# Higher Education Programme SOP

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## 1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, you can click here to view the change history.

## 2.0 Background

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the procedures the College follows in relation to providing high quality Higher Education (HE) programmes.

These procedures are informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 and the Awarding Organisation/ Body Regulations.

## 3.0 Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students registered on Higher Education programmes delivered by the College, including franchised and validated provision.
- Full-time and part-time HE students (including Higher Level Apprentices).

This document **does not** apply to Further Education/ AppNI/ Traineeship (level 1-3) programmes, which are governed by separate arrangements.

Where the detailed regulations of an Awarding Body/ Organisation are more specific than this procedure, those external regulations take precedence. The College procedure should then be applied in a way that is consistent with those regulations.

# 4.0 Production of College, Course and Unit Handbooks and Specifications

## 4.1 Introduction & Principles

These procedures are informed by the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 Principle 9- Recruiting, selecting and admitting students, Principle 11- Teaching, learning and assessment, Principle 7- Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes and Principle 10- Supporting students to achieve their potential and the guidance of the Competitions and Markets Authority.

SERC is committed to providing high quality information to:

- Communicate the value of Higher Education in an accessible, comprehensible and timely way to all users.
- Enable prospective students to make informed decisions about where, what and how they will study.
- Provide current students with relevant, timely and accurate information throughout the learning experience to enhance and confirm academic standards.

## 4.2 Scope

These procedures apply to all staff that create, update and produce college, course and unit handbooks and programme specifications. Channels of communication' covers the widest interpretation including electronic media and editorial media.

## 4.3 Procedure

The layout for programme handbooks, programme specifications, and unit handbooks will be specified as in Appendices 2-3. A template for the handbooks can be found on the HE@SERC- Coordinators Toolkit available on the Staff Intranet.

For programmes awarded by the Ulster University the Course Director must forward all information to be published for prospective and current students to the Head of Higher Education one month prior to internal college deadlines along with a copy of the "Verification of Published Information: Collaborative Partners" form with Stage 1: Section A Complete. This form can be found on the HE@SERC Ulster University page or using the link above. The Head of Higher Education will forward the information to Ulster University for review and approval. Information must not be published until agreement has been received from Ulster University by way of a signed response in section B of the form from the Faculty Partnership Manager.

To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information and meet student need, information in alternative formats will be made available on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met, we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided. We will respond to reasonable requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner.

### 4.3.1 Current Students

The Head of Higher Education (QED) will produce and annually update the College Higher Education Handbook using Appendix 4.

HE programmes will produce a Programme Handbook and Specification and Module/ Unit Handbook. The Course Co-Ordinator/Director should create/review the programme guidance documents annually. The Programme and Module/ Unit Handbooks should be reviewed prior to issue, normally September each year. The Awarding Organisation/ Body guidance should be used, templates and examples are available from QED on the HE@SERC- Coordinators Toolkit.

Following approval of new or revised regulations, codes or practices, policies or guidelines, the Quality Unit must ensure that Course Teams are appropriately informed of the changes.

Programme guidance documents should follow the templates at Appendices 2-4.

## 4.4 Review and Monitoring

### 4.4.1 Current Student Information

The College Higher Education Handbook(s) will be signed off by the Deputy Principal Planning Performance & Engagement prior to publication.

The Induction Handbook/materials will be signed off by the Head of Learner Welfare.

Sampling and regular reviews will be carried out by the Quality, Excellence and Development (QED) unit.

Issues arising from the sampling processes that require changes to information should be actioned by the Programme Team not more than 10 working days following notification of the requirements. School Management will ensure that the action is undertaken.

The quality audits will be reported to the HE Review Board on the effectiveness of processes and reliability of material produced.

As part of the annual monitoring and review processes, students and where possible stakeholders should be asked to review the effectiveness and reliability of published information. The QED Unit will act on issues raised.

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# 5.0 Assessment and Internal Verification for Degree, Foundation Degree, CertHE and Higher National Programmes

## 5.1 Introduction & Principles

SERC is committed to an assessment process that is:

- Fair and free from bias.
- Based on a range of assessment methods to reflect the learning needs of students.
- Adheres to Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements.
- Includes an organised system of internal verification of assessment instruments, cross-marking and moderation to share best practice and verify academic standards.
- Provides clear and constructive written feedback for learner improvement underpinned by a quality assurance process based on team responsibility through vigorous internal verification and moderation process.

This section relates to the preparation, grading and internal verification of Degree, Foundation Degree, CertHE and BTEC Higher National Programmes. It is recognition of the importance of a robust assessment and internal verification procedure. These procedures are informed by the Awarding Organisation/ Body regulations, the UK Quality Code 2024 Principle 11-Teaching, learning and assessment and considers Section 6: HE Examination and Progress Boards.

Internal Verification is the quality assurance system used to monitor assessment practice. This involves:

- The scrutiny of assignment briefs prior to issue to learners.
- Cross-moderating to internally verify the quality of lecturer decisions (including student feedback) for all units and providing appropriate feedback to lecturers, with an action plan where necessary.
- Monitoring consistency across teams/ lecturers on one or several sites through a standardisation programme.
- Monitoring consistency across programmes operating as part of a consortium.

## 5.2 Scope

These procedures apply to all staff involved in the preparation, assessment, grading and internal verification of all Ulster University, The Open University and BTEC Higher National Programmes.

## 5.3 Authorised Forms

The following standardised pro forma have been devised for use as part of the planning, assessment, internal verification, grading and cross moderation processes for each Awarding Organisation/ Body and are available on the HE@SERC- Coordinators Toolkit available on the staff intranet. The College Portal can be used in lieu of the forms below; however, use should be consistent across programmes.

### 5.3.1 The Open University Provision

Standardised pro forma available from: The Open University- Assessment and IV Templates

- Form 1- Assignment Brief and Feedback
- Form 2- Examination Paper
- Form 3- IV of Assessment Form
- Form 4- Cross Moderation of Assessment
- Form 5- Cross Campus Moderation of Assessment
- Form 6- Assessment Planning

### 5.3.2 Ulster University Provision

Standardised pro forma available from: Ulster University- Assessment and IV Templates

- Form 1- Assignment Brief Template
- Form 2- Examination Paper Template
- Form 3- IV of Assessment Form
- Form 4- Moderation of Assessment Form
- Form 5- Module Template
- Form 6- Semester 1 Assessment Deferral Request
- Form 7- Assessment Planning

### 5.3.3 BTEC Higher Nationals Provision

Standardised pro forma available from: BTEC Higher Nationals- Assessment and IV Templates

- Form 01a- Assignment Brief
- Form 01b- Assignment Feedback Sheets
- Form 02- Internal Verification of Assignment Brief
- Form 03- Internal Verification of Programme Assessment Schedule
- Form 04a- Campus Internal Verification of Assessment Decisions
- Form 04b- Cross Campus Standardisation of Assessment Decisions
- Form 05- Internal Verification Programme Planning
- Form 06- Lead Internal Verification Tracking
- Form 07- Course Co-Ordinator Internal Verification Tracking
- Form 08- Observation Record
- Form 09- Witness Statement
- Form 10- Assessment Planning
- Form 11- Student Induction Checklist
- Form 12- Learner Evidence Checklist
- Form 13- Assessment Tracking
- Form 14- Programme Lead IV Resubmission Approval

## 5.4 Monitoring & Evaluation

Implementation of the procedure will be overviewed by the School Management and monitored by the QED Unit and evaluation of its effectiveness will be naturally occurring through the course review procedures, and the quality assurance cycle.

## 5.5 Retention & Storage of Assessment Records

All assessment, internal verification and cross moderation records must be completed on-line and kept securely on the School team site in line with the following retention timescales.

### 5.5.1 The Open University Provision

In line with the Assessment Retention information as published at: Assessment retention information | Validation Partnerships

### 5.5.2 Ulster University Provision

| Document Type | Retention Timescale |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Assessment Brief and IV Records (Examinations and Assignments) | Min. 5 years post academic year |
| Candidate work (Examinations and Assignments) | Min. 6 months post Board of Examiners |
| Candidate Assessment Feedback and Cross Moderation Records | Min. 6 years post programme completion |

### 5.5.3 BTEC Higher Nationals Provision

| Document Type | Retention Timescale |
|---|---|
| Assessment Brief and IV Records (Examinations and Assignments) | Min. 3 years post certification |
| Candidate work (Examinations and Assignments) | Min. 12 weeks post certification of largest qualification |
| Candidate Assessment Feedback and Cross Moderation Records (includes both internal and external assessment) | Min. 3 years post certification |

## 5.6 Staff Roles within Internal Verification Process

### 5.6.1 Role of Quality Nominee

The Head of Higher Education will act as Quality Nominee on behalf of the Head of Quality, Excellence and Development for all Higher Education programmes and complete the following tasks:

- Act as a link for Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements.
- Support teams delivering Higher Education programmes through a series of Awarding Organisation/ Body specific Coordinator Meetings.
- Liaise with Programme Leads and Course Directors on Awarding Organisation/ Body matters.
- Link with School Management to support programme leads and Lead IVs as required.
- Ensure assessment and internal verification is effective.
- Ensure Awarding Organisation/ Body policy requirements and approval conditions are being implemented consistently and effectively.
- Manage the College Progress and Examination Board process as stated in Section 6: HE Examination and Progress Boards.

### 5.6.2 Role of Lead Internal Verifier/ School Programme Manager

Key tasks:

- Satisfy the Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements for Lead Internal Verifier.
- Ensure that there is an assessment and verification plan for the programmes in areas of responsibilities.
- Ensure that the assessment schedule is issued to students.
- Sample assessment briefs for a programme in line with Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements.
- Coordinate an Assessment Plan for the programme in conjunction with the Unit/ Module Leader and Internal Verifiers.
- Plan, allocate and manage internal verifiers for the programmes in areas of responsibilities.

- At suitable points ensure that the Plan is being implemented and IV records maintained.
- Arrange standardisation meetings across teams and on campuses.
- Manage, sample and assure internal verification processes and procedures by internal Verifiers.
- Undertake some IV and/or assessment for individual units within at least one of the programmes.
- Support Programme Coordinators in preparation for and execution of College Progress and Examinations Boards.
- Manage Programme Coordinators to ensure that final results are communicated in a timely way to students.
- Assist the Head of Higher Education (QED) with the Appeals Process.

### 5.6.3 Role of the Internal Verifier

The Internal Verifier is at the heart of quality assurance both within the national framework and within the quality and management system of SERC. The Internal Verifier has overall responsibility in ensuring that the Internal Verification Process (detailed below) is carried out for the appointed programme of study. The Internal Verifier will be appointed by the Lead Internal Verifier for specific units and/or areas of a programme.

**Key tasks:**

Preparation of Assignment Briefs and Role in Assessment Planning

- Attend course team meetings and lead a team approach to assessment of the programme to ensure cohesiveness.
- Ensure **that only approved documentation** and layout are used for both assignments and the internal verification process. The approved documentation can be found in section 5.3- Authorised Forms. It is understood that in some subjects a variation may be necessary to the cover sheet. This **must be** agreed through the Lead IV with the Head of Higher Education as part of the annual IV planning process.
- Ensure that the quality of assignment briefs is fit for purpose and reflect the unit learning outcomes, content, assessment and grading criteria and assessment guidance. Once the IV has signed off the assignment brief it means that it meets the Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements and only at this point be issued to the candidates.
- Where an assignment brief does not meet Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements, the IV must indicate the remedial action required, discuss the issue with the staff writing the assignment and arrange for the changes. **The IV is responsible** for ensuring that the remedial action is completed, the assignment and IV documentation updated prior to issue. Assignment briefs **must not** be issued without this stage of the IV process being completed.

Cross Moderation of Assessment Decisions

- Use subject knowledge to confirm the grading criteria awarded within the sample.
- Where the grading criteria awarded is not agreed this **must be** noted on the cross moderation documentation. The IV should then undertake a professional discussion with the assessor to agree the remedial action required.
- Where the IV and assessor cannot reach agreement the Lead IV/ School Programme Manager can be consulted for assistance.
- Ensure that the appropriate corrective action is taken where necessary and the results noted on the internal verification or cross moderation documentation.
- Monitor and ensure student feedback meets College and Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements. Feedback should be based on marking for improvement. This includes annotation on the script and on the feedback sheet. The annotation on the script should

identify how the grading has or has not been met and any future improvements that could be made.
- Provide advice and support to lecturers on a regular basis.
- Ensure your own assessment decisions are sampled.
- Ensure that the internal verification and cross moderation processes are carried out on time.
- Ensure all accurate records regarding internal verification and cross moderation activities are stored online on the appropriate school team site.
- Liaise with Lead Internal Verifier/ School Programme Manager.
- Support quality assurance by taking a key role in quality reviews.
- Advise the course team on any training needs.
- Provide feedback on the assessment system to the programme team, senior management and Awarding Organisation.
- Take part in the formal stage of any appeal.

### 5.6.4 Role of Unit/ Module Leader

The following list of tasks is indicative of the areas normally covered by a unit/ module lecturer – any variations will be agreed with line manager when agreeing timetables.

**Key tasks:**

Preparation of Assignments and Internal Verification

- Active participation in all team meetings, the preparation of assignments, assessment schedule and future course development.
- The assessor will have a detailed knowledge of the units to be assessed with regard to learning outcomes, content, grading criteria and assessment guidance. They will ensure that these are followed in assessment practices.
- Scheme of work, all assessments/assignment briefs passed to programme leader as required.
- Ensure **that only approved documentation** and layout are used for both assignments and the internal verification process. The approved documentation can be found in section 5.3- Authorised Forms.
- The wording of the learning outcomes and any grading criteria **cannot be altered in any way** from that within the unit/ module specification unless approved by the Awarding Organisation/ Body.
- Assignment briefs must not be issued to students unless the IV process has been fully completed and the brief has been signed off the IV and any issues resolved.
- Assessors must attend and participate in internal verification events within the school.
- A sample of assessed works must be provided for internal verification events. It is the assessor's responsibility to manage the assessment process to ensure that a sample of graded, annotated work is available at these events. Failure to provide such a sample must be agreed in advance with School Management.

Assessment of Student Work

- Provide a formative and summative feedback opportunity to the learner for Pearson Higher National programmes.
- Provide summative feedback opportunity to the learner in line with Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements.

- Undertake prompt marking of assessed work with return to students within a maximum of **3 weeks (21 days)** from submission of assessment.
- Feedback should be based on marking for improvement. This includes annotation on the script and on the feedback sheet. The annotation on the script should identify how and where the grading criteria has or has not been met and any future improvements that could be made.
- Maintain accurate records of formative and summative assessment decisions using the required College systems and documentation identified in 5.3- Authorised Forms for the duration as identified in Section 5.5 Retention & Storage of Assessment Records.

Teaching and Delivering Learning

- Prompt attendance at all timetabled classes, maintenance of unit/ module registers and appropriate action taken in the case of poor attendance in line with course team procedures.
- Module/ Unit specification, handbook and schedule /plan of work to be issued to students during 1st week of study.
- Provide a comprehensive programme induction including academic regulations for the programme. Awarding Organisation/ Body specific induction templates can be found at HE@SERC Coordinators Toolkit- 06. Induction Presentation Templates
- Ensure that all relevant teaching has been covered prior to planned assessment activities.
- Provide clear guidance to students re grading criteria and unit/module objectives to be assessed and, adherence to planned submission dates in line with course, College and Awarding Organisation/ Body guidelines.
- Forward completed student unit/ module portfolios with final grades to programme leaders within 1 week of unit/ module completion.
- Ensure that all Awarding Organisation/ Body, College and course team policies are followed in terms of cross marking and IV procedures.
- Follow submission procedures as outlined in the College student handbooks.
- Provide learners with support and signpost individual learners with specific learning needs to the course tutor.
- Completion of online student performance record system as required.
- Reflect upon and evaluate own performance and contribute to course review and evaluation procedures.

## 5.7 Role of Course Co-Ordinator/ Programme Leader

**Key tasks:**

Within the internal verification process the course co-ordinator/programme leader will:

- Ensure that all schemes of work and assignment briefs are available to students on the VLE.
- Complete and maintain the co-ordinator tracking of internal verification as required by the Awarding Organisation/ Body regulations and provide to the Lead IV/ School Management for agreement.
- Liaise with the Lead IV/ School Management as required.
- Attend and engage in Awarding Organisation/ Body specific HE Co-ordinator meetings with the Head of HE.
- Communicate the decisions of the College Progress and Examination Boards in a timely way as required in Section 6: HE Examination and Progress Boards.
- Be available to consider academic appeals in the agreed timeline following Progress and Examination Boards following Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements.

## 5.8 The Internal Verification Procedure

**All staff involved with the Internal Verification procedure must ensure that they understand their role as indicated above before commencing the IV procedure.**

Internal Verification is the quality assurance system used to monitor assessment practice. This involves:

- The scrutiny of assignment briefs prior to issue to learners.
- Cross-marking to internally verify the quality of lecturer decisions (including student feedback) for all units and providing appropriate feedback to lecturers, with an action plan where necessary.
- Monitoring consistency across teams/ lecturers on one or several sites through a standardisation programme.
- Judging learner evidence against the assessment criteria.

Awarding Organisation/ Body specific forms available on the HE@SERC Coordinators Toolkit should be used to complete this process.

The cross moderation of assessment requirements of the Awarding Organisation/ Body should be followed and provide a sampled check of all aspects of the assessment process and should take account of:

- All Assessors
- All assignments from every unit/ module
- All forms of assessed work
- All grades of performance
- Work from every assignment
- As wide a variety of learners as possible
- The Lead IV/ School Management should use a 'risk based' approach as required. This means that the Lead IV will take into account the previous outcomes from internal verification and standard verification, experience of assessor and whether the unit is new or has been delivered before.

## 5.9 Cross College Standardisation Events

The Lead IV/ School Management must organise three cross-college events annually:

- Standardisation event, prior to the start of the academic year, using a sample of learner work and the relevant assessment criteria to agree the standard for the Awarding Organisation/ Body. This is achieved through a professional discussion with all of the assessors and should bring cross-campus teams together. Following this exercise formal assessment and internal verification can occur.
- IV/ Cross Moderation during inter-semester January (prior to Progress Board).
- IV/ Cross Moderation during May/June (prior to Examination Board).
- For Pearson Higher National programmes cross moderation should take place at the time of assessment and prior to the return of assessments to learners.

## 5.10 Internal Verification Process

**Stage 1: Preparation of Programme Assessment Plan**

The Assignment Schedule for the Programme is a live document which should be reviewed regularly by the Lead Internal Verifier/ School Management and agreed by the Programme

team on the relevant Form. The Assessment Plan should ensure that assignments are timely and provide opportunity for a reasonable student workload. A variety of modes of assessment should be used as appropriate.

**Stage 2: Internal Verification of Assignment Briefs**
All assignment briefs must be internally verified, **prior** to issue to the learner. This task is carried out by the IV. The Lead IV/ School Management will sample a minimum of 20% of assignment briefs to verify the brief is fit for purpose:

- Ensuring the tasks and evidence will allow the learner to address the targeted criteria.
- Ensuring the brief is written in a clear and accessible language.
- Ensuring learners' roles and tasks are vocationally relevant and appropriate to the level of the qualification.
- Ensuring equal opportunities are incorporated.
- Ensure the brief meets the requirements of the Awarding Organisation/ Body.
- Ensure timescales are appropriate.

Internal verification of assignment briefs should be reported and recorded on the relevant Form. If action is required, the lecturer should complete this and return it to the Internal Verifier for sign off. **Only when** the brief is verified as fit for purpose may it be issued to the learners.

**Stage 3: Agreement of Internal Verification Plan**
The Lead IV/ School Management must prepare annually a risk-based internal verification plan for each programme for which they are responsible. The IV plan should reflect the needs of the programme, including risk-based issues, the principles of internal verification and may use a mix of campus and cross-campus internal verification as required.

**Stage 4: Cross Moderation of Assessment decisions**
A sample of assessment decisions for each unit of study must be internally verified. Team/Cross Campus internal verification should be recorded on the relevant Form and should follow the Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements for sampling. Where a programme is offered across SERC there should be evidence that cross moderation has occurred between the campus delivery teams.

This is to ensure:

- Assessment decisions accurately match learner work (evidence) to the unit learning outcomes, content, grading criteria and assignment guidance.
- Assessment and grading are consistent across the programme on all sites.
- Evidence confirmed by the lecturer is valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient.
- Awarding Organisation/ Body standards are being met.
- Feedback is timely, linked to criteria, and provides clear guidance for improvement. Annotation on the script meets the standards as outlined in Internal Verification of assessed student work.

Cross moderation activities between programme team members should be completed prior to feedback to the learner and recorded on the relevant Form. Feedback should be provided to the module lecturer and forms forwarded to the IV for monitoring. If assessment decisions are not agreed the IV should ensure appropriate corrective action is taken. The IV is responsible for ensuring that all remedial action is completed. The sample must represent all sites where a programme is offered.

**Stage 5: Lead Internal Verification**

A sample of verified decisions by Internal Verifiers across units, programmes and Campuses, must be reviewed by the Lead IV/ School Management. The Lead IV/ School Manager should use a risk approach and must be satisfied that each step of the IV process has been followed and the AO's standards met.

Sample size

All assessors work must be internally verified annually. All units and as wide a spread of learners should be sampled. The Lead IV should work with the Co-ordinator to ensure spread meets the requirements of the Awarding Organisation/ Body.

Campus level Internal Verification

As a team each unit should be internally verified. A minimum of 3 pieces of work for each assessment to cover all grades of performance and a range of learners. All fails should also be confirmed. This step is used at the Lead IV discretion and will be highlighted within the IV plan.

Cross Campus level Internal Verification

Where the programme is delivered cross campus there should be a minimum of two standardisation meetings per year to ensure parity of assessment decisions. For every unit a minimum of three pieces of assessed work from each campus to cover all assessors, grades of performance and a range of learners.

Preparation of sample for the Awarding Organisation/ Body Verifier

The Lead IV/ School Management should follow the guidelines of the Awarding Organisation/ Body, coordinate with the assessors and internal verifiers for the programme, and work with the Head of Higher Education to ensure a sample is available for external moderation.

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# 6.0 HE Examination and Progress Boards

## 6.1 Introduction & Principles

This section outlines the procedure the College follows for Higher Education (HE) Progress and Examination Boards. The procedure takes account and reflects the UK Quality Code 2024 Principle 1- Strategic Approach to Managing Quality and Standards, Principle 5- Monitoring, Evaluating and Enhancing Provision, Principle 11- Teaching, learning and assessment and Principle 12- Operating concerns, complaints and appeals process

## 6.2 Scope

This procedure applies to all academic staff delivering HE programmes.

## 6.3 Procedure

### 6.3.1 Overview

Students' status is normally considered three times per year: January/February at a Progress Board, June at an Examination Board and August at a supplementary resit Examination Board.

The Examination Boards act as an important element of quality improvement and assurance for SERC HE students. The Board is the final arbiter of the award of marks/grades to ensure standards and quality of programmes are consistent with the relevant national qualification frameworks.

The Progress Boards focus on the students' **progression within the year** and the Examination Board on **progression between academic years and levels**.

### 6.3.2 The Progress and Examination Boards have the following functions:

- To determine the module/unit results obtained by candidates.
- To forward to external bodies lists of successful candidates classified in accordance with relevant course regulations, where such results lead directly to an award.
- To determine the academic progress of students on the basis of their performance in examinations and other forms of assessment.
- To ensure that the examination and assessment of candidates are conducted in accordance with regulations and procedures as required by the Awarding Organisation.

### 6.3.3 The following are eligible to attend a Board:

- All staff who teach on the programme
- The External Examiner
- The Course Co-ordinator/Director
- The Head of Higher Education (QED) who will act as the Chair
- Representatives from the Awarding Organisation/ Body
- The Head of School, Principal Lecturer, and or Deputy Head of School running the programme
- Representative from Examinations Unit
- Board Secretary (QED)

**As a minimum, the following must attend:**

- Representatives of the delivery team when results are being submitted for approval
- The Course Co-ordinator/Director
- The Head of Higher Education (QED)
- Board Secretary (QED)
- School Management representative

### 6.3.4 The Course Co-ordinator/Director Duties

The Course Coordinator/ Director should complete the following duties prior to the Board:

- Prepare the results sheets as meets the requirements of the College and Awarding Organisation/ Body. Where the programme is a Foundation Degree or Full Degree the result sheets submitted can be those approved by the University or Awarding Organisation.

- Collate information recording extenuating circumstances and leave of absence/ interruption of studies. Details should be available for the Board if requested. Students must have used the correct documentation as required by the University or as found on the Assessment Regulations and Key Forms section of the SERC website.

- Organise attendance of team members and School Management representatives at the board.

- Arrange for attendance of External Examiner or presentation of comments if required by the Awarding Organisation/ Body.

- Meet with the Course Team **prior** to the Board to agree decisions in relation to candidate progress in accordance with Awarding Organisation/ Body and or College requirements. This should include arrangements for resits. At this meeting a summary of students with referrals, resits, extenuating circumstances and leave of absence **must be completed using the provided Pre-Board pro forma** (templates available on the HE@SERC-Coordinator Toolkit available on the staff intranet). A note should also be made of issues raised by the External Examiner.

- Upload the completed Pre-Board pro forma showing decisions by the team to the secure exam board teams site.

**The Course Co-ordinator/Director** should undertake the following duties during and resulting from the Board:

- Supply to the Board copies of results sheets/grids and completed Pre-Board pro forma. Accurate student results grids and completed Pre-Board pro forma must be uploaded to the secure Programme Exam Board Team site (a link will be provided by QED in advance of the Board) in **ADVANCE** of the PB/EB **meeting showing decisions made by the team**. These will be ratified or altered at the PB/EB but the team MUST make recommendations in advance. Failure to complete in advance will mean that the PB/EB cannot proceed. This is to meet the need for accuracy and ensure quality code standards have been met. Failure to do so may delay the award of grades.
- Confirm all standardisation and External Verification activity has taken place.
- Identify any perceived conflicts of interest and ensure Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements have been met.
- Supply to the Board the External Examiners report(s) and agreed candidate Extenuating Circumstances and/ or Leave of Absence/ Interruption of Studies.

- Undertake, complete and record any actions and recommendations made by the Board.
- Liaise with Examinations and Marketing as required to progress the interest of the candidate following the Board.
- Communicate the outcome of the Board with the candidate as per section **6.3.7**.

### 6.3.5 The Chairperson of the Boards Duties

The Chairperson of the board should undertake the following duties:

- Convene, record and conduct the Board.
- Consider student progress through confirming module marks or agree amendments (subject to External Examiners approval).
- Consider extenuating circumstances and agree on resulting decisions.
- Record Leave of Absences/ Interruption of Studies.
- Review the progress of each candidate and agree the decisions recommended by the course teams in line with the Awarding Organisation/ Body regulations.
- Prepare and distribute minutes of the Board.

### 6.3.6 Board Agenda

Progress/ Examination/ Supplementary Board agendas specific to the Awarding Organisation/ Body can be found in the HE@SERC- Coordinators Toolkit (Progress and Exam Boards) available on the Staff Intranet. A copy will be made available on the secure teams site for the programme team in advance of the Board. Below identifies the agenda based on the Awarding Organisation/ Body.

#### 6.3.6.1 The Open University Programmes- Board Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Attendance and Apologies for Absence
- Confidentiality of Proceedings
- Minutes of Previous meeting and Matters arising
- Declaration of Conflict of Interest
- Confirmation of Standardisation and Verification Activities
- Programme Analysis- Retention/ Withdrawals/ Students at Risk/ Module review
- Mitigation Outcomes Report- Extenuation Circumstances/ Interruption of Studies
- Academic Misconduct- Plagiarism
- Reading of Grades and Confirmation of Results
- Comments from External Examiner/ OUVP Partnerships Manager
- Comments from Course Leader
- Reassessment Arrangements- Guidance for Students/ Dates of Resits for Examination/ Assessments
- Appeals Date agreement
- Confirmation of Date of next board
- AOB
- Collection of confidential papers by the Administrator

#### 6.3.6.2 Ulster University Programmes- Board Agenda

- Attendance
- Confidentiality of Proceedings
- Declaration of Conflict of Interest
- Regulations
- Evidence of Extenuating Circumstances/ Leave of Absence
- Receipt and Consideration of Candidates Results inc. academic misconduct
- Publication of Results
- Appeals

- Supplementary Examinations
- Prizes and Awards
- Comments from Internal and External Examiners
- AOBs

#### 6.3.6.3 BTEC Higher Nationals and all other Awarding Organisations/ Bodies Programmes- Board Agenda

- Attendance
- Confidentiality of Proceedings
- Declaration of Conflict of Interest
- Confirmation of Standardisation and Verification Activities
- Subject Board- Review of modules and trends in performance
- Programme Board- Retention/ withdrawals/ Extenuating Circumstances/ Leave of Absences/ Students at Risk/ Academic Misconduct/ Outcome of Resubmissions from previous Board, if applicable
- Resubmission Approval Lists for RQF (BTEC Higher Nationals Only)
- Summary of Recommendations to the Board
- Resubmissions to be reviewed at next Board
- Appeals Date agreement
- Comments/ feedback from Standard Verifiers
- Other Business

### 6.3.7 Communication with candidates

Communication with candidates following the Board will be by email or letter. Results will be issued by the Course Director/Programme Coordinator within three working days following the Board. The letter/email must include a transcript of results (HEAR Record for Pearson and University Programmes), date for appeals, date for resits and support arrangements in the case of students who must resubmit. Letter templates can be found in the HE@SERC- Coordinators Toolkit (Communication Templates) available on the Staff Intranet.

## 6.4 Ulster University Programmes Only- At Risk of Withdrawal Process

For any Ulster University programme learner coded as “DW” at a Progress or Examination Board. this student is identified as “At Risk of Withdrawal” (ARoW). This will trigger the requirement of an ARoW process as follows:

- Course Director will communicate DW decision using the ARoW Board Required Letter and copy of ARW1 form to relevant students and ask for ARW1, if appropriate, to be returned within 5 working days to ARoW@serc.ac.uk
- Returned ARW1 forms (and evidence) will be uploaded to the Ulster SharePoint site for review by the EE and the ARoW Board members.
- An ARoW Board will be arranged following the required date of submission.
- As part of the ARoW Board, the Head of Higher Education, along with a nominated Ulster University representative and Course Director will review the evidence presented and agree/advise the Board on the appropriate AST progress code to be applied. If there is no corroborating evidence (or suitable evidence related to the individual) then a withdrawal decision should be noted.
- Post the ARoW Board the AST decision will be communicated by the Chair, to the student, using the ARoW Board Outcome Letter.
- Following the Board decision, the candidate will have the normal right of appeal.

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## 7.0 Professional Suitability and Fitness to Practise (UU Programmes)

This section summarises SERC's duties towards students, staff and external stakeholders in relation to Ulster University programmes where a Fitness to Practise declaration is a requirement of the award.

### 7.1 Principles

Any programme of study which is awarded by the Ulster University may lead to a professional registration will be governed by a requirement that students demonstrate their 'Professional Suitability and Fitness to Practise'. At the heart of the *Professional Suitability and Fitness to Practise procedure* is the recognition of the College's duty of care to all students and stakeholders.

All training makes high academic and personal demands on students. Students are required to demonstrate not only academic ability but also personal suitability, fitness to practise and a commitment to their chosen profession at the point of admission as well as throughout their programme.

The responsibilities in relation to suitability and fitness to practise are not confined to the process and content of the academic programme but have a broader scope and application. They encompass all behaviour including that outside the academic or practice learning setting which may reflect negatively on the profession, College or University Awarding Organisation.

Suitability and fitness for professional work include qualities such as patience, honesty, integrity, resilience and the ability to help people face difficult situations. Evidence of clear thinking, sound judgement, sensitivity and tolerance is required, together with the ability to establish and maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries. This demands sound interpersonal and communication skills as well as both physical and mental ability to carry out the role appropriately.

On occasions, students may be the subject of concerns about their suitability and fitness to practise in one or more of these fields. It must be clear to all parties (students, academic staff and placement/ practice learning supervisors) what kinds of concerns or information will trigger formal action on behalf of the College, how the formal action will be implemented and what are the possible outcomes.

There is a clear professional obligation laid down by regulating bodies to have robust processes that encourage the disclosure of matters that may affect suitability and fitness to practise.

Professional Suitability and Fitness to Practise procedures are distinct from South Eastern Regional College's general disciplinary procedures, There may be situations, however, where more than one set of College procedures are utilised to consider the College's position and professional implications of a student's behaviour or fitness to practise.

### 7.2 Scope

Students registered on a programme of study that requires them to undertake practical training in a professional role in relation to patients, pupils, clients or service-users, or where the end qualification provides a direct license to practise or is a requirement for a license to practise, are subject to this procedure of fitness to practise.

The purpose of this procedure is to give effect to the College's duty to ensure that such students are fit to practise, in order to protect present or future patients, pupils, clients or service users and to comply with the requirements of professional/regulatory bodies and to maintain public confidence.

If students registered on a programme of study are subject to this procedure, this shall be stated in the Course Regulations for that programme of study.

If any student subject to this Regulation is the subject of alleged or proven academic misconduct or disciplinary offence, this shall be disclosed without prejudice to the Head of School, so that any implications regarding fitness to practise may be considered.

The basis for any determination or action concerning the fitness to practise of a student shall be the relevant professional requirements and code of behaviour. The standard of proof required shall be the balance of probabilities.

## 7.3 Fitness to Practise

This section refers to the procedures to be implemented when a student is judged unfit for entry to a profession for which there are academic, behavioural and health requirements that must be met in order to ensure suitability to practise that profession. Examples of relevant profession are Nursing, Health Visiting, Health and Social Care, Early Years Education, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Radiography, Optometry, Podiatry, Chiropractic, Dietetics, Clinical Physiology, Sports Studies, Speech and Language Therapy, Education, Counselling, Social Work, Youth and Community Work, Biomedical Sciences, Pharmacy and Architecture. This list is not exhaustive and it may be added to by the College at any time.

The Fitness to Practise procedure exists to protect:

- the public interest, by safeguarding client/patient well-being;
- the students' interests by ensuring that students do not proceed into a career for which they may well not be suited or for which a regulatory body may not register them.

Students may be considered unfit to practise on the grounds of:

- physical or mental health reasons;
- criminal or other serious misconduct;
- unprofessional conduct or action;
- failure to disclose information at the admissions stage of a course;
- unsuitability for the academic and/or practice demands of the professional education.

Concern that a student may, for behavioural or health reasons, be deemed unfit to be admitted to or to practise in a profession towards which his or her course of study leads, should be disclosed in writing to the appropriate Head of School. Concerns may arise from one incident or from a pattern of behaviour over time.

Anyone, including College teaching staff and academic support staff involved in student clinical/ professional practice who become aware of evidence of health, behavioural or academic unsuitability which may preclude a student from completing the course of study or from undertaking the required professional practice should report the facts in writing to the Head of School at the earliest opportunity.

If the person making such disclosure, as above, identifies his or herself, this will make it possible for the College to undertake prompt action. In exceptional circumstances the Head of School may permit the discloser's identity to remain confidential, provided this is consistent

with natural justice. Anonymous disclosure can be made. However, it must be recognised that if the discloser remains anonymous this can limit the College's ability to take action, as it is likely to be more difficult to investigate and gather evidence.

Boards of Examiners, Student Progress Committees, and the College Disciplinary Committee within departments may also refer students to the Head of School under this Fitness to Practise procedure.

In some situations, where there is an allegation of plagiarism, it may be appropriate to consider the case under both academic and fitness to practise procedures. In these circumstances the academic process will be conducted prior to the fitness to practise process.

Students whose courses are covered by the Fitness to Practise procedure must disclose any criminal convictions to the College before entering the course or immediately such a conviction occurs during the course. This will enable the student to be provided with guidance about entry requirements for registration within the profession concerned. If a student fails to disclose this information and it subsequently comes to light, the student will be referred to the Head of School who may instigate the Fitness to Practise procedure.

Issues relating to professional practice may arise as a consequence of behaviour associated with diagnosed or suspected mental health problems or from addiction. In such circumstances the Fitness to Practise procedure will only be invoked if medical and counseling interventions have not successfully addressed the behaviour or if the student has refused all such interventions. The medical and counseling interventions should be evidenced.

## 7.4 Precautionary Suspension

The Principal or their designate, may suspend a student pending a fuller investigation of the circumstances reported. This power may be used when a student displays inappropriate behaviour while on practice learning or when about to go on practice learning.

When such action is necessary, the Course Director, will prepare a report on the circumstances of the case, normally within 3 working days of the action and will make this report available to a Fitness to Practise panel.

During a period of precautionary suspension, the student will be entitled to access the College's student support services and will be offered any pastoral support required.

## 7.5 Investigation

The Head of School will, within 5 working days of receiving the disclosure, appoint a Departmental Fitness to Practise Panel (hereinafter the Panel). The Panel shall consist of:

- the Head of School or his/her nominee (the Head of School will normally Chair the Panel);
- the Higher Education Co-Ordinator;
- a member of academic staff from the same professional discipline as the student; and
- a member of academic staff who is not from the professional area concerned and who does not know the student.

The panel will meet within 21 days of the disclosure being received.

The student will be given 10 working days' notice of the meeting of the Panel. The notice will include:

- a brief statement of the allegations against him or her;
- details of any precautionary suspension or limitations on or conditions placed upon his or her studies or practice learning experience during the investigation;
- information on his/her right to be accompanied at the Panel meeting by a representative who is a member of the College student or staff body.

The Head of School, or his/her representative, may ask academic or clinical/ professional staff connected with the case to provide written comments on the student's academic standing, conduct or health, explaining why there is concern as to the student's fitness to practise. The Head of School will also be provided with information about the student's professional and academic progress and any other relevant information.

The Panel will establish the facts of the case and in so doing may interview relevant individuals, including the student. The student may be accompanied at the interview by a member of staff of the College, by another student, by a representative of the Students' Union or by a member of the professional organisation. Legal representation is not permitted.

A member of the College administration staff will, with due regard to confidentiality, keep records of the proceedings and be responsible for circulating relevant documents.

The Panel shall satisfy itself that the student understands the purpose and import of the proceedings of the Panel in respect of his/her case, understands his/her rights within the process, and has adequate support.

Wherever possible the Panel will resolve the issue in consultation with the student.

The Panel has the following powers when considering the student's behaviour and conduct:

- no action may be required;
- the student may be encouraged to obtain medical support following which they may be asked to provide medical confirmation of fitness to practise. This action may result in an agreed period of leave of absence;
- recommend to the College Senior Management team that the student discontinue studies on the course with or without possibility of transfer to another course;
- if the student is at an appropriate stage in his/her programme, he/she may be offered an alternative award which does not lead to a professional qualification;
- the student may be referred to the College's Disciplinary procedures;
- other action as deemed appropriate to the situation.

Should the Panel take the decision to refer a student to the College Disciplinary procedures, it will state in writing the reasons for its recommendation and supply any evidence it may have.

When the Panel takes the decision to remove a student from a professional course it will:

- inform the student in writing, within 10 days of the Panel meeting, of the decision of the Panel, giving reasons for the decision;
- appraise the Director of Curriculum and Information Services;
- provide feedback to the complainant(s);
- enter the findings of the Panel on the student's file.

## 7.6 Appeals Procedure

The student may appeal against the decision of the Departmental Fitness to Practise Panel on any of the following grounds:

- that new evidence has become available;
- that there has been procedural irregularity;
- that the decision of the panel was inappropriate or too severe.

An appeal should normally be made through the Director of Curriculum and Information Services within 10 days of receiving the decision of the Panel. The Director of Curriculum and Information Services will set up an Appeal Board (hereinafter the Board). The Board will consist of:

- Director of Curriculum and Information Services (Chair);
- the Head of School of another area;
- the appeal will be considered within 28 days of the date the appeal was lodged;
- the Board will consider the statements and information provided by the Panel. The Board may set aside or vary or confirm the decision of the Panel. There shall be no appeal against the decision of the Appeal Board.

The student will be informed in writing of the decision of the Board within 10 working days of the Board meeting.

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## 8.0 Accreditation of Prior Learning in HE

Please refer to Higher Educations Accreditation of Prior Learning SOP – see link:
Higher Education Accreditation of Prior Learning SOP.pdf

It is important to note that Liverpool John Moore University provision will follow their policy on Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning. This can be found at: Guidance Policy and Process | Liverpool John Moores University (ljmu.ac.uk)

# 9.0 Academic Misconduct in HE

## 9.1 Overview and Scope

This section relates to HE students at SERC. These procedures are informed by the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 Principle 11- Teaching, learning and assessment and Awarding Organisation/ Body requirements.

The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 defines academic integrity as *"A commitment to the fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. The opposite of academic integrity is unethical practices such as plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating or academic misconduct."*

SERC aims to develop the skills of HE students to follow good academic practices and to promote academic integrity.

The aim of this process is to improve the standard and consistency of referencing and ensure the use, on all programmes, of the Harvard referencing system.

The general principles apply to all HE students, but penalties and methods of calculating penalties are dependent on awarding bodies and these are indicated in section 9.6.

It is important to note that Liverpool John Moore University provision will follow their policy on Academic Misconduct This can be found in Section 9.7.

## 9.2 What is Academic Misconduct?

The International Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as a commitment to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage.

Academic misconduct denotes any attempt to subvert or evade the values of academic integrity. This includes acts of dishonesty, deception and fraud through the attempts to gain an unfair academic advantage. The different forms of academic misconduct are identified below:

- Plagiarism of any nature
- Misuse/ covert use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Cheating (including copying, personation and falsification)
- Collusion

Sections 9.2.1 – 9.2.4 identifies examples of the different forms of academic misconduct. The lists provided are not definitive, so should be used as a guide, to help identify where academic misconduct may have taken place.

It is important to note that Liverpool John Moore University provision will follow their guidance on Academic Misconduct. Further information can be found in Section 9.7.

### 9.2.1 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the representation of the work, artefacts or designs, written or otherwise, of any other person, from any source whatsoever, as the student's own. This means that the person considering this work is given the impression they are viewing the student's own original work when it is not the case. Plagiarism can occur in various forms:

The following list identifies examples of plagiarism; this list is not exhaustive:

- The verbatim copying of another's work w ithout clear identification and acknowledgement including the downloading of materials from the internet without proper referencing of materials
- The paraphrasing of another's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without clear identification and acknowledgement.
- The unidentified and unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another's work.
- The deliberate and detailed presentation of another's concept as one's own.
- The representation of the students' own, previous work, without being properly referenced. This is known as auto-plagiarism.

Students who engage in plagiarism will have committed academic malpractice and will be dealt with following the penalties for academic misconduct in section 9.6 in line with the relevant Awarding / Bodys policies.

### 9.2.2 Misuse/ Covert use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) use refers to the use of AI tools to obtain information and content which might be used in work produced for assessments which lead towards qualifications. While the range of AI tools, and their capabilities, is likely to expand greatly in the near future, misuse of AI tools in relation to qualification assessments at any time constitutes malpractice. Teachers and students should also be aware that AI tools are still being developed and there are often limitations to their use, such as producing inaccurate or inappropriate content.

AI chatbots are AI tools which generate text in response to user prompts and questions. Users can ask follow-up questions or ask the chatbot to revise the responses already provided. AI chatbots respond to prompts based upon patterns in the data sets (large language model) upon which they have been trained. They generate responses which are statistically likely to be relevant and appropriate. AI chatbots can complete tasks such as the following:

• Answering questions

• Analysing, improving, and summarising text

• Authoring essays, articles, fiction, and non-fiction

• Writing computer code

• Translating text from one language to another

• Generating new ideas, prompts, or suggestions for a given topic or theme

• Generating text with specific attributes, such as tone, sentiment, or formality

The following list identifies examples of misuse/ covert use of AI; this list is not exhaustive:

• The copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the student's own

• The copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content

• The use of AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the student's own work, analysis, evaluation or calculations

• The failure to acknowledge the use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information

• The incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools

• The submission of work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.

Students who engage in the misuse/ covert use of Artificial Intelligence, where AI generative tools are deployed for assessment purposes without authorisation and/or appropriate acknowledgement, will have committed academic malpractice, and will be dealt with following the penalties for academic misconduct in section 9.6 in line with the relevant Awarding Organisation/ Body policies.

### 9.2.3 Cheating (including copying, personation and falsification)

Cheating involves the unauthorised use of information, materials, devices, sources or practices in completing academic activities.

The following list identifies examples of cheating; this list is not exhaustive:

- Communicating during an examination with any person other than an authorised member of staff.
- Introducing any written, printed or other material into an examination (including electronically stored information) other than that specified in the rubric of the examination paper.
- Gaining access to unauthorised material in any way during or before an assessment.
- The use of mobile phones or any other communication device during an assessment or examination.
- The submission of false claims of previously gained qualifications, research or experience in order to gain credit for prior learning.
- The misrepresentation of information/ data in order to gain advantage.
- The falsification or fabrication including the unauthorised creation of false information/data, or the alteration of information/data within a piece of assessment while presenting this information as genuine.
- The submission of material purchased or commissioned from a third party, such as an essay-writing service, as one's own. This is also known as contract cheating.
- Personation- Assuming the identity of a student with the intent to deceive during a piece of assessment by competing the work on behalf of the student.

Students who engage in cheating will have committed academic malpractice and will be dealt with following the penalties for academic misconduct in section 9.6 in line with the relevant Awarding Organisation's policies.

### 9.2.4 Collusion

Collusion is where students work together to complete an assessment that should be taken independently.

The following list identifies examples of collusion; this list is not exhaustive:

- The conscious collaboration, without official approval, between two or more students in the preparation and production of work which is ultimately submitted by each in an identical or substantially similar form and/or is represented by each to be the product of his or her individual efforts.
- The unauthorised co-operation between a student and another person in the preparation and production of work which is presented as the student's own.

Students who engage in collusion will have committed academic malpractice and will be dealt with following the penalties for academic misconduct in section 9.6 in line with the relevant Awarding Organisation's policies.

## 9.3 Levels of Seriousness of Academic Misconduct

The below outlines the different offences, and the level of severity to be used as a guide when determining the penalties for Academic Misconduct as identified in Section 9.6.

### 9.3.1 Cases of Academic Misconduct

The following list is a guide to what is considered a case of academic misconduct. This list is not exhaustive. Work with limited plagiarism and/ or covert AI generated content may be considered academic misconduct.

- The copying from books and/or internet sources without acknowledgement, which has a significant contribution to the overall work.
- The limited plagiarism from professional work (not course books).
- The paraphrasing of another's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without clear identification and acknowledgement.
- The limited copying of other candidates' work (hard copy or electronic), or excessive help within one piece of work.
- The limited downloading of information from the internet or the use of model answers downloaded from the internet.
- The representation of the students own previous work without being properly referenced. This is known as auto-plagiarism.
- The limited copying or paraphrasing of AI-generated content.
- The incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools.

### 9.3.2 Cases of Gross Academic Misconduct

The following list is a guide to what is considered a case of gross academic misconduct. This list is not exhaustive. Cases of cheating, collusion, and work with substantial plagiarised and/ or covert AI generated content may be considered as gross academic misconduct. Repeated cases of academic misconduct will generally be escalated to gross academic misconduct.

- The extensive copying of textbooks and/or internet sources in one piece of work or limited copying in two or more pieces of work which makes a significant contribution to the work/s.
- The extensive plagiarism of professional works.
- The buying, selling or stealing of work.
- The repeated evidence of extensive use of information from the internet without acknowledgement or using model internet answers.
- The use of past candidates' work from previous years.
- The repeated cases of Academic Misconduct.
- The deliberate and detailed presentation of another's concept as one's own.
- The copying or paraphrasing sections or whole responses of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the students own.

- The use of AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the student's own work, analysis, evaluation or calculations.
- The failure to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information.
- The submission of work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.
- Cases of cheating (Including copying, personation and falsification).
- Cases of collusion.

## 9.4 Guidance for Detecting Plagiarism and/ or misuse/ covert use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Although the detection of plagiarism or misuse/ covert use of Artificial Intelligence tools is not an exact science, there are several indicators that can raise initial suspicions when reviewing and marking student work.

Suspicions of plagiarism may be raised if the submission contains:

- Information on topics that is only vaguely linked to the assessment brief.
- Formatting that does not follow specified requirements e.g., inappropriate headings or irrelevant sections or datasets.
- Changes in formatting, e.g., font colour and style, sections with colour behind text, line spacing.
- Different referencing conventions used within a submission.
- Variations in the learner's writing style throughout the document.
- Untypical use of vocabulary for the learner.
- Spelling and grammar errors e.g., Americanised spelling and phrases.
- Inconsistent use of punctuation e.g., the irregular use of the semicolon or inconsistencies in the use of speech marks and inverted commas.
- Outdated or incorrect details.

To assist with this all assignments are to be submitted using Turnitin where possible. The decision of when to use Turnitin rests with the course programme team. Decisions made may be reviewed as part of the internal College quality mechanisms. The Course team will use Turnitin and any other electronic checking device as appropriate (See section 9.5 for further guidance). All of the evidence must be considered and a professional judgement made by the Course Team.

The following guidance should be used in relation to submissions:

- Students should not include questions.
- Reference sections should be in quotation marks "…"
- Pearson students should submit work before the deadline so they can check and resolve issues (formative submissions can allow for this).
- Students should not submit work that contains text boxes; this work will be returned to the student, so the text boxes can be removed and resubmitted in the correct format.

Staff are advised to review any assignment where Turnitin shows:

- a similarity index of 25% and above, or
- where AI Writing is detected at 20% or above

Turnitin is only one part of the process and professional judgement will be used by staff as part of the process. This includes looking at the context of the work and how much of the work is student interpretation.

The Course Team will review any suspected incidents of Academic Misconduct. A decision to invoke a penalty can only be taken by the Course Team or Head of School depending on level of seriousness as outlined in Section 9.3.

The Course Co-Ordinator should retain the academic history of the student by completing the "Academic Malpractice" section of the Exam/ Progress Pre-Board pro forma and the College Plagiarism and Malpractice register accessed within the current year HE Folder on the QED Management Site.

## 9.5 Use of Turnitin to Assist in Establishing Academic Misconduct

To assist with the implementation of academic standards, Turnitin will be used as an evidence guide to highlight unacceptable practices.

### 9.5.1 Settings for Similarity Report

When setting the exclusions on Turnitin for submission of assignments, staff should exclude:

- 10 successive words
- Bibliography
- Anything in quotation marks which must be "…"

### 9.5.2 Requirements for AI Detection

- File size must be less than 100 MB
- File must have at least 300 words of prose text in a long form writing format
- File must not exceed 30,000 words
- File must be written in English
- Accepted file types: .docx, .pdf, .txt, .rtf

## 9.6 Penalties of Academic Misconduct

The tables in section 9.6.1-9.6.4 summarise the penalties of Academic Misconduct depending upon the Awarding Organisation/ Body. All elements of the penalties in each column should be implemented, depending upon the nature and seriousness of the offence (Academic Misconduct on Gross Academic Misconduct).

The Student Disciplinary procedure is laid out in the Student and Trainee Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP which should be read in conjunction with the penalties below.

### 9.6.1 Penalties for Pearson Higher National programmes

| **1st Offence- Academic Misconduct** | **2nd Offence- Academic Misconduct** | **3rd Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 1st Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct** | **4th Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 2nd Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct** | **Plagiarism Detected after Graduation** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Should be picked up at formative assessment stage and should be addressed by educating on referencing and seriousness of plagiarism and/ or misuse/ covert of AI.<br><br>Formative interview with Unit Co-ordinator and/or Programme Coordinator.<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Work should be marked without plagiarised aspect or work produced through the misuse/ covert use of AI, contributing to the mark.<br><br>Work can be resubmitted if a 'pass' grade not achieved.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 1 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Failure of the assessment.<br><br>Resubmission of full assessment with grade capped at a "pass".<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 2 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Failure of module.<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 3 (final warning issued) or stage 4 (exclusion).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | The award may be revoked. |

### 9.6.2 Penalties for Ulster University Level 4 Certificate and Foundation Degree Programmes

| **1st Offence- Academic Misconduct** | **2nd Offence- Academic Misconduct** | **3rd Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 1st Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct** | **4th Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 2nd Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct** | **Plagiarism Detected after Graduation** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reduction in marks based on exclusion of plagiarised work or work produced through the misuse/ covert use of AI.<br><br>Formative interview with module co-ordinator and/or Programme Coordinator.<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism or through the misuse/ covert use of AI.<br><br>Interview with Head of School and/or Course/Subject Director and/or lecturer.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 1 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism or through the misuse/ covert use of AI. and maximum mark of 40% for coursework element[1].<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 2 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for module.<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 3 (final warning issued) or stage 4 (exclusion).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | The award may be revoked. |

[1] 'Assignment containing plagiarism and/or misuse/ covert use of AI' means the assignment which contains the plagiarised material, and not all the assessments for the module. 'Maximum mark for coursework element' refers to the total aggregate percentage mark for all the pieces of coursework in the module.

### 9.6.3 Penalties for Queens University Belfast Foundation Degree Programmes

| 1st Offence- Academic Misconduct | 2nd Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 1st Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct | 3rd Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 2nd Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct | Plagiarism Detected after Graduation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism or through the misuse/ covert use of AI.<br><br>Interview with Head of School and/or Course/Subject Director and/or lecturer.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 1 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism or through the misuse/ covert use of AI. and maximum mark of 40% for coursework element[1].<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 2 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for module.<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 3 (final warning issued) or stage 4 (exclusion).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | The award may be revoked. |

[1] 'Assignment containing plagiarism and/or misuse/ covert use of AI' means the assignment which contains the plagiarised material, and not all the assessments for the module. 'Maximum mark for coursework element' refers to the total aggregate percentage mark for all the pieces of coursework in the module.

### 9.6.4 Penalties for The Open University, CertHE, Foundation Degree or Degree Programmes (Numeric Mark Awarded)

| 1st Offence- Academic Misconduct | 2nd Offence- Academic Misconduct | 3rd Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 1st Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct | 4th Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 2nd Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct | Plagiarism Detected after Graduation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reduction in marks based on exclusion of plagiarised work or work produced through the misuse/ covert use of AI.<br><br>Formative interview with module co-ordinator and/or Programme Coordinator.<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism or through the misuse/ covert use of AI.<br><br>Interview with Head of School and/or Course/Subject Director and/or lecturer.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 1 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism or through the misuse/ covert use of AI. and maximum mark of 40% for coursework element[1].<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 2 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for module.<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 3 (final warning issued) or stage 4 (exclusion).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | The award may be revoked. |

[1] 'Assignment containing plagiarism and/or misuse/ covert use of AI' means the assignment which contains the plagiarised material, and not all the assessments for the module. 'Maximum mark for coursework element' refers to the total aggregate percentage mark for all the pieces of coursework in the module.

### 9.6.5 Other Awarding Organisation- Penalties

The following policy and practices will be followed when dealing with Academic Misconduct for each Awarding Organisation. Details should also be recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and identified at Progress/ Examination Boards.

| Awarding Organisation | Policy and Practice Location: |
|---|---|
| Chartered Management Institute (CMI) | CMI Quality Assurance Handbook and CMI Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and CMI Quality Assurance Handbook available from: Policies - CMI (managers.org.uk) |
| Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN NI) | Malpractice and Maladministration Policy available from the Centre Login* area of the OCN NI website, Available from: Quality Assurance \| OCN NI. *Please note a Centre login is required to access the documents |
| Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI) | ATI Student Code of Conduct and ATI Assessment Malpractice & Maladministration Policy available from: Policies \| Accounting Technicians Ireland |
| Institute of Export (IoE) | Academic Misconduct Policy** available from: Log in to canvas (instructure.com)<br>**Please note a Centre login is required to access the documents |
| Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) | Malpractice/ Maladministration Policy available from: IMI Policies \| Institute of The Motor Industry (theimi.org.uk) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) | Malpractice and Maladministration Policy available from: Qualification policies \| CIPD |
| Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB) | CPCAB Malpractice and Maladministration Policy available from: https://www.cpcab.co.uk/public_docs/malpractice_maladministration |
| NCFE/ CACHE | JCQ Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures, Available from: Mandatory policies and fees \| NCFE |
| City and Guilds | Assessment Malpractice available from: Centre document library \| City & Guilds (cityandguilds.com) |

Where Awarding Organisation/ Body Academic Misconduct policies and practices are provided, the Course Team will follow these. However, in the absence of such guidance, the following College Penalties will be applied.

| **1st Offence- Academic Misconduct** | **2nd Offence- Academic Misconduct** | **3rd Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 1st Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct** | **4th Offence- Academic Misconduct/ 2nd Offence- Gross Academic Misconduct** | **Plagiarism Detected after Graduation** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reduction in marks based on exclusion of plagiarised work or work produced through the misuse/ covert use of AI.<br><br>Formative interview with module co-ordinator and/or Programme Coordinator.<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism or through the misuse/ covert use of AI.<br><br>Interview with Head of School and/or Course/Subject Director and/or lecturer.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 1 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism or through the misuse/ covert use of AI.<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 2 (formal warning issued).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | Mark of zero for module.<br><br>Case referred to Head of Higher Education (HE).<br><br>Interview with Head of HE and course team representative.<br><br>Application of student disciplinary procedure – stage 3 (final warning issued) or stage 4 (exclusion).<br><br>Details recorded on the Academic Misconduct register and Exam Board. | The award may be revoked. |

## 9.7 Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) Degree Programmes

The Course Team will follow procedures established by LJMU following the Academic Misconduct Policy linked below. All cases of suspected Academic Misconduct must be referred to the Course Director/Assistant Academic Registrar. If there is sufficient evidence to support the finding of a prima facie case of Academic Misconduct, the Course Director will initiate further investigation which may include an Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP).

The LJMU Academic Misconduct Policy is available from: Academic Misconduct | Liverpool John Moores University (ljmu.ac.uk)

## 9.8 Monitoring and Review

The Course Director will inform the Awarding Organisation/ Body as required and include as part of the annual programme review processes and internal quality cycle.

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## 10.0 HE Academic Appeals Process

### 10.1 Introduction

This procedure has been informed by the UK Quality Code 2024 Principle 12- Operating concerns, complaints and appeals process, Awarding Organisation/ Body regulations and the office of the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). It aims to improve the student experience by making appropriate and consistent judgements. The student will be guaranteed confidentiality and will not be disadvantaged for using the process. The College acknowledges that the process aids in developing the student experience.

### 10.2 What this procedure covers

This Appeals Procedure does not cover Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) programmes as this is not delegated to the College. Students working towards an award made by LJMU should use the University's own appeal process which is available at: Student Appeals | Liverpool John Moores University (ljmu.ac.uk).

All other Awarding Organisations fall under these regulations which cover all Higher Education students or those on a leave of absence.

An Academic Appeal is a request within the grounds itemised below to review decisions made by the Higher Education Assessment and Examination Board on progression, assessment and awards. An Academic Appeal can only be made after an Examination Board has sat and you have been advised of your marks/grades.

An Academic Appeal differs from a complaint and therefore appeals and complaints are considered under different processes. A complaint is defined as a formal expression of dissatisfaction made by either a student or group of students about the provision of their programme of study, related academic service or facility, or any other service provision provided by the College. Details of the Complaints and Compliments Policy can be found at the link Complaints and Compliments Policy at www.serc.ac.uk. Should an issue fall under more than one process the College will work flexibly to maintain the rights of the student.

The Academic Appeals Procedure embodies the principles of natural justice, fairness, confidentiality, equity, objectivity and equality of opportunity. Students will be informed about the process in the student handbook, in the Higher Education Programmes SOP and policy page on the intranet and as part of induction and tutorial processes.

### 10.3 Grounds for Academic Appeal

The purpose of this procedure is to establish the facts and come to a reasonable and just resolution, which is timely, relevant, and proportionate. The grounds on which an Academic Appeal will be considered are:

1. That the Higher Education Examination and Progress Board was unaware of new information about an extenuating circumstance which might have affected their decision concerning an individual student.

   Evidence: Written medical evidence or evidence of compassionate circumstances, which were relevant to your performance, must be provided as part of the appeal.

**Note:** Evidence of ill health must be authenticated by a medical certificate from a doctor or appropriate documentation from a registered counsellor - self-certification is not acceptable.

2. That there was a procedural or other irregularity. That the procedures were not used properly and fairly in arriving at judgements.

   Evidence: An example of a procedural irregularity could be a change to submission dates not notified to students in advance or the internal verification processes were not implemented. A full explanation and documentation to support the appeal must be included.

An Academic Appeal will only be considered where there is deemed to be evidence to support one of the above grounds for appeal.

**Disagreement with the academic judgement of assessors or a Board of Examiners cannot constitute grounds for an appeal.**

The Appeals Panel will not consider an appeal if it is deemed to be vexatious or frivolous, if the forms have not been completed, or if supporting evidence has not been supplied.

## 10.4 Procedure for Academic Appeals

### 10.4.1 Stage 1 – Informal

Academic Appeals should be addressed to the Senior Customer Services Officer (SCSO) of the College using the Academic Appeals pro forma within 10 working days* (Ulster University programmes– 7 working days) of the student being notified in writing of the decision they wish to appeal. Submissions can be emailed to academicappeals@serc.ac.uk or handed in to any main campus reception area.

** Working days are those days on which the College is open. Weekends, statutory days, Bank Holidays and other College closures are classed as 'non-working' days.*

It is the responsibility of the appellant to state clearly the grounds for their appeal and to produce evidence in support of either extenuating circumstances or procedural irregularities. The appeal will be rejected if:

(i) There are no grounds for an appeal
(ii) The student has failed to substantially complete the form
(iii) The appeal is received outside the submission timeframe.

The SCSO will forward the appeal to the Head of School who will determine if the appeal is valid, i.e., meets one of the conditions of Grounds for Appeal.

The Head of School, Principal Lecturer, or nominated Deputy Head of School will meet (in person, by phone or email) with the student to try to resolve or provide support. This meeting should occur within 5 working days following receipt of the appeal. A student can bring someone to support them but there is no right to have legal representation. As a consequence of this meeting one of the following outcomes should be agreed;

(i) The student is content not to continue with their appeal
(ii) The student should proceed to the formal appeal stage

Students will in all cases be informed of the outcome of the informal stage in writing by the Head of School, Principal Lecturer, or nominated Deputy Head of School. Any student wishing to proceed to Stage 2 should inform the Senior Customer Services Officer in writing or by email to academicappeals@serc.ac.uk within 5 days of receiving the outcome letter of Stage 1.

### 10.4.2 Stage 2 – Formal

Where a student wishes to continue with their appeal the SCSO will notify the Head of Higher Education (QED) who will convene an Appeal Panel to hear the formal stage of the appeal. The Panel will be convened within 10 working days of receipt of a request by the student to continue the process. The College will try to convene a panel as swiftly as possible to expedite necessary actions, to ensure that the student is not disadvantaged.

To ensure independence and fairness, the Chair of the Appeals Panel and members must not have been party to any preceding decision that may have initiated the appeal. The Panel should be made up of at least two members of staff who have not been involved previously, one of whom must be a Deputy Principal, Head of the Quality Excellence and Development Unit, Head of Higher Education, or Head of School. (see Terms of Reference below).

Students have a right to be accompanied. Any person accompanying a student is present to support a student and as such should not contribute to the meeting unless at the behest of the student and only when invited to do so by the Chair. There is no right for a student to have legal representation at an Academic Appeals Panel. Each party will be given an equal opportunity to present their case.

If the student does not attend the Academic Appeals Panel, the Panel may continue to consider the appeal in the student's absence. The Panel may, if it wishes, adjourn the meeting if reasonable grounds for non-attendance have been provided (e.g. sickness absence). The outcome of the appeal may be:

i. To uphold the appeal based on the evidence presented
ii. To partially uphold the appeal based on the evidence presented
iii. To dismiss the appeal

The Chair of the Appeals Panel will notify the student of the outcome in writing within 5 days of hearing the appeal. Copies of the outcome will be returned to the Senior Customer Services Officer via email to academicappeals@serc.ac.uk.

If the appeal is upheld or partially upheld the issue is referred back to the Board of Examinations to amend the record of the student accordingly in line with Awarding Organisation/ Body regulations.

Academic Appeals forms and guidance can be found in the Key Forms and Academic Appeals Process section of the SERC website.

## 10.5 Appeals to Awarding Organisation or the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

If all internal procedures have been exhausted and the student remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer the appeal to the Awarding Organisation and then to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. Further information about these processes can be found at www.nipso.org.uk

## 10.6 Terms of Reference Academic Appeals Panel

| | |
|---|---|
| **Membership** | Deputy Principal Curriculum<br>Deputy Principal Student Support Services<br>Head of Quality, Excellence and Development<br>Head of Higher Education<br>Heads of School<br>Principal Lecturers<br>Deputy Heads of School<br>Student Representative |
| **Chair** | A Deputy Principal, Head of QED, Head of School/ HE may Chair |
| **Conflict of Interest** | No member may sit on the Appeals Panel if they have been associated with the original decision |
| **Quorum** | A minimum of two members |
| **Frequency** | As required |
| **Purpose** | To implement the Academic Appeals Procedure and to ensure fairness and reliability of all judgements of formal decisions relating to the outcomes of College assessments and to, where appropriate, make recommendations of remedial action.<br><br>The Academic Appeals Panel will be responsible to the College Management Team and report to the Higher Education Review Board. |
| **Terms of Reference** | 1) To implement the College Academic Appeals procedure to provide an opportunity for any individual student to appeal against an academic decision within the stated grounds.<br><br>2) To make decisions using the Academic Appeals procedure.<br><br>3) To provide information on trends and outcomes to the College Management Team and the Higher Education Review Board as appropriate. |

Appeals will be reviewed as part of the annual monitoring processes and quality improvement cycle.

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# 11.0 New Programme and Periodic Review Process

## 11.1 What this procedure covers

These procedures are informed by the Awarding Organisation/ Body regulations, the UK Quality Code 2024 Principle 1- Taking a strategic approach to managing quality standards, Principle 2- Engaging students as partners, Principle 3- Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience, Principle 5- Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision and Principle 7- Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes.

SERC has developed a process of Periodic Review, for full-time and substantive part-time programmes, to allow the College to maintain:

- the coherence and relevance of its portfolio of taught programmes.
- academic standards and student achievement.
- the quality of the student learning experience.
- opportunities for quality enhancement and continuous improvement of provision.

The process supplements the annual self-evaluation and quality improvement cycle by providing a holistic overview of existing non-university awarded/ non-validated provision every five years, or reactive to programmes that require substantive change (e.g. revised qualification specification).

University awarded or validated provision will undergo a Periodic Review as part of the Awarding Organisation/ Body revalidation process.

It will also form the basis of a college approval process for new programmes and an interim review point for programmes identified at risk including university awarded or validated provision.

## 11.2 Scope

The scope of the process is for full-time and substantive part-time higher education (level 4+) programmes not awarded or validated by a university.

Sections A-D identifies the process of periodic review for new and existing programmes and considers:

### A. Programme Rationale and Delivery

- the level of the programme.
- the rationale for the programme considering NI Programme for Government and Skills Barometer.
- recruitment profiles and potential feeder programmes.
- the appropriateness of delivery mode and location.
- how the curriculum is structured to support student engagement and learner outcomes.

### B. Academic Standards:

- if the academic standards in the subjects under review are set and maintained at the appropriate level.
- if the programme remains current, relevant and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application.
- if the programme aligns with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.
- if the assessment strategy and assessment design is valid, reliable and aligned to the learning outcomes.

- how external expertise (e.g. external examiners, PRSBs, Curriculum Hubs, Industrial representatives) impacts on the curriculum.
- the appropriateness of entry requirements to the programme.

**C. Student Experience and Voice:**

- the suitability of digital resources, physical resources, Library resources and practical facilities.
- the pastoral support provided by both the programme team and wider college teams.
- the academic support provided by both the programme team and wider college teams.
- the inclusivity and accessibility of the programme to support diverse learner needs
- how students are engaged as partners to enhance the student learning experience and the student voice provided.

**D. Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

- how ongoing monitoring will be conducted at both programme and module level.
- any recent or planned improvement/ enhancements based on evidence or innovation.
- the requirements and impact of staff development through CPD, scholarship activity, industrial experience, peer review and mentoring.

Additionally, section E identifies the process of periodic review for existing programmes and considers:

**E. Student Outcomes and Performance**

- the retention, achievement and progression trends across all year groups and delivery modes.
- the recruitment trends across all year groups and delivery modes.
- the student voice through feedback from surveys and student consultation (e.g. NSS/ Big14/ Staff Student Consultation Meetings/ Focus Groups).
- the feedback from the External Examiner on behalf of the Awarding Organisation/ Body.
- the effective practice and areas for development (including actions and impact) as identified by the team as part of the Self-Evaluation and Quality Improvement Planning process.

## 11.3 Process

1. A schedule of Periodic Review will be issued annually by the Head of Higher Education (QED) in agreement with the Deputy Principal Curriculum.

2. School Management along with programme Co-ordinator/ Director will complete documentation in Annex one- Periodic Review Pro Forma (Sections A-D for proposed provision, Sections A-E for Existing Provision) prior to the Periodic Review meeting. The review documentation and supplementary evidence should be uploaded to the secure team site a minimum of one week prior to the meeting. The review documentation will be used as a basis for professional discussion at the review meeting.

3. The programme team attending the review should include School Management, programme Coordinator/ Director, representatives from the programme delivery team and, where possible, an industry representative and a student representative (past/ present/ potential student).

4. The panel will consist of the Head of Higher Education (QED) acting as Chair, Deputy Principal Curriculum (or nominated representative), a member of College Management

independent to the programme and, where possible, a subject expert (internal or external) and a student representative (past or present).

5. The panel will provide feedback through a series of commendations, recommendations and essential actions with clear timescales.

6. The programme team will respond to the panel feedback within the required timescale. This process will be monitored by QED and reported to HERB.

7. The recommendations of the review will be reported to the Higher Education Review Board (HERB) and College Senior Management Team.

## Annex one: Periodic Review Pro Forma

For proposed and existing provision, please complete sections A-D in full and include all relevant supplementary evidence in the submission folder provided and add hyperlink to the relevant section of the form.

### Section A: Programme Rationale and Delivery

| | |
|---|---|
| **School:** | |
| **Department:** | |
| **Title of Programme:** | |
| **Level of Programme:** | |
| **Name of School Manager:** | |
| **Name of Course Coordinator/ Director:** | |
| **Campus(es):** | |
| **Proposed Start Date:** | |
| **Mode(s) of Delivery and Duration:** | |
| **Awarding Organisation/ Body:** | |
| **Status of approval:** | |
| **Link to programme specification (if available):** | |

| **Programme Rationale (consider NI Programme for Government and Skills Barometer):** |
|---|
| |

| **Details of market research and evidence of demand for the programme:** |
|---|
| |

| **Proposed Modules Units and delivery (Inc. years and semester):** |
|---|
| |

| **Admissions criteria and recruitment strategy and projections:** |
|---|
| |

| **Proposed articulation:** |
|---|
| |

| **Details of any relevant professional accreditation or recognition:** |
|---|
| |

### Section B: Academic Standards

| **Evaluation of the currency of the curriculum in light of:**<br>• **Academic Standards,**<br>• **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ),**<br>• **QAA Subject Benchmark Statements**<br>• **Development of professional practice** |
|---|
| |

| **Proposed assessment strategy and alignment to learning outcomes:** |
|---|
| |

| External and industrial consultation/ support in the development of the curriculum: |
|---|
| |

| Student consultation/ support in the development of the curriculum: |
|---|
| |

## Section C: Student Experience and Voice

| Digital resource requirements (include both existing and required): |
|---|
| |

| Accommodation and physical resource requirements (include both existing and required): |
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| |

| Library resource requirements (include both existing and required): |
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| |

| Work Based Learning/ Work Experience requirements: |
|---|
| |

| Arrangements for pastoral and academic support: |
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| |

| How do you plan to promote inclusivity and accessibility on the programme? |
|---|
| |

| How do you plan to engage students as partners and capture the student voice? |
|---|
| |

## Section D: Quality Assurance and Enhancement

| What planned enhancements to the programme are there based on evidence or innovation? |
|---|
| |

| Identify the proposed staff qualifications and experience (include qualifications, CPD, industrial experience, scholarly activity) that demonstrate appropriateness to deliver on the programme? |
|---|
| |

| Identify any proposed staff development (include qualifications, CPD, scholarly activity, peer review, mentoring) that will impact on the delivery of the programme? |
|---|
| |

## Section E: Student Outcomes and Performance

Section E should **only** be completed by existing programmes under Periodic Review.

| Identify retention and achievement trends: |
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| |

| Identify progression trends: |
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|---|
| |

| **Identify recruitment trends:** |
|---|
| |

| **Student feedback from surveys and consultation:** |
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| |

| **Awarding Organisation/ Body feedback:** |
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| |

| **Areas of effective practice:** |
|---|
| |

| **Areas for development:** |
|---|
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# 12.0 Student Engagement Process

## 12.1 Background

The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 defines students as partners as *"Working with students as a 'partner' or in 'partnership' is used to define and indicate joint working between students (or the student representative body, students' union, association, or guild if they have one) and staff at the provider. The level of each partner's engagement will vary depending on the context and nature of the student experience. Student partnerships reflect a mature relationship based on mutual respect between students and staff."*

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to define the steps taken by SERC to involve students as partners in shaping their learning experience in their journey towards becoming autonomous, independent learners. SERC will ensure that students are actively engaged as partners in the development, review, and monitoring of Higher Education strategy at SERC through established student voice mechanisms, in line with QAA Quality Code (2024) Principle 2.

SERC is committed to working with all students, either as individuals and/or as groups, to help them develop the skills and confidence to be actively involved in the organisation of their own learning and student experience, regardless of their mode of study, age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexuality or transgender status. SERC seeks opportunities to develop trust with students through creating a clear structure to exchange views built on mutual respect.

## 12.2 Scope

The scope includes all students and staff to encourage progression in independence in learning, preparation for further learning and employment, and develop widening access to higher education. Students are encouraged to influence the education journey and wider HE strategy including:

- Application and admission
- Induction and progression, programme and curriculum design, delivery and organisation
- Student success and retention
- Learning and teaching
- Assessment and feedback
- Learning resources
- Student support and guidance
- Other areas identified by the student body

## 12.3 Key Steps to Develop Student Engagement

SERC provides the following structures for students to contribute as partners to quality assurance, educational enhancement, and HE strategy.

**A. College Student Representation Systems:**

**1. Class Representatives.**

All classes will elect a Class Representative, who will be supported and trained in their role by the Students' Union. Class Representatives will be invited to attend three cross-college HE Forum meetings each year, organised by the Students' Union, to raise issues of concern and

identify shared areas for development. Class Representatives will have the opportunity to contribute to the Higher Education (HE) Forum, which provides a strategic-level platform for discussion with senior staff, including the Head of Higher Education.

Issues raised and agreed upon actions will be tracked through SU systems and monitored as part of the HERB agenda. Progress against these actions will be communicated via the Class Rep Teams page and included as a standing item at HE Forum.

2. **Students' Union Higher Education Officers.**

The Students' Union will seek nominations for Higher Education Officer positions. Officer roles differ from Class Representatives in that they represent the collective HE student voice at campus level across multiple schools, including contributing to the development and enhancement of HE strategy. Elected Officers will have a role descriptor outlined within the SU Constitution and will participate in a structured training programme delivered by Students' Union staff to support them in effectively carrying out their role.

Elected candidates will hold office for one academic year. HE Officers will actively gather and reflect student feedback, interests, and emerging issues at class level, working closely with Class Representatives to ensure this insight informs strategic discussions. Officers will attend HE Forums as a key mechanism for consolidating student voice and identifying priority themes impacting the HE student experience.

HE Officers will play a central role in communicating these themes into formal decision-making structures, including attendance at HERB and other relevant SERC committees, where they will represent HE student interests and contribute to the ongoing development of HE strategy. They will also engage with external bodies such as NUS-USI and regional student networks where appropriate. Outcomes and updates from HE Forums and committee discussions will be communicated back to the wider student body through established channels, including the Class Representatives Teams page, ensuring a clear feedback loop between students and institutional strategy.

B. **Programme Staff Student Consultations –** programme teams will consult with students in areas including Awarding Organisation/ Body and external examiner reports, survey results and areas of concern/development. Teams will seek the input of students when completing the annual self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans.

C. **Programme Development –** in addition to involvement with annual self-evaluation and review a student representative will be invited to participate in the schedule of periodic review.

D. **Surveys and Feedback** – an annual cross-college survey and online HE module survey will be held. Additional surveys and student focus groups may be held to consider areas of concern.

E. **Formal Committees and Working Groups** - Students contribute to the direction, quality, governance and strategic development of SERC through a structured representative system at course, college and governing body level.

At course level, Class Representatives engage directly with Programme Teams and are invited to attend Programme Team meetings alongside HE Forum to raise issues, share feedback, and contribute to continuous improvement of the learning experience. This ensures that all HE students can influence the quality of their learning, with insights captured at source and contributing to continuous improvement and the early shaping of strategic priorities

At college level, the College Higher Education (HE) Officer plays a key role in consolidating and representing the HE student voice across campuses and schools. HE Officers are invited to attend key institutional groups, including the Higher Education Review Board (HERB) and the Equality Working Group. Through these forums, they synthesise student feedback and identify priorities that inform discussion, contribute to quality enhancement, policy, and the wider student experience.

At governance level, a Student Governor is appointed annually to sit on the Governing Body and its Education Committee. In this role, they represent the collective student voice, contributing to high-level decision-making, institutional strategy, and oversight of academic quality and standards.

Together, these roles ensure a clear and connected student voice structure, with feedback moving from course-level engagement through to strategic and governance-level discussions, enabling students to actively shape their educational experience at all levels of the College.

**F. Achievement will be recognised and personal feedback provided** through the annual graduation ceremony with additional individual HR achievement awards and the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR).

**G. Students will engage in developing their own learning** through the use of work-based and project-based learning and tailored tutor interventions to support student need.

| **Step** | **Who** | **Timing** | **Activities** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. College Student Representation Systems | Students' Union | Sept., Nov., Feb., April | Elect Class Reps.,<br>Elect Higher Education Officers.<br>Cross-College meetings |
| 2. Programme Staff Student Consultations | Programme Teams | Nov., Feb., | Staff-Student Consultations |
| 3. Programme Development | QED | Oct., March | Periodic Review |
| 4. Surveys and Feedback | QED, Programme Teams | January, March, April | Annual Survey,<br>Module Reviews |
| 5. Formal Committees and Working Groups | Students' Union<br><br>QED<br><br>HR<br><br>Programme Teams | May<br><br>Oct., Jan., May<br><br>Twice per year<br><br>Twice per year | Student Governor Elections<br><br>HERB Meeting<br><br>Equality Working Group<br><br>Programme Team Meeting |
| 6. Achievement will be recognised and | Marketing<br><br>Programme Teams | Sept.<br><br>January, June | HE Graduation<br><br>HEAR |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| personal feedback provided | | | |
| 7. Students will engage in developing their own learning | QED<br><br>Programme Teams | Sept., Nov., Jan., Mar., Jun.<br><br>Sept, Jan., May | Student Case Conferences<br><br>Enterprise Induction, PBL |

## 12.4 Student Charter

A Student Charter has been developed by students, staff and the Students Union and sets out shared values and commitments between them. It is not a legal contract, but a statement of partnership designed to support a positive learning experience for all. The Charter can be found around our Campus' and in Appendix 7 – Student Charter. This will be reviewed and updated with the students keeping it current.

## 12.5 Monitoring and Review

The Higher Education Review Board will monitor the effectiveness of the Student Engagement SOP to ensure that all Higher Education students are supported and informed to provide feedback that is instrumental in the quality processes and contributes to the development of educational enhancement.

The outcomes of the key steps will inform the Whole College Self-Evaluation and Review and the resulting Whole College Quality Improvement Plan which will be monitored by the Education Committee of the Governing Body.

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# 13.0 Research and Ethics Process

## 13.1 Introduction

These procedures are informed by the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 Principle 10- Supporting students to achieve their potential and Principle 11- Teaching, learning and assessment.

This section sets out the standard processes that govern the conduct of research carried out by students at SERC. The College is committed to supporting students and staff in the conduct and support of research and expects high standards of personal conduct and ethical standards from those engaged in research.

Research ethics matter for scientific integrity, human rights and dignity, and collaboration between science and society. Therefore, it is a requirement that all research being undertaken by staff or students will be submitted for consideration to the SERC Research and Ethics Committee. The Terms of Reference, Terms of Operation and Composition and Membership, can be found in Section 13.5.

It should also be noted that for studies being conducted in collaboration with the NHS/HPSS, the peer review and scrutiny of applications might be conducted under the research management processes of the collaborating Trust or other body.

If any Awarding Organisation/ Body has any specific research or ethics requirements, then the researcher should follow these in full.

## 13.2 Background

SERC has developed a process for supporting learners and staff involved in research by requiring:

- provision of information clear and accessible to research students and staff;
- the research environment supportive and inclusive for all research students;
- supervisors to appropriately skilled and supported;
- research students to be afforded the opportunities for professional development;
- progress monitoring to be clearly defined and operated;
- clear guidance and processes to be provided on assessment of research degrees.

## 13.3 Research Principles

The guiding principles which govern the conduct of research at SERC, consider Nolans seven Principles of Public Life which promote an ethical culture and legitimacy. All students involved in the conduct of research should follow the following guiding principles:

- ***High Standards*:** The student is expected to strive for excellence and the highest ethical standards and consider conflicts of interest when conducting research.
- ***Honesty*:** The student is expected to be honest in respect of their own actions in research and in their responses to the actions of other researchers, at every stage in the process.
- ***Openness*:** While recognising the need to protect their own research interest in the process of planning their research and obtaining their results, the College encourages students to be as open as possible in discussing their work with other researchers within and outside the College and with the public.
- ***Accountability*:** Students are expected to ensure that the work they undertake is consistent with the expectations of the College and any other

parties involved in the research, such as funding, Awarding Bodies/ Organisations, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, collaborators and participant groups.

- ***Integrity*:** Students are expected to take appropriate actions to address actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest throughout their research.
- ***Inclusion*:** The College aims to promote and sustain an inclusive research culture, providing equality of opportunity for all who are part of its research community and advancing equality by identifying and removing barriers affecting researchers. Students are expected to treat individuals with dignity and respect, to challenge inequalities, and to anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances in carrying out their research.
- ***Safety*:** Students will ensure the dignity, rights, safety and well–being of all involved in its research and avoid unreasonable risk or harm to its research subjects, participants, researchers and others. Research will only be initiated and continued if the anticipated benefits justify the risks involved. This will be oversighted by the Research and Ethics Committee.

## 13.4 SERC Research and Ethics Review Process

This process should be followed by all students who are enrolled on a degree programme and carrying out a research-based project as part of their studies, unless the Awarding Organisation/ Body has its own requirements and regulations. The student will be referred to as the "researcher".

- Complete Sections A to G of the "*Student Research and Ethics Application Form*" (See Appendix 5) as part of your initial research and forward this form to your Dissertation Supervisor. Please note that the form should be completed electronically.

- Once completed and signed, the Dissertation Supervisor will upload to a dedicated, secure team site for review by the College's Research and Ethics Committee for consideration of approval to commence research.

- The application will be considered by the Research and Ethics Committee in accordance with the requirements of the College.

- The Research and Ethics Committee Chair will write to the Dissertation Supervisor indicating the outcome of its review using the *"SERC Research and Ethics Committee Response Form"* (See Appendix 6).

- Depending upon the outcome of the Research and Ethics Committee review, the Dissertation Supervisor should arrange with the researcher to:
  - proceed with the research, or
  - proceed with research and directly address recommendations with supervisor, or
  - resubmit the application for further review, or
  - arrange an interview with the researcher and Committee, or
  - resubmit a new or substantially changed project.

- Any changes to the approved forms must be discussed in the first instance with the Dissertation Supervisor. Should the change be deemed minor, with limited impact on the prior approval, then the Dissertation Supervisor can agree to this change. Should the change be deemed major, then the application will have to be made through the Research and Ethics Committee for review.

- The Research and Ethics Committee will retain a complete set of original forms for each applicant.

- The researcher must attach the complete ethics application form, including resubmissions and new/ substantially changed project forms as an appendix to the final submitted dissertation document.

## 13.5 Research and Ethics Committee Terms and Membership

### 13.5.1 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Committee are listed below:

1. To advise the College through the Higher Education Review Board, on the development of college strategy and policy affecting research. This will include:
    - Reviewing all student research proposals submitted to the Committee using the SERC Application to Undertake Research form for all degree students.
    - Reviewing student research proposals, where concerns are identified by the Research/ Dissertation Supervisor, for L4-L5 programmes.

2. To make an assessment of the ethical implications of the study and request additional information or amendments to be made (as appropriate).

3. To ensure that appointed supervisors are appropriately qualified, skilled and trained and comply with the College's guidance on supervision document.

4. To ensure that the study of research is necessary and that risks have been identified within the research application.

5. To advise the College through the Higher Education Review Board on quality assurance and regulatory issues and on the sharing of good practice.

6. To provide a forum for problem-solving and sharing of best practice research management.

7. To identify and facilitate the development of opportunities for interdisciplinary research and inter-school, inter-departmental and inter-institutional co-operation.

8. To liaise with School and Department research students or staff teams and other bodies as appropriate.

9. To allocate such resources in support of research that the College may from time to time make available to the Committee.

### 13.5.2 Terms of Operation:

The College Research and Ethics Committee will:

- Meet at least three times each year;
- Support Research/ Dissertation Supervisors in the review of ethical considerations of research proposals for all degrees;
- Support Research/ Dissertation Supervisors in the review of ethical considerations of research proposals for L4-L5 provision were required;

- Disclose a conflict of interest in the reviewal of ethics forms**;**
- Form sub-committees and working groups as required;
- Report to the Higher Education Academic Board at least annually;
- Review the relevance and value of its work on an annual basis, and specifically, identify and disseminate exemplars of good practice;
- Review the Terms of Reference on an annual basis;
- Ensure that the transfer of information meets GDPR guidelines;
- Ensure that a researcher-focused ethos is embedded in the curriculum at Higher Education level and disseminated accordingly.

### 13.5.3 Composition and Membership

The Research and Ethics Committee members will consist of a Chair (Head of Higher Education) and a minimum of two staff members who are employed by South Eastern Regional College, and who have an interest in academic research or supporting and supervising research with a 1-year tenure. This will be supported by the secretariat who will have responsibility for record keeping.

The table below summarises the current membership:

| Name | School / Department | Membership Role | Tenure |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stuart Rankin | Quality Excellence and Development | Committee Owner/ Chair | N/A |
| Richard Sittlington | School of Engineering and Science | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Diane Weatherup | Learning Academy | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Owen Parkes | Learning Academy | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Gillian Auld | Learning Academy | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Dr. Charlene Mason | School of Engineering and Science | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Mark Fullerton | School of Engineering and Science | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Dr. Michelle Mulligan | School of Engineering and Science | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Dara Flanagan | School of Arts and Sport | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Clive Robinson | Learning Support | Committee Member | 1 year |
| Kathryn Ledgerwood | Directorate | Secretariat | N/A |
| Matt Buckle | School of Engineering and Science | Dissertation Supervisor | N/A |
| Wendy Lefebvre-Godard | School of Engineering and Science | Dissertation Supervisor | N/A |
| Veronica Tate | School of Engineering and Science | Dissertation Supervisor | N/A |
| Angela Gilmore | School of Engineering and Science | Dissertation Supervisor | N/A |

## 14.0 Communication Plan

These procedures will be communicated to all staff and students via the intranet and reference given in the HE Student Handbook and programme documentation.

Relevant academic staff will be updated through regular staff training at team and College events.

## 15.0 Review

These procedures will be reviewed (and updated if necessary) annually or sooner to reflect changes in legislation or circumstance.

The College will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this SOP.

The College will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote this SOP effectively and is committed to reviewing this SOP on a regular basis, in consultation with the recognised trade unions, statutory organisations such as the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and in line with models of good practice.

## Appendix 1: Document Change History

| Version | Date | Change Detail |
|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | Oct 2020 | Reviewed |
| 1.1 | Nov 2021 | Update to Roles/ Update to Pearson Paperwork/ Update to LJMU information |
| 1.2 | Dec 2021 | Section 4 Amendment to Revised Quality Code reference/ Appendix 6 Pre-Progress/Exam Board pro forma |
| 1.3 | May 2022 | Section 8 Accreditation of Prior Learning in HE updated to link to new SOP. Subsequent Appendix removed. |
| 1.4 | June 2023 | Section 10.4.1-UU Appeals timescale added<br><br>Section 11- Annex 1- Removal of HERB Chair signature from Periodic Review Forms. |
| 1.5 | Aug 2023 | • Transferred to new Accessibility Template<br>• Update to reflect AO requirements<br>• Removal of legacy templates<br>• Links provided to new HE@SERC- Coordinators Toolkit and removal of unnecessary appendices<br>• Updates to Section 7: Professional Suitability and Fitness to Practise (UU Programmes)- Alignment to UU Policy<br>• Update of Section 9: Academic Misconduct section to include Artificial Intelligence and Awarding Body updates<br>• Updates to LJMU Policies<br>• Updates to Student Engagement key steps |
| 1.6 | Aug 2024 | Reviewed and changes reflected to Turnitin from July 2024 updates |
| 1.7 | Aug 2024 | Terms of Reference Academic Appeals Panel updated and Academic Appeals Process section amended to reflect. |
| 1.8 | Sept 2024 | New Section 13: Research and Ethics Section Added |
| 1.9 | Aug 2025 | • Updates to QAA Quality Code 2024 referenced throughout.<br>• Section 5 updated to reflect University and BTEC HN requirements including assessment and IV paperwork. UU ARoW Board process included.<br>• Update to penalty table in section 9 to include recording on academic register for first offence.<br>• Section 11: Periodic Review Process substantially updated and name changed to New Programme and Periodic Review Process |
| 2.0 | June 2026 | • Section 2.0- Updated Scope<br>• Section 5.5.1- Retention Schedule for OU linked<br>• Section 11.0- Clarification of process for “FT” and substantive “PT”<br>• Section 12- Update to Student Engagement process based on current practice. Inclusion of student charter to appendix 7<br>• Updated Section 13.5.3- Research and Ethics Committee Members |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | August 2026 | Appendix 7 updated - Student Charter Graphic |
| 2.2 | Sept 2026 | Updated Section 13.5.3- Research and Ethics Committee Members |

## Appendix 2: Programme/Course Handbook Template

Care should be taken to ensure that the handbooks have a 'professional' feel. The standards set will convey expectations to students. Where content is copied from Awarding Organisation/ Body specifications care should be taken to ensure that one font is used. The suggested font is Arial 12pt. A template for the handbook can be found on the HE@SERC- Coordinators Toolkit available on the Staff Intranet.

| **Programme/Course Handbook Template** |
| --- |
| **Suggested Contents**<br>• Programme/ Course Title<br>• Welcome<br>• Staff Contacts (Programme and Support)<br>• Programme Information<br>• Programme Specifications<br>• External Examiner Information<br>• Assessment Information<br>• Academic Calendar<br>• Work Placement Information (if applicable)<br>• Opportunities for Study Abroad (if applicable)<br>• Dissertation and Projects (if applicable)<br>• Any other Programme Information which the team would like to include which complements the HE College Handbook |

## Appendix 3: Unit/Module Handbook Template

Care should be taken to ensure that the handbooks have a 'professional' feel. The standards set will convey expectations to students. Where content is copied from Awarding Organisation/ Body specifications care should be taken to ensure that one font is used. The suggested font is Arial 12pt. A template for the handbook can be found on the HE@SERC- Coordinators Toolkit available on the Staff Intranet.

| **Module Handbook Template** |
|---|
| **Cover Page**<br>• Exact title of final award (as is on transcript and certificate) and name of Awarding Organisation/ Body<br>• Name and Number of Module/Unit<br>• Module/ Unit Lecturers and contact email<br>• Date of issue of handbook |
| **Module Overview**<br>• Aim and Unit abstract should be taken from the Awarding Organisation/ Body specifications but should be shaped to student requirements. |
| **Learning Outcomes and Content**<br>• These must be taken directly from the Awarding Organisation/ Body specification and the content **must not be altered** |
| **Learning and Teaching Strategies**<br>• Summarise the main strategies that will be used to develop student learning. They should reflect the strategies outlined within the programme specifications. |
| **Session Plan**<br>• A week-by-week guide outlining the topics and activities that will be undertaken to meet the learning outcomes and content specified by the Awarding Organisation/ Body |
| **Assessment**<br>• A summary of the assessments that will be required to complete the unit. The summary will give an indication of approach and purpose.<br>• Copies of assessments if appropriate. |
| **Reading List**<br>• List of sources applicable to the learning outcomes and content. This should include journals and e-resources. The list should be reviewed annually, preferably in consultation with the Libraries. |

## Appendix 4: HE College Handbook Contents

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**Welcome**

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- Internal Moderation, Cross-marking and Role of the External Examiner
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- Publication of Results
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- Student Support
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**Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Guidance on Academic Practices
- Appendix 2 Authorisation of Absence Form
- Appendix 3 Extenuating Circumstances Form
- Appendix 4 Examination Regulations
- Appendix 5 HE Academic Appeals Process

## Appendix 5: SERC Student Research Ethics Application Form

South Eastern Regional College is concerned to protect the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all participants in any research study involving people. The avoidance of harm to research subjects should therefore be a prime consideration for all SERC students. In response, SERC has developed research ethics review procedures that require students to complete an ethics approval application form prior to the commencement of any research project.

Once the Dissertation Supervisor has approved and signed off the form, they will submit it to the College's Research and Ethics Committee for consideration.

The Committee will confirm in writing the outcome of your application. Your dissertation should not commence until approval has been provided in writing by the Colleges Research and Ethics Committee.

This completed form must be included in the final submitted dissertation document.

*PRIVACY NOTICE: Information gathered on this form will be processed within the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and used for the purpose of recording and managing research projects. The College is permitted to process personal data where there is a 'lawful basis' to do so. This processing is necessary for the performance of your contract. Your information may be shared with relevant college staff for the purpose of recording and managing your research project.*

## Section A: About the Researcher

| | |
|---|---|
| **Student name:** | |
| **Student number:** | |
| **Programme title:** | |
| **Mode of study:** | |
| **Module code and title:** | |
| **Dissertation Supervisor name:** | |

## Section B: Research Project Details

| **B1. Research project title:** |
|---|
| |

**Proposed research start date:**

**Proposed research end date:**

| **B2. In the box below, provide a brief outline of the aims and objectives of the proposed research project.** (Maximum 300 words) |
|---|
| |

| **B3. In the box below, provide a summary of the approach and method of the planned research including any procedures to be employed** (E.g. Interviews, observations. Questionnaires) (Maximum 500 words) |
|---|
| |

| **B4. Does the proposed research project involve any of the following ethical risk areas?**<br>(Researchers should note that any study not deemed as low risk is unlikely to obtain a favourable ethical opinion to proceed, unless a particularly compelling case can be made.) |
|---|
| Research involving children under 18- Yes ☐ No ☐<br>Research involving adults with learning or other disabilities - Yes ☐ No ☐<br>Research involving the elderly- - Yes ☐ No ☐<br>Research involving vulnerable groups *(e.g. gender, sexual identity, chronic conditions, disabilities, marginalised groups within the community)*- Yes ☐ No ☐<br>Research involving sensitive topics- Yes ☐ No ☐<br>Research involving defence organisations- Yes ☐ No ☐<br>Research involving health sector organisations- Yes ☐ No ☐<br>Research involving terrorism and/ or extremism- Yes ☐ No ☐<br>Research involving other areas that require ethical consideration- - Yes ☐ No ☐<br>If other areas requiring ethical consideration, please identify below: |

| **B5. If yes to any of the above in B4, please provide a brief summary of the perceived risk associated with each identified and justify why your research request should be considered.** |
|---|
| |

| **B6. Describe the proposed research design and include details of the types of data to be collected from human participants** (E.g. observation of people; number and type of people to be interviewed, such as their job role or occupation; use of survey questionnaires and the type of people to be included in the survey). |
| --- |
| |

| **B7. Identify where proposed research will take place** (E.g. Remotely, online, social media platforms, College premises, public places, private homes, company premises etc.) |
| --- |
| |

## Section C: The Participants

| **C1. Identify the proposed participants of study** (E.g. SERC Staff, SERC Students, members of the public, members of a specific company or organisation etc.) |
|---|
| |

| **C2. Explain how the participants will be selected, approached and recruited. If participants are to be approached by letter / email, please append a copy of the correspondence when you submit your application.** |
|---|
| |

| **C3. Will any of the participants come from any of the following groups?** (Please check all that apply) |
|---|
| ☐Children under 16 |
| ☐Adults with Learning Disabilities |
| ☐Adults with mental illness |
| ☐Drug / Substance users |
| ☐Adults with dementia |
| ☐Young Offenders |
| ☐People without capacity to consent |
| ☐Those with a dependant relationship with the researcher |

| **C4. If required, justify the inclusion of any of the groups checked in C3. Does your research require you to hold an AccessNI check? Include a copy of your AccessNI check if required.** |
|---|
| |

| **C5. Does your study have inclusion or exclusion criteria?** (e.g. participants included/excluded by age, age range, gender, ethnicity, member of organisation). |
|---|
| |

| **C6. Wherever possible research should be disseminated to participants. Will the participants be given the opportunity to find out about the outcomes of the research? How do you plan to do this?** |
|---|
| |

## Section D: Consent

| **D1. How do you intend to gain consent of individuals who will participate in the research? If appropriate, please attach a copy of your draft consent form.** |
|---|
| |

| **D2. Will prospective participants be able to withhold consent (i.e. refuse to take part)? If no, explain why not.** |
|---|
| |

| **D3. Will participants be able to withdraw from the study whilst it is ongoing (i.e. after they have consented to take part)? If no, explain why not.** |
|---|
| |

| **D4. Will participants be able to withdraw from the study after data collection has ended? (i.e. Can you from the data you have collected, be able to identify a participant and withdraw them and their data? If you cannot this should be answered "No"). If no, explain why not.** |
|---|
| |

| **D5. Will participants be provided with an information sheet regarding the nature, purpose, risks and benefits of the study? If appropriate, please attach a copy of your Research Participant Information Sheet.** |
|---|
| |

## Section E: Risk

| **E1. Describe any potential adverse effects, risks or hazards, including any discomfort, distress or inconvenience, of involvement in the study for research participants.** |
|---|
| |

| **E2. With reference to E1, explain any risk management procedures you will put in place.** |
|---|
| |

| **E3. Describe in detail any potential adverse effects, risks or hazards (mild, moderate, high or severe) or involvement in the research for the researchers** (e.g. lone working). **Explain any risk management procedures you will put in place.** |
|---|
| |

| **E4. With reference to E3, explain any risk management procedures you will put in place.** |
|---|
| |

| **E5. Does the proposed research contain any potentially contentious issues that might affect the physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing of the research participants? If so, provide full details.** |
|---|
| |

## Section F: Data Management and Storage

| **F1. Does the research involve the collection and storage of personal, identifiable or sensitive information from participants? If yes, identify the data types below.** (e.g. names, addresses, telephone numbers, date of birth, postcode, medical records, academic records) |
|---|
| |

| **F2. Describe how you will maintain the confidentiality of the research data collected and how you will ensure that research participants are anonymised in your data analysis.** |
|---|
| |

| **F3. Describe how you will store your data, who will have access to it, and what happens to the data at the end of the project.** |
|---|
| |

## Section G: Research Declarations

### Declaration by Researcher:

I confirm that the project will be conducted in compliance with the research description/protocol and in accordance with the College's requirements on recording and reporting.

If ethical issues arise during the research or I have to change my research methodology, I will firstly consult with my supervisor who may need to seek advice from the Research and Ethics Committee. I am aware that this might require me to submit a new application for review should the Dissertation Supervisor deem it appropriate.

I have included all required supporting files as part of this application in Appendix 1 including (check included documentation):

| | |
|---|---|
| Proposed Participant Correspondence (C2) | ☐ |
| AccessNI Check (C4) | ☐ |
| Draft Consent Form (D1) | ☐ |
| Research Participant Information Sheet (D5) | ☐ |
| Other (Please specify below): | ☐ |

| **Additional documents for review:** |
|---|
| |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Researcher Name** | |
| **Signed** | |
| **Date** | |

### Declaration by Dissertation Supervisor:

I confirm that this project is viable and is of research or educational merit and that all risks and ethical and procedural implications have been considered. I have reviewed the application provided and all required information is available for the Committee to review.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Supervisor Name** | |
| **Signed** | |
| **Date** | |

Appendix 1- Attachments

## Appendix 6: SERC Research and Ethics Committee Response Form

*This form will be completed by the Research and Ethics Committee on review of your research proposal.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Researcher name:** | |
| **Student Number:** | |
| **Supervisor Name:** | |
| **Programme title:** | |
| **Research project title:** | |

| **The SERC Research and Ethics Committee has considered this research study application and given the nature of the study and ethical considerations provided recommends that the researcher:** |
|---|
| ☐ proceed with the research |
| ☐ proceed with research and directly address recommendations with supervisor |
| ☐ resubmit the application for further review |
| ☐ interview with researcher and supervisor required |
| ☐ resubmit a new or substantially changed project |

| **Committee Comments:** |
|---|
| |

### Confirmation by Chair of Research and Ethics Committee

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | |
| **Signed** | |
| **Date** | |

## Appendix 7: Student Charter

# SERC STUDENT CHARTER

This Charter sets out the shared values and commitments between students, SERC, and the Students' Union. It is not a legal contract but a statement of partnership, designed to support a positive learning experience for all.

### Our Shared Values

- Respect – Treat everyone with dignity and fairness.
- Integrity – Act honestly and responsibly in all academic and personal conduct.
- Inclusivity – Celebrate diversity and ensure equal opportunities.
- Engagement – Work together to enhance learning and student life.
- Sustainability – Commit to practices that protect our environment and future.

### SERC Commits To

- Deliver high-quality teaching and learning experiences.
- Provide clear, accessible information on courses, assessments, and policies.
- Offer academic, wellbeing, and careers support.
- Ensure safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environments.
- Listen to student feedback and act on it.

### Students Commit To

- Engage actively with learning and assessment.
- Attend classes and participate in activities.
- Respect staff, fellow students, and the wider community.
- Uphold academic integrity and follow college policies.
- Share feedback constructively to help improve services.

SERC

### Students' Union Commits To

- Represent student views at all levels of decision-making.
- Provide opportunities for involvement in clubs, societies, and campaigns.
- Support student wellbeing and promote equality.
- Communicate clearly about events, services, and representation.

### Working Together

- We will maintain open and respectful communication.
- We will review this Charter annually with student input.
- We will signpost to detailed policies on complaints, appeals, and support.