Academic Quality Framework 2017-2018

Section 1: Welcome & Introduction

University College of Osteopathy

ACADEMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK

SECTION 1: WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

> **This Section of the Academic Quality Framework should be read by <u>all members</u> of the UCO.**

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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)	

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ACADEMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK

SECTION 1: WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

CONTENTS

1.1 WELCOME TO THE ACADEMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK

1.1.1 The University College of Osteopathy (UCO) (formerly the British School of Osteopathy) 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 enhance 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 and external readers. We are pleased also to direct student readers to the 'welcome' section provided below (Section 1.2) 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; I commend this framework to you as an attempt to make 'Quality' more accessible and hope you will find it helpful.

Sharon Potter, Vice Principal (Education) │ s.potter@uco.ac.uk │ 020 7089 5351

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. This is why 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!*

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 Unistats website[1], 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 Student Experience Officer 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. When you fulfil this role, we will recognise this on the formal transcript that records your academic achievements.

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); panels that review courses normally meet with groups of students to discuss their views and also 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 as a result of your feedback. For example, we include actions from the previous year's student surveys into your Unit Handbooks and the UCO's newsletter "In Touch", and inform you about actions taken at induction sessions, via student representatives throughout the year, and through posters posted in student areas.

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.

Please let us know if something is not working for you.

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 me.

Heather Batten, Head of Quality │ h.batten@uco.ac.uk │ 020 7089 5355

1.3 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ACADEMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK

1.3.1   The Academic Quality Framework (AQF) defines the procedures for the management of academic quality and standards in teaching and learning at the UCO. 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. A key underpinning core value of the UCO (as stated in the UCO's Strategic Plan) is that students are central to everything that happens within the institution. All teaching and support 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.

1.3.2   The AQF is informed by the UCO's Strategic Plan, its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy[2] and by key external reference points provided by the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code[3].

1.3.3   The AQF refers to procedures, polices, regulations and other core documentation relating to all activities associated with managing and maintaining quality within teaching, learning and assessment. Although this can sound to be bureaucratic, it is necessary to ensure the transparent, smooth and effective running of the institution.

1.3.4   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 Modifications to Courses & Units

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 Professional Doctorate in Osteopathy (Validated by the University of Bedfordshire)

15) The Access to Higher Education Diploma (Validated by Laser Learning Awards) & Pre-entry Course

16) Collaborative Activity

17) Academic Policies and Procedures

18) Glossary of Terms

1.4 How to Use the Academic Quality Framework

1.4.1 The AQF, in its entirety, is made available to all stakeholders through the UCO's intranet[4]. 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.

1.4.2 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.

1.4.3 It is recognised that some readers may wish to focus on particular sub-sections of the AQF. Some information is therefore repeated throughout the AQF to enable each section to be considered in isolation.

1.4.4 Additional information and documentation referenced as footnotes are available on the UCO's intranet or may be requested from the UCO's Core Documentation Holder.

1.4.5 The AQF is regularly reviewed by the UCO's Policy, Regulations and Audit Group[5] to ensure that the information contained within it remains up to date and that timely amendments are made as appropriate.

1.4.6 Readers are recommended to utilise the version of the AQF published on the UCO' intranet when referring to any AQF content to ensure that the current information is being referred to.

1.5 Responsibility for Academic Quality and Standards at the UCO

1.5.1 The Academic Council is the custodian of academic quality and standards at the UCO, and its work is informed by reports from the UCO's Principal, Vice-Principals and Chairs of its sub-committees.

1.5.2 The UCO's academic governance structure places responsibility for quality and standards on individuals: the Vice-Principal (Education) has responsibility for quality and standards, specifically for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision; the Vice-Principal (Research) has responsibility for quality and standards, specifically for research. The Vice-Principals are supported in these roles by a number of senior committees with staff and student representation. These committees, via the Vice-Principals, provide regular reports to Academic Council.

1.6 The Academic Quality Framework and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

1.6.1 External policy developments continue to have a significant impact on the policies and procedures contained within this framework. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)[6] concluded a major review of the 'academic infrastructure' – the Code of Practice, Programme Specifications, Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and Higher Education Progress Files – and reformulated these separate documents into a single UK Quality Code for Higher Education[7]. The AQF will continue to be reviewed and, where necessary updated, as and when the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) is revised and published.

1.6.2 In addition to the above, elements of the Quality Code are subject to regular revision and the UCO measures its processes, policies and procedures against these revisions to ensure that they continue to reflect best practice. The UCO will also continue to use a wide range of external information and best practice in benchmarking our own performance. The UCO remains confident that the broad principles which underline our Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy[8] are consistent with the Quality Code.

1.6.3 This continual monitoring of external developments and their impacts on the UCO's procedures ensures that our quality assurance mechanisms are robust, take account of the Quality Code and prove to be fit for purpose.

1.6.4 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.

1.6.5 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 taught courses should therefore ensure that they are aware of the procedures and apply them consistently.

1.7 QUALITY AT THE UCO AND WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION

1.7.1 In 2015 the QAA granted the UCO Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP). The UCO also works with Laser Learning Awards, which is an Access Validating Authority to approve its Access to Osteopathic Sciences and Healthcare Diploma, and the University of Bedfordshire, which approves and awards the Professional Doctorate in Osteopathy qualification. In addition, the UCO works with the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) regarding its pre-registration osteopathic courses. These courses have been awarded Recognised Qualification (RQ) status following an extensive and detailed quality assurance process undertaken on behalf of the General Osteopathic Council by the QAA[9].

1.7.2 Alongside other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK, the UCO opted in to the Department for Education's (DfE's) new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which aims to "*recognise and reward high quality teaching in higher education for the purpose of giving students clear information about where teaching quality is best and where students have achieved the best outcomes, and to encourage a stronger focus on the quality of teaching in higher education*"[10]. During Year One (2016-2017) of the phased implementation of the TEF, the UCO achieved a "Meets Expectations" award meaning that the UCO passed a baseline quality standard and was judged to be operating at national levels in teaching quality and standards by the DfE. Further to the UCO's submission reflecting on Teaching Quality, Learning Environment and Student Outcomes and Learning Gain and a review of core metrics specified by the DfE, the UCO was awarded a rating of Bronze.

1.7.3 In common with other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK, the UCO ensures that its educational provision operates to appropriate academic standards and offers students learning opportunities of acceptable 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 a number of 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.

1.7.4 Much of this framework pertains to taught courses that are approved, delivered and awarded by the UCO. Relevant information regarding quality processes for foundation, research and professionally regulated provision is also included.

a) TERMINOLOGY

1.7.5 Key terminology regarding quality in Higher Education is given below.

1.7.6 **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.

1.7.7 **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.

1.7.8 **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.

1.7.9 **Quality Enhancement**: Quality enhancement refers to taking deliberate steps to bring about continual improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students.

b) RELATIONSHIP TO EXTERNAL BODIES AND QUALITY MECHANISMS

i. THE HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND (HEFCE)

1.7.10 The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is a public body that funds and regulates universities and colleges in England. HEFCE works closely with the DfE and other government departments and agencies to

a) ensure accountability for funding and be a proportionate regulator;

b) act in the public interest and be open, fair, impartial and objective;

c) be an effective broker between Government and the sector and in doing so, ensure that we are implementing government policy effectively;

1.7.11 HEFCE has been asked to implement the new Teaching Excellence Framework exercise to recognise and reward excellent teaching in UK higher education institutions, and is working with the Quality Assurance Agency (see below) to implement Year Two of the TEF.

1.7.12 Further information about HEFCE and the TEF can be found here:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/

ii. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (QAA)

1.7.13 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (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. Further information about the QAA and its work can be found here:

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

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

1.7.15 The Quality Code is available here:

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code

1.7.16 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.

1.7.17 The QAA also undertakes reviews of the UCO's Recognised Qualifications on behalf of the General Osteopathic Council.

iii. THE GENERAL OSTEOPATHIC COUNCIL (GOSC)

1.7.18 In the United Kingdom (UK), osteopaths must register with the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC)[11] in order to practise osteopathy legally in accordance with the Osteopaths Act (1993).

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

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

1.7.20 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[12]. The UCO has undergone four successful RQ inspections since 2000.

1.7.21 As the UCO's PSRB, the GOsC regulates pre-registration osteopathic education. It contracts the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to conduct RQ inspections and institutional inspections on its behalf[13].

1.7.22 The GOsC publishes the Osteopathic Practice Standards (OPS)[14]. These set out the standards required of osteopaths practising in the UK to ensure quality care for their patients. These in addition to the Quality Code are used as key reference points for the UCO's osteopathic taught degree courses.

1.7.23 The UCO is required by the GOsC to complete a Recognised Qualification Annual Report that is considered by their Education and Registration Standards Committee (ERSC) as part of its quality assurance and annual monitoring processes regarding RQ accredited training courses in osteopathy.

1.7.24 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 (OEIs) who have recognised qualifications accredited come together to discuss policy and share good practice.

iv. THE UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE (UOB)

1.7.25 In 2004 the UCO entered into a collaborative arrangement with the University of Luton (now the University of Bedfordshire) to provide approval for the UCO's courses and funding for the UCO's undergraduate students.

1.7.26 The University of Bedfordshire has a long and established history of education dating back to 1882 (the founding of the Bedford Training College for Teachers).

1.7.27 The University of Bedfordshire scored top marks - a 'confidence' rating - in its most recent Quality Assurance Agency audit in 2009, and received the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise: International Trade 2011. The University of Bedfordshire also received special praise in the latest Government Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) for its "world-leading" research. In addition, the University won the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education for its pioneering research into child sexual exploitation in November 2013. This prestigious prize is the highest form of national recognition open to higher and further education institutions in the UK and the award enhances the University's widely-acknowledged reputation for its work in raising awareness of child sexual exploitation (CSE). Further information about the University can be found here:

http://www.beds.ac.uk/

1.7.28 The University of Bedfordshire confirmed the confidence it has in the UCO by awarding the UCO 'accredited partner status' in 2012 thus devolving a number of quality processes to the UCO; the UCO was required to align with a basic framework of the University but was able to take significant responsibility for its own affairs, as detailed in both institutions' Academic Quality documentation. The collaborative arrangement was also articulated by contract between the two institutions.

1.7.29 In 2015, the UCO was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers by the QAA. As a consequence the approval and award of the UCO's taught higher education courses is now the UCO's responsibility.

1.7.30 The UCO does however maintain a collaborative arrangement with the University of Bedfordshire regarding its Professional Doctorate course, which it continues to approve and award. With regard to this course and in accordance with the Quality Code (Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others[15]), the University retains responsibility for the academic standards of awards delivered in its name, and for the quality of the learning experience delivered by collaborative partners. All other obligations under the Quality Code (parts A, B and C) must be demonstrably fulfilled within the partnership.

1.7.31 With regard to the Professional Doctorate in Osteopathy course, responsibility for the following ultimately lie with the University:

a) Assurance of quality and standards;

b) Confirmation of regulations;

c) Appointment of External Examiners;

d) Conduct and discipline, complaints, academic offences and appeals;

e) Approval of partner staff;

f) Collaborative partner staff development;

g) Certificates and transcripts.

1.7.32 Students on University of Bedfordshire-awarded courses have access to University learning resources, careers, advice and support services in addition to those provided at the UCO.

iv. Laser Learning Awards (LASER)

1.7.33 Laser Learning Awards (LASER) is licensed by the QAA to award the Access to Higher Education Diploma.

1.7.34 Access provision is specifically intended to prepare students from under-represented groups for study within the UK higher education sector.

1.7.35 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. Further information about LASER can be found on their website[16].

AQF01: FORMS & TEMPLATES

Form / Template Reference Number	Form / Template Title
N/A	N/A

AQF01: ENDNOTES

[1] http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/

[2] http://intranet.uco.ac.uk/teaching_and_learning/teaching_and_learning_strategy

[3] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code

[4] http://intranet.uco.ac.uk/

[5] http://intranet.uco.ac.uk/UCO_Committees/: Policy, Regulations & Audit Group Terms of Reference

[6] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en

[7] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code

[8] http://intranet.uco.ac.uk/teaching_and_learning/teaching_and_learning_strategy

[9] http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/training-and-registration/information-for-education-providers/

[10] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Learning,and,teaching/TEF/TEFstudent_LeafletV2_update.pdf

[11] http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/

[12] http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/practice/information-for-education-providers/

[13] http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/practice/information-for-education-providers/

[14] http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/news-and-resources/document-library/osteopathic-practice-standards/osteopathic-practice-standards/

[15] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b

[16] http://laser-awards.org.uk/