenging one for individuals and it is essential that students are supported fully in developing underpinning skills essential at this level. Where not directly addressed through specific taught module elements teaching and learning methods will underpin the development of these skills alongside any dedicated support services that eligible students may receive through Disabled Student Allowance provision. In addition, support for key underpinning skills will be further addressed through additional mechanisms such as:

• Activity led by the Student Engagement Officer (SEO) team

• Workshops provided by Library learning centre (LLC) staff

• Facilitator workshops

• Access to partner University and College specific online material

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Higher order cognitive skills such as evaluation and synthesis are encouraged and developed at level five, whilst at level six/ seven students are regarded as highly independent students able to utilise research skills effectively and apply vocational, academic, and transferable skills in order to solve complex problems unaided. At these higher levels it is recognised that whilst traditional classroom delivery will form part of the delivery approach a significant corner stone will be the use of structured academic supervision that, in part, will utilise a coaching approach.

The concept of Widening Participation is an essential priority area for the College which has a reputation for working with "non-traditional" students. In particular, this Strategy recognises the, often intricate, needs of students studying Foundation Entry Programmes at Level Three who may require additional academic support in order to ensure the development of key skills, particularly in terms of preparation for progression to Level Four. The continued development of teaching and learning strategies will help to ensure that all students are able to achieve their learning goals and benefit from an outstanding student experience. Emphasis will be placed on developing methods that not only effectively support but also provide a legitimate "HE" experience that encourage the development of wider practical professional skills such as, but not limited to, respect for other points of view; capacity to critique peer responses in a supportive manner; openness to new ideas; critical analysis and interpretation skills and confident verbal communication.

A system of aspirational target setting via the College's Progress Review process will be used to set individual student targets for each academic year of their programme. Initial starting points will be identified through an Induction Assignment with progress reviewed at regular intervals throughout the year. Whilst this process sits within academic teams, students will also be allocated to a member of the Student Engagement Officer team, on a case loaded basis, to facilitate:

- Negotiating challenging targets for successful learning through regular reviews of progress ensuring each student is developing the skills essential for progression onto further study or employment.

- Ensuring students who are 'at risk' are subject to reviews of greater regularity and action planning to address barriers to their progress.

- Ensuring all students are involved in reflective evaluation of their progress via the review system.

3. Assessment and Feedback

In line with Constructivist principles, it is recognised that assessment and feedback form a cornerstone of learning and the Strategy seeks to ensure that they are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression, and attainment.

As outlined within the Quality Code (2018), assessment should support students' learning. In line with this, therefore, assessment for learning will provide the bedrock for formative assessment strategies, allowing maximum opportunity for student self-reflection, tutor feedback and academic and vocational development:

- All assessment methods, both formative and summative meet standards of authenticity, reliability and validity and allow the effective referencing of learning outcomes.

- A rigorous schedule of internal moderation ensures the consistency of standards and is further augmented through prescribed external scrutiny.

- Module Information Packs and schemes of work acknowledge the importance of timely and supportive feedback by giving appropriate consideration to workload. Scheduling information is clear and consistent with information across all course documentation whether paper based or electronic.

- A greater depth of study and successful achievement are supported through the provision of assessment criteria to all students through handbooks and online documentation.

- Feedback and feed forward marking approaches provide students with critical, supportive, and clear identification of key areas for development designed to stretch and challenge.

- Both through course design and delivery students benefit from engagement in a wide range of formative assessment opportunities with feedback mechanisms following Black and Wiliams' (1999) medal and mission model providing maximum opportunity for individual academic development.

- A range of assessment methods is adopted to minimise opportunities for plagiarism and ensure authenticity of student work and enhance differentiation.

In terms of summative assessment this strategy should be read in conjunction with the HE Assessment Policy which outlines the procedures and practices that all HE staff within the Directorate will follow in conducting fair assessment processes. In particular, the following principles and procedures apply:

- Recognition that learning may take place in a wide variety of settings including conventional taught courses; online learning; learning outside courses; professional and employment experience; personal and leisure experience; self-directed study etc. is acknowledged in line with partner University regulations. Their recognition of prior learning policies facilitate the formal recognition of learning and experience gained elsewhere, and where appropriate, provides for credit to be attached to that learning or experience.

- The purpose of assessment is to provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the course and achieved the standard required for the award they seek.

- Special arrangements for the assessment of students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are to be made where valid supporting evidence has been made available and, where, based on this evidence, special arrangements are deemed necessary and reasonable adjustment is possible. The HE Directorate will follow procedural guidelines as stated in partner University academic regulations.

- The outcomes of assessment must reflect individual student achievement in relation to the standards required for the target award as referenced in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), Professional and/or Statutory Body requirements and appropriate subject benchmark statements as applicable.

- Assessment methods are derived from, and reflect, the variety of the learning outcomes identified for each module/programme of study at the required level. The methods used measure the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes and should accommodate and encourage creativity and originality.

- Assessment will reflect individual student achievement and relate it to a standard for each award which is recognised and maintained across Universities and other higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.

- All modules will be assessed in line with partner University academic regulations.

- All HE students are required to adhere to published partner University submission deadlines for any form of assessment. The partner University's Academic Regulations set down processes for extension requests along with the penalties for late submission of work; schemes for mitigating circumstances; and academic appeals. Students are to be signposted to these regulations via Student Handbooks.

4. Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice

As set out in the HE Strategy (2021-25), the University Centre will plan and implement a culture of staff continuous professional development (CPD) in line with the Professional Standards for Teachers and the Advance HE UK Professional Standards Framework, in order to develop research informed teaching and learning; the intention being to impact positively on the student experience in terms of:

- Student Satisfaction: Through enhancement of the curriculum/ student experience

- Attainment: Through challenging students to encompass new and emerging ideas

- Employability: Through the development of skills and ideas current within industry

In line with the findings of King & Widdowson (2009) it is acknowledged that, as a HE in FE provider, the College is not a research led institution and, as such, the definition and nature of scholarly activity must be considered within the parameters of its operation. For the purposes of this strategy the term will be used to encompass any activity that promotes currency of teaching staff and has a demonstrable impact on the curriculum and or student experience. Such activity may well fall outside of the normal CPD opportunities undertaken by staff but in all cases will be undertaken with the express aim of enhancing the student experience and being made available for peer review within the organisation.

The following list of suggested activity, taken from the HEFCE Good Practice Guide, is considered to provide the most sector relevant guide in terms of possible forms of activity, but is not exhaustive:

- Action research

- Applied/practitioner research

- Conference/event attendance

- Conference presentations/workshops

- Consultancy to industry

- Curriculum development that involves literature searching/work with an HEI

- Higher qualifications

- Industrial secondments

- Research projects

- Subject updating

- Writing for publications

The procedures for implementation and monitoring of this activity are set out within the College's Scholarly Activity Policy.

5. Digital Teaching and Learning

The term "Digital teaching and learning" is defined as:

"teaching and learning that is delivered using digital technology and involves some element of delivery in a digital environment." (Barber, M. 2021)
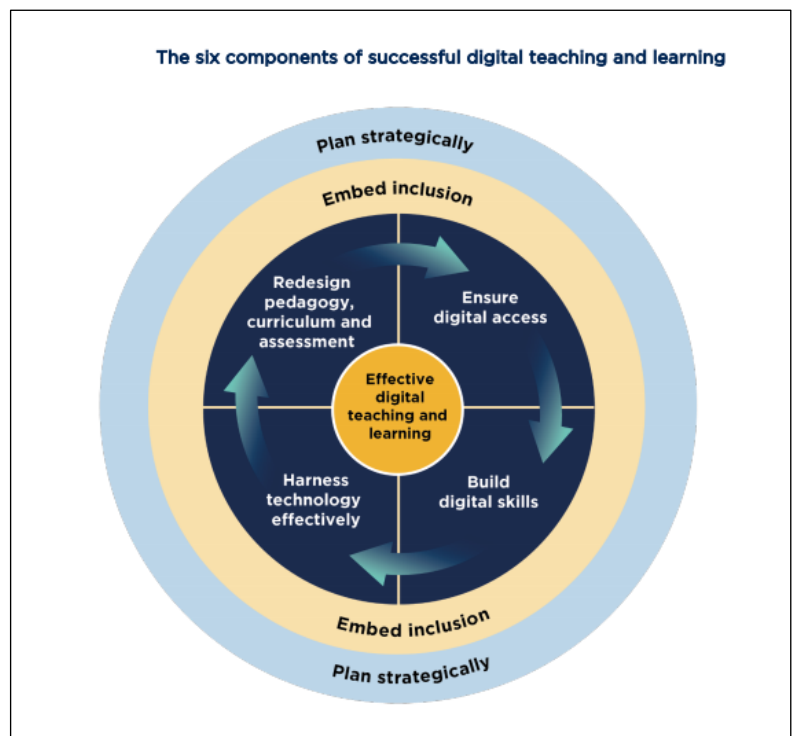
Following the 2020/21 COVID-19 Pandemic the benefits of "online learning" have been recognised by the Report of the digital teaching and learning review (ibid) as:

- Increased flexibility.
- Personalised learning.
- Increased career prospects.
- Pedagogical opportunities.

- Global opportunities

Whilst there are clear benefits to the use of technology, the fundamental approach of this strategy is to effectively draw upon key digital elements whilst utilising "face to face" delivery wherever practicable. Wherever digital approaches are deployed, the methodology will ensure digital access, (as set out in the HE Student Support Policy) and that any digital element incorporates key pedagogical concepts for effective teaching and learning, as outlined earlier in this strategy. The following approach, as outlined the OFS report, will therefore be used as a baseline:

1. Digital teaching must start with appropriately designed pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment.

2. Students must have access to the right digital infrastructure.

3. Good access enables staff and students to build the digital skills necessary to engage.

4. Technology can then be harnessed strategically, rather than in a piecemeal or reactive way, to drive educational experience and outcomes.

5. Inclusion for different student groups must be embedded from the outset.

6. All the elements need to be underpinned by a consistent strategy

The six components of successful digital teaching and learning

Plan strategically

Embed inclusion

Redesign pedagogy, curriculum and assessment

Ensure digital access

Effective digital teaching and learning

Harness technology effectively

Build digital skills

Embed inclusion

Plan strategically

(Adapted from Barber, M. 2021, Gravity Assist: Propelling higher education towards a brighter future. Office for Students)

6. "Career Readiness" Strategy

Overview

The 'Career Readiness' programme was established in 2019/20 to enhance the learning outcomes of all students at the University Centre regardless of academic course or desired routes into employment or further study. The University Centre is committed to providing this support in all its forms and, as with the wider College vision statement, holds teaching and learning to be a fundamental factor in terms of ensuring that it provides inspiring, innovative and outstanding provision that serves the needs of both the local and wider community. The 'Career Readiness Strategy' is a practical output of this approach.

Rationale

The Liverpool City Region is committed to delivering 7 growth strategies which focus upon improving the skills of individuals to meet their personal goals as well as the needs of the local economy. By improving the labour market through education and training (at all levels) the 'eco-system' surrounding the business community has started to demonstrate the relevance of a more fluid approach to student engagement through a marrying up of the skills challenges to direct workforce development. This is no more evident than in the post-pandemic landscape of 'Levelling Up' and 'Building Back Better'.

The University Centre undertakes to fulfil a long-standing commitment to providing employer-led enrichment opportunities for students and this unifying approach to the integration of the 'employer voice' is crucial in providing a cohesive and productive 'Career Readiness' programme, as well as supporting students in their transition from education into the world of work. In addition, the approach seeks to support students in terms of Globalisation and Sustainability as well as supporting the five stages of the student "Career Journey" as set out in the OFS Graduate employment and skills guide. (2021)

Approach

The 'Career Readiness' programme frames 3 key strands of engagement.

1. Creating and facilitating opportunities for students to engage with employers and industry practitioners, thus providing clarity on the roles, opportunities and expectations within a particular sector (delivered through 'Spotlight on Employment' seminars and 'Meet the Professionals'/ 'Join the Professionals' workshops).

2. Developing a robust workforce through students' access to careers advice, skills development and opportunities to enhance their chances of successful employment (delivered through the regular integration of careers advice and guidance in tutorials and in bespoke seminars).

3. Enhancing students' employability by creating a suitably skilled graduate population in response to the demands of the economy (through effective teaching and learning as well as regular interactions with employers).

Programme Structure

The 'Career Readiness' programme provides structure to the Continuous Professional Development of students across a yearlong cycle pertaining to the academic year. Within their CPD students are presented with a range of interventions within which they can engage and interact with employers. This structure is evaluated annually with changes to structure implemented in line with sector demands.

7. Quality Monitoring Process

Teaching quality is monitored through a number of mechanisms including, but not limited to Student Voice activity (e.g., questionnaires, focus groups, Module Evaluation Questionnaires), individual Professional Development observations, course focussed observations and short "Learning Walks". The process is partly based on a cyclical process, reviewed at five points throughout the year with data being reviewed by a Quality Monitoring panel with a view to

- celebrating successes

- reflecting on how best practice can be shared

- supporting teams in identifying actions

- focussing on support planning

- having oversight of the effectiveness of quality processes
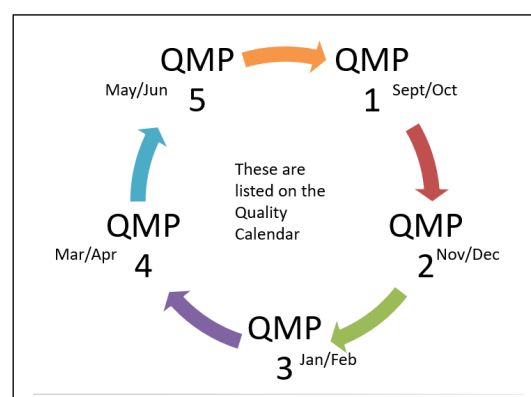
Observations form a key mechanism in terms of assuring the quality of teaching and learning at the College. The HE subset of the Learning Observation Team (LOT) was formed in 2012 in order to distinguish between the demands of Higher Education levels and the primarily Ofsted driven approach of the wider College system with a set of HE specific criteria generated, mapped to the UK Quality Code.

Walk Through Observations:

"Learning Walks" focus on key themes and scheduled at five points throughout the year. The system is also informed via a range of sources, the main driver being the analysis of observation data and other sources including, but not confined to, the results of Module Evaluation Questionnaires, Student Questionnaires, Student Voice activity, External Examiner reports, Course Reviews, and course team requests.

**Teaching, Learning & Assessment Review**

In depth reviews, drawing on data from observations, student voice and desk-based review activity will be used to capture performance of programmes. Reviews, based on the identification of lines of inquiry, may be scheduled for reasons including, but not limited to, performance concerns and the highlighting of good practice. Although not graded, reviews will utilise the following system to report findings:

Not evidenced	Emerging	Embedded	Enhanced
In the observed session, there is no evidence of a particular element. This is a concern and should be followed up with the individual colleague, ensuring an action plan is in place.	There is evidence of the particular elements expected. There may be gaps in what is seen and aspects may require some development. The colleague may have some training needs to be identified.	There is sound and consistent evidence of the particular elements. They are a feature of effective teaching and learning. The good performance is impacting on learner experience and progress.	Highly effective practice is evidenced, with very clear strengths demonstrated. The practice is of a quality to be shared as a model of good practice with wider staff.

Professional Development Observations

Each member of teaching staff will receive one Professional Development Observation each academic year, undertaken by a member of the HE LOT, in order to both ensure the quality of delivery, allow the identification (and subsequent discussion) of best practice, and inform professional development. This process aims to work on a "critical friend" principle and feeds into the Appraisal system to facilitate in order to create a "developmental map" informed by Professional Dialogue.

The overall process seeks to maintain quality whilst ensuring continued professional development and is summarised below:
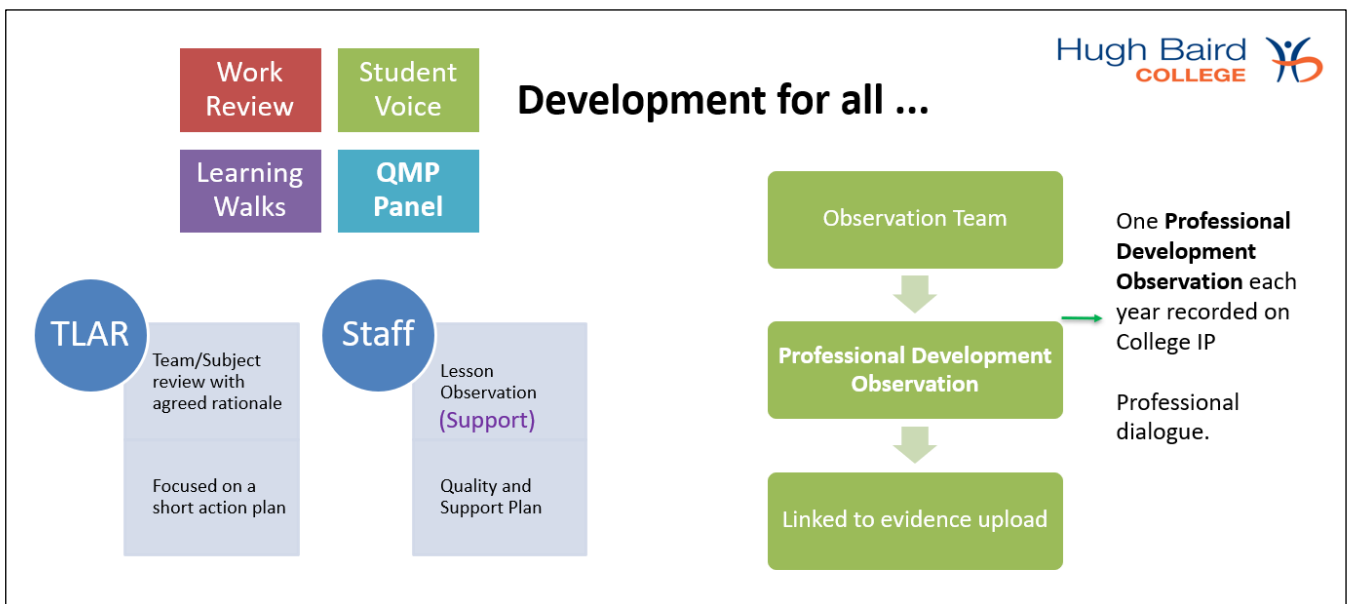
Quality of Formal Assessment

All formal assessment is subject to internal and external moderation as per partner HEI procedures in addition to review by Link Tutors and External Examiners in order to verify quality, maintenance of standards and comparability with similar HE courses. Schedules are recorded on the HE Quality Calendar and coordinated by the HE Academic Lead: Standards.

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