



## Quality Assurance and Compliance News

Issue 5 - September 2021

### Welcome to the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office Newsletter

#### Message from the Head of Quality Assurance

Welcome back for the academic year 2021/22. This is an important year in the wider world of quality assurance, compliance and enhancement. Nationally, the Office for Students ('OfS') will this week be bringing to a close its consultation on the Conditions of Registration relevant to quality assurance (known as the 'B' conditions). These will set out new definitions of what is meant by 'quality' and 'standards' and will help the University shape any revisions to its QA Code and procedures.

Similarly, later this term we should find out what plans the OfS has for bringing back the Teaching Excellence Framework ('TEF'), with a consultation due this autumn. The provisional timeline for TEF applications involves opening the submission window by summer 2022 and announcing outcomes in early 2023. These developments will also help shape any key revisions to Kent's QA Code that we might want to make this year.

Finally, Kent's apprenticeship provision at all levels is now subject to inspection by OFSTED. Although there is no advance schedule published for such audits, it would be sensible to expect our apprenticeship courses to be inspected in the new academic year. The Apprenticeships Governance Committee has developed a revised QA Framework for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships and we hope to publish this as part of Kent's overall QA Code early in the autumn term.

Malcolm Dixon



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.

## QA Blog

### On Academic Integrity

As students return to campuses for the start of the academic year, universities across the sector are faced with questions about the long-term future of Higher Education. Almost two-years after staff and students packed up their offices and books to work and study from home, it's fair to say that most of us have adjusted to blended methods of learning delivery, design and support. And whilst the effectiveness of digital provision has been debated throughout the pandemic, online learning has been proven to allow for greater flexibility, accessibility, innovation and personalization.

There is no ignoring however, that despite the benefits that online learning can provide, a large proportion of students have lacked exposure to the environments that can foster key academic skills. One such area is academic integrity. Online learning has opened the door to an increase in cases of academic misconduct. Whilst plagiarism is year-on-year one of the most common (and easily identifiable) forms of academic misconduct, the pandemic has given rise to increased use of contract cheating and essay mill services.

The increase is unsurprising. In a world where students have been academically and physically “distanced” from their institutions for so long, online environments provide more opportunity, temptation, and increased exposure to unmonitored forums and essay mills advertising services on social media. Essay mills are profit-driven, third party services that provide academic “experts” to write student essays for a fee. These services have been known to employ practices of blackmail and extortion, with students facing significant hidden costs after making initial payments.

A study conducted by Swansea University in 2018 found that one in seven recent graduates may have paid an essay mill (or individual) to undertake their assignment for them. The data was thought to underestimate the actual level of contract cheating by a significant margin, as a large proportion of contract cheating goes undetected by institutions.

What is clear is this: academic integrity is a community issue. All too often, we assume that students are equipped with the skills, discipline and confidence to meet academic integrity standards and adhere to institutional policies. At Kent, we are exploring ways to review our policy in this area, with a more holistic and resolution-focused approach. Over the course of the summer, a working group explored some of these concerns. The group discussed amendments to Kent’s current Academic Misconduct policy (Annex 10 of the Credit Framework), focussing on ways to improve academic misconduct referrals, workflows and workload for professional services and academic staff. Broader discussion focussed on issues relating to training, and the detection (and prevention) of contract cheating. The University also signed the QAA Academic Integrity Charter, joining other UK HE institutions in the pledge to implement principles and commitments that protect and promote academic integrity.

As new guidance and legislation continues to be developed in this area, this work places the university in an excellent position to share best practice with other institutions, and respond in an agile way to broader policy development from the Quality Assurance Agency and Office for Students. Over the coming academic year, we will also focus on developing a reporting framework for gathering academic misconduct data, and improving academic integrity guidance and information available to students and staff, providing staff with the remit and support to meet the challenges ahead.

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



## Updates to Codes of Practice / Credit Framework

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

- [Annex B](#) (Approval and Withdrawal of Modules): A new section (13.6) has been added, outlining the process for changes to modules after OMR closes.
- [Annex B](#) (Approval and Withdrawal of Modules): Taught Module Specification template has been revised and published for 2021-2022.
- [Annex C](#) (Approval and Withdrawal of Taught Courses): Several clarifications have been made in relation to: the development of apprenticeships, Business Case Committee (BCC) approval relating to new pathways for existing courses and new 'Year in' (intercalated courses), amendments to the process for changes to Joint Honours Courses (section 7.3). A new section has also been added in relation to making changes to CMA Material Information. Clarification that major amendments to courses may be advertised and applicants offered places on such courses only once the amended course has been fully approved by the Course Approval Sub-committee (CASC), including any conditions set out by CASC.
- [Annex C](#) (Approval and Withdrawal of Taught Courses): Taught Course Specification template has been revised and published for 2021-2022.
- [Annex K](#) (External Examiners and External Advisers for Taught Courses): Now includes a statement that the Division must review and provide a response to the External Examiner by the end of the following term.

Code of Practice - Taught Courses of Study:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/documents/copt2020-introduction-v2.pdf>

Code of Practice - Research Courses of Study:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/research/documents/copr2020-introduction.pdf>

**The following changes have recently been applied to the Credit Framework**

- [Annex 9](#) (Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances): Expansion on when students can request major assessment deferral (section 2.5)
- [Annex 9, Appendix 1](#) (Conventions for the Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances): Clarification that students taking an opportunity of deferral on pass will be assessed under a single instrument or like-for-like, as set out in the module specification and the limits of more/less 20% for disregarding had been removed.
- [Annex 13](#) (Academic Appeals): addition of actions available to the Chair in section 10.4 - remit the case for re-consideration to the appropriate Board of Examiners

Credit Framework: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/documents/cf2020-credit-framework-sept2020.pdf>

**Please note that there is a new mailbox for CMA related queries and issues. Please contact [kentcma@kent.ac.uk](mailto:kentcma@kent.ac.uk).**

## **QACO Training Schedule for 2021/22**

These are the dates that have been provisionally set for QA Training sessions this Academic Year.

### **October 2021**

**25th October:** CMAS Training: Preparing proformas

**28th October:** CMAS Training: Preparing proformas

### **November 2021**

**8th and 15th November:** Annex 10: Academic Misconduct Secretary Training

**11th and 18th November:** Annex 10: Academic Misconduct Chair Training

**Week Commencing 22nd November:** Annex 10: Academic Misconduct QA Clinics

### **January 2022**

**31 January:** REFRESHER Annex 10 (Academic Misconduct) Secretary Training

### **February 2022**

**3rd February:** REFRESHER Annex 10: Academic Misconduct Chair Training

### **April 2022**

**Dates TBC:** Academic Appeal Review Panel (AARP) Training for Panel Members and Chairs

### **May 2022**

**Dates TBC:** Board of Examiners Administration Training

**Dates TBC:** External Examiners Training

**Dates TBC:** Conventions for Classification of Awards Training

**To register your interest in a training sessions, please email [qacotraining@kent.ac.uk](mailto:qacotraining@kent.ac.uk).**

To book a specific training session for your Division, please complete a [Training Request Form](#).

Once submitted, a member of our team will be in touch to discuss your training needs.

### **Note for Divisions**

Please note that Divisions should be collating information on their own staff acting as External Examiners for Taught Courses at other Higher Education Institutions. This information should be sent to [Andrea McDonnell](#) in order to update the central register which is shared with EASC. This register is checked when Divisions nominate new External Examiners to avoid any conflicts of interest (**Reference Annex K – 4.1.11** External Examiners will not normally be appointed from a department in an institution where a member of the inviting School is serving as an examiner; exceptions may, however, occasionally be unavoidable in the case of subjects taught in only a very small number of institutions).

Key information needed is:

- Name of Academic (last name, first name)
- Centre/School
- Institution that they are working for
- Taught Courses they are examining
- Dates of appointment (00/00/00-00/00/00)

### **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](mailto:qacotraining@kent.ac.uk).**

**Q: What happens if a student submits a resit Appeal to be permitted to progress to the next stage of their Course and they have not received an outcome to their Appeal before the start of the Autumn Term?** A: If the appeal is upheld, then it is possible for students to register up to three weeks after the start of the Autumn term, for that Academic Year. Section 5 of the [Academic Regulations for Taught Courses of Study](#) state that Stage 1 students are permitted to change their module choice(s) during the first three weeks of the Autumn Term and during the first two weeks of the Spring Term (where the student commenced studying the module in the Spring Term). For all other stages, students are permitted to change their module choice(s) only during the first two weeks of either term (where the student commenced studying the module in that term).

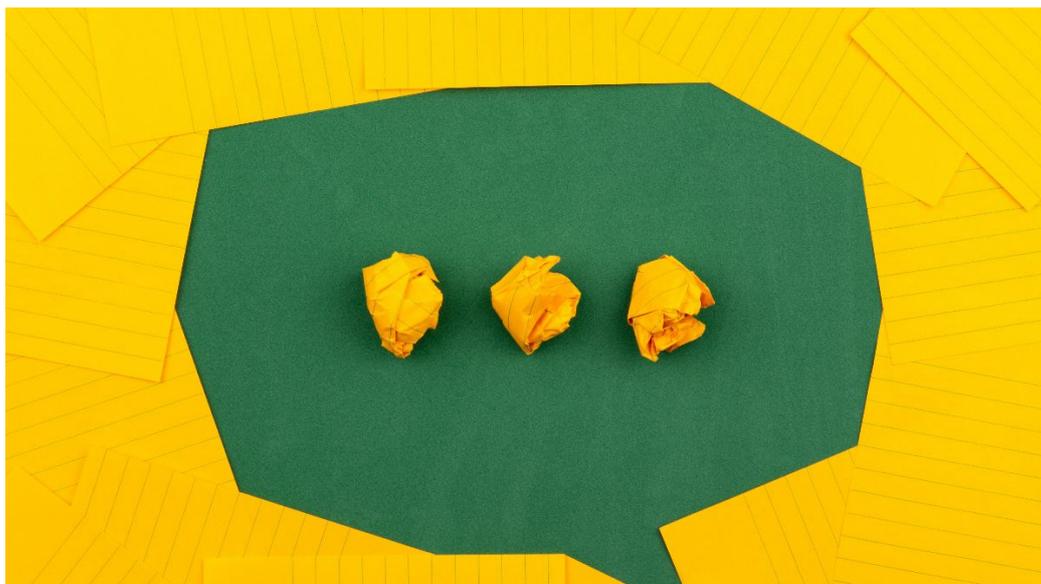
**Q: What is the deadline for Validated Institutions to send the details of new students to the University?** A: Validated Institutions need to send their lists of new students for 2021-22 to [Harriette Frewin-Clarke](#) by 5 October 2021. In addition, Validated Institutions also need to send through lists of the modules those students are registered for so that the information can be entered into KentVision (in an Excel format).

**Q: Where a Division has been in talks with a student can QACO change the status of a formal appeal to an informal appeal so the Division can resolve it, even if the student has not submitted an informal appeal?** A: QACO cannot change the status of the appeal, as we cannot guarantee that the student for some reason wants an informal appeal. Though if the student, when approached, is willing to submit an informal appeal to reach a quicker resolution we can put the formal appeal on hold until the informal is completed.

**Q. When and how do External Examiners of Kent's taught courses (including those delivered by Partner Colleges and Validated Institutions) submit their annual reports?** A: The University requires the submission of an annual report for each course of study to be submitted within **four weeks** of the final Board of Examiners' meeting. Please note that it is not necessary to submit a report following any interim Board of Examiners' meeting - only one report per examiner per course is required each academic year. Separate reports should be submitted for each course examined, except where two or more courses of a similar level are sufficiently cognate in terms of their subject matter that they might benefit from a common set of recommendations. However, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught courses of study should always be reported on separately.

Reports are submitted through the [External Examiner Report Submission System \(EERSS\)](#) using an online report template. Each External Examiner is emailed details of their Kent IT account in their appointment letter and before submitting their first report they should follow these steps:

- a) [change their temporary password](#)
- b) set up [MFA](#) on their Kent IT account
- c) set up their device with Kent's VPN (known as [Global Protect](#)).
- d) access the [External Examiner Report Submission System \(EERSS\)](#) using their Kent IT account login and password.



## How We Work

The Project Management Office are asking for feedback and suggestions on processes and how we work, which you can do here: <https://livekentac.sharepoint.com/sites/HowWeWork>.

## 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/teaching/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 [gacotraining@kent.ac.uk](mailto:gacotraining@kent.ac.uk).