University Code of Practice

Information, Advice, Guidance and Support

Document reference:	QH:E1
Date first approved:	May 2019
Date coming into force:	September 2019
Date last reviewed:	September 2023
Date amended to current version:	August 2025
Current version no:	2.01
Approved by:	Academic Board
Responsibilities:	Academic staff – professional services staff Registrar - Head of Academic Quality and Learning Director of Academic Programmes and Research Vice-Chancellor Academic Quality and Standards Committee Research and Research Degrees Committee
Application to collaborative provision:	Mandatory
Contacts:	Head of Academic Quality and Learning
Applications for exemptions to:	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
Report exemptions to:	Academic Board

Summary/ Description:

This Code sets out the University's commitment to, and arrangements for, providing information to prospective, current and former students, and the wider public (chapter I) and for providing advice, guidance and support for students (chapter II).

Chapter I defines the principles which govern the University's approach to providing information which is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and therefore meets the needs of specific groups. Information is managed in ways which ensure its suitability and currency, with clear responsibilities identified for particular categories of information. The chapter also addresses the provision of programme handbooks, the definitive record of programmes and the University's collaborative provision register.

Information provided to prospective students is of three broad types, information:

- designed to enable an informed decision about the programmes offered
- about how to get further information about programmes and how to apply for a programme
- which sets out rights and responsibilities if an applicant is offered and accepts a place on a programme.

The range of information for current students, provided through programme handbooks and Canvas, relates to the programme and broader issues about being a student (such as access to learning resources and where to get help). A summary is also provided of the information which the University provides about a current student's rights and responsibilities. Information for former students focuses specifically on the Transcript of Academic Record.

Chapter II sets out the University's approach to advice, guidance and support for (current) students. Providing advice, guidance and support is part of the University's approach to enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The chapter specifically addresses:

- arrangements for induction and to support students' transition into, through and beyond their programme
- the types of advice and guidance available in relation to academic and personal matters
- the role of professional services giving students access to specialist areas such as disabilities, counselling and careers (where these services may be bought in given the size of the University).

Further Guidance

See the Introduction to the Quality Handbook (QH:A1) for further guidance and explanations of:

- how the Handbook is designed to work and what it covers and does not cover
- how it is structured
- the 'external reference points' and established practice which have informed each of the Codes
- key concepts and themes
- some suggestions for further reading
- a quick guide to each Code, including definitions and things to watch out for.

This university Code has been written in accordance with the approach approved by the University to enhance clarity involving the following terminology: must = mandatory should = advisable may = desirable. Where these terms are used they are emphasised in bold.

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INTRODUCTION

Authority

1 The Academic Quality and Standards Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this code of practice as it relates to students on taught programmes, and Research and Research Degrees Committee as it relates to students on research degrees. Where there are differences in the way the Code relates to students on taught programmes and those on research degrees, this is made explicit in the text; otherwise the word 'programme' relates to both taught programmes and research degrees.

Scope of the Code

2 This Code applies to all provision which leads to the award of the University's higher education qualifications.

3 This Code applies to prospective, current and former students of the University. Prospective students include those who might wish to consider whether to apply to the University and therefore who are entitled to be assured that the information on which they might rely in making a decision satisfies certain minimum expectations and is being properly managed by the University. Former students includes those who leave as graduates and those who leave having not completed their programme for various reasons. All former students are entitled to be provided with formal confirmation of their studies, and for this to be verified to appropriate third parties such as potential employers.

4 Chapter I sets out the University's commitments to other stakeholders through providing public assurance that the University manages the academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience in a transparent, rigorous and fair manner, including through making available publicly information about its quality assurance and enhancement system (captured in this Quality Handbook) and through other information on its website.

5 Chapter II is primarily concerned with those who have enrolled as students on the University's programmes leading to higher education qualifications and with applicants who are entitled to enrol, in that they have accepted an unconditional offer from the University, or they have accepted a conditional offer which the University has confirmed that the conditions have been met. Information, advice and support for applicants prior to this stage, and for potential applicants, is addressed in the Code on Recruitment, Selection and Admission (QH:C3).

Application to collaborative provision

6 Unless specified by the Academic Board, this Code applies to all provision referred to in paragraph 2 whether that provision is delivered by the University or another approved provider in accordance with a formal legal agreement.

CHAPTER I: INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY'S HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISION

7 This chapter sets out the University's commitment and approach to providing information to prospective, current and former students, and to providing public assurance about the way it manages the academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. It sets out a number of principles which reflect expectations and practice in the UK, including as set out in the UK Quality Code (2014).

Principles

8 The University is committed to providing information to prospective, current and former students and to the wider public that is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The University interprets these terms as committing it to ensuring that information:

(a) meets the needs of diverse audiences, is reviewed and updated regularly and systematically and its value is demonstrated by feedback from different audiences
(b) is available when it is needed, can be located readily and without extensive searching and can be readily understood. (This is over and above to providing specific assistance for example where information is required in alternative formats (such as braille or large print))
(c) can be relied upon enabling informed decisions to be made (such as whether to apply for a programme) and is not misleading either in what it says or in what it does not say.

9 The University's approach to providing information also forms part of its commitment to:

(a) working with students as partners in their higher education experience (as set out in the Code on Students as Partners (QH:F1))
(b) engaging with external experts, professional, statutory or regulatory bodies for applicable programmes and with industry especially in the design, development, delivery and review of its programmes
(c) providing equality of opportunity to prospective applicants, applicants and enrolled students including through anticipating their needs and making reasonable adjustments in individual cases based on consultation and expert advice
(d) enabling students to take full advantage of their higher education experience, academically, personally and professionally.

10 This Code forms part of the University's Quality Handbook which brings together all of the University's rules and codes in what is designed to be a transparent and comprehensive academic framework setting out how it awards higher education qualifications, and how it manages the quality of the student learning experience. As a publicly available set of documents it contributes to providing public assurance of the way in which the University manages higher education, in addition to information about how the University is regulated (through the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority), governed (through its governing body and Academic Board) and its mission, values and strategy.

Managing information

11 The University seeks to ensure that information meets the commitments set out above:

(a) by ensuring that information is provided by those persons best qualified to provide it
(b) by assigning clear responsibilities for managing information in all its forms
(c) through the systematic monitoring and updating of information taking into account feedback from internal (and where applicable) external stakeholders.

Responsibilities

12 The following are responsible for ensuring that information produced by the University satisfies the commitments set out in this Code:

Information	Responsible for developing content/format	Responsible for approving content/format
Marketing and publicity	Communications and Marketing Manager	Vice Chancellor
Prospectus	Communications and Marketing Manager	Vice-Chancellor
Information about programmes and awards (for prospective students)	Registrar with Programme Coordinator	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
Information on how to apply for a programme	Registrar	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
Quality Handbook	Head of Academic Quality and Learning Director of Academic Programmes and Research	Academic Board
Research Degree provision	Director of Academic Programmes and Research	Research and Research Degrees Committee
Governance	Chief Financial & Operations Officer	Vice-Chancellor
Programme and module specifications	Programme Coordinator	Programme Approval Panel Head of Academic Quality and Learning
Programme Handbooks	Programme Coordinator	Head of Academic Quality and Learning Director of Academic Programmes and Research
Information about University services/facilities	Recruitment and Student Experience Manager	Registrar

13 Responsibilities involve ensuring that before information is provided (in hard copy, via electronic means such as Canvas, or uploaded to the University's website) it is clear, accurate,

appropriate for the intended audience and properly presented (including proof read). Responsibilities also include ensuring that information is kept up to date (at least annual updating) and that, where appropriate, the information, or the way in which it is presented, is improved for example in response to user feedback.

Handbooks for students

14 Programme Coordinators are responsible for ensuring the production of handbooks for students undertaking each programme. Handbooks are designed to provide a single comprehensive resource containing clear information about the programme, the sources of support and guidance available to students and the standards of achievement expected of them. In particular they address the information set out in para. 28 below.

15 Handbooks are provided online through Canvas with alternative formats available either on request, or where agreed as part of a student's Statement of Reasonable Adjustments (under the Code on Reasonable Adjustments (QH:E4)). Definitive versions are maintained by the Programme Coordinator (in pdf format) including an archive of each year's version (in the event of a query or complaint). Each version contains clear version/date information to ensure staff and students are clear about which is the current version.

16 Students **must** be notified by email when the handbook is available, and **must** be similarly notified if changes have to be made to the handbook during the year including providing a summary of the changes and the reasons for those changes. Handbooks are one of the items for discussion and feedback at Student-Staff Liaison Committees meetings and through student surveys. (See the Code on Students as Partners (QH:F1)).

17 Handbooks contain a mixture of programme specific and University-level information. Content for the latter is provided by the Head of Academic Quality and Learning (for taught provision) and the Director of Academic Programmes and Research for research degree provision and includes summaries of University procedures such as those governing progression, appeals, complaints, and University services and facilities.

Definitive record of programmes

18 The University, through its Quality Office, maintains a definitive record of all taught programmes approved under the Code on Programme Approval (QH:C2)). The definitive record comprises the final version (in electronic format) of the programme specification and module descriptors approved in accordance with this Code (or its predecessors) including the date of approval, date of commencement of delivery, and mode of delivery approved, of each programme.

19 The record also shows whether the programme has been accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body and the period for which that accreditation is valid.

20 The definitive version of the programme and its modules held in the record is used as the basis for the delivery of the programme (including assessment), and for the monitoring and Periodic Development Review of the programme. It also provides the basis for information for students, employers and other stakeholders, for example supporting the production of Transcripts of Academic Record.

21 Historical versions of programmes and modules will also be maintained so that accurate information can be provided to graduates and other stakeholders where their studies related to versions of the programme which have now been superseded or withdrawn.

Collaborative provision register

22 The University – through the Director of Academic Programmes and Research - maintains on its publicly available website a definitive record of other providers with whom it has made a formal agreement for the delivery of higher education provision, both where the agreement leads to the award of the University's credit or higher education qualifications and where the University is contributing to the delivery of another degree awarding body's awards. Partnerships are categorised according to the nature of the partnership activity including:

(a) articulation agreements
(b) placement learning
(c) study abroad
(d) student exchanges
(e) franchises
(f) validations
(g) dual/multiple awards
(h) joint awards.

23 For each formal agreement the register sets out the following information:

(i) name and registered address of the partner organisation
(j) date agreement formally agreed by the two parties
(k) date agreement ends or is scheduled for review
(l) nature of the activity authorised through the agreement.

Information for prospective students

24 The University recognises that in addition to prospective students - that is those who might wish to consider whether to apply to the University – others will have an interest in the same information, in particular those who might be providing advice to a prospective student (such as a parent/guardian/partner), and those who might be sponsoring or otherwise enabling an application (such as an employer or financial sponsor).

25 The University provides information through its website and prospectus of three broad types:

(a) information designed to enable an informed decision about the programmes offered. Programme specifications are published and openly accessible through the University's website. Information provided in programme specifications includes:

(i) the title of the programme and the qualification to which it leads
(ii) the structure of the programme: module components (including optional modules) and their credit weighting
(iii) the specific entry requirements, including English language requirements;
(iv) whether offered full and/or part-time
(v) the learning, teaching and assessment methods, including the balance between formal teaching (contact hours) and self-directed study
(vi) the knowledge and skills which will be gained (including subject-specific and transferable)
(vii) any opportunities for placements or equivalent
(viii) whether the programme is accredited or recognised by a professional, statutory or regulatory body
(ix) employment prospects

(b) information about key dates such as semesters and details of how to get further information, for example on:
(i) open days or visits to the University;
(ii) how to apply (including the process of application and the general entry criteria), and including how to get individual help with making an application (such as reasonable adjustments because of a disability or similar need);
(iii) programme costs including both the tuition fee and any additional costs (such as relating to field trips, protective clothing or specialist equipment)
(x) the resources and facilities available to support learning (including specialist services)
(xi) the curriculum content of a programme.

(c) information which sets out rights and responsibilities which would become part of the contract between the University and the applicant on acceptance of the offer, including:

(i) the Terms and Conditions of the contract (available on the website but also issued along with an offer of a place)
(ii) the Code on Student Protection (which applies in the event that a programme is withdrawn or material changes are made to it affecting current students)
(iii) procedures enabling an applicant to provide feedback and to lodge an appeal or a complaint relating to the handling of an application.

26 Information such as the rules and regulations governing progression through a programme and being awarded a qualification, and the University's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience, is available to both prospective and current students in the Quality Handbook on the University's website.

27 Once an applicant accepts an offer of a place from the University (and, where the offer is conditional, satisfies the conditions of the offer), the applicant will be provided with information to support them through the transition to starting the programme. Information will also be provided about induction events and activities (see further chapter II below).

Information for current students

28 Current students have access to the full range of information about their programme, provided electronically through Canvas and through their programme handbook. This information includes those matters set out in para. 25, and includes more detailed information including:

(a) teaching: timetable, types of teaching activities, expectations relating to independent study
(b) the intended learning outcomes for each module, and for the programme as a whole
(c) for research students: supervision, the research environment and the criteria for progression
(d) assessment: formative and summative assessment tasks, deadlines for submission, how to submit work, marking criteria and the marking scale, deadlines for return of marked work and arrangements for feedback, plagiarism and other forms of academic/research misconduct and their consequences
(e) access to learning resources: Canvas, library, ICT
(f) the rules governing progression, including the consequences of not progressing
(g) getting help: study skills, mitigating circumstances, interruption of studies/repeat periods, reasonable adjustments (if not already addressed pre-enrolment)
(h) arrangements for getting results at the end of each programme stage and at the end of the programme (and see further below regarding Transcripts of Academic Record).

Rights and responsibilities

29 Current students are also provided with information setting out their rights and responsibilities as students, making clear what they can expect of the University and what the University expects of them: This information includes:

Rights

(a) to participate in the management of their student experience, through providing feedback, becoming a student representative or providing their ideas and views through their student representative (see the Code on Students as Partners (QH:F1))
(b) to receive academic guidance about their progress (including if things do not go well)
(c) to receive sound advice about University procedures and how to exercise their rights (see further under chapter II)
(d) to receive help and support when a student encounters problems that affect their ability to study
(e) to lodge an appeal or a complaint about matters relating to their academic progress or their student experience (including the preferred option of seeking informal resolution before a formal appeal or complaint)

Responsibilities

(a) to make effective use of the information provided to them (such as the programme handbook) and to seek further guidance where they consider that information is unclear or does not resolve their query or problem
(b) to comply with programme attendance and submission requirements

(c) to comply with standards or codes of conduct to ensure their safety and well-being and that of those they come into contact with (including standards or codes of employers or professional bodies when on placement)
(d) to take responsibility for their learning and to engage with the learning opportunities provided (such as carrying out required independent study) (see further under chapter II)
(e) to notify changes in circumstances that affect a student's entitlement to be a student
(f) to seek help when difficulties occur (for example through using the mitigating circumstances/absence with good cause procedures)
(g) to pay, or ensure the payment of, tuition and other fees properly notified by the University.

Information for former students

30 The University provides information for students at the end of their programme and on request thereafter which provides them with definitive and official confirmation of their achievements which can then be used in support of applications for employment and/or further study.

31 Upon successful completion of the programme or early completion with an exit award due to voluntary withdrawal by the student or the termination of their programme under the University's rules (Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1) or Academic Regulations: Research Degrees (QH:D1)), a student will receive a Transcript of Academic Record. A student not eligible for an award will receive a statement listing completed modules.

Taught programmes

32 For taught programmes, each Transcript of Academic Record will record, for each module attempted, module code, name, credit value, level and mark (as a percentage) achieved including, where applicable:

(a) modules passed by compensation, showing the uncompensated mark for the module
(b) for modules passed by reassessment, the capped reassessment mark
(c) the highest of the two marks where both attempts at a module were failed
(d) credit transferred from another University of Gibraltar programme, credit transferred from another degree awarding body, and credit for prior experiential or certificated learning, making explicit the level and volume of that credit and how it has been used towards the University of Gibraltar qualification.

33 The following will not be recorded on the Transcript of Academic Record:

(a) any indication that mitigating circumstances have been taken into account in relation to any module or the programme as whole
(a) any indication that a student was awarded a 'pass with mitigation' for a module
(b) the marks awarded for the original attempts at a stage where the student was granted permission to repeat the stage on grounds of mitigating circumstances.

34 The Transcript of Academic Record will indicate the number of credits awarded under the UK Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

Research degree provision

35 For research degree students, the Transcript of Academic Record will record any research training or equivalent module undertaken as part of the research degree, including any mark awarded for the module.

Students in debt

36 Students who are in debt to the University for payment of tuition fees where the sum involved is greater than £50, will not be provided with a Transcript of Academic Record until the debt has been cleared.

CHAPTER II: ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

37 This chapter sets out how the University seeks to take a holistic approach to making advice, guidance and support available to students as part of the arrangements and resources designed to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. These arrangements cover the provision of induction at various points of the student journey, advice and guidance on academic and non-academic matters (and including to help students exercise their rights effectively) and support provided, including through professional services (such as counselling, disabilities and careers). This holistic approach also seeks to enable students to develop the skills that will help their development, skills both to manage their academic development (including opportunities such as placement learning) and to help their transition from their programme to employment or further study.

38 Clear and current information about the range of opportunities and services available to students is provided in programme handbooks and on Canvas – including from whom to seek advice on specific matters (see further chapter I).

Induction and transition

39 The University is committed to supporting and enabling the induction and transition of students through each of the key stages of their higher education experience for whichever programme they are studying, in which ever mode and of whichever duration. Specifically (and where applicable) this includes successfully:

(a) moving from the applicant stage to becoming an enrolled student
(b) commencing the programme and being equipped to begin studying
(c) making best use of formative assessment opportunities including reflecting and acting on feedback
(d) completing each set of summative assessments
(e) moving between stages of the programme
(f) completing the programme and moving to the award and conferment stages

(g) becoming an alumnus of the University.

40 The University's approach to enabling and supporting students is founded on the principle that higher education is, as far as possible, the development of a partnership – a form of joint working - between staff and students, and one where students can legitimately be expected to develop greater independence as they move through their programme, and therefore can be expected to take increasing responsibility for their learning. The University views this idea of partnership as applying to:

(a) learning and teaching and assessment: where these involve a dialogue between students and students, and students and staff that enables critical self-reflection on what has been achieved and what can be achieved
(b) the management of the quality of the student learning experience, including the enhancement of that experience.

41 This approach is realised through:

(a) providing an environment which enables effective learning, which is safe, accessible and reliable for every student whether it is physical, virtual or social, and including environments provided by partner organisations such as through placements
(b) for research students, providing an environment that supports doing and learning about research and in which externally recognised research is occurring
(c) reducing the inequalities which arise because of the lack of experience of students compared with University staff – this includes ensuring clarity about student rights and responsibilities and providing advice and guidance
(d) recognising the diversity of students and the individuality of their needs and aspirations
(e) supporting students when things go wrong including providing clear information about options
(f) developing shared understandings, for example of the University's strategic approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and of the way in which these approaches are implemented such as in assessment, enabling a shared understanding of the complex nature and purpose of assessment and feedback.

Induction sessions

42 The University will provide, and seek student feedback on a range of induction sessions for:

(a) students at the start of their programme
(b) at the beginning of each new stage of the programme
(c) prior to, and following, periods away from the University, such as on placement or an interruption of studies.

43 Induction sessions will be designed to introduce students to different aspects of university life - academic, social and pastoral - and to create a sense of belonging to the University community. They will also seek to equip students with knowledge and skills, or to help students identify where additional support or advice may be needed, in relation to:

(a) studying at higher education level (including the increasing level of difficulty moving through e.g. a Bachelor's programme or undertaking a research degree, and the nature of a learning outcomes-based approach to education)
(b) the study skills (subject-specific and generic) required to engage effectively in learning, to understand the value of feedback and to utilise that feedback effectively
(c) how to get the most out of their university experience
(d) good academic practice and academic integrity
(e) digital and information literacies
(f) research (subject-specific and generic including development and career opportunities)
(g) transferrable skills such as working together in informal and formal settings
(h) cultural orientation and exchange
(i) getting involved for example as a student representative or through giving ideas and feedback to help enhance the student learning experience
(j) other broader themes (for example education for sustainability, citizenship, internationalisation, ethical behaviour)
(k) where and how to get further help.

Advice and guidance

44 The University will provide students with advice and guidance – both for all students and specific to individual students - on a range of matters designed to support them in addressing difficult challenges, whether academic or personal, which might affect their ability to progress, and ensuring that they are aware of and can exercise their rights provided as part of their contractual relationship with the University. Advice and guidance relates to, for example:

Academic matters

(a) the requirements for progression through a programme and to the award including (where applicable) how degree classifications are calculated
(b) making appropriate and informed choices for example when selecting optional modules or applying for placements
(c) applying for credit transfer and/or the recognition of prior learning (certificated or experiential)
(d) the consequences of failure and options for redeeming failure
(e) the consequences of not complying with attendance and submission requirements (including exclusion from assessment/reassessment and the termination of the programme)
(f) the requirements of good academic practice, the consequences of academic/research misconduct (including examination offences) and entitlements if an allegation is made
(g) rights to raise concerns informally and to lodge an appeal or complaint (including for the latter relating to non-academic matters)

Personal or related matters

(h) applying for extension/absence for good cause or mitigating circumstances
(i) applying for reasonable adjustments or revising the provision of reasonable adjustments where a student's circumstances change
(j) opportunities for an interruption of studies, or a repeat semester or module
(k) difficulties relating to financial matters, including for example resulting in the inability to pay tuition or other fees

(l) the availability of Exit awards and Aegrotat awards in the event of a student being entirely incapable of completing a programme for (usually) medical reasons.

Professional services

45 The University will provide students with access to specialist professional services, such as counselling, on a collective basis and, when required, to meet individual student needs. As the University is a small organisation a number of services will be bought in rather than being provided by University staff.

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