



University of
Chester

Handbook

Quality and Standards Manual

**TO ACCOMPANY THE
PRINCIPLES AND REGULATIONS:**

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS PROVISION

2020 – 2021

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INTRODUCTION

This Handbook sets out the University's requirements and expectations with regard to procedures and practice relating to information published in electronic or printed form. The information covered refers to academic programmes, services, corporate strategy and policies. It does not cover letters, verbal communication, presentations, teaching & learning materials, staff recruitment advertisements, the outputs of research and scholarly activity or the content of creative work.

Its purpose is to promote the quality of information made available to stakeholders both internal and external to the university, in terms of whether it is accurate, fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. It also aims to enable external audiences to form an accurate impression of the institution and to make informed decisions. Detail given in the handbook about the types of information to be made available is not exhaustive but gives an indication of areas of best practice in making information available publically.

The Handbook incorporates information and data requirements as identified by the Office for Students.

General principles for Information about Higher Education Provision

[Appendix A](#) sets out in tabular format those with responsibilities for each of the different areas of information stated in this handbook. Responsibility for producing and updating information may in practice be the individual(s) listed or their representative(s).

Local procedures and record-keeping should be commensurate with the importance of the communication.

The tone and complexity of the information published should be appropriate for the audience for which it is intended.

Information published on the University's corporate website should be clearly signposted and be located where a user would expect to find it.

Information should be made available in alternative formats where practicable to cater for the access requirements of a diverse audience.

Any links to external material should be checked regularly to ensure they are current.

Information such as third party endorsements, ratings, rankings or comparators should be supported with reference to the source and date. Where possible good practice would be to insert a hyperlink to the source of the information.

Information is communicated in the context of legislation and best practice guidelines, including:

- Freedom of Information
- General Data Protection Regulation

Reference to the 'corporate website' in this document refers to content held on the <http://www1.chester.ac.uk> webpages and therefore publically available information. 'SharePoint' or 'Portal' references refer to the University's internal electronic portal and therefore information to be accessed internally only by staff, students or external contacts who have specifically been given access rights to this area.

All agreements set out with collaborative partners should make clear what information they are expected to make publically available about their provision. Further details on this can be found in [Handbook C: Collaborative Arrangements](#).

SECTION A: INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER

Information on mission, values and overall strategy.

The University will make available on its corporate website information of interest to the public at large. This shall enable external audiences to develop a fair and accurate understanding of the institution.

This information can be produced in whatever format the Senior Management Team of the University deem fit. However, at a minimum it shall include the following:

- Mission statement
- Corporate plan
- Statement of quality and assurance processes
- Learning and Teaching strategy
- Information on partnerships
- Employability statements

The information shall be easily found in the 'About the University' area of the website.

This information shall also be made available in hard copy on request.

Each of these documents, once published, will be kept up to date with the latest versions and in the truest context within which the University is currently operating.

Ideally this information shall be reviewed at least annually in line with designed schedules for producing and updating institutional level information, strategies and policies.

SECTION B: INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Information on applicant and admission.

The most up to date information relating to admissions and applications to the University at a general level shall be made available via the corporate website:

- Undergraduate and Postgraduate Admissions policies
- International student admissions criteria (i.e. UKBA requirements)
- Fees, bursaries and financial support availability and eligibility.

Specific Entry requirements at a course level (i.e. previous qualifications/experience) shall be made clear on the University's course pages and be in line with those detailed in programme specifications.

Contact details on Course/Department/Services pages on the University's corporate website shall be kept up to date with current contact details.

Information on academic environment and support.

At a minimum, information about aspects of courses and awards made available to prospective students shall be made available in the form of:

- Prospectuses
- Course pages on the corporate website.
- Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors (for current academic year)
- Results of internal students surveys (these may be available internally only and made available externally on request)
- Links with employers (where employers have input into a course or programme) – this could be quite a high level statement
- Partnership agreements, links with awarding bodies/delivery partners.

Updating the content of this information shall be done in line with existing university processes, as appropriate, on an annual basis. Changes should be reflected in all publically available information; specifically, but not exclusively, the corporate website and other programme publicity information.

Course pages on the University's website shall give prospective students a fair, accurate and up to date representation of:

- What it is like to study the course
- Learning & Teaching and Assessment methods
- Indicative contact hours

- Employability prospects
- Entry requirements
- Whether the course carries professional accreditation
- Any other specific information relating to the course

Departments have autonomy on the content, style and format of communication to prospective students via course pages or otherwise, so long as information does not contradict other official publications or data sources about the course, such as prospectuses or programme specifications.

The [Student Life](#) area of the corporate website shall be kept up to date with information to aid a prospective student's understanding (or their advisers) of the learning environment and support made available to them on commencing study with the University. This information shall cover the areas of:

- Student Support Services
- Careers
- Learning and Information Services (e.g. library and IT resources available)
- Religion and Faith
- Site resource information (including Students' Union, leisure facilities, catering)
- Any other information relating to the environment within which the prospective student would be studying to inform their choice of university.

Information given to students on Open Days relating to the course/department/university shall also be up to date and offer a fair and accurate view of the university.

Unistats data collection

The Unistats data collection (previously referred to as the Key Information Set (KIS) data collection) is a data return requested by the Office for Students (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/discover-uni-and-unistats/>). It requires providers to return a reduced dataset which includes links to detailed information about course delivery and costs on their own websites.

However some data is no longer required in the Unistats data return, and since 2017 providers have been expected to publish detailed information about the following on their own websites in line with the Competition and Market Authority advice (www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers):

- Proportion of time spent in scheduled learning and teaching and independent study
- Proportion of assessment by method
- Tuition fee information
- Accommodation costs.

Unistats data is now provided to the public through the [Discover Uni](#) website, and course pages found here will link directly to this information for the relevant course on the provider's website, giving prospective students access to it as part of their course search.

The University will ensure the accuracy of data submitted annually relating to the Unistats data collection, and also that of the information which now resides on the University's own website. At the request of the Quality Manager (Data & Enhancement), AQS, this will require on an annual basis a review of:

- Undergraduate courses which meet the inclusion criteria for requiring a Unistats record to be created;
- Accommodation costs of both institution owned and privately provided student accommodation for the next academic year;
- Module level Learning & Teaching and Assessment data for the current academic year. This will enable this data to be calculated for each year of study for courses eligible for Unistats. This shall be in line with information in boxes 7 and 13 of the module descriptor;
- Courses eligible for Unistats with professional accreditation and the nature of the type of accreditation this offers students on completion of their studies.

The Discover Uni widget will be placed on the course pages of the corporate website by the University's web team in order to give indicative measures of student satisfaction and employability for the course/subject area. Departments may wish to supplement this information with statements about the course and employability in the designated areas of course pages.

Academic Departments shall nominate a Unistats Contact (formerly 'KIS Contact') who will be responsible for ensuring that all information required for Unistats is made available in a timely and accurate manner.

Academic Departments shall ensure that all information submitted in relation to Unistats is accurate by checking their courses on the [Discover Uni](#) website and the respective widgets displayed on the university's course pages, following publication in the current academic year. Any inaccuracies or changes to information displayed on Discover Uni should be communicated to the Data & Enhancement Team (AQS) at the earliest opportunity who will ensure that changes are made to the University's Unistats record accordingly.

[Appendix B](#) gives further guidance about assigning Learning & Teaching and Assessment categories and percentages to modules for the purposes of meeting the requirements of Office for Students (OfS) and Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) in providing this information via the University's corporate website.

SECTION C: INFORMATION FOR CURRENT STUDENTS

Information on programme of study.

Prior to arriving at the University, students will be provided with an induction pack in the form of a 'Welcome Magazine'. This pack will normally include (but is not limited to) information on the following:

- Enrolment information
- PASS (Pre Arrival Student Site) where they can apply for accommodation, look at their full central and academic induction timetables.
- Personal Academic Tutor (PAT)
- Academic days
- Attendance Monitoring
- Volunteering and Mentoring
- Disability and Inclusion
- Wellbeing and Mental Health
- Careers and Employability
- Finance
- Accommodation (including registering for a local GP and Dentist Practice)
- Students' Union
- John Smiths Bookshop (including the Aspire Books Scheme)
- Welcome Week timetable with all compulsory activities and optional social events
- Campus Map(s) (including information on car parking, transport and campus facilities)

Current students shall be able to access in electronic format or hard copy, a Programme Handbook for the current academic year. This shall be made available electronically on the University SharePoint Department/Course pages or in hard copy from the Department offices and should relate to the current academic year.

Information given to students in the form of Programme Handbooks shall follow the guidance as detailed in [Appendix C: Information For Students In Programme Handbooks 2020/21](#).

Programme specifications shall also be published in line with the guidance found in the following places:

- Appendix Di to this handbook relating to the Annual Updating of Programme Specifications for existing programmes
- Appendix Dii to this handbook relating to the Annual Updating of Programme Specifications for existing programmes including a Foundation Year
- The guidance in [Handbook B: Approval, Modification and Withdrawal of Academic Provision](#) for new programmes

These, once set to the published stage in the programme specification editor, will be made available to current students via the Programme Documents page on

SharePoint and shall be updated on an annual basis in preparation for programme delivery in the following academic year.

The latest versions of Module Descriptors will also be made available via the Programme Documents page on SharePoint and shall be a point of reference for module specific information for current students.

Information on assessment and examination schedules and procedures shall be made available to current students electronically or in hard copy in a clear and timely manner by Registry Services and be made available electronically via SharePoint and in hard copy to be posted on noticeboards at designated points in the University.

Opportunities for study abroad or work based learning shall be clearly communicated to students by departments. This shall be up to date and include information such as who to contact and the administrative processes to follow in order to partake in these opportunities.

The location of where to find the full set of relevant and applicable regulations relating to academic study at the University shall be made available either electronically on SharePoint or in hard copy. It shall be made clear to students where they will be able to find this information.

Information specific to Postgraduate study and research at a department level or within the Graduate School shall be made available to current students either electronically or in hard copy. This should include administrative and supervision arrangements specific to postgraduate students.

HE Provider and current students' expectations.

Current students shall find information on the following easy to find, clear and up to date:

- Student support and guidance
- Financial support
- Information on mitigating circumstances/appeals/complaints

It shall be made clear to current students how students are represented in informing change and decision making processes at a department/faculty/university level.

This shall include:

- Arrangements for gathering and responding to student feedback
- How student representatives are elected/selected (in collaboration with the Students' Union)

- Making external examiners and annual monitoring reports available
- Minutes of Boards of Studies and other University committees with student representation

Please refer to the University's [Student Engagement Portal site](#) for more information on the students' role in informing change and decision making.

The University shall make clearly available regulations and procedures relevant to their studies including information on:

- Deferral of assessment or interruption of studies
- Assessment regulations
- Mitigating Circumstances
- Academic Appeals
- Academic Integrity
- Research Ethics

Students will be requested to read and accept the current 'Student Contract' during online enrolment with the University at the start of each academic year of study. This includes an acknowledgement on the part of the student that he/she is responsible for familiarising himself/herself with all the information which the University issues in electronic or paper form. The University shall therefore ensure that information is made clearly available to students for this purpose.

SECTION D: INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS ON COMPLETION OF THEIR STUDIES

Record of their studies.

On completion of their studies, students will be provided with a record of their academic achievement in the form of a Higher Education Achievement Report, Diploma Supplement or other such suitable document.

Information on policies for archiving and retrieval of records shall be made available on the corporate website for access by students who have completed their studies.

SECTION E: INFORMATION FOR THOSE WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY

Framework for managing academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement.

Information relating to academic standards and quality will normally be made available internally and available externally on request, however information of specific interest to external audiences or that requires access from an external source will be made available on the corporate website at the discretion of the Head of Academic Quality and Standards.

The [Quality and Standards Manual](#) shall be reviewed and updated accordingly in line with the Office for Students' Conditions of Registration on an annual basis. Following approval by Academic Quality and Enhancement committee, the most up to date publishable Quality and Standards Manual handbooks will be made available via the Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) department page on SharePoint or in hard copy on request.

Information held on the [Portal AQS page](#) will, at a minimum, document the following (this information will also be made available in hard copy on request):

- Procedures and outcomes for programme approval, monitoring and review
- External examination procedures
- Policies for student complaints, appeals and academic integrity

The [Programme Documents page](#) on SharePoint will be maintained and updated by AQS and contain a record of the following:

- Programme Specifications (all years)
- Module Descriptors (current)
- Programme approval and Academic Periodic Review reports
- Continuous Monitoring of Enhancement – including links to current and historic Faculty/Departmental/Programme monitoring data and reports (incorporating external examiner responses)
- Historic Programme Monitoring AQS Overview reports and data
- Academic Framework information

Management information to be used in monitoring and enhancing academic quality and standards shall be available at a minimum from the following sources:

- The Continuous Monitoring of Enhancement process (superseding the Annual Monitoring process) - see [Handbook D: Evaluation, Monitoring and Review](#);
- The Infoview reporting tool accessed via SharePoint;

- Bespoke quantitative data available on request from Management Information Services (MIS);
- Student Survey data is made available to both staff and students via [Portal](#), and is overseen by AQS. This includes the following surveys; [National Student Survey \(NSS\)](#), Undergraduate Experience Survey (UGES), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).
- Graduate Outcomes data is also made available to both staff and students via [Portal](#), and is overseen by Student Futures: Careers & Employability. This includes the following surveys; Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, [Graduate Outcomes Survey \(GOS\)](#) and Career Readiness Survey.

All management information will be used in line with policies on Data Protection and General Data Protection Regulation.

Information detailing the University's committee structure, agendas, papers and minutes of meetings shall be made available on the [Essentials page](#) on Portal.

Information regarding Office for Students' Conditions of Registration, Annual Provider Review, Higher Education Review, or any equivalent, and recommended actions, shall be circulated to those with specific interest and made available on [Portal](#) when available and appropriate.

Records of collaborative arrangements.

Information relating to the management of quality and standards for collaborative arrangements shall be documented and made publically available via the [Partners page](#) on the corporate website. This may include information on promotion and publicity; recruitment, selection and admissions; learning, teaching and assessment; management of student records; and quality assurance. Please refer to [Handbook C: Collaborative Arrangements](#) for further details.