



Academic Quality Framework

Section 1: Welcome & Introduction

2023-2024

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This Section of the Academic Quality Framework should be read by all members of the UCO and Collaborative Partners.

Version number	Dates produced and approved (include committee)	Reason for production/ revision	Author	Location(s)	Proposed next review date and approval required
V1.0	March 2014 Academic Council	To define the procedures for the management of academic quality and standards in teaching and learning at the UCO.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Intranet	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
V2.0	Sept 2016 Academic Council	Reviewed to update staff role and policy titles and to reflect current practice.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Intranet	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
V3.0	Sept 2017 Academic Council	Annual Review including amendments to reflect the name change of the British School of Osteopathy to the University College of Osteopathy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Intranet	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
V4.0	Sept 2018 PRAG Chair	Annual Review: Administrative Amendments to update role titles, HE regulatory body and web links.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Website	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
V5.0	Sept 2019 Academic Council	Annual Review: Major Amendments to reflect new Regulatory Bodies and general update to information.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Website	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
V6.0	Jun 2019 PRAG Chair	Annual Review Administrative Amendments: Correction of typographical errors and updating external weblinks.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Website	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
V7.0	Aug 2020 PRAG Chair	Annual Review: Administrative amendments to reflect update external agency	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Website	Annually and on an “as required” basis.

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		<i>titles and factual matters.</i>			
V8.0	Aug 2021 PRAG Chair	<i>Annual Review: Administrative Amendments to update hyperlinks, titles of committees and relationships with external organisations.</i>	<i>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality</i>	<i>Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Website</i>	<i>Annually and on an “as required” basis.</i>
V9.0	June 2022 PRAG Chair TQSC	<i>Annual Review: Administrative Amendments of a factual nature to update academic year dates, webpage hyperlinks, titles of committees and relationships with external organisations.</i>	<i>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality & Partnerships</i>	<i>Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Website</i>	<i>Annually and on an “as required” basis.</i>
V10.0	June 2023 TQSC	<i>Annual Review: Minor Amendments to update dates, wording, regulatory bodies, staff changes and to include reference to Collaborative Partners.</i>	<i>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Head of Quality & Partnerships</i>	<i>Master Version: SharePoint - QA Published Version: Website</i>	<i>Annually and on an “as required” basis.</i>
Equality Impact					
Positive equality impact (i.e. the policy/procedure/guideline significantly reduces inequalities)					
Neutral equality impact (i.e. no significant effect)					X
Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)					
<p>If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this document, please email your comments to: quality@uco.ac.uk</p>					

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1.1 WELCOME TO THE ACADEMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK

- 1.1.1 The University College of Osteopathy (UCO) has a long and distinguished history of providing learning experiences for students that are challenging and rewarding. We are strongly committed to maintaining its academic standards and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching provision.
- 1.1.2 Our high standards and ambitions for quality enhancement are achieved through the objectives contained within the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and other initiatives. Our approach is predicated on the professionalism and creativity of our staff, individually and collectively, which enables innovative and stimulating learning. Quality is enhanced through attention to students' experiences as learners, the development of subject disciplines, and engagement with teaching practice. Additional vital resources complement and augment the high standards of provision viz. the clinic, library, IT, general facilities, and the wide range of support services.
- 1.1.3 We also use the activities that are the subject of this Academic Quality Framework to support, assure and enhance quality. This framework brings together into one convenient source comprehensive information about our quality processes. It explains what it is we do, why we do it, and how it is done. It also explains the UCO's place within the wider context of national and professional requirements.
- 1.1.4 This Academic Quality Framework (AQF) is aimed at staff colleagues, students, collaborative partners, and external readers. We are pleased to direct student readers to the 'Welcome for Student Readers' section provided below that addresses aspects of the framework that are particularly student related. Quality assurance and enhancement and their associated procedures can be difficult areas to relate to. We therefore hope that this framework makes "Quality Assurance" more accessible to you and that you find it helpful.
- 1.1.5 If you have any questions regarding this framework, please direct your enquiries to the UCO's Quality Assurance Team: quality@uco.ac.uk.

1.2 WELCOME FOR STUDENT READERS

- 1.2.1 The UCO is committed to ensuring that your experience as a student is the best the institution can provide, and that where further improvements can be made, they happen. The UCO has an excellent reputation for the quality of its teaching and the facilities that support learning.
- 1.2.2 To help the UCO be sure that it continues to provide a high-quality student experience, it makes use of the procedures set out in this Academic Quality Framework (AQF). You will see that a wide range of UCO staff as well as other organisations are involved in these procedures. Your role as a student is also critical. The UCO sees students as partners in monitoring and improving what we offer; therefore we ensure that you have access to this framework, which provides you with information about our monitoring processes and why we use a variety of methods to gather your feedback.
- 1.2.3 ***Your feedback is highly important to us; you can instigate change at the UCO that enhances your own and others' Student Experience, as well as that of students who follow you. All your comments and suggestions are welcome!***

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- 1.2.4 The UCO uses a variety of methods to gain your feedback to help us identify what is working well for you and what could be enhanced to ensure that you receive a high-quality student experience. These are detailed further in AQF Section 10, but include:
- a) **Questionnaires, Surveys and Focus Groups:** Student feedback methods include questionnaires for individual units, surveys that cover a year of study and, in some cases, the opportunity to take part in focus groups and similar activities. Final year students also participate in the National Student Survey (NSS) and the results of this are published online through the [Discovering Uni](#) website, the official website for comparing UK higher education course data that helps prospective students to choose where to study by comparing results of student feedback on our courses with others in the UK.
 - b) **Student & Staff Liaison Consultation Groups:** You will see from the AQF that we operate Student & Staff Liaison and Consultation Groups (SSLCGs). These provide opportunities for you to inform us of your views and suggestions, for us to consult with you on institutional matters and to engage in discussions with you about matters of concern and ideas for enhancements.
 - c) **Student Committee Members:** Students are also represented on a range of committees that are mentioned in this framework, from the Board of Directors to individual Course Teams. These enable you to participate fully in consultation and decision-making processes at all governing levels.
 - d) **Student Representation:** You can also make your views known to your Student Representatives, or volunteer to become a representative yourself. Student Representative training is organised by the Head of Student Services in conjunction with the Students' Union. Many students find the experience of acting as a Student Representative a valuable and rewarding chance to influence what the UCO does. As a representative, you are also likely to develop useful transferable skills that enhance your opportunities as you progress from the UCO into employment, including leadership, diplomacy and negotiating skills.
 - e) **Involvement in Review Processes:** There are further ways in which you can inform us about how well the UCO is doing. For instance, each course is reviewed periodically (See AQF Section 6) where panels that review courses normally meet with groups of students to discuss their views and include a student member so that the student voice is directly included in any decision-making. The UCO is also subject to institutional reviews by external bodies to ensure that we meet their requirements for standards and quality as well as governance and management. As you read through this framework, you will also see that the role of the student voice is again central to most of the associated processes undertaken as part of these reviews. The positive collaborative partnership the UCO promotes with its student body is therefore valued very highly.
- 1.2.5 We make every effort to inform you about what actions we take in response to your feedback including informing you about actions taken at induction sessions, via student representatives throughout the year, through posters posted in student areas and on the UCO Portal.
- 1.2.6 We recognise the importance of reporting back to you on actions that we have taken in response to your comments and hope that this encourages you to play your part in identifying further actions that could be taken and participating in the UCO's Quality Assurance processes

to improve your Student Experience. We therefore strongly encourage you to take all opportunities to provide feedback when invited to do so throughout your time at the UCO.

- 1.2.7 We are equally delighted to hear about aspects of the UCO that are particularly good especially if it is something that we can adopt elsewhere so that everyone can benefit!
- 1.2.8 We hope that this AQF will provide you with much useful information about the activities that take place regarding the management and organisation of your course and how you can be involved in this.
- 1.2.9 If you have any comments or questions about the AQF or any of the activities it describes, please do not hesitate to contact the Quality Team: quality@uco.ac.uk.

1.3 WELCOME TO COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- 1.3.1 The UCO is pleased to work with a number of collaborative partners in a variety of ways which are set out in AQF Section 16: Collaborative Activity. Where the nature of a collaborative partnership is that where the collaborative provision leads to an award of the UCO, the partner is expected to align to and comply this AQF or, where differences in practice or process are proposed, operate to an approved Schedule of Variance to this AQF.
- 1.3.2 Collaborative Partners are welcome to liaise with us about the policies and procedures set out in the AQF and how they can best be applied within their own setting and to also provide us with feedback to enhance process and practice with respect to collaborative partnerships.
- 1.3.3 Throughout this AQF, specific UCO staff roles may be identified with responsibility for overseeing or implementing the academic processes and regulations set out within it. Where this occurs, Collaborative Partners will normally have in place equivalent staff roles who will undertake these responsibilities on behalf of the partner, unless stated otherwise within the approved Schedule of Variance.

1.4 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ACADEMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK

- 1.4.1 The Academic Quality Framework (AQF) defines the procedures for the management of academic quality and standards in teaching and learning at the UCO and at Collaborative Partners where provision leads to a UCO award.
- 1.4.2 The UCO has the largest student population amongst the UK osteopathic educational institutions, and we play a central role in driving and delivering osteopathic education in the UK both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The UCO also delivers courses in allied health care subjects in line with its Strategic Plan to broaden and diversify its taught degree provision, and works with Collaborative Partners who deliver courses in a variety of subject areas that lead to a UCO award.
- 1.4.3 A key underpinning core value of the UCO is that students are central to everything that happens within the UCO. All teaching, professional services and partner staff work towards this and have a collective responsibility both for ensuring a high-quality learning experience for students, and for maintaining the standard of the awards conferred.
- 1.4.4 The AQF is informed by the UCO's Strategic Plan, its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and by key external reference points primarily provided by the [Quality Assurance](#)

[Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body standards and guidance.

- 1.4.5 The AQF refers to procedures, policies, regulations and other core documentation relating to all activities associated with managing and maintaining quality within teaching, learning and assessment. Although this can appear bureaucratic, it is necessary to ensure the transparent, smooth and effective running of an institution.
- 1.4.6 The AQF is comprised of the following sections:
- 1) Welcome and Introduction to the Academic Quality Framework
 - 2) An Overview of Teaching and Learning at the UCO
 - 3) The Assurance and Enhancement of Academic Quality and Standards in Teaching and Learning at the UCO
 - 4) Course & Unit Approval and Modification
 - 5) Periodic Review
 - 6) Annual Monitoring & Reporting
 - 7) Academic Regulations
 - 8) Student Recruitment and Admissions
 - 9) Student Guidance and Learner Support
 - 10) Student Voice
 - 11) External Examining
 - 12) Boards of Examiners
 - 13) Staff Recruitment and Development
 - 14) The Access to Higher Education Diploma (Validated by Laser Learning Awards) & Pre-entry Courses
 - 15) Collaborative Activity
 - 16) Academic Policies and Procedures
 - 17) Glossary of Terms

1.5 HOW TO USE THE ACADEMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK

- 1.5.1 The AQF, in its entirety, is made available to all stakeholders through the [UCO's Academic Quality Framework Webpage](#). This provides readers with immediate access to the UCO's academic quality processes, to understand more about the UCO's history and to be well-informed about the context that the UCO currently operates in.
- 1.5.2 Each section of the AQF begins with a 'Suggested Readers' box, which serves to highlight the content that is considered most relevant to different readers.

- 1.5.3 It is recognised that some readers may wish to focus on sub-sections of the AQF therefore some information is repeated throughout the AQF to enable each section to be considered in isolation.
- 1.5.4 Additional information and documentation referenced within the AQF may be requested from the UCO's Quality Team (quality@uco.ac.uk).
- 1.5.5 The AQF is regularly reviewed and at least annually to ensure that the information contained within it remains up to date and that timely amendments are made as appropriate. Regular reviews of the AQF are monitored by the UCO's Policy & Regulations Group (PRG).
- 1.5.6 Readers are recommended to utilise the version of the AQF published on the [UCO's Academic Quality Framework Webpage](#) when referring to any AQF content to ensure that the most current information is being referred to.

1.6 RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS AT THE UCO

- 1.6.1 The UCO's Academic Council is the custodian of academic quality and standards at the UCO and for collaborative provision that leads to a UCO award, and its work is informed by reports from the UCO's Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Chairs of its sub-committees.
- 1.6.2 The UCO's academic governance structure places responsibility for academic quality and standards on individuals: the Vice-Chancellor has overall responsibility for quality and standards, specifically for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision including that delivered by Collaborative Partnerships leading to UCO award in their role as Chair of the Academic Council; the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) has responsibility for quality and standards specifically for research. The Deputy Vice-Chancellors are supported in these roles by several senior committees with staff and student representation. These committees, via the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, provide regular reports to the Academic Council.

1.7 THE ACADEMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK AND EXTERNAL REQUIREMENTS & DEVELOPMENTS

- 1.7.1 External policy and regulatory developments continue to have a significant impact on the policies and procedures contained within this framework. These include those produced and monitored by the UK's independent regulator of higher education in England (the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#)) and the [Quality Assurance Agency \(QAA\) a recognised national and international independent body working to maintain and enhance academic quality and standards](#).
- 1.7.2 To align with OfS requirements and QAA guidance regarding academic quality and standards, the UCO has mapped the AQF and its policies, procedures and processes to the OfS's ongoing Conditions of Registration (particularly Condition B which relate to Quality and Standards) and the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code) published by the QAA. which will continue to be reviewed and, where necessary updated, as and when the Quality Code is revised and published to ensure that they continue to reflect best practice.

- 1.7.3 The UCO also uses a wide range of external information and best practice in benchmarking our own performance and remains confident that the broad principles which underline our Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy are consistent with the Quality Code. Collaborative Partners are likewise expected to use appropriate external information and best practice in benchmarking their performance relevant to their setting and context which is consistent with the Quality Code or equivalent in-country standards.
- 1.7.4 This continual monitoring of external developments and their impacts on academic procedures ensures that our quality assurance mechanisms are robust, take account of the Quality Code and prove to be fit for purpose.
- 1.7.5 We are mindful that there are continual enhancements to Higher Education policies and procedures internally and externally. We therefore keep these procedures under review through regular committee and annual monitoring.
- 1.7.6 The UCO's ability to demonstrate the robustness of these procedures depends on a critical resource: our staff. Colleagues responsible for managing and providing support for academic provision should therefore ensure that they are aware of the procedures and apply them consistently.

1.8 QUALITY AT THE UCO AND WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION

- 1.8.1 In 2015 the QAA granted the UCO Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP).
- 1.8.2 Alongside other Higher Education Providers in the UK, the UCO also participates in the Department for Education's (DfE's) [Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework \(TEF\)](#), which assesses excellence in teaching and how well education providers ensure excellent outcomes for their students regarding further study or graduate-level employment. The UCO currently has a Silver TEF award¹. In common with other Higher Education Providers in the UK, the UCO ensures that its educational provision operates to appropriate academic standards and offers students learning opportunities of sufficient quality. Our approach to quality recognises the importance of ongoing improvement and enhancement within these areas. To ensure that the UCO meets these requirements and aims regarding academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement, the UCO utilises several quality procedures as described within this framework. Some of these procedures are managed by the UCO itself, whereas others are managed by external approval and validating bodies. Both internal and external procedures operate according to national frameworks.
- 1.8.3 Much of this framework pertains to taught courses that are approved, delivered and awarded by the UCO. Relevant information regarding quality processes for foundation, partner, research, and professionally regulated provision is also included.
- 1.8.4 Key terminology regarding quality in Higher Education is given below.
- a) **Academic Standards:** Threshold academic standards are the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student must demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Academic standards should be at a similar level across the UK.

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/#/tefoutcomes/provider/10000936>

- b) **Academic Quality:** Academic quality is concerned with how well the learning opportunities made available to students enable them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.
- c) **Quality Assurance:** Quality assurance refers to a range of review procedures designed to safeguard academic standards and promote learning opportunities for students of acceptable quality.
- d) **Quality Enhancement:** Quality enhancement refers to taking deliberate steps to bring about continual improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students.

1.9 RELATIONSHIP TO EXTERNAL BODIES AND QUALITY MECHANISMS

1.9.1 The UCO works with a several External Bodies to assure the quality of its provision these as described below.

A) THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OFS)

1.9.2 The UCO is regulated as a Higher Education Provider in England by the Office for Students (OfS). The OfS was established in April 2018 superseding the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to regulate English higher education providers on behalf of students. The OfS works closely with the Department for Education to ensure that English higher education is delivering positive outcomes for students – past, present, and future.

1.9.3 Further information about the OfS and its work can be found here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>

B) THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY (QAA)

1.9.4 The [Quality Assurance Agency \(QAA\)](#) was established in 1997, replacing the former Higher Education Quality Council and the quality assessment divisions of the higher education funding councils for England and Wales. Its mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK Higher Education.

1.9.5 To support standards and promote quality enhancement, the QAA publishes a range of reference points and guidance. Its [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) is a definitive reference point for those involved in delivering higher education which leads to an award from or is validated by a UK higher education provider.

1.9.6 The Quality Code is one of the main benchmarks to which the UCO sets its quality assurance practices. The Quality Code is complemented by additional guidance on particular topics or qualification types.

1.9.7 Further information about the QAA and its work can be found here:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/home>

C) LASER LEARNING AWARDS (LASER)

- 1.9.8 Laser Learning Awards (LASER) is a national awarding organisation regulated by Ofqual to offer qualifications and is approved by the Security Industry Association (SIA) to offer licence-linked qualifications in the security sector under the brand name Trident Awards. LASER is also a QAA regulated Access Validating Agency for Access to Higher Education qualifications.
- 1.9.9 Access provision is specifically intended to prepare students from under-represented groups for study within the UK higher education sector.
- 1.9.10 The UCO's Access provision (Access to Higher Education Diploma (Osteopathic Sciences and Health Care)) is validated by LASER which has responsibility for approving and monitoring the quality of the UCO's Access provision.
- 1.9.11 Further information about LASER can be found here: <https://www.laser-awards.org.uk/>

D) THE GENERAL OSTEOPATHIC COUNCIL (GOSC)

- 1.9.12 In the United Kingdom (UK), osteopaths must register with the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) to practise osteopathy legally in accordance with the Osteopaths Act (1993).
- 1.9.13 The GOsC regulates the practice of osteopathy in the UK as the profession's Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB). It works with the public and osteopathic profession to promote patient safety by registering qualified professionals, and setting, maintaining, and developing standards of osteopathic practice and conduct.
- 1.9.14 Registration with the GOsC requires possession of a Recognised Qualification (RQ) in osteopathy. This is achieved by successfully completing a pre-registration programme of study which has been inspected and accredited by the GOsC and granted approval by Privy Council. The GOsC contracts [Mott MacDonald](#) to conduct RQ inspections and institutional inspections on its behalf. The UCO has undergone four successful RQ inspections since 2000 (which were previously undertaken by the QAA on behalf of the GOsC) and these [RQ Review Reports](#) are published by the GOsC on their website.
- 1.9.15 The GOsC publishes the [Osteopathic Practice Standards \(OPS\)](#). These set out the standards required of osteopaths practising in the UK to ensure quality care for their patients. These in addition to the UK Quality Code are used as key reference points for the UCO's osteopathic taught degree courses.
- 1.9.16 The UCO is required by the GOsC to complete a Recognised Qualification Annual Report that is considered by their Policy Education Committee (PEC) as part of its quality assurance and annual monitoring processes regarding RQ accredited training courses in osteopathy.
- 1.9.17 The UCO also meets with the GOsC three to four times a year as part of its Osteopathic Institution Liaison (OIL) meetings where all Osteopathic Educational Institutions (OELs) who have recognised qualifications accredited meet to discuss policy and share good practice.
- 1.9.18 In January 2020 the GOsC recommended to the Privy Council to recognise the UCO's pre-registration osteopathic qualifications (the Master of Osteopathy, Bachelor of Osteopathy and Master of Science in Osteopathy (Pre-Registration)) with no expiry date and with no conditions, further demonstrating the confidence the GOsC has in the UCO as a provider of high-quality osteopathic education.

1.9.19 Further information about the work of the GOsC can be found here:

<http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/home/>

AQF01: APPENDICES

Appendix Reference Number	Appendix Title
N/A	N/A