Royal
Agricultural
University

A

Code of Practice: Quality and Standards Framework

<u>Academic Governance Approval</u>

Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)

<u>Academic Sponsor</u>

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resources)

<u>Professional Services Owner</u>

Head of Academic Quality

<u>Date Approved</u>

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1. Aims and Scope and Regulations

1.1 Aims

The Code of Practice A: Quality and Standards Framework outlines procedures that ensure the effective and efficient implementation of processes to support the management of academic standards that ensure a high-quality learning experience and support student achievement.

The overall aim of the Quality and Standards Framework is to demonstrate the University's responsibility for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its awards and for managing the quality of its programmes, and to ensure the student experience is continuously improved. The University intends that its awards, and the research and academic writing carried out, will be recognised of being of an academic standard which is at least equal to that of any other recognised and comparable Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the UK.

1.2 Scope

This Code of Practice applies to the following awards from the Royal Agricultural University taught at its campuses in Cirencester and Swindon, as well as its Joint Institute for Advanced Agritechnology at Qingdao Agricultural University (RAU at QAU) Joint Institute; franchised and validated provision taught at education providers in the UK and international:

- Level 4 Certificates
- Level 5 Diplomas
- Level 6 Honours
- Level 7 Masters
- Level 8 Doctoral

Where the University is in an approved partnership with an education provider in the UK or internationally, responsibility for ensuring the quality and standards of the University are met sits within the subject area to which the collaborative programme(s) belong.

1.3 Regulations

The University is registered with the Office for Students which means the University needs to meet the conditions of registration as set out in [The Office for Students Regulatory Framework (Nov 2022)](#). Conditions B relate to the quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students, such as:

Condition B1: Academic experience
The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high- quality academic experience which includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that each course:

a) is up-to-date;
b) provides educational challenge;
c) is coherent;
d) is effectively delivered; and
e) as appropriate to the subject matter of the course, requires students to develop relevant skills.

Condition B2: Resources, support and student engagement

The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure students receive resources and support to guarantee a high-quality academic experience and for students to succeed in and beyond higher education; and that effective engagement which each cohort of students takes place.

Condition B3: Student outcomes

The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.

Condition B4: Assessment and awards

The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards. The provider must ensure that
a) students are assessed effectively;
b) each assessment is valid and reliable;
c) academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible;
d) academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a way which appropriately reflects the level and content of the course;
e) relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.

Condition B5: Sector-recognised standards

The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):
a) and standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards;
b) awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.

Condition B6: Participation in the Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF)

The provider must participate in the Teaching Excellence Framework.

In addition, to support the University's continued engagement with higher education quality principles, the University works with, and embeds principles from:

[The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (Feb 2024)](#)

[QAA Quality Code for Higher Education 2024](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 – Sector-agreed Principles](#)

[QAA Characteristics Statements](#)

[QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#)

1.4 Key Terminology

Quality assurance	The process for checking that the academic standards and quality of higher education provision meet agreed expectations
Threshold academic standards	The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for the award of academic credit or a qualification as set out the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (Feb 2024)
Academic standards	The standards that individual degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of their academic credit and qualifications.
Academic quality	How, and how well, the HEI supports students to enable them to achieve their award. This covers learning, teaching and assessment.
Quality enhancement	Deliberate steps taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities
OfS numerical thresholds	Numerical thresholds representing the minimum expectations for the percentage of students achieving positive outcomes for each indicator (continuation, completion and progression)

2. Principles and Context

2.1 Principles

The University Quality and Standards Framework with its procedures sets out to enable RAU's graduates to support the University's vision for it to be UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management, enabling communities locally, nationally and across the world to thrive in harmony with nature. The University's goals and measures of success are:

Quality

A global reputation for excellence and leadership across our teaching, research and engagement.

- All our programmes are market leaders
- Our graduates are prized by employers
- Our staff develop into recognised leaders within their disciplines
- Professional bodies seek our expertise and help

Reach

A growing, diverse and inclusive community of students and partners in the UK and internationally.

- Increase in student applications to study in the UK
- Attracting more students from under-represented groups
- Growth in transnational education
- Growing partnerships with like-minded organisations

Sustainability

A showcase for sustainable and resilient management, through our land and estate, our finances, and our culture.

- Physical transformation of our estate
- Generating sufficient revenues to reinvest
- Material progress towards achieving net zero
- Our staff enjoy working here

The University has five values to underpin our learning community. These are the values which staff and students will work by:

Collaborative

We believe in the power of working together. We are stronger as a community of practice - inspiring each other, identifying shared goals, and providing reciprocal support that leads to greater success.

Open-minded

We are receptive to new ideas and we value the diversity of experiences and skills. We are committed to listening to everyone across the RAU community.

Resourceful

We adopt creative approaches to achieve our goals while setting higher standards, promoting professionalism and sustainability.

Responsible

Individually and collectively we take accountability for our actions, working with integrity to achieve the highest ethical standards.

Inclusive

We acknowledge the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals and are committed to maintaining an environment that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and respects diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences.

2.2 RAU Graduate Framework

The University's Quality and Standards Framework with its policies supports the implementation of the RAU Graduate Framework which it aims to embed into all its programmes of study and support activities offered to students.

The RAU Graduate Framework is aimed to help RAU Staff and Graduates articulate employability credentials developed whilst at the RAU. The framework consists of the following four domains:

1. Professional approach
2. Sustainable mindset
3. Technically skilled
4. Innovative thinker

The four employability domains have been derived from a review and detailed mapping of relevant proprietary employability frameworks, employer feedback and RAU strategy. The framework has also been strongly informed by RAU Values

1. Collaborative
2. Open-minded
3. Resourceful
4. Responsible

5. Inclusive

2.2.1 Professional approach:

We inspire our graduates to be reflective, self-aware team members with excellent communication skills approaching new challenges with flexibility and confidence.

The RAU curriculum and University experience promotes development in the following (indicative not exhaustive):
- Resilience, growth mindset and lifelong learning
- Advisor communication skills
- Facilitation and practice-led innovation
- Leadership, management and team working
- Equality, diversity and inclusivity
- Professional ethics, standards and client care
- Conflict avoidance and dispute resolution
- Health and safety

Demonstrated by knowing how to:
- Act with integrity, promoting trust in themselves and their profession.
- Pursue excellence & provide a high standard of service.
- Show respect and consider the perspectives of others.
- Take responsibility and show resilience.
- Understand and apply professional ethics and standards

2.2.2 Sustainable mindset

We inspire our graduates to commit to environmental sustainability and regeneration, demonstrating an understanding of complexity and systems thinking.

The RAU curriculum and University experience promotes development in the following:
- Natural resource monitoring and management
- Analysis of dynamic interactions between systems
- Nature and technology-based solutions
- Government, industry and civil society policy
- Environmental stewardship, social responsibility and corporate governance
- Citizen and consumer engagement and influence

Demonstrated by:
- Environmental awareness.
- Understanding how multi-faceted forms of sustainability impact decision making.
- Awareness and application of the principal environmental & sustainability frameworks.
- Ability to engage in, critique and challenge sustainability narratives professionally, responsibly and inclusively.
- Understanding how behavior affects positive change.

2.2.3 Technically skilled

We inspire our graduates to enter the workplace as technically and digitally skilled practitioners who value practical knowledge and scientific evidence.

The RAU curriculum and University experience promotes development in the following:
- Relevant professional, academic and practical skills
- Technology innovation and adoption
- Data analysis and business informatics
- Communities of practice and indigenous knowledge
- Evidence-based decision making

Demonstrated by:
- Competence in research and information management.
- Knowledge and use of subject specific technical language and procedures.
- Experiential learning through placements and work experience.
- Subject specific competency and technical skills.
- Understanding the value of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

2.2.4 Innovative thinker

We inspire our graduates to have commercial acumen and curiosity, seeking innovative solutions to real-world problems.

The RAU curriculum and University experience promotes development in the following:
- Entrepreneurship and innovation process
- Business accounting and planning
- Project management
- Strategic and operational management
- Rural revitalisation and prosperity

Demonstrated by knowing how to:
- Value equality, diversity and inclusion as an innovative force for a business.
- Show professional curiosity and creativity.
- Adopt a growth mindset and positive work ethic
- Use market intelligence and research to solve problems.
- Become reflective lifelong learners.
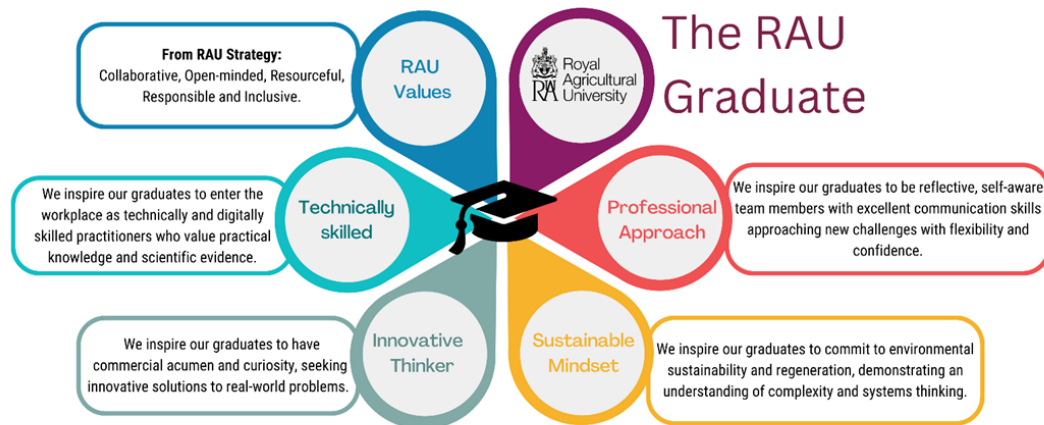
3. RAU Quality and Standards Framework

3.1 Codes of Practice

The University Quality and Standards Framework is expressed in sections throughout the Codes of Practice and these support the application of the University's Academic Framework for Taught Programmes and the Research Degree Framework:

- Code of Practice A: Quality and Standards Framework

- Code of Practice B: Admissions

- Code of Practice C: Learning and Teaching

- Code of Practice D: Assessment

- Code of Practice E: External Examiners

- Code of Practice F: Programme Design, Development and Approval

- Code of Practice G: Review and Reapproval of Programmes and Modules

- Code of Practice H: Monitoring and Evaluation of Programmes and Modules

- Code of Practice I: Collaborative Provision

- Code of Practice J: Assessment Boards

3.2 Governance of Quality and Standards

The governance of quality and standards at the University is managed through a range of Committees and Boards, including:

- **Board of Governors**
Responsible for ensuring the University meets the ongoing conditions of registration as an HE provider and provision of assurances to the Office for Students (OfS) confirming the standards for student academic experiences, student outcomes, and the standards of awards. These assurances are based on the reports and action plans it receives from Academic Board.

- **Academic Board**
is responsible for ensuring that the University's academic standards are fit for purpose. It is responsible for the formal approval of academic policies and procedures, for ensuring that the University's academic strategy is fit for purpose. It has formal responsibility for the standards, quality and enhancement of the University's academic provision with oversight for learning and teaching, research, scholarship, standards, students and programmes. Academic Board delegates some responsibilities to its subcommittees.

- **Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)**
is responsible on behalf of Academic Board for all aspects of academic quality assurance and enhancement to assure the quality and standards of the University's academic awards. This includes, but is not restricted to, academic policies and procedures, external examiners, student voice and programme approval with recommendations to Academic Board.

- **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC)**
has overall responsibility for the strategic development and enhancement of the student learning experience and the quality of teaching and assessment. Reporting to Academic Board, LTAC works alongside AQSC.

- **Academic Strategy and Planning Committee (ASPC)**
is responsible for academic portfolio planning and development as it relates to the University's Academic Strategy, and for approving on behalf of Academic Board the proposed development of new undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, new partnerships, and the substantial change (or significant revisions), or the suspension or closure of, existing programmes and partners. ASPC is responsible for developing, monitoring and reviewing the Institutional Academic Strategy

- **Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC)**
comprised of elected student representatives and the teaching team. They meet each semester to review teaching and learning and the delivery, organisation and assessment of each course. The minutes of these committees are kept as a formal record and made available to students, and relevant members of the Subject area Senior Management Team.

- **Research & KE Committee**
is responsible for the delivery of the RAU Strategy in the areas of research and knowledge exchange. The Committee owns and delivers the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy to promote, encourage and deliver research, scholarship and knowledge exchange on behalf of the RAU Academic Board and Governing Council. In addition, the work of the University is supported by steering groups that address particular areas of work at a point in time.

3.3 Assurances of Standards and Enhancement

The Quality and Standards Framework provides a systematic approach to assess and provide reasonable assurance of the effectiveness of the institution's approach to governance, risk management and quality and standards processes. These processes are mapped against the Codes of Practice as follows:

Business case approval for new programme(s)	Code of Practice F
Programme and module reviews	Code of Practice G
Programme and module modifications (Material and non-material changes)	Code of Practice F
Partnership approval / review	Code of Practice I
Annual Programme Monitoring	Code of Practice H
External Examining	Code of Practice E
Assessment Boards (integrity and management)	Code of Practice J
Student Feedback and Representation	Represented throughout
PSRB Accreditation and Approval	Code of Practice F
APL / APEL considerations	Code of Practice B

4. Roles, Qualifications and Training Framework

4.1 Roles

To assist the Academic Quality Team with the successful implementation of the Quality and Standards Framework, support is required from staff members across the University and subject areas. Clarity on responsibilities and accountabilities are expressed in the Codes of Practice and applies to the following roles:

- Deans of Subject
- Programme Leaders
- Module Leaders
- Link Tutors
- External Examiners
- Student Representatives

4.2 Training Framework

Each role will undergo initial training upon appointment and additional targeted training will be made available through the support from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students; teams across Academic Services that includes Academic Quality, Registry, Admissions, Student Services and Enterprise & Employability; and members from the Learning Technology team).

An annual programme of training activities is made available that includes regulatory updates, pedagogical and technological developments, and CPD opportunities for academic staff members.