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1. RESPONDING TO THE UUK 'STATEMENT OF INTENT'

In May 2019 Universities UK, Guild HE and the Quality Assurance Agency published a **Statement of Intent** in relation to maintaining the transparency, reliability and fairness of the UK degree classifications. It responded to the UUK report [Degree classification: transparent, consistent and fair academic standards](#) (November 2018), which found that over the past decade there has been a 55% increase in the UK of the number of graduates receiving at least an upper second-class degree, with an average rate of increase of 5% per annum. The November 2018 report set out that the rise in the award of first and upper-second class degrees risked undermining public confidence in the honours degree classification system and that the upward trend undermines the usefulness of the classification system to differentiate student attainment.

The Statement of Intent expects universities to meet several commitments, including that they should publish a degree outcomes statements, articulating the result of an internal institutional review of degree outcomes, in 2019-20. While the number of University of Cambridge graduates receiving at least an upper second-class degree in no way reflects this wider sector trend, we are required to prepare a degree outcomes statement as part of our commitment to protecting the value of qualifications.

UUK propose that degree outcomes statement, as the output of an internal institutional review, should explore four headings.

1. Quantitative trends in student degree outcomes over time, including the impact of student demographics, subject mix and academic regulations
2. Whether assessment criteria meet common sector reference points and are applied consistently by academic staff and external examiners
3. Whether the rationale for degree algorithm(s) is clear and publicly accessible
4. Whether the institution is making use of Advance HE's external examiner professional development programme and subject-specific calibration activity, or providing alternative arrangements.

On behalf of, and with the oversight of the Exams and Assessment Committee, the Education Quality and Policy Office (EQPO) will contact faculties and department for information to inform this internal review. Please contact EQPO if you have any questions about the work.

Contact: Education Quality and Policy Office

Queries: educationalpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk

Further information: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/degree-classification-statement-of-intent.aspx>

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY (QAA) MEMBERSHIP

The Quality Assurance Agency is the independent body entrusted with advising on standards and quality in UK higher education. The QAA is committed ensuring that all students working towards a UK qualification get the higher education experiences they are entitled to expect.

Further information about the work of the QAA can be found [here](#).

The University has renewed its membership of QAA. As a member, the University will benefit being part of a UK-wide membership community that is committed to maintaining the quality of UK Higher education. QAA works collaboratively with its members to address sector-wide challenges including safeguarding degree standards; maintains the Quality Code for Higher Education and revised Subject Benchmark Statements; advances UK higher education's international leadership in quality assurance and enhancement through their strategic partnership work with agencies across the world and provides an expert and independent voice on quality and standards.

In addition, the University's membership includes a package called Quality Insights, which includes practical events, webinars, guidance documents and facilitated discussions, focused on enhancement and practice. The resources available will enable colleagues to benefit from the sharing of ideas, keeping knowledge and skills up-to-date, and to assure standards and focus on enhancing academic experience for students.

We strongly advise colleagues register in order to access the wide range of resources available and in particular so that the Subject benchmark statements can be accessed.

Please complete the [registration form](#) to gain access to your log in-in details.

Revised Subject Benchmark Statements

In October, QAA published updates to Subject Benchmark Statements in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. They show what graduates might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their studies.

The STEM Subject Benchmark Statements have been refreshed to ensure that they reflect the 2018 updates to the Quality Code and associated advice and guidance as well as ensuring that our subject level guidance is aligned with current HE reference points. The changes do not represent a major change to the content of each Statement.

The Statements re-published are:

Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences	Engineering
Anthropology	Finance
Biomedical Sciences	Land, Construction, Real Estate and Surveying
Biosciences	Linguistics
Chemistry	Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research
Computing	Physics, Astronomy and Astrophysics
Computing (Master's)	Town and Country Planning
Criminology	Veterinary Nursing
Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies	Veterinary Science (Master's)

To find a particular Subject Benchmark Statement, see <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>.

Contact: Gemma Long
Queries: Gemma.Long@admin.cam.ac.uk
Further information: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/>

3. Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA)

3.1. Urgent request for academics to become complaint and appeal decision-makers

OSCCA are urgently looking for academics who are willing to attend a briefing session and become decision-makers to consider student complaints and/or examination reviews and and/or reviews of other University decisions. Full training is given and there is no obligation to take on any cases, it can be entirely dependent on the academic's capacity at the time. OSCCA provide as much support to the decision-makers as preferred. Please contact us for further information or if you know any academics who would be suitable then please pass this request on. Academics need to be members of Regent House, preferably with experience of making decisions in relation to student matters (in either College or University matters).

Contact: Sarah d'Ambrumenil
Telephone: 01223 (7) 65440
Email: sed52@admin.cam.ac.uk

3.2. Fitness to study consultation

This academic year the Procedure to Determine Students' Fitness to Study is being reviewed and this term is to allow for consultation. Relevant Collegiate University committees are reviewing a consultation paper. However, if there are any particular concerns that individuals would like to feed into the review then please contact us during Michaelmas.

Contact: Sarah d'Ambrumenil
Telephone: 01223 (7) 65440
Email: sed52@admin.cam.ac.uk

3.3. Prevention reporting

This term and next term OSCCA are piloting a system for Graduate students to enable them to anonymously report concerns. Concerns can be raised either via Graduate Tutors or with OSCCA directly, these concerns will then be shared with the relevant Faculty/Department/HR for informal action either with individuals or for more general action. Concerns should be reported to OSCCA@admin.cam.ac.uk.

This pilot will be in place for 6 months, following which time OSCCA will report on the use and benefit of the system and will look to identify trends and take action in relation to these.

Additionally, the University's mediation service is willing to provide mediation or a facilitated discussion between a PhD student and a supervisor, if both are willing to engage. Further information can be found on the University's [mediation service webpage](#), but any request for mediation will need to be submitted to OSCCA@admin.cam.ac.uk.

If you have any questions regarding this mechanism please contact us.

Contact: Sarah d'Ambrumenil
Telephone: 01223 (7) 65440
Email: sed52@admin.cam.ac.uk

3.4. new Responding to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct briefing

The termly training delivered on responding to harassment and sexual misconduct in a University setting has been re-designed and now encompasses new advice regarding note taking and risk management, as well as the practicalities of dealing with someone in distress, what to do if you're the first point of disclosure, and support and reporting options.

The briefing is available to all Collegiate University staff.

This term it runs on **Tuesday 19th November 10am-12pm** in the Student Services Centre. You must book in advance (there are limited places) at:

<https://www.training.cam.ac.uk/oscca/event/3246179>.

4. EXAMINATION OPERATIONS

4.1. Examination timetables

The examination timetables for the Michaelmas term 2019 and the Lent term 2020 are now available online and the examination timetables for the rest of the academic year will be published:

- February, for examination in the 'Early' period (April and May)
- Week commencing 13 April, for examinations in the 'Main' period (May and June)

Further information: <https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/all-students-timetable>

Contact: Craig Belcher

Email: craig.belcher@admin.cam.ac.uk

4.2. Faith provision for examinations

The University recognises that timetabled examinations may clash with religious observance. As a result, the University aims to minimise these clashes but this cannot always be guaranteed and it might be possible to make alternative arrangements.

Students must submit a completed self-declaration form (by deadlines given via the link below) to identify possible days or dates which might clash with University Examinations.

Please find further information regarding faith-provision in University exams [here](#).

4.3. Examination Guide

A transparent, comprehensive, and singular guide to undergraduate examinations for all staff who have a role in those examinations as well as for undergraduate students who wish to understand examinations at Cambridge is available for the academic year 2019-20.

Staff can access the online version here: <https://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/policy-guides>

Students can access the same version from the student facing pages, here:

<http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/undergraduate-exam-information>

4.4. Examination Access Arrangements

Colleges make requests on behalf of students who require adjustments to the standard examination conditions for reasons of disability. Applications are made using CamSIS and the application is then considered by the Exams Assessment and Mitigation Committee (EAMC).

Full details on the policy are [here](#) and a guide to support the specific process is [here](#).

The **deadline for making applications for examination arrangements** is 13th February 2020 with the deadline for the receipt of supporting evidence being 13th March 2020.

Where standard examination arrangements do not adequately address the specific, substantial disadvantage experienced by a disabled student, Colleges should refer to the [Code of Practice on reasonable adjustments for disabled students](#) and the guide which can be found [here](#). Please direct all initial enquiries and applications to exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk.

We encourage Colleges to submit applications as soon as possible, as they can take several weeks or months to conclude. At the very latest, the **deadline for making an AMA application** for academic year 2019 - 20 is 6th December 2018 (end of Full Michaelmas term).

Contact for AMA: Teresa Timlett

Telephone: (3) 39276

Email: exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk

4.5. Examiner expense claims

The subsistence rates for examiners expenses will be updated in January to reflect the changes planned by the Finance Division. Updated forms will be available:

<https://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/examinations-further-guidance-staff/appointment-examiners-and-assessors>

The central fund is unable to reimburse costs above those outlined in the guidance and in cases where claims are above the given rates, the maximum will be applied.

If there are circumstances where incurring expenses not permitted by the guidance, please ensure that an explanation is submitted with the claim form.

Email: feeandexpenseclaims@admin.cam.ac.uk

5. FEEDBACK AND REPORTING (GRADUATE STUDENTS)

5.1. Student Self-Evaluation

The Student Self-Evaluation report will be open to students from 12 – 30th November 2019. This report is available to all doctoral students and students on the Master of Philosophy and Master of Research. **It provides new students with a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of any issues** they may be experiencing and for all students to reflect on their time at Cambridge and to highlight any achievements or concerns. Submitted reports are viewed by Supervisors and College Tutors (who can also comment on the report) and by staff in Departments, Colleges and the Student Registry. Guidance on submitting a report can be found [here](#).

5.2. Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting System (Supervisor Reports)

The Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting System (PFRS), which replaced the old system (CGSRS), will open for termly supervision reports on the following dates:

- Michaelmas Term 2019: 12th November 2019 – 4th January 2020
- Lent Term 2020: 13th February 2020 - 9th April 2020
- Easter Term 2020: 14th May 2020 – 30th September 2020

Reports submitted are viewable by the student and colleagues in Departments and Colleges. Guidance on completing reports is available [here](#).

Contact: Emma Rixon
Queries: RecordsandExams@admin.cam.ac.uk

6. STUDENT HOLIDAYS (RESEARCH STUDENTS)

Students on research programmes are expected to be resident in Cambridge and working on their research throughout the year (including during the summer months when undergraduate students are not in residence), with short breaks for holidays. Doctoral students are entitled to up to 8 weeks of holiday per year and are expected to take a minimum of 4 weeks per year.

Students are not expected to be working during periods of holiday. Students who wish to undertake an internship or other such activity during the summer months must therefore apply to intermit their studies or work away from Cambridge (as appropriate, depending on the nature of the activity). Further information can be found [here](#).

Contact: Kerri Gardiner
Queries: Kerri.Gardiner@admin.cam.ac.uk
Further information: www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/graduate-study.

7. POSTGRADUATE FUNDING COMPETITION

The Postgraduate Funding Competition, to select the best applicants for funding, has now begun for 2020 entry candidates. The US round 1 competition is currently in progress. The round 2 competition funding deadlines, for applicants to be considered are 3 December 2019 or 7 January 2020 (dependant on course). **Departments must submit all nominations via TOAST by midday on Thursday 6 February** for them to be considered by Gates, Cambridge Trust, AHRC, ESRC, and other funding bodies. Awards will be announced from early March and reported though the Postgraduate funding Moodle site, weekly. Full information about the Competition can be found [here](#) and on the Moodle site.

For access to the Moodle site or the TOAST system, please email as below.

Contact: Jessica Barrick
Telephone: (7) 64850
Queries: fundingnominations@admin.cam.ac.uk