

A Context

A1 Introduction

A1.1 Principles

- A1.1.1 All undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on offer at Regent's University London are validated by the University. This handbook provides a regulatory framework for all of the University's programmes.
- A1.1.2 Doctoral programmes are validated by either the Open University Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (OUCICP) or the University of Wales. The Doctoral programmes may have validated programme-specific regulations which vary slightly to the University's regulatory framework. Where this is the case, this will be indicated in Programme Handbooks.

A1.2 University Mission

- A1.2.1 Regent's University London seeks to foster Internationalism and Professionalism through the provision of appropriate, applied, academic programmes which embody a spirit of international understanding and mutual co-operation, allied to high level professional capability and responsibility.
- A1.2.2 The primary ambition of the University is to provide a uniquely stimulating, multicultural and plurilingual, learning environment in which students aspire to become global citizens capable of contributing effectively and responsibly to a 21st century environment.

A1.3 Aims

- A1.3.1 To achieve its mission, Regent's University London seeks to welcome all prospective students with the ability and motivation who wish to apply for a place on one of Regent's University London's programmes of study. In so doing, the University seeks to ensure that:
- (a) All staff involved in the admissions process provide equal opportunities for those who wish to apply for a place on a Regent's University London programme of study.
 - (b) All applications are measured against fair, transparent and explicit programme entry criteria.
 - (c) This policy joins with other University policies so that the overall student learning experience at Regent's University London is designed to advance a student's academic career.

A1.4 Legislative and Institutional Compliance

- A1.4.1 Senate will ensure that any changes in: a) legislation; b) QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education; or c) validation requirements may be reflected in the principles and procedures laid out in this handbook.

A1.5 Promotional Materials

- A1.5.1 All promotional materials and activities should be accurate, relevant, current, accessible, and provide information that will enable applicants to make informed decisions about their options.

A1.6 Monitoring Transparency

- A1.6.1 All faculties/institutes apply the regulations within section A1.8 and make clear the entry requirements for each programme. Admissions data is recorded by staff involved in the admissions process and a report is made by the Heads of Programmes through their Annual Monitoring Report to the Senate Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. Exact requirements for entry onto programmes of study will be made explicit in both online and hard copy prospectuses. This policy will be made available via the University website.

A1.7 Particular Institutional Strategic Goals which this section seeks to support:

- A1.7.1 Focus on the needs of its students by providing an excellent environment in which they can gain the professional skills and global perspectives that will enhance their future careers.
- A1.7.2 Celebrate and apply the diversity of its staff and student base to enrich the learning and collegiate experience of all.

A1.8 Admissions

- A1.8.1 Admission to a programme at Regent's University London is based on an assumption by staff involved in the admissions process that a prospective student will be able to: a) meet the intended learning outcomes of that programme; and b) successfully achieve the required standard for the award.
- A1.8.2 Decisions regarding admissions to programmes at Regent's University London are made by those equipped to make the required judgements and competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Heads of Programmes may be involved in this process.
- A1.8.3 Staff involved in the admissions process follow all policies or procedures set out by Senate and its committees, and any

procedures condoned as being necessary through a validation process. Transparent academic and non-academic entry requirements are agreed at validation and used to underpin judgements made during the selection process for entry.

- A1.8.4 At the time the offer of a place is made, Regent's University London staff charged with admissions must inform applicants of the obligations placed on prospective students, should an offer be accepted.
- A1.8.5 All students who register on programmes at Regent's University London must submit full required documentation to the Admissions office to complete the registration process.
- A1.8.6 Admissions staff will inform prospective students, at the earliest opportunity, of any significant changes to a programme made between the time the offer of a place is made and registration is completed; and also ensure that the prospective students are advised of the options available in the circumstances.
- A1.8.7 Admissions staff will explain to applicants who have accepted a place on a programme the arrangements for the enrolment, registration, induction and orientation of new students; and ensure that these arrangements promote efficient and effective integration of entrants as students.
- A1.8.8 Applicants who have not been offered a place on a degree at Regent's University London are offered specific counselling by Admissions staff at the rejection stage of admissions. This is usually in the form of a telephone call to ensure they understand the rejection decision. Rejected applicants are informed of the reasons why they have not been offered a place and the alternatives open to them.
- A1.8.9 Applicants who are not satisfied with a decision made regarding their admission onto a Regent's University London programme may make an appeal or complaint by following the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy which is available upon request from a member of Admissions staff.
- A1.8.10 All programmes of study at Regent's University London have admissions regulations in place which are subject to approval by Senate (via the Senate Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee).

A2 Quality and Standards, including QAA Mapping

A2.1 What are Standards and Quality?

- A2.1.1 The phrase 'academic standards' refers to the threshold level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic

award such as an Honours degree. For all academic awards, the level to reach a particular standard (a First or Upper Second class degree, for example) should be comparable across UK institutions. The maintenance of academic standards is important for securing the reputation, respect, integrity of the University amongst all its stakeholders including students, potential employers, current and potential employees and external bodies such as accrediting agencies or funding agencies.

- A2.1.2 The phrases ‘academic quality’ or ‘teaching quality’ describe how well the learning opportunities available to students are managed to help them to achieve their award. They are about making sure that appropriate and effective learning, teaching, support and assessment opportunities are provided. This highlights the need to continually assess the learning opportunities that students are offered during their time on a programme and in the wider University campus community. This includes the support that they receive through classroom based teaching but also through wider learning opportunities e.g. personal tutors/mentoring, advising and student activities on campus.

A2.2 Who is Quality for?

- A2.2.1 Quality is for students who deserve good quality learning.
- A2.2.2 Quality is for staff – i.e. professionals working in a learning community (Regent’s University London or another) and a wider academic discipline related to their field or subject.
- A2.2.3 Quality in higher education can be thought of as a tension between two cultures: on the one hand is the concept of ‘service’ where ‘the customer is always right’ and which would measure quality largely based on customer satisfaction; at the other extreme would be “purist” academics who see themselves as custodians of specialist knowledge and therefore the sole authorities on how the student should learn.
- A2.2.4 A moderate position recognises that good quality teaching, academic mentoring and feedback all make their contribution in educating students to become skilled members of an academic community and equip them with transferable skills for their future careers. A clear set of guidelines on standards and quality helps us to find such a compromise.

A2.3 Why do we need Quality Assurance?

- A2.3.1 All academic staff have their idea of what constitutes good teaching and learning and standards appropriate to their subject. This can lead to the question ‘why can’t we be left alone to do our jobs?’ While politicians constantly make promises about cutting ‘red tape’, many of us feel bureaucracy is increasing - with short-

term, target-driven, inspectorial regimes that feel like an affront to the professionalism and autonomy of academic staff.

A2.3.2 However, national quality assurance procedures are a fact of life, and we cannot opt out. But even if such procedures did not exist, we would still want to review our learning and teaching practices and try to improve them. For example, we need to develop an inclusive learning and teaching environment that takes into account the diverse needs of both students and staff.

A2.3.3 In applying Quality Assurance (QA) procedures, the University needs to make academic staff feel that it belongs to and is relevant to them.

A2.3.4 In reviewing our learning and teaching practices and in shaping our specific processes of assuring quality we can draw on a number of sources including national QA procedures, relating Quality to learning and student experience, and by listening and sharing existing good practice to help shape evolving policies and processes, rather than imposing centrally and/or remotely designed ones.

A2.4 What is Quality Assurance?

A2.4.1 QA in general terms, means identifying what you are trying to do, why you are doing it, and checking periodically that you are doing it rigorously and efficiently.

A2.5 What is Quality Enhancement?

A2.5.1 As the name suggests, Quality Enhancement (QE) is defined as the process of taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities.

A2.5.2 This should be done both internally and externally. We need to ask those involved in what we do (students and staff) about their experiences and amend the systems we operate to make improvements; and we need to assure ourselves – through the involvement of external professionals and stakeholders – that our standards and quality assurance mechanisms are (at least) as good as equivalent educational institutions.

A2.6 What is Quality Auditing?

A2.6.1 Auditing means keeping records to prove to both our own learning community and to outsiders that we are doing QA and QE.

A2.6.2 Audit should not be a primary driver for QA and QE if we believe that quality is a good thing in its own right. This can be difficult to remember in our culture of testing and targets where statistics and league tables can sometimes appear to take precedence over learning for its own value.

A2.7 How do QA and QE relate to each other?

- A2.7.1 Effective and dynamic QA systems should automatically highlight opportunities for QE.
- A2.7.2 QE (innovation, development) should not compromise the core aims and standards of the learning programmes, but rather enhance these through disseminating best practice and current research.
- A2.7.3 Conversely, QA systems that are too narrow or too rigid will not permit the innovation and potential for change inherent in QE.
- A2.7.4 Managing QA and QE amounts to managing change, and so requires strategic thinking, leadership skills and sensitivity to local cultures and existing ways of working, and an awareness of relevant legislative requirements, for example our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005.

A2.8 National Context

- A2.8.1 The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is the national body set up to 'safeguard quality and standards in UK universities and colleges, so that students have the best possible learning experience'.
- A2.8.2 Along with the rest of the Higher Education sector, the University works within what is referred to as the 'QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education' (the Quality Code). This is comprised of Quality Code expectations and practices for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, national frameworks for higher education qualifications, subject benchmark statements and a range of associated guidelines. Taken together, the QAA publications represent a suite of external reference points against which all UK higher education leading to a degree award is to be measured, wherever in the world it is delivered. When Regent's University London validates its programmes, it demonstrates to the wider sector knowledge and understanding of these reference points and takes account of them through its institutional quality assurance arrangements and programme delivery.
- A2.8.3 The Quality Code provides guidance on maintaining quality and standards for universities subscribing to the QAA.
- A2.8.4 The University maps institutional practice against each of the expectations and practices published in the Quality Code.
- A2.8.5 As this is both an assurance and enhancement exercise, the production and review of the action lists resulting from the mapping process are set and monitored by the SQAEC and operationalised by both the Registrar, the Associate Director of

RILC and the Associate Deans in liaison with the appropriate academic staff.

A2.9 Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

A2.9.1 The main purpose of the FHEQ is to:

- (a) provide important points of reference for setting and assessing academic standards to higher education providers and their external examiners;
- (b) assist in the identification of potential progression routes, particularly in the context of lifelong learning;
- (c) promote a shared and common understanding of the expectations associated with typical qualifications by facilitating a consistent use of qualifications titles across the higher education sector.

A2.9.2 The following table summarises the levels:

Typical Higher Education Qualifications within each Level	FHEQ Level*
Doctoral Degrees (e.g., PhD/DPhil (including new-route PhD), EdD, DBA, DclinPsy)	8
Master's Degrees (e.g., MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc)	7
Integrated Master's Degrees (e.g., MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm)	
Postgraduate Diplomas	
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)	
Postgraduate Certificates	6
Bachelor's Degrees with Honours (e.g., BA/BSc Hons)	
Bachelor's Degrees	
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)	
Graduate Diplomas	
Graduate Certificates	5
Foundation Degrees (e.g., FdA, FdSc)	
Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)	
Higher National Diplomas (HND)	4
Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)	

* Formerly, in the 2001 edition of the FHEQ, the levels were identified as Certificate (C), Intermediate (I), Honours (H), Master's (M) and Doctoral (D) level.

A2.10 Subject Benchmark Statements (SBSs)

- A2.10.1 SBSs outline expectations for standards, skills and curriculum.
- A2.10.2 SBSs outline the curriculum content in a broad rather than detailed way, and skills are both subject specific and transferable.
- A2.10.3 SBSs outline standards in the form of 'threshold' (Third Class degree) and/or 'typical' (Upper Second class degree) or even 'levels of excellence' (First Class degree).
- A2.10.4 It is not the intention of SBSs to be prescriptive or to subvert higher education institution (HEI) autonomy, much less to form basis for a national curriculum at HE level. Instead SBSs provide

a basis for self-reflection, indicating possible routes rather than necessary ones.

A2.11 SBSs relevant to Regent's University London

- (a) Honours level General Business and Management (2015)
- (b) Master's level Business and Management (2015)
- (c) Honours level Accounting (2016)
- (d) Honours level Finance (2016)
- (e) Honours level Events, Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism (2016)
- (f) Master's level Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013)
- (g) Honours level Languages, Culture and Societies(2015)
- (h) Honours level Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies (2016)
- (i) Honours level Dance, Drama and Performance (2015)
- (j) Honours level Psychology (2016)
- (k) Honours level Art and Design (2016)
- (l) Honours level English (2015)
- (m) Honours level History (2014)
- (n) Honours level Politics and International Relations (2015)
- (o) Honours level Law (2015)

Please note that as SBSs are published online by the QAA, this list may change.

A2.12 How SBSs relate to QA and QE

- A2.12.1 The requirement is to engage with subject benchmarks rather than slavishly adhere to them (e.g. a programme specification may depart from SBSs but a clear rationale will need to be given).
- A2.12.2 A programme which failed to take a benchmark into consideration at all would be considered of dubious quality.
- A2.12.3 Conversely, a programme which adhered strictly to SBS but with no evidence of debate and critical reflection about it would also be considered QA-weak.
- A2.12.4 When reviewing or making changes to programmes (as part of QE); consideration should be taken of SBSs.
- A2.12.5 Engaging students with SBSs can be productive: do they perceive any differences between what is written down and their own experience of the programme? This encourages self-reflection on the part of students and enhances their learning and skills.

A2.13 External reference documents relevant to Regent's University London

- (a) Foundation degree characteristics statement
- (b) Master's degree characteristics statement
- (c) Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies
- (d) Framework for Qualification of the European Higher Education Area (FH-EHEA)
- (e) Higher Education credit framework for England: Guidance on academic credit arrangements in Higher Education in England

A2.14 External accreditors applicable to Regent's University London

- (a) United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)
- (b) British Psychological Society (BPS)
- (c) Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- (d) Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
- (e) Energy Institute (EI)

A2.15 Programme Specifications

A2.15.1 A programme specification is a concise description of the intended learning outcomes of a HE programme, and the means by which the outcomes are achieved and demonstrated. In general, modules or other units of study have stated outcomes, often set out in handbooks provided by institutions to inform student choice. These intended learning outcomes relate directly to the curriculum, the study and assessment methods and the criteria used to assess performance. Programme specifications show how modules can be combined into whole qualifications. However, a programme specification is not simply an aggregation of module outcomes; it relates to the learning and attributes developed by the programme as a whole and which, in general, are typically in HE more than the sum of the parts.

A2.15.2 For the purposes of audit and review, programme specifications are '...the definitive publicly available information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements of programmes of study' (Handbook for institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland, 2009).