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Quality Model

Describes the School's course/programme processes for Quality Assurance.

1. Roles

The following posts have responsibilities which particularly impinge upon quality matters within the School:

- **Director of Quality** - Overall responsibility for ([UG](#), [PGT](#) and [PGR](#)) quality matters within the School and for liaison with College, University and external quality processes.
- **Director of Teaching** - Delegated responsibility from Head of School for teaching delivery, and oversight of the administrative Teaching Organisation.
- **Head of Graduate School** - Delegated responsibility from Head of School for the postgraduate research student community, and oversight of the administrative Informatics Graduate School.
- **Convenors of Exam Boards** - As specified in College and University documentation, with an emphasis on liaison with External Examiners.
- **Year Organisers** - Each programme year has a Year Organiser who is primarily responsible for the coordination of the year's teaching activities, liaising and reporting as necessary to the relevant committees. The Year Organiser is responsible for ensuring that all the Informatics courses that can be taken by students in that year run smoothly, and also deals with requests from students for coursework deadline extensions.
- **UG and PGT Personal Tutors** - Responsible for the provision of pastoral and academic advice to students, in accordance with definition provided in the [School Personal Tutoring Statement](#). A wider [School Student Support Statement](#) is also available online.
- **Directors of Research Institutes** - Directors of Research Institutes have responsibilities which include a contribution to the annual monitoring of postgraduate research students within their Institute.

2. Committees

Agenda, papers and minutes of the following committees are published on the school web site.

2.1 Teaching Committee

The Informatics Teaching Committee exists to develop policy on the delivery (rather than the syllabus) of taught courses and to monitor activity within those courses. It also develops and monitors policy in the area of taught student recruitment and applicant conversion. Teaching Committee is chaired by a convenor appointed by the Head of School. Its core (ex-officio) membership consists of:

- UG and PGT Year Organisers
- Board of Examiners Convenors
- School Director of Quality
- Recruitment Officer
- Feedback Officer
- Representatives of; administrative staff, support and technical staff, [PG](#) teaching support staff, on-course students.

Committee meetings are open to all other interested members of staff, with all minutes published online.

2.2 Board of Studies

The Board of Studies is responsible for the curriculum approval process within the School of Informatics, providing a forum for discussion within the School, appropriate consultation with other Schools, and approval of submissions to the relevant bodies at higher levels within the University.

It is chaired by a Convenor appointed by the Head of School and includes all Informatics academic teaching staff, at least two members external to the School and at least two student representatives.

3. Administrative Bodies

3.1 Informatics Teaching Organisation

The Informatics Teaching Organisation (ITO), of which the Director of Teaching is academic lead, oversees the

procedures of UG and PGT teaching delivery. It provides administrative support for students and teaching staff. Its particular responsibilities are to:

- maintain UG/PGT student records and class lists for all years;
- support Year Organisers and course lecturers in the administration of taught courses;
- provide administrative support for the activities of the Board of Studies;
- provide administrative support for the activities of the Teaching Committee;
- provide administrative support to the Recruitment Committee and oversee all taught applicant conversion activities;
- implement taught programme QA procedures and prepare QA (and similar) submissions;
- administer the examination process, including liaison with all UG and PGT External Examiners;
- manage appointments of Teaching Support staff and their contracts;
- disseminate adjustment schedules for students with special needs.

Each course has a secretary nominated from within the ITO staff. Course lecturers retain overall responsibility for their courses, devolving administrative tasks to the ITO as appropriate, while retaining control over matters which require academic judgement or leadership.

3.2 Informatics Graduate School

The Graduate School aims to build a postgraduate community, coordinate recruitment, admissions, studentship funds, publicity and develop and monitor policies affecting postgraduate research students. Under its Director, the dedicated administrative staff have responsibility for:

- the welcome and orientation of new PGR students;
- on-course maintenance of PGR student records;
- administration of the PGR Monitoring Processes;
- interacting with various PGR related bodies within and beyond the University;
- concessions (extensions, interruptions, leaves of absence);
- examination support and the Nomination of PGR Examiners;
- PGR student recruitment, admission and offers (funding and academic);
- the administration of all DTA, Doctoral Training and School studentship funds;
- distribution of devolved Institute for Academic Development funding;
- implementing research programme QA procedures and prepare QA (and similar) submissions.

3.3 Research Institutes

Research Institutes have responsibility for the academic management of postgraduate research students. For administration and supervision purposes, every PhD student is attached to some Institute, although the subject of their research interest may in practice span several of the above areas, and will be allocated a PhD supervisor within this Institute. The supervisor is responsible for management of the student's day-to-day research activities, for ensuring the student's conformance to progress milestones, and for arranging progress review meetings, although the latter are supported and monitored by the Graduate School.

Each institute holds annual PGR review meetings in order to monitor the academic progress of its research students.

4. Reporting and Monitoring (UG and PGT)

Matters related to undergraduate and taught postgraduate degrees are presented in this section. The corresponding details for postgraduate research degrees are discussed in section 5 below.

4.1 Elicitation of feedback from students

Individual students may provide feedback on Informatics courses via course feedback questionnaires. Responses are stored anonymously by the Informatics Teaching Organisation and will be seen by (at least) the course lecturers and the Year Organiser of the year in which the course is offered.

Each year has elected student representatives, who are full members of the Teaching Committee and Board of Studies. Student reps interact with the School and Year Organisers both informally and more formally through meetings of the relevant Staff-Student Liaison Committee. External Examiner feedback reports are also considered at these meetings, ensuring that students have direct access to any recommendations made at the previous Examination Board.

Additionally, a Student Representative group meets weekly to deal with immediate issues concerning the teaching facilities and teaching and learning issues. Its membership comprises the Director of Teaching, any Informatics Class Rep who wants to attend together with a representative from the ITO and, when possible, a member of Computing Support staff. This group is intended to deal with pressing matters urgently, in order that Teaching Committee, Board of Studies and Staff Student Liaison Committees are able to take a longer term view.

Staff Student Liaison Committee minutes are published on the course web page. Individual course lecturers are encouraged to use further feedback methods (e.g. online mechanisms for informal discussion or course-related issues, opinions and problems) to keep in touch with their classes, but these are not part of our formal QA model.

4.2 Teaching Committee and course reports

Year Organisers and student representatives are invited to table reports for each Teaching Committee meeting, and any significant points from these reports are discussed.

After all the UG courses within a year have been fully examined, the Year Organiser prepares a report which is submitted to the ITO. It is the responsibility of the Director of Teaching to extract any relevant points and bring them to the attention of the Board of Studies or the Teaching Committee as appropriate.

The Course/Year Organiser may call a meeting of the staff involved with the course if there are issues which could usefully be discussed at this level. A similar process is carried out in October for MSc courses.

4.3 Role of External Examiners

These are as recommended in the College's documentation. Matters arising from the External Examiners' reports are considered by the Teaching Committee or Board of Studies as appropriate.

4.4 Provision of information to students

At the start of a course, students are provided with information covering at least the following points:

- an overview of the aims and objectives of the course;
- prerequisites;
- a condensed syllabus and learning outcomes;
- expected workload, including lectures, tutorials and practicals;
- timetable information, including first week arrangements, lectures, tutorials, lab sessions, practical deadlines, and feedback deadlines;
- assessment procedures and pass requirements;
- mainstreamed adjustments;
- details of the Quality Assurance mechanisms as seen by the students (e.g. staff-student committees, course questionnaires);
- a reading list;
- staff involved (including administrative and technical support) and how to contact them.

Substantial use is made of electronic newsgroups, email lists and web pages both in providing general and course

specific information and documentation. Email lists are generated daily from information held in the ITO database and all messages to these lists are held in web archives which can be read by list members.

Students are also provided with access to a personal automated individual portal page, summarising their course registrations, upcoming deadlines, feedback dates, marks received to date and group memberships.

4.5 Accreditation

All honours degrees put forward for accreditation by the British Computer Society on a five year cycle. Recommendations resulting from the process are considered by the Teaching Committee and Board of Studies as appropriate.

5. Reporting and Monitoring (PGR)

5.1 Individual student monitoring

The Graduate School defines a [detailed framework](#) for the monitoring of individual PGR students, expressed as a series of milestones (typically five or six for each of the first three years) and related review processes. Most substantially, these include annual submission of an appropriate proposal/progress document by the student, to be presented to a panel comprising supervisors and at least one independent member of staff. This panel provides the student with feedback and reports to the Graduate School. It also feeds into the supervisor's formal annual report to College. All reports are monitored by the Director of the Graduate School.

5.2 Institute level monitoring

Each Research Institute annually reviews the progress of all its research students, primarily by considering all review panel reports submitted since its previous meeting, and with further input as appropriate from supervisors. The meeting is attended by all supervisors, by the Institute's Director and PhD selector, and by the Director of the Graduate School. The Director of the Research Institute takes responsibility for ensuring that any resulting actions are addressed.

5.3 Elicitation of feedback from students

The PG Student Representative group comprises the Director of Graduate School, Graduate School administrative representation and student representatives. All PGR students are encouraged to participate via a wiki, or pass their feedback or concerns via their student rep. The group meets monthly and works through a standard agenda on the following topics:

- academic issues; e.g. PhD progress reviews, quality of supervision, rules and regulations;
- student welfare; e.g. relationship with supervisor, Furbush-style events, Institute social events;
- career planning; e.g. internships, postdoc grant application workshop, tutoring or commercialisation opportunities;
- admin, computing and support; availability, attitude and responsiveness of IGS and Computing Support teams;
- the Forum and postgraduate research environment; PhD office space, meeting rooms and computing facilities.

5.4 Role of external examiners

These are as recommended in the College's documentation. Matters arising from the External Examiners' reports are considered by the Teaching Committee or Board of Studies as appropriate. All External Examiners' reports are reviewed by the Director of the Graduate School.

5.5 Provision of information to students

The Graduate School organises orientation events and events preparing students for the major milestones, maintains detailed web pages and acts as a point of contact for informal enquires for PGR students. Information is maintained and disseminated covering at least:

- induction, registration and matriculation
- welcome and social events
- on-course monitoring, milestones and annual reporting
- resolving problems; transferable skills workshops and research training
- links to relevant University services

More information

[College of Science and Engineering Quality Assurance Wiki](#)

[Academic Services - External Examining](#)

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