

## **2023/24 Annual Report on Academic Quality and Standards Assurance**

### **1. Introduction and Overview**

This report provides an overview of the university's recent achievements which demonstrate the level of academic quality we are achieving. It also outlines the university's mechanisms for assuring the quality and standards of our provision and provides a summary of the outcomes of these processes.

The university's Quality Assurance team provide central oversight and management for quality assurance processes, monitoring compliance within these processes and providing advice and guidance to staff across the university on quality assurance matters. The university's Strategic Planning team provide analysis of data relating to student performance metrics. Governance is provided through the Student Success Board which reports to Academic Council. Academic quality and standards are managed by faculties within mutually agreed, university-wide frameworks, principles, policies and protocols. Quality and standards are a shared responsibility, with programmes designed and delivered by the university's academic community, while many student support mechanisms are provided by professional services teams.

### **2. 2023/4 Key Achievements**

The university has built on its success in gaining Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework, with the following key achievements in 2023/24:

#### **2.1 National Student Survey 2024**

In 2024, the university improved by 0.3 percentage points (p.p.) to 81.3% on its NSS KPI, which is an average of the scores for 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback'.

The university remained above the sector average for Assessment and Feedback (+2p.p.) and Student Voice (+3p.p.), and improved satisfaction rates for Academic Support and Organisation and Management compared to 2023.

#### **2.2 2023 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is the leading survey of Taught Postgraduates in the UK, with 98,311 respondents in 2024, achieving a 13% response rate. 108 institutions were involved in the survey.

Overall Satisfaction: 86% of Greenwich taught postgraduate students agreed with the 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course' question. This is in line with the result in the 2022 and 2023 surveys, which was a 4%-pt gain on the 2021 outcome.

Response rate: the response rate for the 2024 survey was 29%, a fall of 5%-pts from the 2023 outcome of 34%, but well above the sector average.

#### **2.3 Student Outcome Thresholds**

All types of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at the University of Greenwich are above the Office for Students (OfS) threshold for continuation, completion, and progression to employment/further study.

### 3. How Academic Standards are managed

In assuring the standards we expect from students to gain academic credit and awards, the university's intention is to ensure that:

1. Academic standards of programmes meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework;
2. The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.

The Quality Assurance team assure academic standards through our management of programme validation processes, programme modification processes, external examiner systems, and Progression and Award Boards (Greenwich's equivalent of exam boards).

### 4. How Academic Quality is managed

In assuring the quality of our academic provision, the University's intention is to ensure that:

1. Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed;
2. All students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

Academic quality is managed through programme validation processes, programme modification processes, external examiner systems and Annual Programme Review.

### 5. Update on Quality and Standards

The Quality Assurance Team regularly review and revise quality systems and processes to ensure fitness for purpose, that they are aligned to the university strategic plan, and continue to meet the requirements of external regulatory bodies. This section identifies some of the key developments to systems and processes during the 2023/24 academic year.

#### 5.1 Progression and Award Boards

It is the responsibility of Progression and Award Boards (PABs) to make decisions in accordance with the University's [Academic Regulations for Taught Awards](#) when considering an individual students' academic profile. The Progression and Award Board therefore has the power to enable a student to progress to their next level of study, to resit assessments, to repeat modules and/or years of study, to recommend awards and to exit students from programmes of study.

The Quality Assurance team have continued to strengthen mechanisms for communicating with faculty and Student and Academic Services staff regarding the operation of PABs, including monthly operational meetings with each faculty and bi-monthly forums with Associate Deans for Student Success. The Quality Assurance team also enhanced reporting mechanisms for PABs by working with Information and Library Services to develop a mark entry report in Business Objects. The success of PABs is demonstrated by an increase of approximately ~1200 students who re-registered in the first week of registration in September 2024 versus September 2023. This is a continuous improvement following an increased number of registrations from the first week of registration in 2023 of 3000 students compared to the same week in 2022.

The Quality Assurance team have continued to work with faculty stakeholders to standardise the application of decisions at PABs, in particular:

- Trailing credit, whereby students can repeat failed modules alongside the modules in the next stage of study
- Application of Extenuating Circumstance, which provides mitigation when students have been prevented from completing assessments or doing so to the best of their ability (e.g. due to illness)
- Re-sit and repeat year opportunities

Improvements to the consistency of Progression and Award Board decisions has been a contributory factor in achieving a 27% reduction in the number of appeals received during the 2023/24 academic session.

However, limitations associated with Banner, the university's student information management system, means that there continues to be a level of risk. We mitigate potential risks associated with the Banner (where manual interventions may be necessary) through robust scrutiny of outcomes to ensure equitable treatment of our students. The systems that support these processes are continually reviewed for improvements by the university Student Systems Product Group.

During 2024/25, a Curriculum Management Tool will be developed which will help to re-design the way in which curriculum structures are built in the student information system. This transformational project is anticipated to address the aforementioned risk and further enhance the PAB operations, resulting in reduced administrative burden, improved consistency of decision making and standardisation.

## **5.2 External Examiner Systems**

As in other universities, the external examiner system is designed to provide assurance that marking of assessments at the University of Greenwich is consistent with recognised standards. External examiners moderate samples of student work (with the marking and feedback undertaken at the University of Greenwich), attend Subject Assessment Panels<sup>1</sup> and Progression and Award Boards and provide an annual report summarising their findings. The annual external examiner report template has been mapped to the expectations in the Office for Students Conditions for Registration.

During 2023/24, the Quality Assurance team received 225 external examiner reports. The results demonstrate that 97% of external examiners either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that assessment design enables all learning outcomes to be assessed at the appropriate level and are marked consistently, to an appropriate standard. 78% agreed exam boards were fair, equitable and consistent (8% not enough information to say), while 94% agreed the standards of student performance are comparable to similar programmes/modules in other UK institutions with which the external examiner is familiar.

Overall responses received indicate that external examiners are satisfied that our programmes are of a high standard, provide sufficient academic rigour and standards are at least equivalent to programmes offered by other UK higher education institutions. Qualitative feedback received generally indicates that external examiners are particularly positive regarding the academic support provided to students.

## **5.3 Degree Outcomes Statement**

Degree outcomes statements are short public documents signed off by governing bodies. The degree outcomes statement sets out the institutional degree classification profile over the past five years. It considers how assessment and marking practices and governance structures assure the standard of degrees; how the degree algorithm has changed; and how learning and teaching enhancements can account for improved attainment.

In 2023 the Academic Council and Governing Body approved changes to the University's degree algorithm to ensure that it is not a structural factor contributing to the BAME awarding gap, provides a fair reflection of the achievements of all our students at the point of graduation and adheres to principles of good practice.

Following Governing Body approval, the most recent [Degree Outcomes Statement](#) (covering the period to 2022/23) was published in June 2024. It showed the percentage of 'Good Honours Degrees' (first class and upper second combined) went from 71% in 2022 to 71.5% in 2023.

## **5.4 Programme Validations**

The programme validation process is designed to assure (i) the standards of programmes, by ensuring that new programmes meet the requirements of relevant national frameworks; and (ii) the quality of the programme, by ensuring they are well-designed and that suitable resources are

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<sup>1</sup> Subject Assessment Panels (SAPs) are convened to review and address cohort standards, assessment practice and marking standards for all modules under their remit.

in place to ensure a high-quality academic experience. During 2023/24 the Programmes and Partnerships Management Committee approved 133 new programmes and 158 programme discontinuations. There were 64 programme changes agreed, and 36 suspensions of existing programmes were considered and approved. This represents a significant increase in activity versus the 2022/23 academic cycle.

The Quality Assurance Team coordinated 21 separate validation events during 2023/24.

The programme validation process is sound in ensuring that newly approved programmes are of a suitable standard and quality. Continued assurance that existing programmes continue to be up to date with current thinking and practices in the relevant discipline is provided by external examiners, 99% of whom either agreed or strongly agreed that 'the curriculum is representative of current thinking and practices in the subject matter'.

The Quality Assurance Team are currently working to develop a more collaborative programme validation process which will ensure that academic colleagues are supported by professional services stakeholders in designing their curriculums. The new process will initially be utilised to revalidate programmes to the new Curriculum Framework, with the intention that this would become a business-as-usual process for validating new programmes also.

### **5.5 Annual Programme Review**

The Annual Programme Review (APR) process provides a mechanism through which programme leaders are asked to reflect on the performance of their programmes, identify strengths and weaknesses and create a plan for how they intend to enhance the programme. Annual Programme Reviews are now completed in the Continuous Improvement Tool (CIT). This includes a dashboard of key performance metrics that programme leaders can reflect and comment on. Programmes with poor metrics were followed up in the 2024/25 academic year and tasked to develop action plans as part of the new Academic Programme Taskforce. During 2023/24 the CIT was extended to on campus postgraduate provision and the Quality Assurance Team worked to socialise the CIT, achieving a 96% completion rate for APRs.

### **5.6 Partnership Reviews**

Partnership Reviews of each University partner are undertaken on a 5 yearly periodic basis. The intention is to assure both the quality and standards of the partner institution.

During 2023/24, the Quality Assurance Team coordinated Partnership Reviews for the following partner institutions:

- London South East College (LSEC), UK
- FPT University, Vietnam
- Hong Kong Management Association (HKMA), Hong Kong
- North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCOT), UK
- KMD, Myanmar
- Daffodil International Academy, Bangladesh
- Royal School of Military Engineering (RSME), UK
- Bird College, UK
- SBCS College, Trinidad
- University of Greenwich International College (UGIC), UK
- London School of Business and Finance (LSBF), Singapore
- Yunnan University of Finance and Economics (YUFE), China – Exceptional Partnership Review conducted as a result of a 2 year extension from the initial review conducted during the 2021/22 academic year

All twelve Partnership Reviews resulted in successful reapproval of the partnership for a further period of 5 years.

The Quality Assurance Team also coordinated partnership validations for:

- Denning College, Pakistan

The partnership was fully validated for a period of 5 years.

Further light touch Partnership Reviews were conducted for the following teacher training partnerships:

- Heronsgate, UK
- Royal Greenwich Teaching School Alliance, UK
- Primary First Trust, UK

## **6. Conclusion**

The Academic Council and Governing Body can be assured of our academic quality and standards by:

- Student satisfaction in the NSS and PTES being comparable with the levels seen in 2023
- All student outcomes thresholds being met for all UG and PGT programme types
- Robust processes to monitor both quality and standards
- External examiner feedback indicating that standards continue to be of an equivalent level, or higher, than other universities and that they are satisfied that our provision is of high quality
- A comparable proportion of good honours degrees were awarded in 2023 as in 2022.

We have further enhanced our support for academic quality and standards in 2023/24 as follows:

1. The significant progress in the effectiveness of Progression and Award Boards in 2022/23 has been further built on. This has ensured that all students had an appropriate progression decision by the end of the academic year, which is imperative to enabling those students to re-register.
2. Embedding of the Continuous Improvement Tool in our Annual Programme Review process for both postgraduate and undergraduate taught programmes has provided a powerful tool for academic colleagues to review the performance of their programmes, to identify potential issues and to put meaningful actions in place to resolve them.

We anticipate further benefits in future as we look towards the implementation of a Curriculum Management Tool and a Curriculum Framework.