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Quality Assurance Policy for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to make a statement regarding the internal quality assurance arrangements for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships¹.
- 1.2 This quality assurance policy outlines the University's commitment to ensure that ongoing quality improvements are an integral part of our organisation. The University of Kent will aim for continuous improvement in the quality of all aspects of its work in relation to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships in order to help apprentices achieve the highest possible standards.
- 1.3 This document should be read as supplemental to the established annexes and procedures of the University's *Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance of Taught Programmes of Study*² ('Code of Practice') and sets out additional requirements specifically for the quality assurance of programmes of study leading to apprenticeship awards, as per the national regulatory framework governing such programmes.

2. Underlying Quality Assurance Frameworks for this Policy

- 2.1 The University is committed to ensuring that the programmes of study that underpin the apprenticeships meet the requirements of the Code of Practice, Academic Regulations³ and Credit Framework⁴. By doing so, these programmes will, therefore, satisfy the expectations and core practices of the **UK Quality Code**.
- 2.2 In accordance with the Education and Skills Funding Agency⁵ (ESFA) and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills⁶ (OFSTED), the University undertakes to deliver the provision to an acceptable standard of quality, complying with the funding rules published by ESFA and the **Common Inspection Framework**, as amended from time to time. As a result, Kent will, therefore, use all reasonable endeavours to ensure the achievement of the following objectives:
 - 2.2.1 To minimise drop-out rates, deliver high completion, achievement and success rates and appropriate progression;
 - 2.2.2 To meet the requirements for quality and standards, as published by ESFA and OFSTED, that apply to the apprenticeship programmes delivered;
 - 2.2.3 To ensure competent and appropriately qualified staff deliver and assess learning. The University shall be responsible for the continuing professional development and relevant training of its staff and for meeting any minimum requirements which may be required by the ESFA-designated regulatory process for higher and degree apprenticeships;
 - 2.2.4 To offer equality of access to learning opportunities and close equality gaps in learning and outcomes;

¹ <https://skillsfunding.service.gov.uk/contracts/download/15854>

² <https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html>

³ <https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/regulations/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/index.html>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

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- 2.2.5 To help provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment, which meets the needs of apprentices (including Safeguarding of Apprentices, PREVENT and British Values);
 - 2.2.6 To provide good management and leadership of the learning process;
 - 2.2.7 To deliver value for money and financial regularity and probity; and
 - 2.2.8 To ensure any sub-contractors delivering the provision comply with the requirements above.
- 2.3 The University will continuously seek to improve provision and raise standards to benefit the apprentice and their employer. The University will have the primary responsibility for improving standards and will demonstrate that based on continuous improvement through a process of self-evaluation and action planning.

3. Scope of QA Policy and Implementation

- 3.1 The Quality Assurance Policy and associated procedures will involve employers, apprentices and collaborative partners, as appropriate. The management of the process will be through the existing University structures for management review and audit, together with additional specific Apprenticeship Governance.
- 3.2 Quality assurance procedures will be founded in a process of regular self-evaluation by staff and internal and external audits and observations. The University will seek the views and thoughts of learners who are enrolled on an apprenticeship with the University and their employers.
- 3.3 Wherever possible, the procedures will promote the identification of quality standards and performance indicators against which performance can be measured, evaluated and improved, for example, via ESFA achievements rates, etc.

3.4 *Responsibility for Implementation*

All staff involved in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes, including Professional Service Departments (PSDs), Support Services and Academic Schools, are responsible for the implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy. It is the responsibility of the Senior Managers within CHDA, working with the Quality Assurance Office and under the purview of the Apprenticeship Governance Committee (See *Appendix A*), to ensure there is an annual review of the policy. However, it is the responsibility of all to engage positively in that review and ensure implementation.

3.5 *Quality Assurance of Qualifications*

The University's Code of Practice and Credit Framework set out the quality assurance procedures and academic/credit conventions through which the University assures the quality and standards of its awards. The University will only offer HE-prescribed qualifications for the higher and degree apprenticeships that it delivers.

Where appropriate, the University shall confirm in writing to ESFA that it has formal programme approval from the professional or educational awarding body or other organisations as relevant to the qualification. This will ensure that the programme of study has approval from ESFA and is listed on the Learning Aim Reference Service (LARS) database.

3.6 *Quality Assurance of Staff*

The University's Staff Development Policy outlines the University of Kent's commitment to ensuring that staff can undertake development opportunities throughout their careers. The policy, along with the Centre's performance measures, supports the department in the process of regularly reviewing staff performance, training and developmental needs

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through monthly performance reviews and the annual Reflect, Plan, Develop (RPD) reviews.

In addition to this, annual peer teaching observations between Apprenticeship Advisers monitor and evaluate performance and highlight developmental needs. All new Apprenticeship Advisers are required to be observed conducting a progress review during the first six months to ensure that they are adhering to all relevant procedures.

3.7 *Management of Learners*

The University will provide high quality and easily accessible information and advice in helping apprentices to understand the opportunities and support available to them about education, training and connected matters (including employment).

As part of the learners' Initial Needs Assessment, all apprentices will have their maths and English assessed. Where additional support is highlighted the University will signpost the apprentices to the appropriate resources. Supplementary learning will also be available throughout the apprenticeship to challenge and stretch the apprentice in the specific subject area, along with Maths, English and IT.

The University of Kent will work in partnership with apprentices and employers to ensure that satisfactory performance and progress of the apprentices is maintained throughout the apprenticeship. All parties will be made aware of the expectations of the University of Kent with regards to quality and standards at the beginning and throughout the apprenticeship.

All learners' performance and progress will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. All learners' evidence packs and files, including feedback, progress review meetings and exit questionnaires will be analysed and acted upon, where possible.

All learners' evidence packs/files will be continuously and rigorously assessed by the relevant staff to ensure they are complete and up to date.

3.8 *Internal QA Procedure for Continuous Improvement*

The process for continuous QA improvement requires staff to meet on a regular basis to review the work, set standards and monitor learner progression, achievements, retention and attrition. These monitoring bodies include the Centre Education Committee as required by the Code of Practice, the Apprenticeship Governance Committee; the Senior Management Team (SMT) for the Centre and other appropriate departments. Quality control will be carried out against relevant agreed criteria, which will incorporate appropriate performance indicators.

The Centre will take a Risk Management Approach when working with new providers, employers, procedures and systems. These risks will be reviewed on a regular basis and will feed into the Centre's and the University's Risk Register where appropriate, and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

Internal Apprenticeship Progress meetings will be staged on a quarterly basis and will be closely monitored to capture progress and identify learners who are 'at risk' of falling behind. An 'at risk' register ('RAG-rated'⁷) is used to identify apprentices who are failing to progress at the expected rate and enable interventions to be implemented swiftly and be recorded on their progress reviews. Statistical analysis will be carried out against agreed criteria, which will incorporate performance indicators.

Module, Programme and Apprenticeship reviews will be supported by analysis of learner, employer and staff views and perceptions, gathered via questionnaires, surveys and review meetings. This will include:

⁷ i.e. 'red/Amber/Green-rated'

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- Employer and apprentice surveys run by ESFA and Ofsted;
- University apprenticeship surveys/workshops/focus groups;
- Standard University procedures for module and programme reviews.

Periodically, the apprenticeship administration team will self-audit specific elements of the apprenticeship process. These elements will be chosen on a rotational basis and will form part of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The results of the audit will be fed to the SMT on a regular basis. The audit will cover the following:

- Apprentice evidence pack;
- End Point Assessment;
- Employer Contracts;
- Funding;
- Sub-contracting due diligence.

3.9 Oversight

The CHDA Senior Management Team (SMT) will meet on a regular basis to review the QIP, to gather evidence for actions taken for improvement and set relevant targets to improve progress. This will feed into the termly Apprenticeship Governance Committee. Membership of this committee will include senior members of staff from various PSDs and will be chaired by the Head of Quality Assurance for the University. The University will also hold strategy-focused steering group meetings on a quarterly basis to discuss HDA provision within the University. Membership of this group will include senior members of staff across the University who are key stakeholders.

Feedback from the QIP process will be communicated to staff via monthly team meetings and/or individual 1:1 sessions. The outcome and action plans which result from the process will form the basis of the annual Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement plan.

3.10 Data Collection

The University will collate data relating to the 20% 'Off-The-Job' to help track apprentices' progress and ensure both apprentices and their employers are adhering to this requirement.

The University will supply the ESFA (or other relevant party) data on each individual apprentice, in accordance with the data collections framework set out in the 'Individualised Learner Record (ILR) specifications validation rules and appendices', as per the 'Provider Support Manual'. The University will supply ESFA with data in accordance with the following:

- In line with agreed audit arrangements;
- In adherence with the Data Protection Act/GDPR;
- To support payments received on profile;
- To enable financial reconciliation to take place; and
- To support the contract management and allocation processes.

Regular internal audits will be conducted by staff within CHDA using the Provider Data Self-assessment Toolkit (PDSAT) in order to make accurate and complete ILR data returns and to ensure the quality and reliability of the University's data.

The University will also confirm the apprenticeship via the Government's Apprenticeship Service portal (DAS). The employer can either grant the University permission to upload

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apprentices' information or ask the University to confirm information about the apprenticeship. This is currently only for employers who pay the Apprenticeship Levy and have signed an agreement with ESFA, but from April 2020 will include all employers. This data must match the information submitted on the ILR.

Any anomalies identified with the data held on any database (for example SITS, ILR, Apprenticeship Service Portal) will be evaluated and an action plan put in place to address any data quality issues.

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Appendix A

Apprenticeship Governance Committee: Terms of Reference

1. Rationale

A Standing Committee will be established in the Spring Term 2018/19 to ensure the sound academic governance of the University's arrangements for managing programmes of study leading to apprenticeship awards.

In fulfilling its responsibility for governance, the Committee will meet the following core objectives:

- Know the provision and understand its strengths and weaknesses;
- Support and strengthen leadership to shape its strategic direction;
- Challenge and hold senior managers to account for improving the quality of learning and the effectiveness of performance management systems.

2. Terms of Reference

The Committee will be responsible for the following matters:

- (i) To monitor the effectiveness and fitness for purpose of the University's policies, practices and procedures for managing apprenticeship programmes against the following internal and external regulatory documentation:
 - (a) Ofsted Common Inspection Framework;
 - (b) Education and Skills Funding Agency Funding Requirements;
 - (c) University of Kent Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance of Taught Programmes of Study;
 - (d) Quality Assurance Policy for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.
- (ii) To evaluate and report to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee/Graduate School Board on the effectiveness and fitness for purpose of the University's policies, practices and procedures for managing programmes of study leading to apprenticeship awards;
- (iii) To consider the appropriate range of student learning and related reports on a termly/annual basis and report on these to ASQC, with a view to drawing up a plan of action for facilitating the following:
 1. Securing and sustaining improvements to teaching, learning and assessment;
 2. Tackling weaknesses;
 3. Collaborating with employers and other partners to ensure that provision is aligned to local and regional priorities;
 4. Monitoring the progress of groups of learners;
 5. Monitoring the progression and destinations of different groups of learners;
 6. Maintaining provision over time;
 7. Ensuring that the safeguarding of learners is maintained.