

Academic Framework

Approving committee:	Academic Board
Minute reference:	A/6/01/2
Document owner:	Academic Services - Education Policy and Quality
Key Contact(s):	Barbara Pittam
Date of Equality Impact Assessment:	15/05/2017
Equality Impact Assessment Outcome:	No impact
Latest review date:	22/07/2019
Next review date:	31/07/2023

ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK - OUR APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

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1. PURPOSE

This Framework Document specifies the Institute of Cancer Research's academic quality assurance procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of its postgraduate research and taught degrees. It contains links or file references for all relevant mechanisms, policies and procedures. It is approved by the Academic Board and is made available to the University of London.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Cancer Research has been a constituent part of the University of London since 1927. In 1995, upon dissolution of the British Postgraduate Medical Foundation, it became an associate institution of the University. In 1992 the ICR entered the Universities Funding Council Research Assessment Exercise and received higher education institution funding thereafter for the first time, with direct funding from HEFCE granted from August 2000. In September 2003 the ICR was officially admitted as a college of the University of London, and in 2018 the ICR joined the register of higher education providers with the Office for Students.

We offer postgraduate courses only. This reflects our status as a specialist cancer research organisation, working at the forefront of cancer research, and is integral to our strategic approach to learning, teaching and assessment. We have a long-established provision for MPhil / PhD and MD(Res) students, and also provide specialist clinical trainees in oncology with education in the scientific discoveries that underpin clinical practice through the taught MSc in Oncology. We also partner with Imperial College London to deliver the MSc in Genomic Medicine.

The excellence of teaching and the world-leading environment of ICR was recognised in 2016 with the award of Specialist Institution funding from HEFCE. The strength of our research programme and the quality of training offered to research students is demonstrated by the ICR's performance in being placed first overall in the Times Higher Education tables of outcome of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014; this ranked the ICR as the leading Higher Education Institution submitting to more than one Unit of Assessment.

3. CONTEXT

The ICR's Vision is *that people may live their lives free from the fear of cancer as a life-threatening disease.*

The ICR's Mission is *to make the discoveries that defeat cancer.*

The ICR's Strategic Goals that support the vision and mission are:

1. Research and Impact: To be a world leader in fundamental research into cancer and the translation of research discoveries into improved outcomes for cancer patients.

2. Education and Training: To educate and train the next generation of cancer researchers and clinicians.

3. Environment and Infrastructure: To deliver a world class and sustainable organisation to support cancer research and education for patient benefit.

4. GOVERNANCE

The ICR is governed by its Board of Trustees. The principal officers of the ICR are the Chief Executive, the Chief Operating Officer and the Academic Dean.

The ICR's higher education activities are led by the Academic Dean, who is Chair of the Academic Board. The Board of Trustees has delegated to the Academic Board responsibility for all academic and teaching matters and questions of education policy, and for ensuring that the ICR has a rigorous and responsive Quality Assurance framework in place, and for developing and delivering the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Board is supported by sub-committees for research degrees and postgraduate taught courses. The Academic Dean is responsible to the Chief Executive for determining (subject to the advice of the Academic Board) education strategies and priorities; the planning and implementation to achieve them; and the evaluation of education and training outcomes, including student welfare, and for effective quality processes that assure quality and standards.

The Academic Dean is supported by an Academic Dean's Team, which comprises two Deputy Deans, one responsible for Biomedical Sciences and one for Clinical Sciences, six Senior Tutors and a Joint Course Director of the MSc (Oncology). The Deputy Deans' responsibilities include ensuring appropriate supervision arrangements are in place; holding an annual formal review of each student's progress; welfare and discipline. The Senior Tutors' roles include working with the Deputy Deans on the recruitment of students and their supervision arrangements; recommending changes where necessary to the supervisory team, and the general and personal welfare of students. The Joint Course Director is responsible for the academic management and leadership of the MSc (Oncology) and the associated qualifications, and for the quality and academic standards of the course. The Course Director is also responsible for the welfare of the taught course students.

The department includes the Registry (including registry operations) which is responsible for all operational aspects of postgraduate study at the ICR including admissions, progress monitoring, student records, administration of taught courses, student statistical returns, the graduation ceremony, quality assurance and annual monitoring, internal annual assessment, academic events and governance, and new programme development. Academic services also includes Academic Systems (incorporating the library, systems and data), Academic Resources, Research Operations, Higher Education (Planning) and Research Support, Information Governance, Biomedical Research Centre Office, and Clinical Research and Development.

5. LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

The ICR's plans for meeting its Strategic Objective for Education are set out in its Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2016 – 2021.

<http://www.icr.ac.uk/about-us/icr-strategy/learning-teaching-strategy>

Delivery of the Strategy is supported by an annual Operational Plan.

Academic Board ensures the achievement of the Key Performance Indicators monitoring the ICR's academic business. These are:

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- Achieving submission of at least 90% of PhD and MD(Res) theses within four years
- Consistently achieving a 100% pass rate for PhDs that are submitted
- Registering at least 100 students annually on postgraduate taught courses.

We also have aspirational targets to:

- Ensure that at least 90% of students registered on the MSc in Oncology exit with a postgraduate qualification
- Deliver career support such that following degree completion, 70% of non-clinical research students go directly into a scientific research role, and 50% are still in such a role three years later.

Academic Board also monitors the following metrics:

- The number of research studentships awarded each year (to ensure that numbers do not fall below a critical mass)
- The number of publications per research degree student – both as a first author and the total number.

The Learning and Teaching strategy comprises three pillars which describe how we intend to educate and train the next generation of cancer researchers and clinicians, and three foundations which outline how we support and approach delivery of the pillars. These are:

Pillar 1: Providing world-class research degree programmes

Pillar 2: Teach tomorrow's leaders today's discoveries

Pillar 3: Partnering with our peers and with the public

Foundation 1: Environment and Infrastructure

Foundation 2: Quality Assurance

Foundation 3: Equality and Diversity

6. PROGRAMME

University of London Awards

- MSc Oncology (and Postgraduate Certificate / Postgraduate Diploma in Oncology)
- MPhil
- MD(Res)
- PhD

7. KEY PRINCIPLES

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The ICR's approach to quality assurance and enhancement is underpinned by the following key principles:

- The primary and ultimate responsibility of Academic Board, supported by its sub-committees, for the management of academic standards and quality;
- Effective delegation to the sub-committees within their Terms of Reference, and recognition that responsibility for day-to-day operational management, individual student issues, and (for taught courses) course development lies with the research degrees / taught courses management groups;
- A commitment to promote an ethos of continuous improvement in curriculum delivery and management and the learning environment;
- Engagement with students and, where possible, employers through appropriate representation, consultation and feedback mechanisms;
- The use of external peers as members of the Academic Board's Research Degrees and Taught Courses sub-committees, and in the approval and periodic review of the curriculum;
- The use of appropriate external and internal reference points, including regular review of our engagement with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (The Quality Code), and, for research degrees, the REF outcome and other measures of the quality of the research environment;
- The use of management information (quantitative and qualitative) to support our quality assurance and enhancement processes; and
- The proactive management of the research environment through the structures for determining research strategy and research governance.

8. UNIVERSITY OF LONDON REQUIREMENTS

University of London Regulation 68 requires each College to "... put in place quality assurance procedures which shall be approved in accordance with the arrangements made by its governing body". This Framework is intended to meet that requirement. Its component parts (the Codes, policies, etc) are approved as appropriate by the Academic Board or the relevant sub-Committee in accordance with the Standing Orders and Terms of Reference.

Regulation 70 sets out a list of information and reports which must be provided annually to the Collegiate Council. Annex 1 to this Framework specifies who is responsible for ensuring each of these is provided to the University, and how it is done.

Regulation 71 goes on to require that these quality assurance procedures shall include provision for, inter alia:

- The formal award of the degree, diploma or certificate to candidates for taught postgraduate and research degree courses and, where applicable, the award of degrees jointly with an institution outside the University;
- The appointment of examiners for the degrees of MPhil, PhD and MD(Res).

The quality assurance provisions which relate to these are part of the ICR's Academic Regulations, including specific taught course regulations; Codes of Practice for MPhil/PhD and MD(Res) students and handbooks for MSc and research degree students.

Regulation 75 requires each College to make regulations for the foundation degrees, first degrees, postgraduate taught degrees, diplomas, certificates and specialist doctorates for which it provides

programmes of study. The ICR's Academic Regulations governing taught postgraduate degrees form part of its overall Academic Regulations.

Regulation 76 provides that each College may make regulations for the degrees of Master in Philosophical Studies, Master and Doctor of Philosophy, and of Doctor of Medicine (Research). The ICR's Academic Regulations provide these.

9. QAA - THE UK QUALITY CODE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (The Quality Code) was introduced in the 2012-13 academic year along with a range of other guidance to help education providers ensure that students receive a high quality experience of UK higher education. It replaced its predecessor, the Academic Infrastructure.

The ICR regularly reviews its engagement with The Quality Code as updates to the Code occur. The Code was last revised by the QAA in 2018. Expectations and core practices of the Quality Code (outlined below) align with the OfS general ongoing conditions of registration (conditions B1-B5) relating to quality and standards, and therefore providers must meet them.

Expectations for standards:

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

Core practices for standards:

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

Expectations for quality:

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

Core practices for quality:

- The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.
- The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses
- The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

- The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
- The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.
- Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.
- Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.
- The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

The advice and guidance documents are designed to be "guiding principles" of the fundamental practices of the higher education sector, based on the experience of a wide range of providers. They are intended as a framework for providers to consider when establishing new or looking at existing higher education provision.

Examples of best practice for the ICR are identified through sector engagement and implemented through the five year rolling QA programme. Reviews, and the resulting recommendations, are considered by the Academic Board or its appropriate sub-committee, which receive implementation reports. In January 2019 the Academic Board approved an updated rolling programme, against the revised Quality Code.

Other external reference points

Other external reference points include:

- The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- Master's degree characteristics (2010)
- Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements (2008)

10. KEY QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

The ICR uses the following key quality assurance mechanisms:

- Clear authorities and delegations from the Board of Trustees through the academic committee structure, headed by the Academic Board.
- The ICR General, Academic, Examination and Course Regulations
- Codes of Practice for MPhil/PhD and MD(Res) degrees, and handbooks for the research degree students and those studying for taught courses e.g. MSc Oncology (and certificate and diploma)
- The academic KPIs and monitoring of performance against them
- Rolling programme providing for comprehensive reviews of all significant QA mechanisms, and annual programme
- Policies and procedures covering all key aspects of the ICR's academic business (see section 11 below)
- Operating procedures that set out how key procedures are administered
- Effective consultation and feedback mechanisms with students
- External input in quality assurance development
- Use of the Annual Monitoring Exercise to continuously improve the quality of teaching

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- Clear criteria and a clear process for considering conferment of academic titles
- Use of internal audit reviews as appropriate
- Annual operational plan to secure implementation of the L&T strategy
- Academic Risk Register, linked to the ICR Risk Register, covering risks to the delivery of the L&T Strategy.
- External reviews and audits
- The Board of Trustees has oversight of academic governance and the student academic experience, as confirmed in the Annual Assurance Return to the OfS.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The general academic and examination regulations governing the ICR's research and taught courses are held within the ICR Regulations document available at www.icr.ac.uk/studentpolicies.

Key policies and procedures relating to taught courses including MSc Handbook, Validation, Annual Monitoring, Periodic Review, External Examining and Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures are also available at www.icr.ac.uk/studentpolicies.

Codes of practice for research students (MPhil/PhD and MD(Res)), which include information in relation to the programme requirements and key procedures, are published on the ICR website, and are available at www.icr.ac.uk/studentpolicies.

12. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR STUDENTS

The ICR runs a comprehensive programme of training for research degree students in general and transferrable skills. These are subject to regular review (the next periodic review is due in 2019/20). Recommendations made by the review team are presented to the Research Degree Committee for consideration and approved by Academic Board.

The ICR's taught course students on the MSc (Oncology) are all part-time, attending only one day a week. Their training needs beyond the course content itself are considered as part of the Annual Monitoring Exercise and Periodic Review processes. Part C students have a group tutorial at the start of the year where they discuss what training will be provided, and they are then encouraged to talk to their local education supervisor about training needs.

Training provided for both research degree and taught course students is subject to review every five years as part of the rolling quality assurance programme.

13. WELFARE

The Academic Dean and the Academic Dean's team are responsible for student welfare (See Sect. 4).

Confidential welfare advice for individuals is available through an ICR-funded Employee (and Student) Assistance Programme. Students also have access to Mental Health First Aiders. There is also a network of Wellbeing Advisors who are ICR staff, trained in this volunteer role as a first informal point of contact for issues including mental health matters and workplace concerns. This network includes student confidants who are in place to specifically provide peer-to-peer initial welfare support for students.

Support for students with disabilities is provided by Registry and from October 2019 will be managed by an external provider, Equality Focus.

Information about welfare provision is made available via the handbooks for research degree and taught course students, on Nexus and the ICR's website.

Careers seminars and workshops are made available to research degree students.

14. CAREERS ADVICE, INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

For research degree students, this is primarily provided by the University of London's careers service and coordinated by the Researcher Development team. The Codes of Practice set out supervisors' and students' responsibilities in this respect, and the personal development plan is completed by the student with their supervisor to agree priorities for career development throughout the research degree. The mechanisms for its provision and compliance with QAA guidance are subject to review as part of the five-year rolling programme. The MSc Oncology is undertaken by those who have already made their career choice. It is specifically designed to equip doctors who want to specialise in oncology, and who are already in employment.

15. STUDENT CONSULTATION AND FEEDBACK ARRANGEMENTS

There is a student representative on the Board of Trustees, on all the Academic Committees, and on a number of other ICR committees such as the Equality Steering Group and the Library Committee. Representatives are elected by the students, and committee training is made available for new representatives each year.

There is a Student Committee which is organised by the students and is used primarily to consider student related issues, and to arrange social occasions and student-sponsored career activity. It is affiliated to the National Union of Students and Student Central (the University of London Students' Union).

The ICR consults research and taught degree students on all matters affecting them via the respective student liaison committees. All members of the Student Committee are members of the Research Degree Student Liaison Committee, which is chaired by the Student President. MSc Oncology students are represented at the Taught Courses Student Liaison Committee. Terms of Reference for RDSLCL and TCSLC are at:

<https://nexus.icr.ac.uk/Lists/ICR%20Tasks/DispForm.aspx?ID=91>

The taught course students receive an annual questionnaire covering all aspects of the student experience (PTES^[1]); research degree students are surveyed biennially (PRES^[2]), both surveys are currently administered by Advance HE. The results of this are discussed with the student liaison committees and actions arising from the survey results are reported to the RDSLCL or TCSLC, and the relevant academic committee. .

Regular, informal, meetings are encouraged between MSc oncology students and the Course Directors/ Course Management Team. These help ensure that MSc students are aware of wider ICR issues, and can raise concerns beyond any related to their course.

The arrangements for consulting with students, and obtaining feedback, are reviewed as part of the five year rolling programme.

16. REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

Section 11 of this Framework (list of Quality Assurance Policies and procedures) is updated annually in late July, by the Assistant Director (Registry).

The Framework is reviewed by the Academic Board as part of the five year rolling quality assurance programme. Following Academic Board's approval, the revised document is sent to the University of London by the Assistant Director (Registry).

Hilary Glover
Academic Governance and Events Manager
July 2019

[\[1\]](#) Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

[\[2\]](#) Postgraduate Research Experience Survey

ANNEX 1

ANNUAL INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON COLLEGIATE COUNCIL UNDER UoL REGULATION 1

Reg	Item	Responsibility for provision to UoL	Authority
70.1	List of programmes of study, as & when amended	Registry Officer	AB
70.2	List of the general areas of research available for specialist doctorates and degrees of MPhil, PhD and MD(Res)	Registry Officer	AB
70.3	List of candidates to whom the ICR has awarded degrees (and any revocations)	Head of Registry Operations	Exam Board
70.4	Reports and communications received during the year from the QAA following its reviews and the ICR responses(s)	Assistant Director (Registry)	AB

to these (as soon as available).

An annual return on all awards offered to inform the University Quality Enhancement Review to include:

- information as requested about current issues and priorities for enhancement, particularly of systems for assuring standards and managing or enhancing academic quality; and substantive changes to the ICR academic and research degree regulation and quality assurance procedures (70.5.1)

- confirmation of compliance with Regulation 1 (70.5.2)

70.5	<p>-Confirmation that all examination boards had the input of at least one External Examiner, that no External Examiner failed to confirm the appropriateness of standards or sector comparability of student performance in respect of the awards at each level, and that no External Examiner failed to confirm the appropriateness and due conduct of the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards; and, should any one or more External Examiner(s) not provide confirmation, that any concerns raised were addressed (70.5.3)</p>	Assistant Director (Registry)	n/a
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ANNEX 2

LIST OF REGISTRY OPERATING PROCEDURES

To be updated Summer 2019

General

Research Degrees

Taught Courses

ANNEX 3

OTHER QA LINKS

[Programme specification for MSc Oncology](#)

[UoL Regulations](#)

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Approved ICR policy

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