Chapter 3

Quality Enhancement

3. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines how the University, in accordance with the UK Quality Code of Higher Education, promotes continuous and systematic enhancement of the student experience of learning and teaching. It also details how the University uses a range of student experience feedback and quality enhancement processes to inform and improve the student academic experience strategically for both current and future cohorts.

3.2 A culture of enhancement

There is a culture of enhancement within UWTSD, with all staff across academic and professional units engaged with and responsible for the systematic enhancement of the student experience. This culture supports, enables, and celebrates the continual enhancement of learning and teaching to enable it to meet its core value of ***Excellent teaching*** informed by *scholarship* and *professional practice*, and *applied research* that influences knowledge and policy in Wales and beyond.

As detailed in this chapter, a variety of formal mechanisms are in place to encourage reflection on performance, to identify areas for enhancement and improvement, and to monitor the impact of any action taken. In addition to such formal mechanisms, enhancement also occurs more informally because of the culture of enhancement embedded within the institution.

3.3 Student engagement with enhancement

Key to enhancement is the University's strong commitment to students as active partners in their educational experience. This approach is outlined in Chapter 5. As a result, the University collaborates closely with its students to create strong and vibrant learning communities where all students are able to fulfil their individual potential.

The University systematically seeks student voices in key areas to inform its strategic approach to academic enhancement and to ensure that action taken is informed by student experience feedback (see Chapter 5).

3.4 Collaborative Partner institutions

It is recognised that quality enhancement may take a different format for collaborative partner institutions.

All collaborative partner institutions are expected to:
- meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education;
- value students as key and active partners to enhance their academic experience;
- systematically embed enhancement within learning and teaching processes, using the principles outlined in section 3.9.

3.5 A strategic approach to enhancement

The key strategy for enhancement is the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy.

In addition, a range of other strategies focus on enhancement of the student academic experience and student outcomes in specified areas, such as:

- Digital Framework for Blended Learning
- Strategic Equality Plan

- Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Fee and Access Plan

The strategic approach to enhancement is characterised by, for example:

- the use of quality assurance and student experience feedback processes to provide opportunities for systematic reflection, the evidence for areas of weakness and strength, and identification of priorities for quality enhancement;
- the comprehensive analysis of all key student outcomes data (including the external and internal benchmarking of such data) in order to identify any discipline areas or specific cohorts where performance needs to be enhanced and to identify good practice for dissemination;
- the use of Key Performance Indicators to measure and monitor progress made and provide evidence of impact where action has been taken;
- focused attention to increase or further develop performance in a specified area through an institution-wide enhancement theme (see 3.7);
- the setting of clear institution-wide expectations in a number of key areas (e.g. in relation to assessment and feedback or the Learning and Teaching Standards);
- the embedding of a range of processes and mechanisms to encourage the piloting of new approaches and to identify and disseminate good practice (e.g. through staff development or a central teaching and learning conference);
- regular and consistent reflection on areas of weakness and strength and the monitoring of any action taken as part of the committee structure.

3.6 Key Principles

The University approach to enhancement is centrally led at a cross-institutional level to allow the sharing, development and embedding of good practice. The University also supports locally led development within Institutes and Professional Services to support staff in key areas.

Within the institution, key committees in relation to enhancement are:

- Senate
- Academic Standards Committee (ASC)
- Student Experience Committee (SEC)
  - Learning and Teaching Board
  - Equalities and Wellbeing Board
- Research Committee
- Institute Boards
- Research Degrees Committee

These key committees and sub-committees may also establish groups with specific remits to support the enhancement agenda (e.g. Blended Learning – Educational Technology Group).

In collaborative partner institutions, a different committee framework may be in place. However, there is an expectation that partners will engage in the strategic approach to enhancement outlined above, as appropriate to their nature, size, range of disciplines, and student cohorts.

3.7 Enhancement Priorities

As part of the University-wide strategic approach to enhancement, the University identifies priorities for enhancement at both a central and Institute level. For 2021/22, the University has identified an overarching priority in relation to blended learning and curriculum design. Institute

priorities are normally identified through the annual monitoring and personal development review processes.

Key enhancement priorities are identified through the analysis of performance, Students' Union Annual Quality Reports, or reflection on key sector-wide concerns or drivers, such as the work of HEFCW, QAA, AdvanceHE, NUS, TEF, REF, and Jisc.

Collaborative partners decide on priority enhancement areas for the provision validated with UWTSD as part of the annual monitoring processes.

3.8   Enhancement and quality assurance processes

All key quality assurance processes (e.g. curriculum development, programme validation, programme review) embed quality enhancement. The evidence gathered at these stages provides the foundation for a focused and strategic approach to enhancement.

Examples of this include:

- consistent reflection at programme and discipline level of pedagogy, performance, student outcomes and students' overall educational experience (e.g. as part of annual review processes);
- evaluation of sector- or discipline-wide new developments (e.g. in relation to educational technology, developments in pedagogy, or learning space design) to inform or underpin the chosen approach to enhancement;
- the systematic use of external examiners and external readers to benchmark performance, obtain feedback and embed an element of externality to these processes;
- the Annual Quality Report produced by the Students' Union which provides a set of recommendations for the enhancement of the University's performance in a specific area.

3.9   Enhancement of learning and teaching processes

Systematic enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching processes takes place through a number of different mechanisms.

The University supports enhancement of learning and teaching under the umbrella of the NEXUS Learning and Teaching Framework, for example, through:

- systematic identification of key priorities for enhancement;
- a scheme for staff to achieve an appropriate level of HEA fellowship;
- Learning, Enhancement and Advancement Programme (LEAP) Fellows;
- an annual NEXUS conference;
- Share and Learn events;
- the Aurora Programme;
- the Future Leaders Programme;
- Mentoring/Coaching training;
- the Digital Skills Framework and the Jisc Discovery Tool.

The Students' Union runs an annual award process, which includes recognition of Academic and Non-Academic staff members of the year.

Institutes and collaborative partner institutions enhance the learning and teaching within their disciplines, for example, through:
- systematic identification of key priorities for enhancement;
- a focused and holistic approach to continued professional development for staff (e.g. through the set Institute or subject level teaching and learning development days);

- the use of a peer support process, in accordance with the University's Peer Support Policy, to identify areas of innovation as well as areas for enhancement, to encourage the sharing and dissemination of good practice amongst peers, and to systematically enhance learning and teaching across the unit;
- the availability of support and opportunities to staff to further develop their teaching and learning and engage with continued professional staff development (e.g. through the staff development events, professional learning pathways and training, the acquisition of a teaching qualification, or obtaining of an HEA fellowship);
- enhanced support offered to all staff new to teaching and learning (e.g. through mentoring opportunities);
- encouragement of the sharing of good and innovative practice through participation of staff at the annual NEXUS conference, with external subject and discipline level initiatives, or with professional bodies.