



LSHTM Academic Manual 2023-24

Chapter 1: Quality Assurance Context and Principles

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Annual Review of the Academic Manual

The LSHTM Academic Manual was introduced in 2019-20 bringing together all the academic regulations and procedures which constitute LSHTM's framework for quality and standards for credit-bearing taught provision, research degrees and special programmes. The Academic Manual consists of 11 Chapters all of which are reviewed annually and published as separate documents on [LSHTM website](#) together with a summary of amendments. With the exception of most minor editorial changes (e.g. typos, formatting and spelling or grammatical corrections), all revisions and amendments are noted and approved by Senate before the start of each academic year.

1.1 Principles and Core Practices

- 1.1.1 This document sets out the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)'s overall approach to the assurance and enhancement of academic quality and standards, describing a framework and broad principles under which more specifically-focused regulations, policies and codes of practice should operate.
- 1.1.2 This framework should apply across all award-bearing teaching and training at LSHTM, including both taught programmes and research degrees, and both face-to-face and distance learning modes of study.
- 1.1.3 It should also apply for all collaborative provision offered by LSHTM, even if specific mechanisms may differ in areas for which a partner institution has responsibility.
- 1.1.4 Quality assurance and enhancement activities will be grounded in the following key principles:
- a. Quality and standards are the individual and collective responsibility of all staff involved in learning & teaching. In their work, staff should always look to uphold LSHTM's academic standards, and support the quality of students' experience and embed equity and inclusion.
 - b. LSHTM will offer students suitable opportunities to meaningfully engage with and contribute towards quality improvement and progressing equity and inclusion, including through individual and collective feedback and representation on appropriate oversight and decision-making bodies.
 - c. LSHTM will maintain procedures to secure consistent academic standards across all teaching and training programmes, whilst encouraging an appropriate diversity of practice that allows these programmes to offer an optimum teaching and learning experience to students.
 - d. LSHTM's teaching quality management structures and procedures should:
 - support effective and efficient quality assurance and enhancement;

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- operate in a consultative and collegiate manner;
 - facilitate meaningful student engagement;
 - devolve quality responsibilities to those best placed to exercise them;
 - foster a culture of critical review and reflection in a positive and supportive environment; and,
 - encourage the dissemination and adoption of good practice.
- e. LSHTM will take a systematic approach to planning and reviewing quality related developments, including embedding inclusivity, in a strategic and institution-wide way, so as to demonstrably improve the quality of learning opportunities for students.
- f. Quality assurance and enhancement activities should be closely linked, so that regular monitoring identifies areas for improvement—particularly with regard to the student experience and student outcomes—and evaluates the success of such improvements. Such links should ensure enhancement developments are embedded, maintained, and can be identified as good practice to extend to other areas.

1.1.5 Furthermore, LSHTM's teaching and training provision as well as its quality assurance and enhancement activities will be grounded in LSHTM's [Mission and Strategy](#).

1.2 Academic Governance

1.2.1 LSHTM is a Member Institution of the University of London (UoL) and all credit-bearing degree awards are made under the aegis of the University. As such UoL's [Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations](#) provide a key reference point for LSHTM. Within the federal structure of the University LSHTM is responsible for setting and implementing its own academic quality assurance procedures, consistent with the broad requirements set out by the University (particularly University Regulation 1, contained in [University of London Awards](#)).

1.2.2 LSHTM is led on academic matters by Senate under the oversight of Council who direct the strategy and management of the institution and who have overall responsibility for academic quality assurance. Please see

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[Chapter 10, Governance of the LSHTM Academic Manual](#) for full details of terms of reference of academic committees and an organogram of academic governance.

1.3 Aims

- 1.3.1 LSHTM will assure itself, its students and other stakeholders that the teaching and training it offers upholds internationally-excellent academic standards and provides an internationally-excellent quality of learning opportunities.
- Such assurance will be achieved through rigorous and effective policies and procedures, that both reflect on and (wherever appropriate) seek to enhance quality and standards.
 - Policies and procedures will draw on and align with key external reference points, particularly the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and the [Office for Students \(OfS\) Registration Conditions](#)
- 1.3.2 Quality assurance and enhancement activities will support LSHTM's Mission, values and strategy—specifically the strategy for education.

1.4 Legislative and Institutional Compliance

- 1.4.1 Senate will ensure that any changes in:
- a. legislation through the [Higher Education and Research Act 2017](#) and/or [Competitions and Markets Authority](#)
 - b. compliance activity through the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#), [OfS' Conditions of Registration](#), and [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) will be reflected in the principles and procedures laid out in this handbook.
- 1.4.2 The [OfS](#) is the independent regulator of higher education in England. The OfS is independent from government and from providers. Its approach to regulation is underpinned by the functions, duties and powers given to it in the [Higher Education and Research Act 2017](#). These duties include assessing the quality of, and the standards applied to, higher education.

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- 1.4.3 The [OIA](#) provides an independent scheme, which reviews student complaints against providers. This also includes academic appeals.
- 1.4.4 The [UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment](#) provides sector-led oversight of higher education quality assessment arrangements that continue to be shared across the UK. Its aim is to ensure the provision of high-quality education across the UK, including higher education qualifications that are available overseas.
- 1.4.5 The Office for Students (OfS) [Regulatory Framework](#) is the basis upon which LSHTM secures academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, whilst utilising other sector recognised reference points such as the [Quality Assurance Agency \(QAA\)](#)'s [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) to support and enhance academic standards and the quality of teaching and training provision.
- a. National guidance and benchmarks are adapted into institutional practice in a considered way that fits with both the underlying principles contained within the OfS' [Conditions of Registration](#) and the specific needs of LSHTM.
 - b. Awards offered by LSHTM will align with the [Sector Recognised Standards](#) as detailed in the OfS Registration Condition B5, and the [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-awarding Bodies](#) (FHEQ), as part of the UK Quality Code for HE. This should also ensure equivalence in the threshold standards of all awards made under LSHTM auspices.
 - c. Standards of achievement and learning outcomes will be set out in programme specifications, aligning with national subject benchmark statements where available.
 - d. LSHTM's credit-bearing programmes and research degrees use the [QAA degree characteristics statements](#) to help inform their structure..
 - e. The [OfS Regulatory Framework](#) will form a key reference point for ensuring that teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities for LSHTM students meet national expectations. All programmes of study will be governed by clear procedures for approval, amendment, annual monitoring, and strategic periodic review.

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- f. Alignment with the OfS Regulatory Framework as well as maintaining processes aligned with best practice contained within QAA's Quality Code ensures institutional alignment with the standards for internal quality assurance of higher education institutions set out in the [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#).

1.5 Student Representation

- 1.5.1 LSHTM has mechanisms and policies for ensuring student representation on key committees and panels, so that students can contribute to quality assurance and enhancement activity.
- 1.5.2 LSHTM has separate procedures for the collation and analysis of Student Feedback and [Student Representation and Engagement](#).
- 1.5.3 LSHTM uses a variety of student feedback mechanisms to ensure that there is full student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement procedures, for example surveys, committees, panels and informal feedback.
- 1.5.4 LSHTM has a [Students' Representative Council](#) (SRC), which is an independent, student-led body that represents the interests of master's and research students at LSHTM.
- 1.5.5 All students registered for a programme of study with LSHTM become members of the SRC for the period of their registration unless they specifically opt out.
- 1.5.6 Students must be advised during the induction period of the mechanisms for providing feedback to LSHTM/their Faculty, including opportunities for representation on relevant committees via Student Representatives.

1.6 Admissions

- 1.6.1 The School makes clear the policies within paragraph 1.5.2 and make clear the entry requirements for each programme. Admissions data is recorded

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by staff involved in the admissions process and a report is made by the Programme Directors. Exact requirements for entry onto programmes of study will be made explicit in both online and hard copy programme specifications. These policies will be made available via the University website.

1.6.2 LSHTM has separate policies on admissions, including:

- [Postgraduate Taught Admissions Policy](#)
- [Postgraduate Research Degrees Admissions Policy](#)

1.7 External Reference Points

1.7.1 All quality-related policies, procedures and developments at LSHTM will pay due regard to appropriate external reference points, including as set out in paragraphs 1.4.2-1.4.5.

1.7.2 LSHTM programmes make use of a credit system in line with the [Qualifications and Credit Framework \(QCF\)](#) and the [Higher Education Credit Framework for England](#). LSHTM's credit framework is detailed in [Chapter 2, Qualifications and Taught Credit Framework of the LSHTM Academic Manual](#).

1.7.3 The professional development of staff as teachers in higher education will be aligned with the [UK Professional Standards Framework](#), published by [Advance HE](#).

1.7.4 The professional development of research degree students as doctoral-level researchers will be aligned with the Researcher Development Framework and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers both published by [Vitae](#).

1.7.5 The requirements of any other professional, statutory, regulatory, funding or accrediting bodies, both in the UK and internationally, that are of relevance to LSHTM's provision will be monitored, understood and engaged with, so as to safeguard and enhance the quality and standards of LSHTM's teaching and training. This forms part of Terms of Reference

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for key committees and job descriptions for key staff (see section 1.8 below).

1.8 Role of Key Staff in Quality Assurance

- 1.8.1 The Director acts as chair of Senate and takes strategic responsibility across LSHTM for the management of academic quality and standards, the promotion of quality enhancement, and the direction of LSHTM's education and research strategies.
- 1.8.2 The Pro-Director (Education) acts as chair of the Senate Postgraduate Taught Committee and takes operational responsibility for the management of academic quality and standards on LSHTM's programmes of study.
- 1.8.3 The Associate Dean of Education (Quality, Academic Standards & Collaborative Provision) takes operational responsibility for the management of quality and academic standards on LSHTM's taught postgraduate programmes; the Associate Dean takes further responsibility for the quality of teaching and training provided in collaboration with partner institutions.
- 1.8.4 The Associate Dean of Education (Head of the Doctoral College) acts as chair of the Senate Research Degrees Committee and takes operational responsibility for the management of academic quality and standards on LSHTM's research degree programmes.
- 1.8.5 The Director of Education Services is responsible for ensuring that quality assurance procedures are in place on an institutional level.
- 1.8.6 Taught Programme Directors and Faculty Research Degree Directors take operational responsibility for the management and assurance of academic quality and standards within their respective faculties.
- 1.8.7 Programme Directors engage with quality assurance procedures to ensure academic standards are upheld and not compromised on the programme for which they are responsible.

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- 1.8.8 Module Organisers engage with quality assurance procedures on a modular basis.
- 1.8.9 The Director of Education Services ensures that quality assurance procedures are in place across professional services and operations with delegation to the Head of Quality & Academic Standards, the Head of Registry and other Heads of Service as appropriate.
- 1.8.10 LSHTM recognises that individual staff, in discharging their responsibilities for teaching, supervision, assessment or student support, play the single most crucial role in assuring academic standards and the quality of students' learning and overall experience. To ensure that staff appreciate and feel ownership of this aspect of their role, LSHTM operates a collegial culture of quality assurance and enhancement. Consultation on proposed developments will take across the committee and management structure as appropriate—for example consulting Faculty committees, and where relevant departments or programmes, on proposed School-level policy developments of major significance.
- 1.8.11 The hierarchy of the key roles for ensuring quality and academic standards at LSHTM is shown in the [Organisational Chart](#) on LSHTM's website.