



HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMIC BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Higher Education Academic Board is a Committee of DCG Corporation. Its purpose is to provide assurance higher education academic governance is robust and effective.
2. Subject to the requirements of, and compliance with the statutory, regulatory and accrediting bodies, the Higher Education Academic Board advises the Corporation on:
 - The Group's Higher Education Academic Strategy
 - Compliance with the Office for Students Conditions of Registration
 - Academic Risk
 - Partnerships and collaboration, recruitment, progression and retention, data provision, quality assurance, academic standards.
3. The Committee composition will be made up of the following:
 - Two independent governors (one with higher education experience)
 - The Chief Executive
 - The higher education student governor
 - A member of teaching staff involved in higher education programmes

Membership may include additional persons with relevant experience who have been recommended by the Search and Governance Committee and approved by the Corporation to be co-opted Members of the Committee.

4. Core attendees include:
 - The Deputy Chief Executive
 - The Deputy Principal
 - The Head of Higher Education
 - The OFS Policy and Compliance Officer
 - The Chief Finance Officer
5. The Chair shall have the power to invite other individuals to attend any meeting if deemed appropriate to the business.
6. The Committee shall be served by the Clerk to the Corporation.
7. The Chair, if not appointed by the Corporation, shall be elected from within and by the members of the Committee.
8. The quorum shall be three members of the Committee, excluding any external co-optees. In the event of the Chair being unable to attend, the remaining members shall elect a Chair from among those present.
9. The Committee will report to the Corporation.

10. The functions of the committee shall be to:

- i. Take active involvement in the formulation, approval and review of all elements of the higher education strategy.
- ii. Monitor higher education provision within cross-college business plans and KPIs (including TEF and NSS) ensuring these meet the interests of the stakeholders and partners.
- iii. Scrutinise and provide assurance to the Corporation on higher education academic quality and standards, quality assurance, enhancement and outcomes
- iv. Oversee the student experience, which includes:
 1. Recommending for approval to the OfS the Access and Participation Plan is published.
 2. Recommending for approval to the OFS the Student Protection Plan
 3. Review and recommend the criteria for the recruitment and admission of higher education students, including the transfers of students
 4. Student voice and student survey information
 5. Receiving and making sure appropriate action is taken towards student complaints
 6. Monitoring safeguarding, sexual harassment and PREVENT referrals
- v. Oversee the management of regulatory and reputational academic risks to the higher education provision.
- vi. Oversight and management of the OFS conditions of registration, including any reportable events and highlighting any breaches.
- vii. Review annually the self-assessment against the Guiding Principles
- viii. Oversee of data return completion
- ix. Have oversight of partner performance
- x. Seek assurance there is an appropriate system of academic staff development in place
- xi. Review and approve specific academic policies and procedures
- xii. Receive reliable and up to date information to ensure that Corporation is informed about its legal and regulatory responsibilities.
- xiii. Keep up to date with policy and horizon scanning which may affect academic governance
- xiv. Have effective communication with key stakeholders, including regulators and partners
- xv. Ensure the Group meets the freedom of speech and academic freedom requirements in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

11. The Committee has no power to make spending decisions outside of the annual budgeting process. Any additional requirements to allocate resources are to be referred to the Corporation.

12. The Committee is entitled, wherever it is satisfied that it is appropriate to do so, to go into confidential session and (subject to the rules of quoracy at paragraph 8 above) to exclude any, or all, participants and observers, except the Clerk to the Corporation.

13. The Minutes of the Committee shall be submitted to the next full meeting of the Corporation for information and/or approval as appropriate.

APPENDIX 1

Monitoring compliance against the OFS conditions and oversee the OFS are informed accordingly should any breaches to compliance occur.

- Review and recommend for approval by the OFS an Access and Participation Plan (A1)
- Ensure the Group deliver well designed courses and that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enables a student's achievement to be reliably assessed. (B1)
- Monitor the higher education students' academic experience from admission through to completion, ensuring they receive the support required to succeed in and benefit from higher education. (B2)
- Monitor academic performance by using agreed and accepted KPIs, which are stretching and attainable, ensuring the Group delivers successful outcomes for all of its students which are recognised and valued by employers and/or enable further study. (B3)
- Gain assurance qualifications awarded to students will hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards.(B4)
- Monitor that courses delivered meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications at Level 4 or higher. (B5)
- Oversee participation in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework. (B6)
- Seek assurance policies, procedures and terms and conditions have given due regard for guidance on compliance with consumer protection law. (C1)
- Ensuring student complaints are reviewed and appropriate action is taken. That the institution co-operates with the requirements of the students complaints scheme ran by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, ensuring the Group complies with its duty to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom, and including its subscription requirements and that students are aware of the ability to use the scheme. (C2)
- Review and recommend for OFS approval, a student protection plan, which is appropriate for the OFS's assessment of the regulatory risk presented by the Group and for the risk for continuation of study of all its students. Ensure the implementation of the plan if such events occur and inform the OFS as outlined in their guidance. (C3)
- Oversee financial viability and sustainability. Ensure the Group has the necessary financial resources to provide and deliver HE courses as advertised and contracted to deliver and to continue to comply with all conditions of OFS registration. (D1)
- Support the Corporation in upholding the public interest governance principles (E1) by regularly reporting to the Board ensuring it understands its responsibilities to;
 - operate in accordance with its governing documents (E2)
 - deliver, in practice, the public interest governance principles that are applicable to it (E2)
 - provide and fully deliver the higher education courses advertised (E2)
 - continue to comply with all conditions of registration (E2)
- Support the Corporation in accepting responsibility for the interactions between the OFS and its designated bodies (E3)
- Oversee compliance with all conditions of registration and with the OFS accounts direction (E3)
- Make sure the Corporation notifies the OFS of any change it becomes aware of that affects the accuracy of the information contained in the provider's entry in the Register (E4)
- Ensure compliance with the OFS guidance to facilitate, in co-operation with electoral registration officers, the electoral registration of students. (E5)

- Ensure the Group publish, in the format specified by the OFS, the transparency information set out in section 9 of HERA (F1)
- Make certain the Group provides to the OFS and publishes information for a student transfer (F2)
- Oversee for the purpose of assisting the OFS in performing any function, or exercising any power, conferred on the OFS under any legislation, that the governing body (F3);
 - Provides the OFS or a person nominated with the OFS with such information, as the OFS specifies at the time and in the manner specified
 - Permit the OFS to verify or arrange for independent verification by a person nominated by the OFS of such information the OFS specifies at the time and in the manner specified and must notify the OFS of the outcome of any independent verification at the time and the manner and form specified.
 - Take such steps as the OFS reasonably requests to co-operate with any monitoring or investigation by the OFS, in particular, but not limited to, providing explanations or making available documents to the OFS or a person nominated by it or making available to members of staff to meet with the OFS or a person nominated by it.
- Make sure for the purpose of the designated data body (DDB)'s duties under the sections 64 (1) and 65(1) of HERA the Group provides the DDB with such information as the DDB specifies at the time and in the manner and form specified by the DDB (F4).
- Recommend for approval the Tuition Fees Policy and monitor. A provider in the approved (fee cap) category must charge qualifying persons on qualifying courses fees that do not exceed the relevant fee limit determined by the provider's quality rating and its access and participation plan G1).
- The Group must comply with any terms and conditions attached to financial support received from the OfS and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under sections 41(1) and/or 94(2) of HERA. A breach of such terms and conditions will be a breach of this condition of registration (G2).
- Monitor the timely payment of (G3):
 - The Group's annual registration fee and other OfS fees in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State.
 - The fees charged by the designated bodies.

APPENDIX 2

Effective quality assurance against the QAA UK Quality Code

Standards

- The Group ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.
- The Group ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.
- As the Group works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.
- The Group uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.

Quality

- The Group has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.
- The Group designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.
- The Group has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- The Group has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- The Group actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
- The Group has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.
- As the Group works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.
- The Group supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

Revision History

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