International Quality Review of University of Gibraltar

November 2021

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at University of Gibraltar. The review took place from 22 to 25 November 2021 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Mark Hunt
- Mr Ian Kimber (international reviewer)
- Dr Harry Williams (student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Yue Song.

International Quality Review (IQR) offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity to have a review by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The review benchmarks the institution's quality assurance processes against international quality assurance standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG).[1]

In International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

- makes conclusion against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- came to an overall conclusion as to whether the institution meets the standards for International Quality Review.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.[2] A dedicated section explains the method for International Quality Review[3] and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms, see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/en/training-and-services/iqr

Key findings

Executive summary

The University of Gibraltar (UoG) is the only higher education institution in Gibraltar. The University was established in 2015 by Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar through the *University of Gibraltar Act 2015*. The University's aim is to deliver high-quality teaching, learning and research in order to contribute to the sustainable development of Gibraltar and to the Mediterranean region.

The University of Gibraltar is currently offering four undergraduate, five postgraduate taught programmes and a research PhD programme. While provision of a research (PhD) programme commenced in the academic year of 2015-16, provision of taught awards did not commence until the academic year 2018-19. The first taught programmes launched were the Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) and the MSc in Marine Science and Climate Change. In 2019-20, the University added the Master of Business Administration and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education to its provision. In 2020-21, the University launched the BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing, the MA Leadership and Management, and an Executive MBA (eMBA). The latter is delivered through the University's collaborative provider - Learna. September 2021 saw the launch of two BSc (Hons) programmes in Maritime Science (Engineering and Nautical).

There are currently 125 students enrolled at the University, of whom 35% are undergraduate, 48% postgraduate and 17% PhD. The majority of students are from Gibraltar with 30% of the student body comprising EU/international students. There are currently 40 academic and non-academic staff employed at the University, and a further 16 contracted sessional lecturers.

As per the *University of Gibraltar Act 2015*, the management, administration and control of the property, revenue and business of the University fall under the auspices of its Board of Governors (BoG). The Academic Board (AB), formally established through the University of Gibraltar (Academic Board) Regulations 2018, is the University's highest academic body with overall responsibility for academic decisions and governance. The AB is the only body within the University that has the authority to award credit and qualifications. The Vice-Chancellor is the chair of the AB and is responsible for the overall management of the University, supported by the Executive Committee and senior operational staff and directors.

The University of Gibraltar Strategic Plan aligns with the University mission: 'to respond to current societal needs as well as shape personal and professional futures through the pursuit of education, training and research'. The Strategic Plan outlines the direction that the University will take during the period 2019-22, including six strategic priorities: curriculum, research and research education, learning, campus, student support and corporate governance. This reflects the University's aspirations, including its vision to become: 'an institution of excellence in teaching, learning and research'.

At the end of each academic year, the University undertakes a formal evaluation of progress made towards the achievement of the Strategic Plan in the form of a progress report, and reviews planned milestones for the forthcoming year. These documents are shared with staff via the staff intranet and submitted to the Board of Governors, the Academic Board, and the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority (GRA). An executive summary of progress made towards the achievement of the Strategic Plan is posted on the University website.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which the UoG meets the 10 ESG Standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the handbook for International Quality Review (June 2021). The QAA review team was provided

with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence by the University. During the four-day online review visit, which took place from 22 to 25 November 2021, the review team held a total of seven meetings with the Vice-Chancellor, senior management team, academic staff, professional support staff, students, alumni and the University partner. The review team also had the opportunity to conduct a virtual observation of the University's online systems.

The review team came to the overall conclusion that University of Gibraltar meets all 10 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015), Part 1: Internal Quality Assurance. The review team has identified four areas of good practice and five recommendations.

QAA's conclusions about University of Gibraltar

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at the University of Gibraltar.

European Standards and Guidelines

The University of Gibraltar meets all of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the University of Gibraltar.

- The quality handbook provides a robust level of architecture for the management of quality and standards at university level, and which includes extensive externality (ESG Standard 1.1).

- Clear procedures of how the outcomes and actions from Module Evaluation and Enhancement Reports (MEERs) and Programme Review and Enhancement Plans (PREPs) are carried forward to the next time a module or programme is delivered (ESG Standard 1.3).

- The close-working partnerships between the University and other Gibraltar-based organisations, given the particular challenges with operating in such a densely populated and geographically restricted space, such as the Gibraltar peninsula (ESG Standard 1.6).

- The effective use of externality throughout its committee structure and embedded within its quality assurance processes (ESG Standard 1.9).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the University of Gibraltar.

- Summarise the outcomes of due diligence of partnership arrangements in a documentary report which follows the sequence listed in paragraph 60 of the Academic Partnerships and Collaborative Provision. This would then enable the University to present a consolidated report for consideration and approval by the Contracts & Agreement Committee and ultimately the Board of Governors (ESG Standard 1.1).

- Set up personal tutoring procedures in a more formal and structured manner (ESG Standard 1.3).

- Build a time allocation into its workforce model for personal tutoring and provide training for staff on conducting their tutor roles (ESG Standard 1.5).

- Develop an overarching strategy to underpin its approach to student employability and professional skills development (ESG Standard 1.6).

- Formalise the process currently in place to ensure the ongoing currency and accuracy of its public information (ESG Standard 1.8).

Explanation of the findings about University of Gibraltar

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a brief glossary at the end of this report. A fuller glossary of terms is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the review method, also on the QAA website.

Explanation of the findings about University of Gibraltar

Standard 1.1   Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Findings

1.1   The University of Gibraltar (UoG) aligns itself to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the European Standards and Guidelines. A key objective is to ensure that the standard of awards are comparable with that of other UK universities. In meetings with the review team, the staff of the University confirmed that they were clear on the requirements of the regulatory environment and that specific training and support had been provided and undertaken.

1.2   In order to ensure that the University exercises its degree awarding powers transparently, fairly and rigorously, and to ensure that its qualifications are consistent with both national and international expectations and are only awarded where students have met the published programme requirements through fair, valid and reliable assessments - a number of mechanisms are deployed which include: the Board of Governors; the Academic Board; and Academic Board's two sub-committees with authority on academic matters: Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) (Taught) and Research & Research Degrees Committee (Research).

1.3   Academic standards in teaching, learning and research are set out in the University's Quality Assurance Policy and the Quality Handbook. Both documents are available on the University website and apply to all staff - both academic and professional support. The Quality Assurance Policy outlines the guarding of academic standards, while the Quality Handbook sets out the University's quality systems and its approach to managing academic standards of its awards and the quality of learning opportunities it provides to students leading to its awards. The Quality Handbook sets out how the University is governed and how it exercises degree awarding powers granted to it under the *University of Gibraltar Act 2015*.

1.4   The Quality Handbook sets out the academic regulations for both taught and research degrees, and defines the rules governing the award of the University's qualifications. The Academic Regulations are supplemented by codes that provide additional information and guidance. The Quality Handbook is operationalised and implemented through a range of committees which include: Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), Quality Enhancement Committee, and the Research and Research Degrees Committee - all overseen by the Academic Board to ensure that clear reporting lines are in place and that quality assurance is effectively governed.

1.5   At an operational level, the Vice-Chancellor has responsibility for the oversight of quality within the University and is supported by a number of key roles - these include: the Academic Quality and Learning Manager, who has oversight for quality assurance; Heads of School; and the Programme Coordinators, who have oversight of individual academic programmes.

1.6   From the analysis of committee chairing, it was evident that the Vice-Chancellor chairs two of the key university committees: AB and AQSC. The review team was concerned that there could be a danger that the same discussion takes place at both committees without sufficient challenge or difference of opinion. Although the review team heard the reasons why the Vice-Chancellor chairs both the AB and AQSC, the review team would

advise the University to consider segregating the chairing responsibilities for both the AB and AQSC.

1.7   Student partnership is embedded throughout the committee structure via student representation on the Board of Governors, Academic Board, at programme level and on the Student-Staff Liaison Committees. The University confirmed that students were not formal members of the Board of Governors.

1.8   The University's quality assurance procedures have been designed to meet the expectations of the sector as described in the European Standards and Guidelines and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. At the heart of these frameworks is the importance of independent external participation in programme approval, monitoring and review.

1.9   The University assures the quality of its provision by implementing a staged reporting process for its programme monitoring and review process for its taught provision. The stages include: seeking feedback from students mid-way through the semester to enable adjustments to be made; evaluation of the student experience through an online end of module questionnaire survey; at the end of each module lecturers complete a Module Evaluation and Enhancement Report (MEER) in which they develop enhancement plans; and Programme Review and Enhancement Plans (PREPs) completed by the Programme Coordinator at the end of the academic year. The PREP considers and consolidates data from the MEERs, external examiner reports, programme team meetings and the Student-Staff Liaison Committee minutes in order to develop a holistic programme enhancement plan.

1.10   The MEERs and PREPs provide the key information source for the preparation and development of the University's Annual Report on Academic Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement. The Annual report provides AQSC, Academic Board and the University regulator (Gibraltar Regulatory Authority) with an oversight on academic quality at the University.

1.11   In respect to the monitoring of PhD students, the University reports that at the end of the academic year the students and their corresponding supervisors fill in the annual review form. The reports are then sent to Research and Research Degrees Committee for review where they are signed off. The Director of Academic Programmes and Research is then responsible for communicating the outcome to each student. The full process for monitoring and review of PhD students is set out within the Academic Regulations for Research Degrees.

1.12   The University has one collaborative partner - Learna. The Quality Handbook outlines the commitments and responsibilities of both parties which are set out in a collaborative agreement. Programmes developed and delivered by the collaborative partner must adhere to the same validation processes as all university programmes. A quality assurance visit is also conducted with partners as and when required. However, in respect to the Learna partnership, a site visit was not possible due to Covid and the pandemic. The review team heard through meetings that the quality and standards of the Learna provision was assured by other means - for example, through close oversight of the online provision. The review team heard that the Head of School for Business regularly reviews the virtual learning environment (VLE) content, and all lecturers on the course have to be approved by the University. The University also moderates the assessments conducted by Learna to ensure that the courses are of good quality and comparable in standard to the University's courses. Although the review team did receive a range of documents and discussed the partnership during the review visit to ensure that appropriate due diligence had been undertaken prior to approval of the partnership, the papers received by the review team were in a summarised form which lacked specific detail. The review team, therefore,

recommends for future partnership arrangements that the University formally summarises the outcomes of due diligence in a documentary report which follows the sequence listed in paragraph 60 of the Academic Partnerships and Collaborative Provision. This would then enable the University to present a consolidated report for consideration and approval by the Contracts & Agreement Committee and ultimately the Board of Governors.

1.13   The development of the Quality Handbook was undertaken in 2018-19 with the support of an external member of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) who had expertise in UK academic standards and quality assurance. The University confirmed that the Quality Handbook benefitted from extensive stakeholder input from: Programme Coordinators, the Student Experience Office, the Director of Academic Programmes and Research, the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, the AQSC and Academic Board. Ongoing improvements have been discussed by the Quality Enhancement Committee and by the Programme Coordinators Meetings, prior to approval by AQSC and AB. The Quality Handbook has continued to be developed and implemented with faculty staff, the University Board of Examiners, QEC, AQSC and AB. During the 2020-21 review, a number of amendments in light of practice were made to the handbook.

1.14   The review team can confirm that the Quality Handbook provides an accessible and comprehensive set of documents in relation to academic standards and quality and which makes explicit where authority for decision-making resides at university level. The Quality Handbook comprises: Academic Regulations, Codes of Practice and Relevant Forms. The Quality Handbook also details the University's management structures and corporate obligations and aims to provide assurance to Academic Board, through its sub-committees. In meetings with the review team, university staff were able to confirm how the quality handbook had been implemented and how they had been engaged in the process of development. The review team considers that the quality handbook provides a robust level of architecture for the management of quality and standards at university level, and which includes extensive externality; the review team considers this an aspect of **good practice**.

1.15   The University operates a cyclical strategic planning process which integrates planning, systematic data gathering and analysis to inform its evaluation and decision-making processes aimed at enhancing performance across the University. During the last three academic years, strategic plan milestones set have been achieved as follows: 2018-19 - 98%; 2019-20 - 94%; and 2020-21 - 97%. The University owes this level of achievement to the fact that each staff member has at least one strategic plan target or milestone embedded in the annual performance review. This approach has ensured a university-wide commitment to the University's strategic aims.

1.16   One further aspect of external oversight is provided by the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority (GRA). The GRA has been designated as the Gibraltar Authority for Standards in Higher Education and the Gibraltar Higher Education Commission under the *University of Gibraltar Act 2015*. The GRA Memorandum of Regulation details the information the University is required to report upon, on an annual basis.

1.17   The review team's discussions with university staff and students confirmed that the structures and policies in place for managing quality operates effectively.

1.18   The University has in place clear policies and processes for managing quality assurance that enables it to meet the statutory requirements prescribed by the *University of Gibraltar Act 2015*. The University has developed its own Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Handbook which address transparency, accountability and reporting requirements. Although the review team has included one recommendation in this standard, to tighten up the formal consideration of due diligence reporting, the review team found that the policies

and processes the University has in place were operating effectively. Overall, the team concludes that Standard 1.1 is **met**.

Standard 1.2   Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Findings

2.1   The Quality Handbook sets out the University's approach to, and requirements for, the approval of new programmes and modules, and their amendment and withdrawal. New programmes are subject to a three-stage process:

- Programme Planning Approval - where the viability of the proposal and alignment with the University Strategic Plan are considered. The Executive Team considers programme planning proposals, and the final decision on whether to proceed rests with the Vice-Chancellor.

- Full Programme Development - involves the planning and development process, including identifying suitable external experts and engaging with internal stakeholders. Full programme documentation is developed at this stage.

- Approval - full programme approval is carried out by an Approval Panel which includes external experts. The Approval Panel scrutinises documentation and provides feedback to the Programme Team. Its conclusions and recommendations, together with responses from the Programme Team, are submitted to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), and forwarded to the Academic Board (AB). The process is monitored by the AQSC with final ratification being undertaken by the AB.

2.2   According to the Self-Evaluation Document, all programmes are designed to align with the University's principal mission to respond to current societal needs and shape personal and professional futures through the pursuit of education. Programmes are also designed to align with the University Strategic Plan and accompanying internal plan.

2.3   Programme development also utilises Subject Benchmark Statements produced by QAA as well as direct benchmarking exercises against similar programmes in UK universities.

2.4   As mentioned in Standard 1.1, the University has an agreement with a third party - Learna - a specialist provider of flexible online education, to deliver a limited range of programmes online. The University advised the review team that these programmes were subject to these same development and approval processes, prior to being offered and delivered by the partner.

2.5   Typically, the Vice-Chancellor or the Director of Academic Programmes and Research, and the Head of the School for the intended programme are involved in the development process. The University has developed a number of programmes in consultation with other higher education providers. This, together with input from industry stakeholders including Key Advisory Groups, provides a high level of external input to and scrutiny of proposals.

2.6   The University's programme development processes also have provision for the inclusion of and input from students, such as through Student-Staff Liaison Committees. However, the University has identified that, given the small size of student cohorts and the youth of the University itself, there have been limited opportunities to fully involve students in development processes. This is discussed further below.

2.7   Through scrutinising evidence provided by the University, and discussions with a range of staff, students and stakeholders during the site visit, the review team tested the University's approach to programme development and approval.

2.8   The team saw evidence of a good line of sight from the programme development and approval process to the University's strategic objectives. Examples of programme development documentation were provided, which showed that they were in keeping with the University's academic regulations, and alignment with the institutional strategy, and with explicit learning outcomes was an integral part of the process.

2.9   Many teaching staff are part-time so have not necessarily been involved in the design stage. During discussions with staff, the review team confirmed that all staff have access to the development and validation documentation for the programme they are teaching and their feedback feeds into subsequent developments. Staff with experience in other systems, such as the UK, were of the view that the University's programme development processes were aligned to arrangements in these systems.

2.10   External expertise and external reference points are used extensively. For example, a programme proposal for the University's MBA showed that the design had been informed by the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Master's Degrees in Business and Management, evaluations of similar courses, and with input from an Australian university (Griffith University) whose business school is in turn accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). It was also evident that the University draws on and collaborates with local expertise in programme development with, for example, the PGCE developed in consultation with HM Government of Gibraltar, Department of Education.

2.11   Many of the University's programmes involve substantial placement elements; these include the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Nursing. The engagement of stakeholders through the programme development process helps facilitate these placements. During discussions at the site visit, students were on the whole satisfied with their placement experiences.

2.12   The review team was interested to learn more about the University's plans for increasing student involvement in programme development and approval, and in quality assurance processes more broadly. The team was advised of strategies the University was developing to both encourage and equip students to participate in quality assurance processes, including training and capacity building programmes. The University has also rolled out a Student Engagement App with a section for communication between the University and students or student representatives.

2.13   Notwithstanding the University's plans and strategies, there were varied responses from students about the effectiveness of the support they received to participate, with some saying they were well equipped and supported, and others not so. The review team strongly encourages the University to continue its work to support and encourage student participation in quality assurance.

2.14   The review team concludes that the University has robust processes for the design and approval of its programmes. They are designed to meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes, result in qualifications that are clearly specified

and communicated, and align with UK and European qualifications and credit frameworks. Overall, the team concludes that Standard 1.2 is **met**.

Standard 1.3   Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Findings

3.1   The University's approach to learning and teaching has three key themes: student experience, relevant and diverse student experience, and learning and teaching practice. These are set out in the Learning and Teaching (L&T) Policy. In turn, two strategic goals underline the University's commitment to learning and teaching, and a positive student journey: Goal 3.1 - provide an outstanding learning experience; Goal 3.2 - learning experience will optimise student success.

3.2   At the core of the University's approach is its commitment to face-to-face learning and maintaining small class sizes. The institution says this encourages the development of positive learner-lecturer relationships, allowing students to benefit from an engaging and supported learning environment, with easy access to teaching staff. The University characterises its approach as participative and active. To facilitate this approach, many lecturers adopt a workshop style to their delivery. As the majority of teaching staff are actively working in their respective fields, they are able to engage students with direct examples and insights into current work practice.

3.3   Within the parameters of its commitment to face-to-face delivery, the University uses a range of delivery methods within modules and programmes. Traditional classroom environments, blended learning, placement and work-based learning, laboratory and simulation suites, as well as practices such as flipped classrooms, are used across all programmes. The University uses Canvas as its VLE, underpinning each programme's teaching and learning methods, by which the University aims to provide students with an engaging blended learning environment.

3.4   From its scrutiny of a range of documents and other evidence provided by the University, and through discussions with students and staff during the site visit, the review team was able to test the University's approach to learning and teaching. From meetings with both students and staff, the team found there was widespread understanding of and commitment to the University's approach to participative learning. Students generally felt they were given opportunities to be partners in their learning. This included at postgraduate level, where classes often involved students sharing their experience, and the academic facilitating discussion in a collaborative approach.

3.5   The review team learned that the University makes use of local facilities and amenities to enhance programme delivery and the learning experience. A good example was the use of deep pool facilities for underwater exercises in the Maritime programmes.

3.6   The review team also discussed the student-centred aspects of online delivery by the University's partner, Learna, and found that the 'participative' approach was carried through to the online environment.

3.7   The external evaluation conducted for the mid-term review of the MSc recognised the University's innovative teaching and learning methods, including questioning, group work, videos, presentations, peer-to-peer teaching, case studies, linking of concepts to prior learning, as well as the contextualisation of theory using real-life examples - workshop style approach.

3.8   The team concluded that the learning and teaching practices of the University encourage students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and employ a variety of pedagogical methods.

3.9   As mentioned in Standard 1.2, the University has made efforts to engage students in programme development and approval, and other quality assurance processes and activities. Academic Board membership includes an elected student representative and the Board of Governors invites an elected student representative to attend meetings. A function of the Student Experience Office (SEO) is to work closely with the student body to ensure that students are represented across all programmes and levels of study, and have a range of opportunities to engage with the University. The establishment of Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) in each school is an example of this. SSLCs meet every term and student representatives can present any concerns or issues. The Code on Students as Partners underpins these structures and procedures, and aims to establish a culture and environment in which students feel confident to give their views.

3.10   Student feedback is gathered both formally - via a range of surveys such as end-of-module evaluation questionnaires and end-(or near-end)-of-programme evaluation questionnaires - and informally - for example, directly to teaching   or professional staff. The University says it is quick to respond to student feedback on its programmes and/or modules.

3.11   Heads of School and Module Leaders consider and analyse feedback within the Module and Annual Programme evaluation and enhancement reports - the MEERs and PREPs. The University provided examples of analysis of the feedback and action plans and their outcomes.

3.12   During the site visit, and in particular in the demonstration of the university online management systems, the review team saw a demonstration of the MEER/PREP System on how the outcomes and actions from MEERs and PREPs are carried forward to the next time a module or programme is delivered, and agreed this was an example of **good practice**.

3.13   As university programmes are still new in their development and delivery, the University had few examples of how modes of delivery and pedagogical methods had been adjusted in response to student feedback. Information on some instances was provided to the review team, including one from the MSc Marine Science and Climate Change where feedback resulted in a change from a written to computer-based exam.

3.14   Notwithstanding, however, during the site visit some students advised that they were not aware whether their feedback was acted upon or how it resulted in improvements. The review team encourages the University to pay particular attention to ensuring students understand how their feedback is used to improve the student experience.

3.15   Support available to students, and the University's expectations of students, are conveyed through the student handbook or the relevant programme and module handbooks, as well as through the Quality Handbook. Students have access to both academic and non-academic support.

3.16   The review team scrutinised a range of policies underpinning this support, and the team was told during the site visit that the University's small size and 'open door' policy across both academic and professional staff was key to understanding and responding to student support needs. Student responses from surveys and feedback opportunities indicated that students were very satisfied with the availability and access to lecturers, tutors and programme coordinators, and could raise any issues requiring support with them. This was further confirmed during the site visit.

3.17   The review team noticed that sometimes student surveys got low response rates, particularly for the end-of-year surveys. The University confirmed this was an issue, and explained that this could be due to the timing of rolling-out surveys. The University had begun discussions with the SSLCs to help address the low-response-rate issue.

3.18   During the site visit, the review team found that there was no explicit expectation that academic staff would be available for one-to-one personal tutoring, nor was it built into conditions of employment and performance plans. The Student Experience Office did not have any formal role in arranging or monitoring this type of support. The team heard from academic staff that the tutoring was operated on a more informal basis, and was integral to the participative learning approach, and the good relationships with students.

3.19   Students reported in the meeting that the academic staff provide close personal support for students, though they do not have a 'personal tutor' job title. The draft mid-term review of the MSc concludes that the students have benefitted greatly from the close and individual guidance that they have received, even given the need for some meetings to take place by video conferencing due to COVID-19 restrictions. Likewise, in the mid-term review of the BBA, student support being provided during the year, and flexibility of staff and support for students are identified as good practice.

3.20   However, the review team felt that while the current approach is suitable for the University's current size, the academic staff might not have the capacity on tutoring when the student number grows. The team, therefore, **recommends** that the University should consider to setting up personal tutoring procedures in a more formal and structured manner. This also reflects the recommendation under Standard 1.5 which recommends the University considers allocating specific time for academic staff to conduct their tutor roles.

3.21   Students can access assessment-specific support offered on programmes. This may include one-to-one sessions, whole-class sessions and small-group sessions depending on the needs of the students and the assessment type. Heads of School and/or Programme Coordinators regularly review the level of support provided to students.

3.22   Students with special needs are assisted through inclusive design or where applicable through making individual reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments are factored into the delivery of assessments and examinations, and the SEO provides Programme Coordinators with advance notice of students with special needs. The University's Reasonable Adjustments Code provides further information on what adjustments can be made to support students. The University advised that, to date, requests received for reasonable adjustments have primarily been in the context of learning disabilities such as dyslexia. Based on specialist advice adjustments have been made to the delivery or assessments, such as students being given additional time for exams or materials have been printed in colour.

3.23   The Academic Appeals Code sets out the three stages through which appeals are dealt with, the first one being informal. The process for non-academic complaints follows a similar route, also with a three-stage process. If not resolved, complaints are referred to the Public Service Ombudsman. The review team saw a flowchart of both processes. At the time of the review, the University had not received a formal complaint, and had received its first formal appeal in September 2021. The team noted that the appeal was handled in accordance with the Academic Appeals Code.

3.24   The review team concluded that, through its Student Engagement and Support arrangements, the University respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enables flexible learning paths, encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher, and promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship.

3.25   A range of formative and summative assessments are used to ensure students demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. These include auditing of subject knowledge, producing electronic posters, undertaking work-based interventions and creating multi-media presentations. The majority of university programmes include at least one placement opportunity, and often more than one. Assessed placements adhere to the requirements set out within the Quality Handbook and are further defined within Placement Agreements.

3.26   Assessment rubrics aim to ensure consistency and that assessment is aligned to the intended learning outcomes of each module/assessment. Information about assessment, learning outcomes, assessment methods, criteria and marking rubrics are published in advance in, for example, module descriptors and assessment information in student handbooks. They are also available on Canvas.

3.27   Assessment is carried out by more than one examiner and involves anonymous marking where possible. Written submissions, such as essays or reports, are marked by two internal examiners. Where two internal examiners mark assignments, a process of internal moderation then takes place to ensure all internal examiners have interpreted the tasks and applied the criteria consistently.

3.28   All programmes are subject to external moderation and external examiner reports are used to enhance the programme. Every programme has Module Boards which usually meet every semester. Programme Boards are usually held once a year. The review team saw examples where external examiner reports are discussed at the Module and Programme Exam Boards.

3.29   Both formal and informal assessment feedback is given to students, which aims to be timely. The review team saw evidence that the level of feedback provided has been commended by external examiners. Programme Coordinators have agreed with a benchmark on providing feedback to students such that, in most circumstances, feedback will be returned to students within 20 working days in taught degrees.

3.30   The University has a zero-tolerance policy towards academic misconduct. Students are provided with information and training on what constitutes academic misconduct and how to avoid it through skills sessions, induction and their student handbooks. At the site visit, students interviewed by the review team agreed that the University made its expectations regarding academic misconduct clear, and that they had been given clear guidance about what constituted academic misconduct and how to avoid it. To date, there have been two cases of academic misconduct at the University. In both cases, the University followed its process, awarded judgements and, where appropriate, penalties per the Code for the students involved.

3.31   The Heads of School, Programme Coordinators and University Librarian have developed a structured academic skills programme for all students to access, and the University has been exploring an additional arrangement for academic skills sessions to be made available to students online. Furthermore, ad hoc sessions covering essential academic skills have been, and continue to be, delivered to students who require further support. Staff have attended training on academic misconduct and the University Code.

3.32   In relation to assessment, the review team concludes that the criteria for and methods of assessment and marking are published in advance; the assessment allows for demonstration of achievement of learning outcomes; students are given timely and constructive feedback; assessment is carried out by more than one examiner, and in accordance with stated procedure. Finally, the regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances and provide a formal procedure for student appeals.

3.33   Based upon the evidence provided, including feedback from staff and students, the review team concludes that the University has developed diversified approaches of learning, teaching and assessment, and that consequently Standard 1.3 is **met**.

Standard 1.4   Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1   The University provides information relating to its approach to higher education in several ways, including via its website. Prospective students may also download specific programme specifications via the university website.

4.2   The Student Experience Office (SEO) is responsible for coordinating the student admissions and registration. There are policies and procedures in place covering student admissions, registration and progression which are outlined in the University Quality Handbook. At the end of their programmes, graduates are issued with graduation certificates and a transcript of their academic studies.

4.3   Applications for all programmes are submitted directly to the University via an online system; however, the way in which applications for taught and research programmes are then handled varies. For taught programmes, the decision as to whether an offer should be made is taken by either the Programme Coordinator or Head of School. For research programmes, applicants submit a PhD proposal to the University, which is assessed by at least two members of staff. The recommendations from the assessors as to whether the candidate should be accepted into the PhD programme are considered by the Research and Research Degrees Committee (RRDC), which makes the final decision on whether an offer should be made.

4.4   Offers for all programmes are communicated by email. Prior to induction, the Student Experience and Academic Records Officer is responsible for ensuring that all conditions of study have been met. Once this is complete, the students are provided with their student cards and access to the University's online learning platform. There is a comprehensive induction process, which includes a general university induction, which is the same for all students and programmes, as well as programme-specific induction. There is a separate induction process for research students, which is led by the Research Office and supported by other key services, including the University library.

4.5   The University has a clear policy for the recognition of prior learning (RPL). The policy applies only to taught programmes and requires interested students to submit their claim, with supporting evidence, to the Registrar. All applications for RPL are considered by a specially constituted Recognition Panel. The University normally receives three to five applications for RPL per annum. The number and outcome of all RPL applications is reported annually to AQSC via the Annual Report on Academic Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

4.6   There are clear mechanisms in place to ensure students are supported to achieve throughout the student life cycle. For taught students, module marks are confirmed by the relevant Module Board of Examiners with decisions on progression and recommendations to the Academic Board on final award classifications made by the Programme Board of Examiners. Student marks are collected and stored by the Registry Office.

4.7   For research students, there are defined progression points at which the University may evaluate student progress. Within nine months (full-time) or 18 months (part-time), all candidates for an MPhil or PhD by research should submit their formal research proposal to RRDC for approval. Students must also apply to RRDC for confirmation of their candidature

for their registered programme. Once sufficient research has been undertaken to enable the thesis to be completed, students may apply to enter the writing-up stage of their programme. This decision is taken by the Director of Academic Programmes and Research based on the criteria set out in the relevant academic guidelines.

4.8   All research students must also complete an annual progress review to satisfy RRDC that sufficient progress is being made on their projects. This includes an audit of all supervisory meetings, an update to their research development plan, and an update on the progress of the research project itself. The minutes of RRDC show that while the majority of annual reviews are received on time and discussed by the Committee, some are submitted late and discussed by email instead. Nevertheless, the University confirmed to the review team that the progress of all research students is discussed at all meetings of RRDC, whether their annual progress review is submitted on time or not.

4.9   There are processes in place to enable the recognition and certification of taught and research students. Taught students are formally notified of their award outcome once approved by Academic Board. Research students are advised of their MPhil/PhD award recommendation upon the completion of the viva voce examination and after any requested corrections to the final thesis have been made. The award recommended by the examination team must be endorsed by the RRDC before being formally approved by Academic Board. Taught graduates are provided with a degree certificate and a transcript. For research students, the transcript also confirms any progression points the students has achieved as part of their research degree.

4.10   The University also has a small number of students enrolled on programmes delivered by Learna. Applications for these programmes are made via the Learna website; however, the ultimate decision as to whether to make an offer is taken by the University. Module marks and progression decisions are made at Module and Programme Boards of Examiners which deal specifically with Learna students. While this process is owned by the University, staff from Learna attend these Boards. Recognition and certification for students enrolled on Learna-delivered programmes will follow the same processes as outlined in paragraph 4.9. During the review visit, the team met with both university staff responsible for overseeing the Learna partnership and staff from Learna involved in the delivery of the Learna programmes. The team found both staff groups were cognisant of each other's roles and responsibilities and while the partnership was relatively new, the collaboration was working well.

4.11   The review team concluded that the processes for the admission of students, the recognition of prior learning, and the arrangements for graduation and certification align with the requirements outlined in Standard 1.4. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.4: Student admissions, progression, recognition and certification is **met**.

Standard 1.5   Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Findings

5.1   The University currently comprises 17 teaching staff members. The Business School has the largest faculty, with eight sessional lecturers (who typically work in industry), two fixed-term senior lecturers and the Head of School. The Marine Science, Education and Nursing Schools are largely comprised of the Head of School and one, typically part-time, lecturer supported by numerous guest speakers. The University has recently recruited a full-time Senior Lecturer in the School of Health Sciences. The Head of School will typically also undertake programme coordinator duties.

5.2   A faculty workload policy reflecting a notional split of 60/30/10 (teaching, administration and research) was developed in early 2021 with the assistance of UK human resource professionals and was recently added to the Human Resources and Employee (HRE) Handbook.

5.3   The University's commitment to ensuring the competence of its teaching staff is set out in the Strategic Plan and the Quality Handbook, as well as the HRE Handbook. The Strategic Plan sets the aim that the University will provide an outstanding learning experience, measured, in part, by the percentage of teaching staff with Advance HE fellowships and/or recognised teaching qualifications/training and/or current industry experience.

5.4   In the 2020-21 academic year, 56% of teaching staff across taught programmes held PhDs or are PhD candidates. In addition, teaching is augmented by individuals with the appropriate qualifications and experience in the discipline areas. For example, staff are seconded to teach in the Education and Nursing programmes from the HM Government of Gibraltar, Department of Education or the Gibraltar Heath Authority respectively, as well as guest lecturers with specific industry-related expertise.

5.5   There is an ongoing cycle of review and improvement that commences at the recruitment stage and continues throughout the teaching staff's tenure at the University.

5.6   The recruitment of all lecturers is based on programme offerings and follows the relevant sections from the University HRE Handbook. Vacancies are published on the university website, the local employment service and other advertising means depending on the position (for example, jobs.ac.uk). Advertisements clearly state the requirements of the position and, typically, this includes academic and industry experience. Applicants are requested to include a covering letter and curriculum vitae and apply via a designated email address. Initial review of applications is carried out by the University Finance Administrator, then to the shortlisting panel for review. By way of illustration, the shortlisting panel to recruit a lecturer for the School of Business typically comprises the VC, the Registrar and the Head of the Business School.

5.7   The Quality Handbook requires all teaching staff to undergo observation of the delivery of their teaching. Observations are developmental in nature and encourage teaching staff to reflect on their practice and professional development. All new teaching staff are observed by the Head of School or Programme Coordinator at least once per semester. If the teaching staff member is not new to teaching at the University, then there   is the option to conduct a peer-to-peer observation. The observer and observee meet in advance of the

observation and discuss the particular area of practice/activity to be observed. After the observation, both then meet to discuss the observation. This also provides an opportunity for the observee to reflect. The observation form is completed and signed by both.

5.8   In addition to class observations, there are formal mechanisms used to collect feedback on the entire student experience, including the quality of teaching - see section 1.3 above for discussion of student engagement and feedback. The SSLC meetings referred to in section 1.3, also cover teaching and serve as another evaluation tool for lecturing staff.

5.9   All staff members (including Programme Coordinators and other administrative staff, but excluding sessional teaching staff) undergo an annual Staff Development and Performance Review (SDPR), as set out in the HRE Handbook which includes an annual appraisal meeting. The SDPR is to review the effectiveness of the staff member in meeting their individual agreed objectives and to agree on new objectives for the following academic year.

5.10   Development of teaching staff is through various processes and procedures throughout the academic year. For new staff, at the start of the academic year, new lecturer inductions are conducted by the programme coordinator or Head of School. Sharing of good practice takes place through internal workshops, presentations and inductions, as well as the programme coordinator monthly meetings. Individual staff development is discussed during the SDPR referred to above.

5.11   There is an allocated training budget for teaching staff, including part-time and sessional staff. This is allocated to staff based on requirements. Once a training need has been identified, staff apply via the University's formal expenditure approval process. Staff also have access to an Erasmus+ grant which can be used for staff development. So far, 28 university and faculty staff have taken advantage of the Erasmus+ grant and have benefited from working and shadowing their counterparts at universities around Europe. This year's continual professional development (CPD) budget is £6,000. In addition there is an Erasmus staff development grant of €17,531. Due to the size of the university, most staff have administrative and academic responsibilities, and therefore the budget is not split for academic and professional staff.

5.12   Staff are paid for any other ad hoc work. Training is paid for by the University and typically forms part of standard working hours. For example, during the 2020-21 academic year all sessional staff were encouraged to undertake training aimed at enhancing teaching skills with Advance HE. Since 2021-22, new sessional teaching staff contracts (Service Level Agreements) also include a mandatory requirement for CPD.

5.13   Staff are encouraged and supported in furthering studies. Those teaching staff members who do not hold a teaching qualification have been encouraged to undertake training with Advance HE (which also complements the Strategic Plan KPI 3.1).

5.14   Faculty can dedicate a small percentage of their annual working time (up to 10%) towards research and scholarly activity. This includes agreed research outputs, such as publications or presentations at conferences and the need for the research to be broadly aligned to the University's/faculty member's academic profile.

5.15   The University complements its small-group teaching approach with the strategic use of key education technology-enabled platforms including Canvas, Zoom and Microsoft Teams. All new teaching staff attend a basic introduction on the use of these platforms at the start of the academic year. Individual ad-hoc training can also be arranged on a case-by-case basis. The IT Service Helpdesk provides additional bespoke support to staff for Canvas, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or ICT-related training.

5.16   The review team tested the effectiveness of these processes, policies and practices through scrutiny of documentation and discussions during the site visit. In its SED, the University also identified several areas where it saw room for improvement in its approaches.

5.17   Staff interviewed confirmed that their experience with the University's recruitment process was positive. They also agreed the University had in place an ongoing cycle   of improvement and reflection for staff. Staff pointed to: the induction process; ongoing and compulsory CPD requirements and opportunities; the widespread use of materials from external professional groups; responding to student feedback to amend their practice; links with other universities; participation in the Advance HE Fellowship scheme; and the observation process as components of this cycle.

5.18   Discussions with the University's online delivery partner - Learna - confirmed that their teaching staff were also approved by the University, and feedback on staff performance fed into their own staff performance review processes. The team also heard that Learna run training for their staff in, for example, the latest online pedagogy.

5.19   From this, the review team was satisfied that the University sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching.

5.20   The team saw examples of performance reviews (academic and professional) which were comprehensive and included training needs and professional development plans. Staff confirmed the University encourages scholarly activity and that they were able to access support and funding for such activities as conference attendance, CPD offered by other universities, and participation in HEA fellowship activities.

5.21   The University's policy of observing staff teaching practices is at the centre of its teaching review and improvement. At the site visit, staff were very supportive of the practice, finding it constructive and supportive. Feedback from lecturers indicated that they have greatly valued the opportunity to participate in peer-to-peer observations, both as observers and observees, regarding it as an effective way to enhance their teaching practice.

5.22   The University has identified that an area for improvement to the peer-to-peer observation process is to ensure follow-up observations take place to check that the teaching staff are implementing the changes in all programmes. Due to the fact that programmes are new and the majority of programmes have only one active teaching staff member, there are a limited number of follow-up observations that have been done so far. However, it was noted that in the School of Business, which has a larger number of teaching staff, staff development between peer observation periods has been observed.

5.23   The review team confirms that the University offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff, and encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research.

5.24   Through discussion with staff at the site visit, the review team established that the University did not provide any training or specific development opportunities for staff in one-to-one mentoring or tutoring of students, even though this was seen as an important strength in the University's approach to learning and teaching and to student support (see section 1.3 above). The review team also noted that there is no formal allocation of time for one-to-one student support. The review team, therefore, **recommends** that the University builds a time allocation into its workforce model for personal tutoring, and provide training for staff on this critical aspect of its learning and support model.

5.25   Teaching staff confirmed that they used the learning and teaching technologies of the University, and had been trained on their use. The review team saw evidence that the effective use of these tools was commented on in the teaching observations and in performance reviews. Positive comments on the use of Canvas and innovative teaching practices have been received from external examiners. The review team, therefore, confirms that the University encourages the use of new technologies in teaching.

5.26   The review team concluded that the University's processes for staff recruitment, professional development and support, and staff performance review align with the requirements outlined in Standard 1.5. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.5: Teaching staff is **met**.

Standard 1.6   Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Findings

6.1   The University has a wide range of learning and teaching resources that support and enable students to achieve both academically and professionally. Classrooms and lecture theatres allow for the delivery of in-person teaching. The University also has several specialist facilities, including a hospital ward simulation suite, which support the delivery of technical material.

6.2   During the review visit, the team heard from senior staff that the University had made the strategic decision to partner with several organisations to support the delivery of some programmes. For example, the University has an agreement with the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service allowing students enrolled on maritime-related courses to practise extinguishing fires on ships. Given the particular challenges with operating in such a densely populated and geographically-restricted space, such as the Gibraltar peninsula, the team considers the close-working partnerships between the University and other Gibraltar-based organisations as **good practice**.

6.3   All programmes at the University are facilitated by the virtual learning environment (VLE). The VLE allows students to access content remotely, access their grades, assessment tasks and assessment feedback. The University also uses the VLE to promote discussion and collaboration between students and faculty. A tour of the University's VLE during the review visit found a well-organised system with key pieces of information readily available, including the University's Quality Handbook and external examiner reports.

6.4   The University Library supports the delivery of teaching by providing students and staff with access to physical and online resources. During the review visit, the team heard from some students that the number of key texts in the library was limited. In response, the University confirmed to the review team that they take into consideration student feedback and that, where necessary, the University restricts the withdrawal of some key texts to ensure there is always at least one reference copy available to students. The University also confirmed that it was actively looking to expand its digital collection to augment its physical collection.

6.5   The SEO is the first port-of-call for students with questions or concerns. Students can visit either in-person or make use of their services via an online portal accessible via the University VLE. The principal role of the SEO is to signpost students to the relevant internal department or external service; however, with the University library, the SEO may also request additional sessions to support students with academic skills and the English language. Information on the academic and pastoral support available to students is provided in the University Student Handbook and also the programme-specific student handbooks.

6.6   The University does not currently have a formal personal tutoring system in place. Exploring this with academic staff during the review visit, the team heard that, while time for personal tutoring is not formally part of the workload allocation model, staff are always happy to help students in need. Separately, students and student representatives confirmed to the review team that they felt supported by university staff and the SEO. The University has a strategic aim to grow, and the review team felt that, while the current approach is suitable for the University's current size, the team concluded that the University should consider

allocating specific time for academic staff to exercise this personal tutor role in the future. This led to a recommendation under Standard 1.5.

6.7   Research students have an identified supervisory team from the point of enrolment, which provides both technical supervision but also pastoral support. Research students have access to a dedicated breakout room within the University and also have access to laboratory spaces when not in use for teaching. Depending on their funding arrangements, there is at least £1,000 available to research students for activities that augment their studies - for example, to support travel to a conference following approval of their research proposal. The review team also heard examples of the university library covering the cost of membership towards academic and learned societies for research students.

6.8   While the University does not currently have a dedicated careers service, the SEO does provide some placement and careers information to students. Programmes also organise workshops on professional skills as part of academic modules; an example of this is the Placement and Employability Module organised by the School of Business. During the review visit, the University outlined aspirations to develop a formal careers service; however, there were no solid plans at the time of the review. Given that the University is relatively young, the review team agreed with the University that having a dedicated careers service was probably unnecessary at this stage of the University's development. Nevertheless, the team could not find evidence of an overarching strategy pulling together all the positive things the University is doing on employability and professional skills development. The review team felt that this presented a risk whereby good practice in one course may not be shared further afield. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the University develops an overarching strategy to underpin its approach to student employability and professional skills development.

6.9   The University has established programme (PREP) and module (MEER) review processes, during which the appropriateness of the University's learning resources is considered. Ultimately, these and other feedback processes feed into the University's business planning activities, which are led by the Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Financial and Operations Officer (CFOO) with oversight provided by the Board of Governors.

6.10   Staff are encouraged to engage with continual professional development (CPD) activities throughout their employment at the University. For professional and administrative staff, areas for development are identified as part of the annual staff development and performance review (SDPR) programme. During the review visit, the team confirmed with the University that, in addition to   the training budget for upskilling teaching staff, there is a dedicated budget to fund the development of professional support staff.

6.11   The review team concluded that the University provides appropriate learning and student support services both online and in-person. These services are underpinned by a suitable level of funding and therefore, Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support is **met**.

Standard 1.7   Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Findings

7.1   At a strategic level, the University has defined a set of strategic priorities within its strategic plan. Each strategic priority has several strategic goals to assist achieving its mission and vision. Each strategic goal is underpinned by measurable targets or key performance indicators and major milestones that need to be met each year of the strategic plan. The annual process is led by the Vice-Chancellor and milestones are embedded in the annual performance objectives of staff members. Progress towards strategic goals and milestones are discussed with the entire staff at monthly university team meetings. The annual evaluation of the strategic planning process forms part of the University's annual reporting process to the Board of Governors and the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority (GRA).

7.2   The University collects a range of data at key stages of the student journey - for example, application and recruitment, student performance, progression and programme performance. The University uses this range of data to enhance the provision and inform future programme development. At the time of the review, the University was establishing a system for collecting data on student destinations, which had not fully concluded.

7.3   The University collects student progression and success data from every module and programme; in addition, information on appeals, academic misconduct, complaints and feedback from surveys are also collected and analysed. The information collected is utilised using the Module Evaluation and Enhancement Reports (MEERs) and Programme Review and Enhancement Plans (PREPs), which includes external examiner reports, student feedback report forms and graduate destination survey results collated in September 2021. Data is gathered by each Programme Coordinator or Head of School and presented to the Quality Enhancement Committee. The information is then collated into the University's Annual Report on Academic Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement which is reviewed by the QEC and AQSC before being submitted to the AB for approval. Once approved, the report is provided to the Board of Governors and the University regulator - the GRA. The review team considers the annual reports to be an effective annual summary of the University's quality assurance and enhancement cycle.

7.4   Statistical analysis and evaluation of student performance and achievement data is included in both the MEERs and PREPs. The following data fields are collected: student profile and mode of study; admission, retention, progression and achievement data; mitigating circumstances cases; interruptions of studies; instances of academic misconduct and attendance/submission records; and responses to non-attendance/submission.

7.5   The University uses Student Information Management System and customer relationship system to support its student recruitment functions. The data systems are readily accessible by Programme Coordinators and Heads of School on a routine basis. The review team received a demonstration of the systems used by the University; the demonstration confirmed the effectiveness of the systems available to the staff in the University.

7.6   The Academic Board, as the University's highest academic decision-making body, maintains oversight of all academic matters by receiving regular reports conducted by its sub-committees, the RRDC and the AQSC. AQSC is supported by the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) whose primary functions include ensuring the consistent implementation

of the Quality Handbook. In September 2021, the AQSC will be further supported by a new Learning and Teaching Committee which will have a focus on student performance data. The two committees will bring key staff together to assure academic standards and enhance the quality of the student learning experience throughout the University. The review team supports the introduction of the new Learning and Teaching Committee and its focus upon the analysis of student performance data.

7.7   For the academic year ending 31 July 2021, the University had 125 enrolled students. Undergraduate students represent 35%, postgraduate 48% and postgraduate research 17%. Part-time students represent 35% of the student body (PhD and MBA) and 65% are full-time. By nationality: 72% are British students (Gibraltarian and UK); 18% from the European Union; and 10% international. Male students represent 47% of the student population and female 53%. In terms of course breakdown: 22% of students are studying on the Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) (BBA); 17% PhD; 15% Master of Business Administration (MBA); 14% BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing; 14% Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE); 10% MSc in Marine Science and Climate Change (MSCC); 4% Executive MBA (eMBA); and 4% MA Leadership and Management (MALM). In meetings with the review team, the University confirmed that student number growth would be modest over the next few years.

7.8   The strategic plan outlines strategic priorities, one of which is to provide modern and effective learning facilities and a second focuses on provision of an outstanding student experience. The University evaluates its strategic priorities through the strategic plan progress report which measures major milestones and reports progress against each identified priority. Each strategic priority has a success factor greater than 80%, in many cases targets and goals have a success factor of 100%. The review team considers the strategic plan progress reporting to be effective.

7.9   Student feedback is a fixed item on the agenda of SSLCs each year. Records of SSLC meetings are retained and Programme Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that students are informed about the actions and outcomes taken. Survey results, SSLC and programme team minutes inform both MEERs and PREPs. The University reports that encouraging student participation in the surveys remains a challenge. In meetings with students, it was confirmed that the SSLCs are an effective forum for student feedback and follow-up action.

7.10   The review team can confirm that the University ensures a clear flow of information from the bottom-up and top-down throughout the University due to the short communication lines. The University has clear lines of responsibility in that Programme Coordinators and Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that MEERs and PREPs are prepared for the programmes they oversee. The Academic Quality and Learning Manager is responsible for overseeing the process at a central level and providing necessary support.

7.11   In respect to student progression, the University sets an institutional KPI target of 80% of students to progress to the next level of their studies. Early indications suggest that at least 84% of students across taught programmes for 2020-21 are eligible for graduation or progression to the next stage of their programme.

7.12   One of the University's strategic goals is to provide an outstanding learning experience underpinned by a KPI target of 85% overall student satisfaction. The University monitors student satisfaction through regular surveys, including an end-of-module and end-of-programme experience survey. Survey outcomes for 2018-19 and 2019-20 indicate high levels of overall student satisfaction. The MSCC scored 5/5 for 2018-19 and 4.7/5 for 2019-20; the BBA scored 4/5 for 2018-19; and the PGCE scored 4.5/5 for 2019-20.

7.13   The University Executive Team monitors university performance using a dashboard and monthly financial reports. The dashboard provides a snapshot of income from academic programmes, short courses, student numbers, expenditure and liquidity. It enables management to take prompt and decisive action to address issues arising. Dashboard information is shared with managers and, if appropriate, the Business Continuity Team.

7.14   The University collects a range of relevant data and information throughout the student journey, including student recruitment and admission, programme performance and student satisfaction. The University ensures that its processes to inform enhancement are effective and robust. The University does acknowledge that some improvements to the flow of recruitment data used in module and programme evaluation processes could be made - for example, by pre-populating data on the evaluation software and then provided to module and programme leaders. This would make the process less time-consuming and easier to engage.

7.15   The University held its first graduation in December 2020 and therefore has limited graduate destination data at the current time. The first graduate destination survey was released in July 2021 and results collated in September 2021.

7.16   The University of Gibraltar ensures that relevant data and information are collected, analysed, and used to inform the management and continual improvement of programmes, allowing Standard 1.7 to be **met**.

Standard 1.8   Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Findings

8.1 The University publishes information about its activities, including information on its curriculum, online and in printed marketing materials. Information on course fees for both taught and research programmes are also communicated via the University website. Students reported that the information on the University's website is helpful and that their experiences had lived up to expectations.

8.2 The Communication and Marketing Team is responsible for public communication activities which includes overseeing the University brand, the production of online content and printed materials, as well as overseeing the University's social media presence.

8.3 The university website is the first port-of-call for all enquiries relating to the University's provision. Prospective students may also download specific programme specifications via the university website. Together, these documents provide the public and prospective students with a comprehensive insight into how the University's programmes are structured, how and where learning and teaching takes place, and the learning facilities available. New students are provided with the University's student handbook, a comprehensive guide to the extensive student support functions, as well as other aspects of student life, including health and wellbeing.

8.4 There is an established process through which public information is published and reviewed, which is controlled by the Communication and Marketing Team. Quarterly, the Communication and Marketing Team carries out an audit of all published information, which includes contacting members of staff with responsibility for published content asking them to review and confirm whether any changes are required. A change log is kept identifying any requests to change published information. The Registrar who is responsible for keeping an up-to-date record of all tuition and bench fees, depending on the levels agreed by the Board of Governors, approves any requests for changes to fees published on the website.

8.5 The team reviewed the evidence from the audit conducted by the Communication and Marketing Team in 2021 and found the process to be comprehensive and robust. Exploring this further, the team found that while staff involved with the audit of published information were cognisant of their roles and responsibilities, the audit process itself was not captured in any formal policy document. There is a risk, therefore, that staff knowledgeable with the audit process leave the University and the process falls away. The review team, therefore, **recommends** that the University formalises the process currently in place to ensure the ongoing currency and accuracy of its public information.

8.6 The University provides information about its activities, programmes and overall direction to both prospective students and the public that is clear, objective and readily accessible. Notwithstanding the recommendation under this Standard around formalising a process currently in place to ensure that published information is reviewed on a regular basis, the team concluded that Standard 1.8: Public information is **met**.

Standard 1.9   Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Findings

9.1   The Quality Handbook sets out the University's approach to the monitoring and evaluation of its academic programmes and course modules. The University states that programme evaluation is an ongoing process, drawing together module-level and programme-level student feedback, and staff/external examiner feedback which identifies opportunities to enhance the student learning experience. Additionally, the process identifies major and minor amendments to modules at programme level.

9.2   Programme monitoring and review processes play an important role in providing assurance to the Academic Board (via its sub-committee AQSC), students and external stakeholders that the University's programmes continue to meet their stated objectives and that academic standards continue to be maintained.

9.3   The University's annual monitoring and review process is based upon five key reporting stages: student surveys and engagement which takes place each semester and annually; the module evaluation and enhancement report (MEER) which typically takes place each semester; programme review and enhancement plan (PREP) which takes place annually; an annual report on academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement; and the Vice-Chancellor's annual report to the Board of Governors (BoG) and Gibraltar Regulatory Authority (GRA).

9.4   The first stage of annual monitoring is focused on gathering student feedback at the mid-point of the module via an in-class 'Continue-Start-Stop' survey. The survey allows for module adjustments to be made for the benefit of the current cohort. Programme Coordinators are informed of the outcomes and module leaders/lecturers are expected to action and address specific course feedback. Feedback outside of the responsibility of the course is referred to the relevant department - Student Experience Office/Campus/IT. In discussion with the review team, students confirmed that feedback from the survey is acted upon and that key actions were fed back at the start of the academic year.

9.5   Feedback and action from the 'Continue-Start-Stop' survey is evident in the end-of-module survey which takes place in the final week of teaching. The University confirms that its survey has been benchmarked against best practice including the National Student Survey, Office for Students, Higher Education Statistics Agency and QAA. At the time of the review visit, only the PGCE had completed the end-of-programme survey, the BBA, MBA and MSCC surveys results were expected in November 2021. The survey for MALM was not due until 2022 and the Adult Nursing survey not until 2023; the review team was therefore unable to comment on their effectiveness.

9.6   The Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) act as a forum to discuss student feedback, the outcome from surveys, external examiner reports and programme enhancement plans. All student feedback is kept anonymous when fed into the PREPs. The SSLCs are chaired by the Programme Leader or Head of School; membership includes one student rep from each year of the programme, a delivery member of staff and a member from the Student Experience Office. In discussion with the review team, students confirmed

that SSLCs had very clear agendas to discuss issues relating to the programme and University; feedback from students is taken on board and changes are made.

9.7   MEERs are completed by the relevant module leader/lecturer. The MEERs are used to assess the module learning and teaching for the programme and are completed each semester. Feedback from the mid-module and end-of-module surveys and the outcomes from the SSLCs are reported within the MEERs. Feedback captured includes an evaluation of learning, teaching and assessment, evaluation of student satisfaction and feedback, and an evaluation of resources.

9.8   MEERs build upon the enhancement action points from the previous MEER. MEERs once completed are reviewed by the Programme Coordinator. Module boxes which contain a standard set of documents for the module are kept on Canvas. The content of module boxes is also reviewed by the external examiner as part of their assessment of the module.

9.9   An annual Programme Review and Enhancement Plan (PREP) is undertaken for each programme and completed at the end of the academic year. MEERs are reviewed by the Programme Coordinator and used to compile the PREP. The PREP is the University's reporting mechanism for the overall performance of the programme; data and feedback is drawn from the MEERs, including student and external examiner feedback. Data used in the PREP is drawn from the student records and management systems. The finalised PREP is communicated to external examiners.

9.10   Improvements to modules and programmes identified by the MEERs and PREPs are implemented by the Programme Coordinators immediately or during the following semester, improvements are communicated to module leaders and lecturers. The outcome of MEERs and PREPs are discussed at the start of the semester with the entire programme team in programme team meetings. The Head of School and Programme Coordinators highlight both good practice and areas for improvement.

9.11   Monitoring of the PhD programme is handled by the University's Research Office and overseen by the Research and Research Degrees Committee (RRDC) which reports directly to the academic board. The RRDC meets at least twice a year and is responsible for the annual monitoring of all research programmes and research students. The RRDC formally signs off programme development, student recruitment, student progression, research ethics and the final viva voce examinations for the PhD programme, and is ratified by the Academic Board. Due to the non-uniform nature of the PhD programme, there is no formal cyclical review process in the form of MEERs or PREPs for the programme. The University has, however, employed external reviewers in 2016 and 2018 to review the research provision. An action plan was developed by the Research Office following each evaluation in order to take deliberate steps to enhance the research programme. In addition, research students can feed back on their programme through an annual survey. The research office reviews the student responses and develops an action plan. Each year, the research office reports to students on the survey results and actions taken in response, and reports to the RRDC and Academic Board. Students confirmed that the survey is sent on an annual basis, feedback is timely, and changes are notified in induction each year.

9.12   External examiners report upon programmes at the end of the academic year. Programme Coordinators are responsible for developing action plans in response to the opportunities and challenges identified within the reports. Responses are communicated back to the external examiners in respect of the reports together with any recommended changes to assessment for the following academic year. External examiner reports, together with Programme Coordinator responses, are included on Canvas which allows students and staff to view the outcomes from the external examiner process. Students met by the review

team were, however, a little unclear of who their programme external was and where external examiner reports were located. As the external examiner reports are clearly located in Canvas we would suggest that the University reviews the communication methods on this topic with students.

9.13   For the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic year, external examiners for all academic programmes confirmed assurance on the three key areas of academic standards, assessment processes and, in the case of BBA and MSCC, responsiveness to previous external examiner reports.

9.14   The Quality Handbook sets out the University's approach and requirements for the Periodic Review of its programmes on a six-year cycle underpinned by a mid-cycle review after three years. At the time of the review, no programme had yet reached a periodic review stage; however, the first mid-cycle reviews were being undertaken in 2021 for BBA and MSCC. The University confirmed that mid-cycle reviews for BBA and MSCC had not yet been concluded and were due for completion by 31 December 2021. In preparation for executing these reviews, the University had developed a template plus a short guide to the process. In line with the requirements defined in the Quality Handbook, Programme Coordinators analyse data from a range of sources from the previous three-year period - for example, annual programme evaluations, student feedback, external examiner feedback, and progression and retention figures. Due to the timing of the QAA IQR Review, the University was able to provide the team with draft mid-cycle review reports for both BBA and MSCC. The reports demonstrated that the approach and requirements detailed in the Quality Handbook was being followed and, although not fully completed, it demonstrated that the process was effective.

9.15   In respect to collaborative provision, the University has one partner - Learna. Learna provides delivery of an online Executive MBA taught award leading to a university qualification. The partnership is operated by a collaborative agreement between Learna and the University which is in line with the Quality Handbook. Ongoing monitoring of the programme is undertaken through examination boards, moderation of assessments, external examiner reports and approval of all teaching staff by the University Programme Coordinator. Periodic Review of this collaborative partner will take place on the fifth anniversary of the partnership. The first external examiner report is expected in late 2021.

9.16   The University produces an annual report on academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement on the quality of its academic programmes. The report provides assurance to the BoG and GRA that the methods used to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are robust and appropriate, and that standards of the awards have been appropriately set and maintained. The report is prepared by the Academic Quality and Learning (AQL) Manager and approved by the Vice-Chancellor; the report draws upon evidence contained in the MEERs and PREPs, examination boards and external examiner reports. The report is reviewed by the QEC, submitted to AQSC for review, and final approval is by the Academic Board before onward transmission to the BoG and GRA.

9.17   The University uses five programme performance indicators (PPIs) to review and compare performance between programmes. The measures include Enrolment, Retention, Progression, Attendance, and Completion and Graduation. In terms of outcomes for 2019-20, enrolment numbers range from seven to 14; retention ranges from 87% to 100%; progression ranges from 93% to 100%; attendance ranges from 81% to 98%; and completion for all programmes is 100%. There is limited information on graduation as the University's first graduation only took place in December 2020.

9.18   Due to the University's current size, staff training and development in monitoring processes is undertaken by Programme Coordinators or Heads of School supported by the AQL Manager. The Programme Coordinators' group (formed in 2019) has formalised the process for monitoring which ensures consistency across schools for both new and experienced staff members. The group meets monthly and feeds into QEC.

9.19   The University operates effective methods for the collection of feedback for each course programme. Feedback improvements are incorporated into enhancement plans with clear responsibilities assigned and timelines for implementation agreed. Planned actions are effectively monitored and evaluated in order that adjustments can be made as necessary. At the module level student feedback is encouraged in order that rapid improvements can be made throughout the year rather than being left to the end of the year. The review team confirm that the University's processes for monitoring and enhancement of academic programmes is currently fit for purpose.

9.20   The flow of information across the University in respect to monitoring and review contributes to the effective management of programmes. The outcomes from module and programme reviews are shared in a centralised annual quality report which is signed off by the Vice-Chancellor and approved by QEC, AQSC and Academic Board. The review team would endorse the University's view that it could strengthen the process by ensuring that findings from MEERs and PREPs are regularly discussed at QEC.

9.21   The review team confirms that the University's programme review process includes an appropriate and robust level of externality. External examiners input into both module and programme reviews, together with student feedback this ensures that a range of views are taken into consideration by the Programme Coordinators / Heads of School for the further development of the programmes.

9.22   The establishment of the Programme Coordinators' Group from an ad-hoc group into a regular meeting feeding into the QEC, has provided a useful forum to discuss operational programme details and school management issues. The forum is valued by staff members.

9.23   The University has developed a Learning and Teaching Committee; the first meeting was held on 6 September 2021. The Committee's purpose is to facilitate productive discussions between academic staff and to lead on developments relating to the enhancement of learning and teaching at the University and to support the work of AQSC. The review team's discussions with university staff confirmed that there was clarity of what the purpose of the new committee would be; it was, however, too early for the review team to confirm if the new committee would be effective. The review team would endorse this addition to the committee structure.

9.24   The University is committed to ensuring that externality is a key strategy in the review of its programmes, which includes the involvement of an external member on the review panel for periodic programme reviews. In addition, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee includes six UK-based senior academic staff with experience in quality assurance; this enables the University to draw upon guidance and sound practice from the UK higher education sectors. In addition, both the Academic Board and Research and Research Degrees Committee includes both UK and overseas external representation. The review team considers the effective use of externality throughout its committee structure and embedded within its quality assurance processes to be an aspect of **good practice**.

9.25   The review team concludes that the University monitors and intends to regularly review its academic programmes with the aim to continuously improve the quality of the programmes and modules. The review team concludes that Standard 1.9 is **met** based on the documentation it has produced in readiness to activate each specific process. The

commitment to externality at all levels of the University's academic programmes contributes to the good practice identified in paragraph 9.24.

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Findings

10.1   The University's Quality Handbook had been developed to meet the obligations that govern higher education in Gibraltar which includes: the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority (GRA) and the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) that accredit or recognise the University's academic provision.

10.2   In addition, the University has chosen to align itself to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The University's policies and procedures are aligned to meet the requirements of both. The University confirms that it has benchmarked its management of standards and quality against universities in the UK and to a lesser extent those in the European Higher Education (EHEA), the alignment is embodied in the Quality Handbook.

10.3   The GRA has been designated as the Gibraltar Authority for Standards in Higher Education and the Gibraltar Higher Education Commission in line with the *University of Gibraltar Act 2015*. A GRA Memorandum of Regulation details the powers of the GRA in relation to the University and the information the University is required to provide to the GRA. The GRA has a University Advisory Board which includes members with UK higher education expertise. The GRA Memorandum of Regulation has the power to request information from the University and to issue enforcement notices if the University is failing to comply with the 2015 Act.

10.4   The Memorandum of Regulation requires the University to give an annual assurance on quality and standards through the provision of an annual report from the Academic Board. To meet this requirement, the Vice-Chancellor submits a written assurance to the authority each year confirming that: a) the methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience are robust and b) that the standards of awards for which the University is responsible have been maintained. In addition, the University is expected to arrange a periodic external quality assurance review and share outcomes with the GRA. The QAA IQR Review meets this expectation; this will be the University's first external quality assurance review. Other requirements include the sharing of student data (recruitment, retention, completion, destination, survey results and complaints); the submission of audited accounts; the sharing of long-term financial forecasts and an annual budget; providing assurances on internal control and risk management; arranging periodic review of the BoG and Audit Committee; and alerting the GRA to any threats to the University's autonomy and academic freedom. The University has a live 'Risk Register' which is reviewed by the Executive Team on a regular basis; its key risk is described as the: 'Significant deterioration in financial position due to HMGOG funding, failure to achieve tuition fee income and failure to achieve new donor funding'. A range of mitigating actions are outlined in the risk register to lessen the impact on the University.

10.5   Some programmes offered by the University are accredited by national bodies including the BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing Degree which was approved by Academic Board in June 2020 and subsequently presented to the Gibraltar Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors' Registration Board (NRB) in June 2020. Formal recognition for the degree was received from the NRB in November 2020. To meet compliance with the NRB the degree programme includes 'in-practice' assessments and Objective Structured Clinical Assessments (OSCAs) on an annual basis to assess student nurse skills. In addition, the BSc (Hons) Maritime (Engineering and Nautical) degree was approved by Academic Board

in June 2020 and the programme was formally recognised by the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) in September 2020. Students met by the review team confirmed that they had been briefed and were clear of the requirements of the relevant professional bodies.

10.6   In order to meet the GRA's expectation to commission its own internal/external review, the University commissioned its first external quality assurance review conducted by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA); the review has used the International Quality Review methodology (IQR). In order to support its ambition, the University embedded into its strategic plan a specific priority (Priority 1.3) that the 'University will provide quality assured taught and research degree offerings'; it also set explicit annual milestones from 2019 aimed at preparing the University for an IQR by the end of 2022. Interim milestones for 2019 and 2020 ensured the University was prepared for the full review in 2021.

10.7   An application was submitted to QAA for the University's first IQR in September 2019. A QAA scoping visit was undertaken in November 2019. The scoping visit report confirmed that the University had met all criteria in three defined areas of governance, internal monitoring and review, and staffing. The report also identified areas to address these including externality and reference points which had been deemed to have been partially met in respect to the University's engagement with academic and professional networks and organisations. The QAA Scoping Report recognised that the University had engaged with the ESG Standards and that it had initiated a cyclical external review process through QAA IQR. Progression to full QAA IQR was agreed after at least one cohort of student graduation.

10.8   The preparation for IQR has been led by AQSC, the QEC and through 10 working groups. Each working group was tasked with conducting a self-evaluation against one ESG Standard. The University undertook a mock review to receive critical friend feedback. The mock review resulted in a report and action plan to address the recommendations.

10.9   Through meetings with senior staff and in conjunction with documentary evidence, the University has made good use of external inputs at key stages of programme development, approval, delivery and review. This has included reference to Subject Benchmark Statements, input from external members on approval panels, the use of external examiners during programme review, and close collaboration with key employers including the Gibraltar Health Authority and Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar Department of Education for the Nursing and Education degrees. The review team considers these arrangements to be effective.

10.10   The review team is satisfied that the QAA IQR will meet the requirements of external cyclical review for this Standard, together with embedding externality in all stages of programme design, delivery and review. The actions and outcomes from the QAA IQR will be overseen by QEC as it includes stakeholders from all departments, and then reported to AQSC and Academic Board.

10.11   Based upon the evidence provided - including feedback from industry experts and students, external statutory bodies, the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority, and the QAA IQR - the review team concludes that there is an effective cyclical quality assurance in place, and that consequently Standard 1.10 is **met**.

Glossary

Action plan
A plan developed by the institution after the QAA review report has been published, which is signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

Annual monitoring
Checking a process or activity every year to see whether it meets expectations for standards and quality. Annual reports normally include information about student achievements and may comment on the evaluation of courses and modules.

Collaborative arrangement
A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education provider. These may be degree-awarding bodies with which the institution collaborates to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies.

Alternatively, they may be other delivery organisations who deliver part or all of a

proportion of the institution's higher education programmes.

Degree-awarding body
Institutions that have authority - for example, from a national agency - to issue their own awards. Institutions applying to IQR may be degree-awarding bodies themselves, or may collaborate to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of degree-awarding bodies.

Desk-based analysis
An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, that enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

Enhancement
See **quality enhancement**

European Standards and Guidelines
For details, including the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area

Examples of practice
A list of policies and practices that a review team may use when considering the extent to which an institution meets the standards for review. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgment that not all of them will be appropriate for all institutions.

Facilitator
The member of staff identified by the institution to act as the principal point of contact for the QAA officer and who will be available during the review visit, to assist with any questions or requests for additional documentation.

Good practice
A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision.

Lead student representative
An optional voluntary role that is designed to allow students at the institution applying for IQR to play a central part in the organisation of the review.

Oversight
Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

Peer reviewers
Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or have recent experience of being a student in higher education.

Periodic review
An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally-agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education providers. It covers areas such as the continuing relevance of the programme, the currency of the curriculum and reference materials, the employability of graduates and the overall performance of students. Periodic review is one of the main processes whereby institutions can continue to assure themselves about the academic quality and standards of their awards.

Programme of study
An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification. UK higher education programmes must be approved and validated by UK degree-awarding bodies.

Quality enhancement
The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.

QAA officer
The person appointed by QAA to manage the review programme and to act as the liaison between the review team and the institution.

Quality assurance
The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the necessary standards, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

Recognition of prior learning
Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences.

Recommendation
Review teams make recommendations where they agree that an institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure in order to improve the institution's higher education provision.

Reference points
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document
A self-evaluation report by an institution. The submission should include information about the institution as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of its quality systems.

Student submission
A document representing student views that describes what it is like to be a student at the

institution, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes.

Validation

The process by which an institution ensures that its academic programmes meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.

Externality

The use of experts from outside a higher education provider, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.