University of Kent

Quality Assurance and Compliance News

Issue 7- January 2022

Welcome to the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office Newsletter

QUALITY ASSURANCE & COMPLIANCE OFFICE / QA CLINICS

Book a Clinic with a QA Specialist to discuss or troubleshoot specific QA matters, seek advice on implementing regulations and procedures, or request informal training on a 1-2-1 basis.

To book, complete our QA Clinic Booking Form. Please provide a brief overview of your query so that we can allocate the most appropriate QA specialist.

For more information visit:https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/ or email the QA Training team at qacotraining@kent.ac.uk.

Validated Institutions – an Introduction

by Tina Hagger (Quality Assurance and Compliance Adviser)

The University has a wide range of Validated Institutions offering provisions across all six academic Divisions. The extensive list of Validated Institutions includes the Central School of Ballet, the National Centre for Circus Arts, Pearson College London, GlaxoSmithKline and the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.

Collaborative activity with Validated Institutions is an important part of the University's strategic aims. It allows students to gain credited awards in areas of highly skilled, cultural, creative and practical industries, delivered through internationally recognised teaching and supported by professional industry expertise.

What is a Validated Institution?

A Validated Institution is an institution which has received approval from the University of Kent to offer courses devised, delivered and assessed by the institution itself. All course provisions are credit-bearing and lead to an academic award with the University of Kent.

The University delegates a number of responsibilities to validated institutions, including the arrangements for admissions, teaching, assessment, learning resources and other services. Students are not registered with the University of Kent, but remain registered at the validated institution at which the course they are studying is delivered. The University of Kent is responsible for the standards of awards and quality assurance of all approved validated courses. Approved courses are subject to Kent's Code of Practice, Academic Regulations and Credit Framework or procedures for research awards.

What are the key characteristics of Validated Institutions?

Validated Institutions share a number of key characteristics. They are each subject to Code of Practice processes, annual and periodic reviews by the University. Academic responsibility for the courses is allocated to a University Division and the University will provide a member of academic staff to act as a Liaison Officer for each course, to ensure that quality and standards are monitored and maintained. This role includes acting as the Chair of the Board of Examiners. The role of the Academic Liaison Officer and Chair of the Board of Examiners for Validated Institutions is specified in Annex L of the Code of Practice.

Validated courses also adhere to the same Board of Examiner processes as the University. Each Board is comprised of internal tutors, an external examiner and is chaired by member of Kent staff. The External Examiner is appointed by Kent according to University procedures. Training is available for all members of staff involved in running Exam Boards, both internal and at Validated Institutions.

The Quality Assurance and Compliance Office considers the implications of revisions to the Code of Practice, Credit Framework and Regulations on these institutions and their students. We ask that you consider the implications for validated institutions when revisions are made to Divisional policies and procedures and Central policies and procedures, particularly those procedures surrounding the admission, registration and record management of students.

If you would like to contribute to the QA Blog or get involved in this ongoing policy work, please get in touch with a member of the QA team via QACO@kent.ac.uk*.*

Appeals Feedback

We welcome any feedback that Divisions may have regarding the Appeals process for 2020-21. The aim is to review responses and consider possible improvements to the process that may need to be implemented for the coming appeals season.

To provide feedback, please complete the form using the link below:
[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=VvqpUTI_mkSnIT4_SapemjhdZWJdOoVDkJLr0TOVLyZUNFoy WTFZTDlLOUNaM1Q0VUtNMjE5R1RZVi4u_](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=VvqpUTI_mkSnIT4_SapemjhdZWJdOoVDkJLr0TOVLyZUNFoyWTFZTDlLOUNaM1Q0VUtNMjE5R1RZVi4u_)

The survey will close on 28th February 2022.

Updates to Codes of Practice / Credit Framework

The following changes have recently been applied to the Code of Practice - Research Courses of Study

- Annex K (External and Internal Examiners): sections 4.4 and 4.5 have been updated regarding External Examiner appointments for PhD and Master's by Research students.

Code of Practice - Research Courses of Study: Codes Of Practice - Taught and Research Programmes (kent.ac.uk)

Office for Students: Update

The Office for Students has recently published two important consultations:

1. Phase 3 of its consultation on the revised 'B' Quality Conditions of Registration, in this case B3: Student Outcomes. This will redefine how course quality is measured and assessed and so is a must-read for all involved in University QA. https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/student-outcomes-and-teaching-excellence-consultations/student-outcomes/

2. This consultation sets out proposals for the future Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). This is a national scheme which incentivises universities and colleges for excellence in teaching, learning and the outcomes they provide for their students. https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/student-outcomes-and-teaching-excellence-consultations/the-tef/

The QACO team is currently engaged in a mapping exercise of the revised B conditions against the University's current Code of Practice in order to identify any gaps in coverage and propose any necessary amendments. This piece of work will come forward to the Divisions for consideration later this term.

CMA Updates

Process on Seeking Approval to Course Changes that Fall Under CMA Material Information

What happens if a Division wishes to make any changes to an existing course(s) for 2022 start?

Making changes this late in the year poses various risks to our current and potential students, including CMA (Competition and Markets Authority) risks which also may result in increased administrative workload. Any changes that are submitted for approval and include changes to the CMA material information will require a risk assessment from QACO. The risk assessment will be submitted to CASC alongside other required documentation as set out in Annex C. Submissions which do not include the risk assessment may be rejected by CASC and/or the start date for any proposed changes delayed to the next available entry.

What is CMA material information?

CMA material information is described as important information which HE providers must provide in a clear, intelligible, unambiguous and timely manner. Choosing a degree and attending a University is a unique opportunity for many prospective students. Therefore, having the required information of what is being offered is important when comparing Universities and deciding about a place to study.

What are the examples of CMA material information?

A list of changes that are considered as CMA material is available on Kent's CMA website (under the 'required information' tab). Please note that the website is currently under review. However, the list is up to date and should be consulted when proposed changes to courses and/or modules are being considered.

What is the process when the proposed changes are considered as CMA material?

The process when seeking approval for changes that fall under CMA material information largely depends on the proposed start date and whether the changes would affect only new cohorts and/or existing students only.

The recruitment window includes publication of information online and a hard copy prospectus and the application period varies for UG and PG courses. Normally the recruitment and application window spans across 24 months for UG courses and 18 months for PG courses. Please get in touch with QACO via kentcma@kent.ac.uk if you are unsure whether the proposed changes fall within the mentioned timeframe.

Depending on whether the prospective students or current students (or both) are affected by the changes, the responsible Division has to follow the CMA process to ensure that the affected parties receive the updated information related to their course of choice or study.

Current students (or students 'in-session') must be consulted on proposed changes and their consent recorded for audit purposes. Please note that any students that are part-time, intermitting, have deferred, are on a year abroad or any placements must also be consulted and provide their consent.

Where proposed changes affect prospective students (applicants) already in receipt of an offer from the University for the course, these students (applicants) must be informed of the changes in a timely manner and given the opportunity to be released from UCAS should they no longer wish to study at Kent following the proposed changes to their course of choice. Applicants should only be informed where CASC has provided approval for the proposed changes (as per Annex C)

All changes that fall under CMA material information must have a CMA risk assessment.

Please see below for more detail on the CMA risk assessment.

What is a CMA risk assessment?

The CMA risk assessment sets out the level of risk (minor, moderate or major) to the University should the proposed changes be implemented. QACO reviews every request on an individual basis and ascertains the level of risk based on the following criteria:

- the extent of the proposed changes
- the level of possible disruption
- the number of applications to date

Every risk assessment request must be accompanied by the revised course specification(s) with tracked changes and the rationale for these changes. The risk level will also be affected by the UCAS deadlines (UG) and other appropriate recruitment window deadlines for PGT courses. Please note that this criterion serves as a basis for any requests. However, QACO may ask for further information to ensure that the risk assessment is accurate and relevant to the particular course(s).

This assessment must be requested in advance of CASC. It is also advisable to seek the assessment prior to any deliberations about the changes as these may impact on the outcome.

The risk assessment is for guidance only and is designed to support the Divisions in their decision-making whether or not to proceed with the approval process for the proposed changes in-cycle or to defer such changes to the following year. However, CASC will have the power to defer the start date for proposed changes where the deferral is not

detrimental to the course in question and/or there is a risk that such changes, where approved, may result in reputational damage to the University.

Please note that in cases where current students may be affected by proposed changes, the consultation process (including consent) must be completed first as it is likely that changes may not be approved where current students oppose any redesign.

QACO will keep a copy of all requests and the provided risk assessments for audit purposes.

How the CMA risk assessment is obtained?

The CMA risk assessment can be requested emailing kentcma@kent.ac.uk.

We aim to respond to you within five working days. If you haven't heard from us in that time (or if your request is urgent) please contact a QACO representative assigned to your Division via Teams.

Please include the revised course specifications with tracked changes, rationale for the changes and application numbers to date.

Where requested changes affect current students, the request must include confirmation and evidence for their consent.

Where the CMAS thread has been created, and you wish for a QACO representative to comment directly on the thread, please include the link in your email. Otherwise, the risk assessment will be provided by responding to the original email and an appropriate member in the Division will have to upload the email to CMAS.

Contact Information

If you have any concerns or queries related to CMA please do not hesitate to get in touch via kentcma@kent.ac.uk.

QAC FAQs

These are QA questions that are asked regularly, that might be of general interest. If you have a question that you would like to see answered here, please contact qacotraining@kent.ac.uk.

Q: What are the current regulations around self-certification for students in relation to Covid 19 and the pandemic? A: A new Policy has been finalised following consultation with the Academic Mitigation Group in December 2021. The Government has extended self-certification for periods of illness to up to twenty-eight days. There is no longer any limit set on the number of times that the student can self-certify to cover a period that coincides with non-submission of assessment. Divisions are required to adopt a more flexible approach with regard to the submission of medical evidence generally in support of applications for extensions and other forms of mitigation. The Policy will remain in place until further notice.

Q: Some single-stage PGT courses have historically had progression boards in July, will this still be the case for 2022? A: CSAO have advised that single stage PGT courses will only have a Board of Examiners in October. Two stage courses will have both Summer and Autumn Boards of Examiners. There will be no additional PGT resit boards.

Useful weblinks

Academic Regulations – Research Courses: https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/regulations/index.html?tab=research-courses-of-study

Academic Regulations – Taught Courses:
https://www.kent.ac.uk/te aching/qa/regulations/index.html

Collaborative Partnerships:
https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/collaborative/index.html

Credit Framework:
https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/index.html

Research Code of Practice:
https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html?tab=research-courses-of-study

Taught Code of Practice:
https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html

If you would like to be added to the mailing list for this newsletter, please email qacotraining@kent.ac.uk.