

Greenwich Enhancement Framework

The University defines 'enhancement' as follows:

'Transformational and incremental change leading to improvement in the quality of the activities that contribute to the University's core business of learning, teaching and research.'

An Enhancement Framework for Greenwich

Since the development of the University's *Strategic Plan 2012-17: Making Greenwich Great*, the institution has gone on to develop a wide range of enhancement-led strategies, policies, initiatives and projects, in keeping with the *Plan's* aspirational vision and drive to improve the quality of everything we do. Sitting underneath the Strategic Plan, which in all its aspects is enhancement-focused, the Enhancement Framework provides a mechanism to define and coordinate the University's commitment to enhancement and offers a means of bringing together and integrating all of these strategies, policies, initiatives and projects. The Framework also provides guidance for shaping additional development into the future, for the University and for its partners, who must, wherever feasible, be brought within the scope of the University's projects and initiatives. It does so by providing a statement of general aims and principles for enhancement, which can inform the interpretation and implementation of the *Strategic Plan* and its underpinning strategies, and by defining the scope and object of the University's enhancement effort.

The Framework's relationship to the Strategic Plan

The Enhancement Framework is shaped by the values and behaviours identified in the Strategic Plan, in all five of their dimensions, but most especially those of aspiration, creativity and professionalism

Values	Behaviours
Aspiration	Setting and achieving ambitious goals Striving for excellence Being proactive Promoting employee engagement and well-being

Creativity	Being curious and challenging Being willing to take risks Imagining the future Thinking differently
Professionalism	Putting students and stakeholders first Doing a good job first time Respecting others and treating everyone fairly Acting in the interests of the University

Defining Enhancement

The University defines ‘enhancement’ primarily as transformational change, but does not exclude incremental change from the definition. The object of this transformational or incremental change encompasses all of the elements that contribute to the institution’s core business of learning, teaching and research. Enhancement is not simply about academic practice, but must, of necessity, include all of those contributory and supporting activities, from the management of learning spaces and the estate, through social opportunities provided for students, to the catering and student accommodation, as well as the more obvious professional services like student affairs and ICT. Just as significant are the institution’s business systems, structures, governance and procedures and the culture which permeates all of its activities. The quality of all of these is the precondition for the success or otherwise of the institution’s mission and enhancement of their quality is the means by which we can achieve the University’s vision.

A variety of different kinds of activity are therefore encompassed in this definition, the precondition being that they lead to improvement:

- *Innovations arising out of reflective practice by individuals or groups;*
- *Developments, initiatives, projects or innovations introduced by structural components of the institution (committees and sub-committees; Faculties, Directorates and Offices, or sub-sections thereof);*
- *Effective transformative action on the basis of routine quality assurance procedures;*
- *Interventions to re-align, restructure and transform the way in which different parts of the institution function, including relevant staff appointments.*

Responsibility for Enhancement

QAA stresses the taking of ‘deliberate steps’ as a defining characteristic of enhancement, and there is no reason to depart from this other than to say that this does not have to be solely ‘top-down’. Managers and those they manage should share responsibility for driving

enhancement and making the judgements as to what is needed. So, a further component of the Enhancement Framework is that:

- *Responsibility for driving enhancement, and making the judgement about what is needed and how to bring it about, is shared by members of staff at all levels of the institution, each within their own spheres of operation and expertise.*

If the University is to become the kind of academic community to which it aspires, it must continue to take seriously and value the contributions of its students and its staff, even if its management teams must ultimately reserve the right to determine the course of action. For this to be successful, a further requirement relates to culture and management style:

- *Successful enhancement depends upon a culture of open two-way communication, with relationships based on trust, and management styles that are congruent with this.*

The Relationship between Enhancement and Quality

The most widespread definition of 'quality' in HE is probably 'fitness for purpose', although this might be argued to be a little unambitious, unless both 'purpose' and 'fitness' are not static and pre-defined, but contestable and developmental. The University's Enhancement Framework therefore undertakes to define 'quality' in a more dynamic way, closer to 'the pursuit of excellence', based on institutional and sector objectives, which are themselves subject to progressive redefinition. Quality thus stretches into the future and is not defined in terms of static characteristics, such as being free from defects, but is instead tied to a drive towards enhancement:

- *Quality is aspirational and is tied to the vision for the institution.*

This has certain necessary consequences, which affect the relationship between 'quality assurance' and 'quality enhancement'. 'Quality assurance' is not about securing adequate performance, but about stretching beyond that and measuring progress towards the goals of enhancement and the vision that informs it. It demands neither adequacy nor perfection. It offers the tools for evaluation within a trajectory that is about driving improvements, rather than about monitoring whether minimal standards are met:

- *'Quality assurance' is the means we have of checking that we are driving successfully towards our vision.*

By the same token, 'quality enhancement' is about identifying the processes that can secure progress toward a set of goals that underpin the institutional vision and implementing these. This has to involve all stakeholders in the institution, working in partnership (academic staff, students, professional services staff, etc.):

- *'Quality enhancement' is the process of transformation by means of which the institution strives to drive forward quality.*

What must, of necessity, accompany this is an open acknowledgment of problems, or potential problems. Successful quality management therefore also encourages the identification of, and honest communication about risk, be it the risk that might attend innovation or, more importantly, the risks that might be incurred by current practice, so that such risks can be actively managed successfully. The achievement of quality demands, and must reward, transparency:

- *Quality management rewards openness and transparency about what still needs to be achieved, and where the real difficulties and risks lie.*

The Management of Risk and Support for Enhancement

The University recognises that change, innovation and development, for example, the process of taking on additional collaborative partners, will frequently involve risk. It is equally aware that conventional approaches to quality management may inhibit certain forms of enhancement and encourage risk aversion. Therefore, if the University's approach to quality management is to support and promote all forms of enhancement, including risk-taking innovation, the design and operation of the quality management system must be governed by certain key principles.

The first of these is the need to establish an approach to academic governance and an associated culture in which staff are encouraged to disclose that an aspect of the University's operations or its provision are 'at risk', or presents the possibility of risk. Certainly, University committees already have a clear commitment to holding such discussions, but this needs to be accompanied by a willingness amongst staff always to be candid about, and to disclose evidence of such risks or potential risks, including external factors that may jeopardise quality, so that these can be fully acknowledged and managed jointly by all those involved, in other words by both managers and operational staff, sharing responsibility:

- *Successful enhancement requires the clear identification of risk, or potential risk, and the shared management of that risk by all staff involved.*

A corollary to this is that quality management should take a predictive and context-focused¹ approach. In terms of what is normally covered by 'quality assurance', that means ensuring that all of its processes are directed towards future enhancement and that the purpose of any retrospection is solely for the purpose of analysis of the current state of affairs, not 'ticking the box' to establish compliance.

- *Quality assurance procedures must be designed and operate in such a way as to be predictive and context-focused.*

This might mean, for instance, that a process of annual monitoring of a programme would not only draw attention to impediments within academic practice itself, but also to such issues as business practices that present difficulties for the provision, and seek to engage in a dialogue

¹ As an example, this entails not only an awareness and explicit consideration of wider institutional factors that may impede development and the enhancement of quality, but also of the external market and regulatory environment in which the institution finds itself.

about them. Similarly, evaluation of progress made in the development of some aspect of professional services would not stop at the boundary of that service, but also seek to engage other forms of activity, whether academic or non-academic, that had an impact on that development, within a dialogue.

- *Cross-institutional enhancement requires the closer integration of strategies, policies and procedures with one another and creative dialogue about potential impediments to enhancement.*

This also entails that such procedures as we use are more selectively focused on the management of risk and on the enhancement of practice, which also carries with it the expectation that provision should be made for associated support and the targeting of resources. This principle applies both to academic provision and to professional services, and to the setting of priorities for the allocation of resources. 'High risk' and 'at risk' provision and activities must, by definition, be accorded more attention, more detailed scrutiny and a proportionate allocation of resources. This is already undoubtedly the case when the institution identifies provision or systems which are 'at risk'; it may not always be the case for what is deemed to be 'high risk':

- *In allocating resources (human or financial), provision should be made for the support, as well as the closer scrutiny, of 'high risk' activities.*

Conclusion

In many respects, the University's Enhancement Framework merely codifies the approach the University has already taken to enhancement. In doing so, however, and making explicit the principles on the basis of which enhancement must be conducted if it is to be successful, the aim would be to provide the institution for a supportive framework for the design of additional developments; for the processes of implementation of existing or future strategies, and for the evaluation of progress to date. These principles are intended to provide touchstones for each of these processes, and future University strategies and policies, as well as the review of current strategies and policies, will be expected to address these.

The Framework is due for review in 2020, but an interim evaluation of its implementation will be presented to Academic Council at the half-way point in 2017.

The Enhancement Framework

Summary

Enhancement is transformational and incremental change leading to improvement in the quality of all of the activities that contribute to the University's core business of learning, teaching and research.

It encompasses both the University and its partners in a range of activity aimed at producing improvement:

- *Innovations arising out of reflective practice by individuals or groups;*
- *Developments, initiatives, projects or innovations introduced by structural components of the institution (committees and sub-committees; Faculties, Directorates and Offices, or sub-sections thereof);*
- *Effective transformative action on the basis of routine quality assurance procedures;*
- *Interventions to re-align, restructure and transform the way in which different parts of the institution function, including relevant staff appointments.*

It is based on the values, defined in the Strategic Plan, of *aspiration, creativity and professionalism.*

Enhancement relates to everything that we do, to *all* of those activities that contribute to and support the University's core business of learning, teaching and research, as well to its structures and culture.

- *Cross-institutional enhancement requires the closer integration of strategies, policies and procedures with one another and creative dialogue about potential impediments to enhancement.*

The quality of all of the University's activities is the precondition for the success or otherwise of the institution's mission and enhancement of their quality is the means by which we can achieve the University's vision:

- *Quality is aspirational and is tied to the vision for the institution.*
- *'Quality assurance' is the means we have of checking that we are driving successfully towards our vision.*
- *'Quality enhancement' is the process of transformation by means of which the institution strives to drive forward quality.*

- *Quality assurance procedures must be designed and operate in such a way as to be predictive and context-focused.*

There are certain pre-conditions for enhancement to be successful:

- *Responsibility for driving enhancement, and making the judgement about what is needed and how to bring it about, is shared by members of staff at all levels of the institution, each within their own spheres of operation and expertise.*
- *Quality management rewards openness and transparency about what still needs to be achieved, and where the real difficulties and risks lie.*
- *Successful enhancement requires the clear identification of risk, or potential risk, and the shared management of that risk by all staff involved.*
- *In allocating resources (human or financial), provision should be made for the support, as well as the closer scrutiny, of 'high risk' activities.*