

Academic Policy

A01 Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Policy

1. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to ensure:

- the safeguarding of academic standards,
- the assurance and enhancement of academic quality
- the implementation of an effective Quality Assurance and Improvement cycle throughout the operations of SAE Institute in the United Kingdom.

This policy complements other relevant policies and key documents, including *Strategic Directions*, the *Code of Conduct*, the *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy*, and the *Staff Development Policy*.

1.1. Academic Standards

The *safeguarding of academic standards* is the process whereby the Institute ensures that all awards, qualifications and/or credits granted are made on the basis of the achievement of appropriate academic standards.

Academic standards of taught programmes are concerned with the appropriateness of intended programme or unit of credit learning outcomes (in relation to programme or unit of credit aims, content and qualification level), the appropriateness of the syllabus (in relation to learning outcomes), and the effectiveness of assessment (in relation to the measurement of the attainment of learning outcomes).

1.2. Academic Quality

Academic quality is defined as those activities and functions that contribute to a student's academic experience, including:

- learning, teaching, academic guidance and assessment practices;
- the deployment of learning resources and learning support;
- other mechanisms that contribute to the quality of a student's engagement with the Institute, including: student recruitment and admission; provision of information; advice on progression and programme planning; assessment feedback; systems for student evaluations of modules and courses; careers advice and guidance; and student academic appeal, complaint and grievance procedures.

Academic quality assurance is the process whereby the Institute ensures that the quality of the learning opportunities offered to students are at an appropriate level.

Academic quality enhancement describes ongoing processes to improve the student experience over time. A key element of the process of enhancement is the identification and adoption of good practice.

2. Safeguarding of Standards

For all Institute award programmes or units of credit:

- standards will be at an appropriate level for the relevant qualification;
- standards will satisfy the requirements of Middlesex University in relation to all Middlesex University validated or accredited programmes;
- standards will satisfy any relevant governmental or other regulatory bodies, and will be framed in the context of current relevant industry employment standards and good practice for that programme;
- academic standards will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure currency, relevance and consistent application.

3. Assuring Quality

The Institute principles relating to academic quality assurance are:

- the quality of the student experience will meet the requirements of Middlesex University for MU Programmes under validated or accredited status as appropriate;
- the quality of the student experience will meet the requirements of relevant governmental or professional or other regulatory bodies;
- assurance will be informed by programme approval, monitoring, review and student feedback processes which identify and take action to resolve any issues related to students' academic experience;
- Institute approaches to quality assurance will have regard to relevant industry standards and good practice;
- students will have opportunities to be involved in the processes of programme approval, development, monitoring and review; and
- the views of external assessors will be taken into account when the quality of programmes is established or reviewed.

4. Enhancing Quality

A key priority for the Institute is to enhance the student experience on a continuing basis, and towards this aim:

- there will be feedback and evaluation processes for the quality of the student experience to be monitored and reviewed;

- such processes will be based on data sets such as those derived from quality monitoring reports, student feedback, progression and achievement data etc;
- any changes made to improve the student experience will be determined on the basis of sound evidence that they are likely to be effective;
- a key process in enhancing quality will be the identification and promotion of good practice derived both from within SAE Institute nationally and internationally, and from relevant external research and organisations;
- the improvement of quality in the student experience needs to be underpinned by continuing commitment to staff development processes.

5. Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Cycle

The academic quality of courses and programs at SAE Institute is monitored, assured and subject to review and improvement through a continuous improvement cycle based on the principles of PIMRI

Plan-Implement-Monitor-Review-Improve

which was adopted in 2011, and which applies to both management and academic yearly cycles of activity.

The PIMRI process is illustrated in the diagram below:



The major aims of this Academic Quality Assurance and Improvement Cycle are:

- to support a culture of quality assurance and continuous improvement;
- to build quality into all SAE educational courses and activities, and ensure incorporation of the QAA Quality Code;
- to gain staff commitment to continuous quality improvement;
- to establish, in due course, reliable performance indicators and benchmarks of quality at all campuses;
- to establish a variety of ways of gaining information from stakeholders and using that information for continuous improvement;
- to identify and promote good practice.

Responsibility for the implementation and achievement of operational and business objectives resides with Executive Management, while ongoing academic quality assurance is the specific responsibility of the Director of Academic Affairs, the Associate Director of Academic Affairs, and the Senior Academic Coordinator.

This approach addresses academic quality assurance objectives through specific plans, policies and procedures, which are then applied through key functions for individuals with designated responsibilities for implementation of policies and monitoring of evidence including student feedback, and through regular annual reporting and review cycles.

Key elements in the 'monitor and review' sequence are the External Examiner reports and the important annual process for review (Annual Monitoring Report) as required for all courses under the validation and accreditation regulations and guidelines of Middlesex University (MU), with whom SAE Institute has been in partnership since 1997.

6. Foundations for Academic Standards and Quality Assurance

The four major foundations which safeguard academic standards and guide academic quality assurance for SAE Institute offering collaborative validated programmes from Middlesex University in the United Kingdom are:

- 1) the **UK Quality Code for Higher Education**, which applies to all Higher Education operations in the United Kingdom:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/>
- 2) the **Middlesex University Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook**, which is the procedural framework to guide all MU quality assurance activities:
<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/Strategy/quality-standards/handbook/>
- 3) the **SAE Quality Handbook**, which was approved after SAE Institute was granted "accredited status" by Middlesex University in 2010, which brings together both the QAA Quality Code and Middlesex University Guidelines as they apply to SAE Institute operations, and which is reviewed on a regular basis with Middlesex University;

- 4) the **comprehensive system of External Examiners** required by Middlesex University, who act as independent moderators to maintain national and international academic standards, and ensure equitable application of University and Institute rules for all students. The External Examiner system and processes are described fully in the SAE Quality Handbook, and are subject to the provisions of the QAA Quality Code.

In the United Kingdom, SAE Institute is an Associate College of Middlesex University, and is subject to the relevant rules and regulations of Middlesex University as they apply in the context of the collaborative Partnership Agreement (renewed 2009), the Instrument of Accreditation (2010), and the Special Associate College Agreement (2011).

Final responsibility for all academic quality assurance lies with the International Standards and Quality Committee (ISQC) of SAE Institute, which co-ordinates academic quality assurance and enhancement for SAE Institute globally, and the Head of Quality from Middlesex University is a full member of the ISQC.

7. Related Policies and Procedures

All relevant Policies and Procedures are listed in the SAE Institute Quality Handbook, and the Code of Conduct for staff and students forms the major over-arching policy to guide SAE operations.

The major policy by which SAE Institute assures the high quality of teaching and learning processes and outcomes at all campuses is the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, which is intended to promote the importance of good teaching based on scholarship, and of effective learning as a self-directed lifelong quest for skills, knowledge and wisdom.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy also supports a four-stage process for effective teaching, namely:

- 1) the design and development of the curriculum;
- 2) the delivery of courses;
- 3) the assessment of students; and
- 4) the further improvement of learning and teaching experiences for students.

Deriving from and supporting the aims of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy are a number of key related policies and procedures such as those relating to Regulations for Programmes of Study, the Academic Honesty Policy, Assessment Regulations, Academic and Non-Academic Grievance Policies, Staff Development Policy, etc, all of which are included in the SAE Quality Handbook.

8. Review and Reporting Processes

Middlesex University and SAE Institute have established regular review and reporting cycles in relation to all aspects of academic operations. Regular Assessment Board meetings overview and approve academic outcomes and student results, Annual Monitoring Reports are required and provided to Middlesex University, and twice yearly Steering Group meetings overview all aspects of the Associate College partnership and formal agreements and collaborative projects. The SAE Quality Handbook also provides for review processes relating to changes to programmes and specific Academic Review procedures.

9. Version Control

Policy approved: September 2010, CEO, SAE-UK

Policy amended: April, 2013, Director of Academic Affairs, SAE Global