University of Kent
Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Research Programmes of Study

Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Research Programmes of Study

QA Policy Statement

The University requires that there should be a Code of Practice for Quality Assurance that expresses the principles, responsibilities and structures through which it assures academic standards and the continuous improvement of the student academic experience.

This Code came into effect on 1 September 2005, having been approved by the Board for Research and Enterprise on 9 June 2005 and by Senate on 22 June 2005. Institutional oversight of this code (on behalf of Senate) became the responsibility of the Graduate School Board with effect from 31 August 2009. There will be a systematic process of review of this Code of Practice on an annual basis.

Table of Contents

Preamble
Terms Used
Principles
Responsibilities
Collaborative Provision
Quality Management Structures

Annexes:
Annex A: Curriculum Policy
Annex B: Approval and Withdrawal of Research Programmes
Annex C: Approval of Research Candidates and Projects
Annex D: Information to Students
Annex E: Annual Monitoring
Annex F: Periodic Review
Annex G: Personal Academic Support System
Annex H: Supervision
Annex I: School Directors of Graduate Studies
Annex J: Associate Deans (Graduate Studies)
Annex K: Progression and Examination
Annex L: External and Internal Examiners
Annex M: Student Evaluation
Annex N: Practise as Research
Annex O: QA Arrangements for Validated Programmes of Research
ANNEX P: Researcher Development Programme
ANNEX Q: Research Student Teachers and Demonstrators
ANNEX R: Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement
Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Research Programmes of Study

1. **Preamble**

   Senate is responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place that will:
   
   - stimulate, through regular critical self-evaluation, improvement of the quality of the education provided;
   - inform and provide assurance to current and potential students, and relevant external agencies and interests, as to the high quality of the education provided.

   This Code covers all programmes leading to the award by the University of research degrees, including those delivered by other institutions. It does not cover taught programmes of study (see “Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Taught Programmes of Study”). University Schools and Faculties, and institutions with validated programmes, may however introduce requirements additional to these minimum University requirements for quality assurance, for example in relation to professional body accreditation.

   The Code is reviewed at regular intervals by the Graduate School Board and is revised from time to time by the Graduate School Board in order to ensure that it continues to represent best practice and is effective.

2. **Terms Used**

   2.1. A programme of study - hereafter "a programme" - consists of a defined and approved subject area to which students may propose a research thesis, which leads when successfully completed to an award of the University.

   2.2. Schools include (a) Schools, Centres and Units with responsibility for delivering programmes and (b) institutions or organisations delivering programmes under validation or other partnership agreement. Heads of School include Directors of these Schools, Centres, Units and Institutions/Organisations.

   2.3. Directors of Graduate Studies are responsible for maintaining oversight of research programmes of study at a School or at Faculty level. The post holder may also be responsible for matters relating to taught postgraduate provision except in cases where there is more than one Director of Graduate Studies within a School (e.g. one with responsibility for taught programmes and the other with responsibility for research programmes). The responsibilities of the Director of Graduate Studies in relation to taught postgraduate provision are outlined in the Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Taught Programmes of Study. This Code will only define the responsibilities of the post in relation to research programmes of study.

   2.4. The terms 'annual monitoring' and 'annual reporting' are used in this Code exclusively to describe quality management functions at a programme level. Where procedures are expected to operate for individual students, the term 'student progress' will be used.

3. **Principles**

   This Code is based on the principles that quality assurance procedures will be simple and effective; will be integrated into the routine management of research programmes of study; and will harmonise as far as possible internal University and external agency requirements.
4. Responsibilities

This section of the Code summarises where responsibility lies for the various elements of the arrangements for assuring the quality of education provided by the University via research programmes. Detailed requirements are set out in a series of Annexes to the Code.

4.1. The Schools are responsible for:

4.1.1. ensuring that programmes submitted for approval conform with the requirements of this Code (see Annex B: Approval and Withdrawal of Research Programmes);

4.1.2. delivering programmes as approved;

4.1.3. providing a research environment which will encourage students to flourish and achieve their potential;

4.1.4. ensuring, in co-operation with faculties, that all students are provided in good time with all appropriate information relating to their programme and its modules (see Annex D: Information to Students);

4.1.5. annual monitoring of programmes and student progress, determining action to be taken as a consequence and reporting on these matters to Faculty Boards (see Annex E: Annual Monitoring);

4.1.6. providing academic advice and support for their students (see Annex G: Personal Academic Support System);

4.1.7. obtaining and considering the views of students on the education which the School provides (see Annex M: Student Evaluation);

4.1.8. reflecting critically on the education which they provide, in particular as part of internal periodic review (see Annex F: Periodic Review);

4.1.9. responding to the reports of internal periodic review panels (see Annex F: Periodic Review);

4.1.10. acting upon the decisions of Faculty Boards and the Graduate School Board;

4.1.11. appointing a Director of Graduate Studies and establishing a Graduate Studies Committee with responsibilities as set out in Annex I: School Directors of Graduate Studies and Graduate Studies Committees;

4.1.12. ensuring that students have access to appropriate supervision (see Annex H: Supervision);

4.1.13. providing reasonable access to space and IT resources and ensuring the provision of research and related skills (e.g. basic IT and data retrieval) training;


4.2. Faculty Boards are responsible for:

4.2.1. recommending approval of proposed programmes, having ensured that no such approval is recommended unless the proposed programme conforms to the requirements of this Code (see Annex B: Approval and Withdrawal of Research Programmes);

4.2.2. recommending withdrawal of programmes;

4.2.3. ensuring that Schools' annual monitoring conforms to the requirements of this Code and reviewing the outcome of such monitoring (see Annex E: Annual Monitoring);
4.2.4. ensuring, in co-operation with Schools, that all students are provided in good time with all appropriate information relating to their programme and its modules (see Annex D: Information to Students);

4.2.5. organising and conducting periodic reviews on behalf of the University (see Annex F: Periodic Review);

4.2.6. appointing an Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) and establishing a Committee whose responsibilities include detailed consideration on behalf of the Faculty Board of those matters listed above (see Annex J: Associate Deans (Graduate Studies));

4.2.7. reporting annually to the Graduate School Board on the exercise of powers delegated to it by that Board.

4.3. The Graduate School Board is responsible for:

4.3.1. approving programmes, having ensured that no programme is approved unless it conforms to the requirements of this Code (see Annex B: Approval and Withdrawal of Research Programmes);

4.3.2. determining, in the light of reports from review panels, whether programmes may continue, may continue on satisfaction of specified conditions or shall be discontinued (see Annex F: Periodic Review);

4.3.3. approving withdrawal of programmes;

4.3.4. keeping under review this Code and its effectiveness;

4.3.5. reporting annually to the Senate on the exercise of powers delegated to it by the Senate.

4.4. Examiners are responsible for:

4.4.1. making recommendations for the award of qualifications;

4.4.2. making recommendations with regard to resubmission examinations and termination of registration (see Annex K: Progression and Examination).

4.5. External Examiners are responsible for:

4.5.1. ensuring that assessment of students is undertaken fairly and rigorously (see Annex L: External and Internal Examiners).

5. Collaborative Provision

Collaborative programmes of study leading to awards of the University are subject to Kent’s regulations, Codes of Practice for Quality Assurance and Credit Framework conventions, except in so far as these may be varied in a signed Memorandum of Agreement.

Institutions offering programmes of study leading to University awards are required to have in place a quality assurance system that is consistent with the requirements of the University’s Codes of Practice for Quality Assurance.

The detail of the arrangements for validated institutions is set out in Annex O: QA Arrangements for Validated Programmes of Research.
6. Quality Management Structures for Research Programmes

- Senate
  - Vice-Chancellor

- Graduate School Board
  - Dean of the Graduate School

- Faculty Boards
  - Deans

- Faculty Graduate Studies Committee
  - Associate Deans (Graduate Studies)

- School Graduate Studies Committees
  - School Directors of Graduate Studies

- Staff/Student Liaison Committees
- Supervisor/Supervisory Team