

# **The UCEM Academic Infrastructure**

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## **An Introductory Overview**

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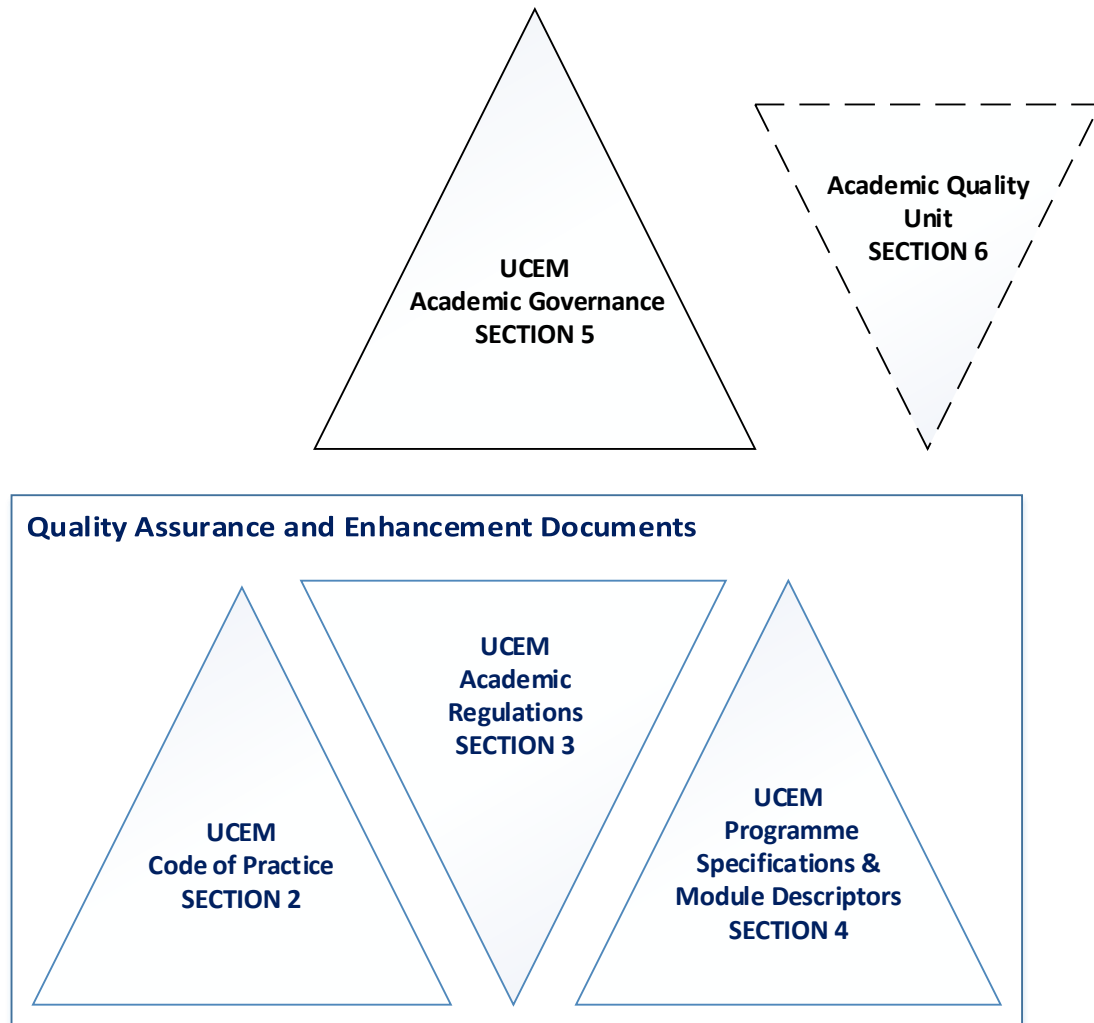
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# 1. Introduction to the Academic Infrastructure

## 1.1 Overview

The University College of Estate Management (UCEM) Academic Infrastructure is made up of the following elements:



This introductory overview to UCEM's Academic Infrastructure provides an outline of each element and signposts to the more detailed guidance, policies and procedures in conjunction with which this document should be read.

The Academic Infrastructure covers programmes at Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) levels 4 to 7.

In addition to the sources introduced in this overview, UCEM makes use of other relevant policy documents and guidance notes. These include a Freedom of Speech Policy, an External Speakers Policy and Student Protection Plan. These are published on the [UCEM website in the Policies section \(opens new window\)](#).

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## 1.2 Key Definitions

Please see the [UCEM Glossary \(opens new window\)](#), which can be accessed via the UCEM Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), for a more extensive list of terms.

- **Academic quality:** The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) defines academic quality as *‘how, and how well, higher education providers manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed’*. (QAA Glossary, 2022)
- **Quality assurance:** *‘The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the Expectations set out in the Quality Code, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved’*. (QAA Glossary, 2022)
- **Quality enhancement:** the process of development which leads to the improvement in the quality of the institution or individual programme of study.
- **Threshold academic standards:** QAA defines a threshold academic standard as *‘the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award’*. (QAA Glossary, 2022)

## 1.3 The Office for Students (OfS)

The OfS is currently the Designated Quality Body (DQB) with responsibility for assessing the quality and standards of Higher Education Providers (HEPs) in England.

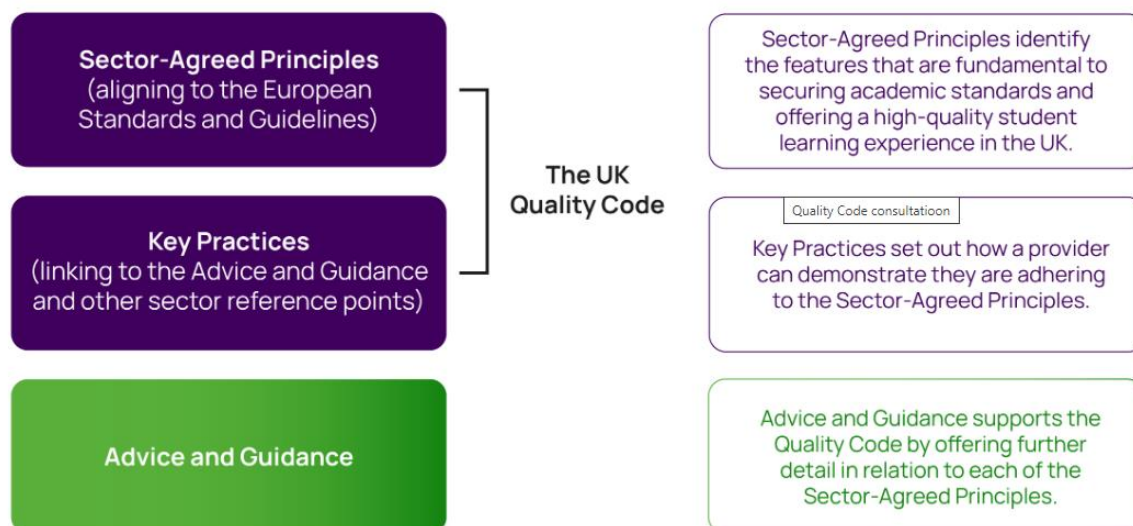
## 1.4 The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

The QAA reviews standards and quality in higher education, produces key sector guidance and provides practical support for members.

The QAA has produced a series of resources to help guide HEPs; the core three are:

- [Higher Education Credit Framework for England \(QAA, 2021\) \(opens new window\)](#): provides guiding principles for the use of credit and includes the Credit Framework Table.
- [Subject Benchmark Statements \(QAA, 2024\) \(opens new window\)](#): guidance organised by subject area which sets out the expectations of the knowledge that should be acquired by a student studying that award. Those that are particularly relevant to UCEM are the Subject Benchmark Statements for Land, Construction, Real Estate and Surveying and for Business and Management.
- [The UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(QAA, 2023\) \(opens new window\)](#): designed to assure the academic standards and quality of higher education in the UK. The Quality Code is under review due to changes to the regulatory structures of higher education across the UK. The proposed revised structure is as follows (Source: QAA 2024):

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### 1.5 Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

UCEM has strong links with professional bodies. Professional accreditation and /or recognition is a key feature of UCEM programmes. UCEM works with PSRBs including the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Chartered Management Institute (CMI), the Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE), the Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors (CICES), the Hong Kong Institute of Construction Managers (HKICM) and the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Property Managers (HKICPM).

Periodically, UCEM is required to report to regulatory bodies based outside the UK in connection with the recognition and monitoring of programmes offered to students based within their national jurisdictions. This includes the Hong Kong Non-Local Courses Registry (HKNCR). An annual return is provided to HKNCR for programmes which are registered in Hong Kong.

## 2. UCEM Code of Practice

The UCEM Code of Practice sets out UCEM's academic policies and procedures which underpin the quality and standards of UCEM awards. It has been developed, and continues to be informed by, good practice in the wider HE community and by the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The Code of Practice is regularly reviewed through UCEM's deliberative committees to ensure that it remains in line with both QAA guidance and proposed changes to UCEM policy and practice.

UCEM staff are encouraged to notify UCEM's Director of Academic Quality if there are any parts of the Code that require amendment as part of the continuous improvement of the Code.

The Code is developed within the context of the [UCEM Academic and Programme Regulations \(opens new window\)](#) relating to both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Where UCEM policy and procedures are affected by legislation, the relevant section of the Code will make explicit reference to the relevant statutory instrument(s). The Code will also reflect principles, policies and procedures adopted by UCEM to meet the

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requirements of external professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Some chapters may be supplemented by additional documents that are used in connection with the implementation of the content of the chapter.

The Code of Practice seeks to achieve certainty and consistency for all those engaged in the relevant processes within UCEM and transparency and accountability for the benefit of external stakeholders.

The [UCEM Code of Practice \(opens new window\)](#) is available on the UCEM website. The Table of Contents shows the chapters which make up the Code of Practice and these are described in further detail below.

### 2.1.1 Academic Infrastructure – An Introductory Overview

This document provides an overview of UCEM's Academic Infrastructure and Code of Practice.

### 2.1.2 UCEM Code of Practice: Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning

The UCEM Code of Practice on Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning sets out UCEM's policy on the admission of students and the recognition of prior learning for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study.

The policy aims to ensure that:

- applicants are treated fairly and consistently;
- applicants are appropriately supported and guided through the application process;
- applicants are able to make appropriate, informed choices;
- students who are recruited are capable of succeeding in their chosen programme; UCEM strategic objectives are recognised.

The Code of Practice also sets out UCEM's policy and procedure in respect of credit transfer and recognition of prior learning (the recognition of academic credit towards module exemption), as well as the procedure for the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) for non-standard admission (the recognition of learning through experience and practice as a means for entry onto a programme).

#### **UCEM supplementary documents:**

- [Terms and Conditions of Contract \(opens new window\)](#)
- Core entry requirements for each programme of study can be found in the [programme specification \(opens new window\)](#).

### 2.1.3 UCEM Code of Practice: Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing.

The UCEM Code of Practice on Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing provides a framework for the implementation of reasonable adjustments to support students with a disability or neurodiversity. UCEM aims to ensure that all students achieve their full academic potential, and that no student is disadvantaged because of a disability, neurodiversity or health condition.

#### **UCEM supplementary Documents:**

- [Neurodiversity, Disability, and Wellbeing Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)

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### 2.1.4 UCEM Code of Practice: Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The UCEM Code of Practice on Learning, Teaching and Assessment, provides operational guidance and policy for the Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Strategy's implementation. UCEM's LTA Strategy is a high-level planning document identifying the principal objectives and priorities for these areas at UCEM and is reviewed every 5 years. The implementation of the strategy works within the other Codes of Practice and academic regulations.

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-2025 \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Alternative Assessment Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)

### 2.1.5 UCEM Code of Practice: Partnerships

The UCEM Code of Practice on Partnerships sets out the scope of UCEM's approach to partnerships. It draws upon the Expectations and Core and Common practices from the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education and the QAA Advice and Guidance on Partnerships (2018), including the core practice 'where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them'.

### 2.1.6 UCEM Code of Practice: Programme Development and Validation

The UCEM Code of Practice on Programme Development and Validation sets out the broad principles and procedures that guide the design and approval of UCEM programmes. It closely partners the UCEM Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. More extensive guidance for those engaged in developing a proposal for approval and subsequent validation is set out in UCEM's Programme Development and Validation Procedure.

**Validation** is the process by which UCEM evaluates whether a proposed new programme of study meets institutional and national academic standards, and whether the content and delivery will provide UCEM students with a good quality learning experience.

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- Programme Development and Validation Procedure
- Briefing Document for Validation / Periodic Review & Re-validation Panel Members
- Guidance for Programme Teams Preparing for Validation and Periodic Review
- (Re-)Validation Business and Academic Case proforma

The documents listed above are available internally on the AQU section of the UCEM intranet.

### 2.1.7 UCEM Code of Practice: Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Code of Practice on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation sets out the broad principles and procedures that guide the monitoring, periodic review, re-approval and withdrawal of UCEM programmes.

This Code of Practice chapter sits alongside the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation and is also supported by the detailed procedural documents on Programme Monitoring and Evaluation and Programme Amendment and Discontinuation.

It includes:

#### Planning

- Programme validation (see Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation)
- Module and programme amendment
- Module and programme discontinuation

#### Monitoring

- Programme monitoring mechanisms
- Module and programme Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- In-delivery monitoring of modules

#### Evaluation

- Module Evaluation and Module Leaders Report
- Annual programme review
- Periodic review and re-validation

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- [Programme Amendment and Discontinuation Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)

### 2.1.8 UCEM Code of Practice: External Examining

External Examiners are subject experts independent from UCEM who are in place as an additional mechanism for assuring the standards of UCEM awards and provision. The UCEM Code of Practice on External Examining sets out the principal responsibilities of External Examiners appointed to modules and programmes offered by UCEM; procedures relating to their appointment; induction; reporting and other duties; their involvement with Boards of Examiners; their remuneration; and circumstances relating to the termination of their appointment.

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- External Examiner Appointments Subcommittee Terms of Reference (available on the AQU section of the UCEM intranet).



### 2.1.9 UCEM Code of Practice: Student Appeals and Complaints

The UCEM Code of Practice on Student Appeals and Complaints applies to all UCEM programmes. It sets the context for the separate procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals.

UCEM aims to treat all complaints and appeals appropriately, fairly and with regard to applicable law, and in line with UCEM's Code of Practices on Equality and Diversity and Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing. Both UCEM's academic appeals and student complaints procedures give due consideration to students' need to raise issues of concern with the assurance that such issues will be treated in confidence and with impartiality.

#### Student Complaints

UCEM defines a complaint as *'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about UCEM's action or lack of action, or about the standard of services provided by, or on behalf of UCEM'*.

#### Student Appeals

UCEM defines an appeal as *'a request for a review of a decision taken by an individual or body (i.e. one of the UCEM committees) charged with determining applications for admissions and making decisions about student progression, assessment, and awards'*.

Appeals are normally, but not exclusively, related to decisions on admissions, decisions made by a Board of Examiners, Mitigating Circumstances Panel, Academic Misconduct Panel, Fitness to Study Panel, disciplinary decisions or decisions about reasonable adjustments or decisions on admissions or registration. Appeals cannot be made against academic judgement.

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- [Student Complaints Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Student Appeals Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices \(opens new window\)](#)

### 2.1.10 UCEM Code of Practice: Student Academic and Behavioural Conduct

The Code of Practice Student Academic and Behavioural Conduct sets out UCEM's procedures relating to managing academic and behavioural conduct. UCEM aims to promote and develop consistently high standards of academic conduct and behaviour for its students, to prepare them for their professional and personal life, both during and after the completion of their programme.

The Code of Practice Academic and Behavioural Conduct should be read in conjunction with the following:

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- [Academic Misconduct Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Panel Guidance for Students \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Terms of Reference and Protocol for Academic Misconduct Panel Hearings \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)

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- [Online Protocol \(opens new window\)](#)

### 2.1.11 UCEM Code of Practice: Student Voices

The Code of Practice on Student Voices sets out the principles on which students representation (including apprentices) at UCEM is based. These principles are Partnership, Representation, and Inclusivity.

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- [Student Charter \(opens new window\)](#)

### 2.1.12 UCEM Code of Practice: Careers Advice, Education, Information and Guidance

The UCEM Code of Practice Careers Advice, Education, Information and Guidance sets out UCEM policy and procedure in relation to its aim to ensure that all UCEM students have access to appropriate career education, information, advice and guidance and are provided with opportunities to develop career related knowledge and skills.

### 2.1.13 UCEM Code of Practice: Research and Scholarship

The Code of Practice Research and Scholarship presents a framework for UCEM's management, support and development of research in line with the UCEM Research Strategy. It outlines the forms of research and scholarly activity within UCEM.

UCEM recognises the value of research and scholarly activity in supporting academic excellence. It promotes and sustains research and scholarly activity that is consistent with the mission and strategic objectives of UCEM.

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- [Research Strategy \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Intellectual Property Policy \(opens new window\)](#)

### 2.1.14 UCEM Code of Practice: Boards of Examiners

The Code of Practice on Board of Examiners presents all matters relating to the scope and operation of boards of examiners applying to modules and programmes leading to an award by UCEM. The purpose of the Code is to make explicit UCEM's expectation for the conduct of boards of examiners taking into account external expectations, including defining the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved.

#### Module Boards

A Postgraduate and an Undergraduate Module Board is held at the end of each semester, once all module assessment undertaken during the semester is complete and prior to the meeting of the Progression and Awards Boards. Their remit is to confirm and agree module marks awarded for summative assessment tasks.

#### Progression and Award Boards

Postgraduate and Undergraduate Progression and Award Boards also are both held twice per year. The Progression and Awards Boards verify progression through a programme to

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awards, and where appropriate the classification of awards. The Board also makes decisions about discontinuation from a programme following the expiry of all permitted attempts, and the Board will also decide on the award of any relevant prizes.

### Resubmission Progression and Award Boards

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Resubmission Progression and Award Boards are held following the resubmission period.

#### UCEM supplementary documents:

- Boards of Examiners Terms of Reference
- [Mitigating Circumstances Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)
- Mitigating Circumstances Committee Terms of Reference
- Board of Examiners - Denominators

The above documents are available internally via the on the AQU section of the UCEM intranet.

### 2.1.15 UCEM Code of Practice: Equality and Diversity

The UCEM Code of Practice Equality and Diversity sets out UCEM's Equality and Diversity Policy. UCEM is committed to securing equal opportunities for all individuals, celebrating diversity and eliminating unfair discrimination in the pursuance of its mission. UCEM recognises that all people are individuals, and it respects diversity and values all students, staff, and alumni. It believes individuals' different experiences, cultures and perspectives better enable UCEM to understand and add value to what it does. UCEM extends this commitment through a policy of widening participation across a diverse cohort of students and alumni from different cultures and backgrounds.

In exercising its policies, procedures and other functions UCEM will have due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010. UCEM values equality and diversity and believes that excellence will be achieved through recognising the value of every individual.

### 2.1.16 UCEM Code of Practice: Information About Higher Education Provision

The Code of Practice Information About Higher Education Provision sets out the framework UCEM operates in order to ensure the accuracy and transparency of the information it provides about itself.

The information within the Code of Practice chapter applies to a range of stakeholders, including those interested in the public information published by Higher Education Institutions (e.g., QAA, Higher Education Statistics Agency, OfS), prospective students, students, employers and professional bodies. UCEM also takes account of the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) in the provision of information on customer protection law.

### 2.1.17 UCEM Code of Practice: Safeguarding and Prevent

This Code of Practice provides high-level information on the requirements of UCEM's responsibility with regards to Safeguarding and the Prevent duty, and UCEM's approach to complying with these. The UCEM Code of Practice: Safeguarding and Prevent is applicable to all staff, students, apprentices and trustees.

#### UCEM Supplementary Documents:

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- [Safeguarding Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Prevent Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Anti-bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Procedure for Students \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Online Safety Guidance \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Fitness to Study Procedure \(opens new window\)](#)
- [Terms of Reference and Protocol for Fitness to Study Panel Hearings \(opens new window\)](#)

### 2.1.18 UCEM Code of Practice: Quality Assuring Apprenticeship Provision

This chapter outlines the policies in place to ensure the quality of UCEM's higher education apprenticeship programmes. It should be read alongside UCEM's other code of practice chapters and the Academic and Programme Regulations which set out how UCEM ensures the quality of the academic awards that are included within the apprenticeship programmes it provides. It should also be read alongside UCEM's Apprenticeship Quality Statement ([opens new window](#)) which details UCEM's commitment to employers and apprentices on the quality of provision that they can expect from UCEM.

## 3. Academic and Programme Regulations

The [UCEM Academic and Programme Regulations \(opens new window\)](#) set out all UCEM regulations that apply to students. These regulations represent a key means by which UCEM assures the standards of its awards and ensures fair and equitable treatment of all students throughout their studies.

The Regulations represent the highest written authority influencing the design, development and management of UCEM awards and provide the necessary academic framework to enable UCEM to confer degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic awards.

## 4. Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors

[Programme Specifications \(opens new window\)](#) are public documents which set out the intended learning outcomes of a programme and how these outcomes can be achieved and demonstrated.

UCEM Programme Specifications include information on:

- award details
- programme aims and structure
- programme learning outcomes
- module summaries
- accreditation details.

All UCEM programmes have a Programme Specification. All Programme Specifications are reviewed and updated annually and presented to the Academic Regulations and Specifications Subcommittee for approval.

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UCEM Programme Specifications are available on the UCEM website and on the VLE.

[Module Descriptors \(opens new window\)](#) describe in detail what is covered in each module of study.

UCEM Module Descriptors normally:

- confirm the credit value for that module;
- define the syllabus for that module;
- set out the learning outcomes for that module;
- define the assessment(s) in that module and will clearly state what percentage each piece of assessment counts for in the overall module mark;
- confirm the recommended learning hours required for that module.

Module Descriptors are made available on the UCEM Website and on the VLE. UCEM also maintains a definitive archive of all Module Descriptors on the [AQU SharePoint site \(opens new window\)](#).

The Module Leader should review the Module Descriptor annually to ensure that it continues to reflect the content of the module. If there are any changes required, the Module Leader should liaise with the Programme Leader to update the Module Descriptor by following the programme amendment procedure set out in the UCEM Code of Practice on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

## 5. Academic Governance

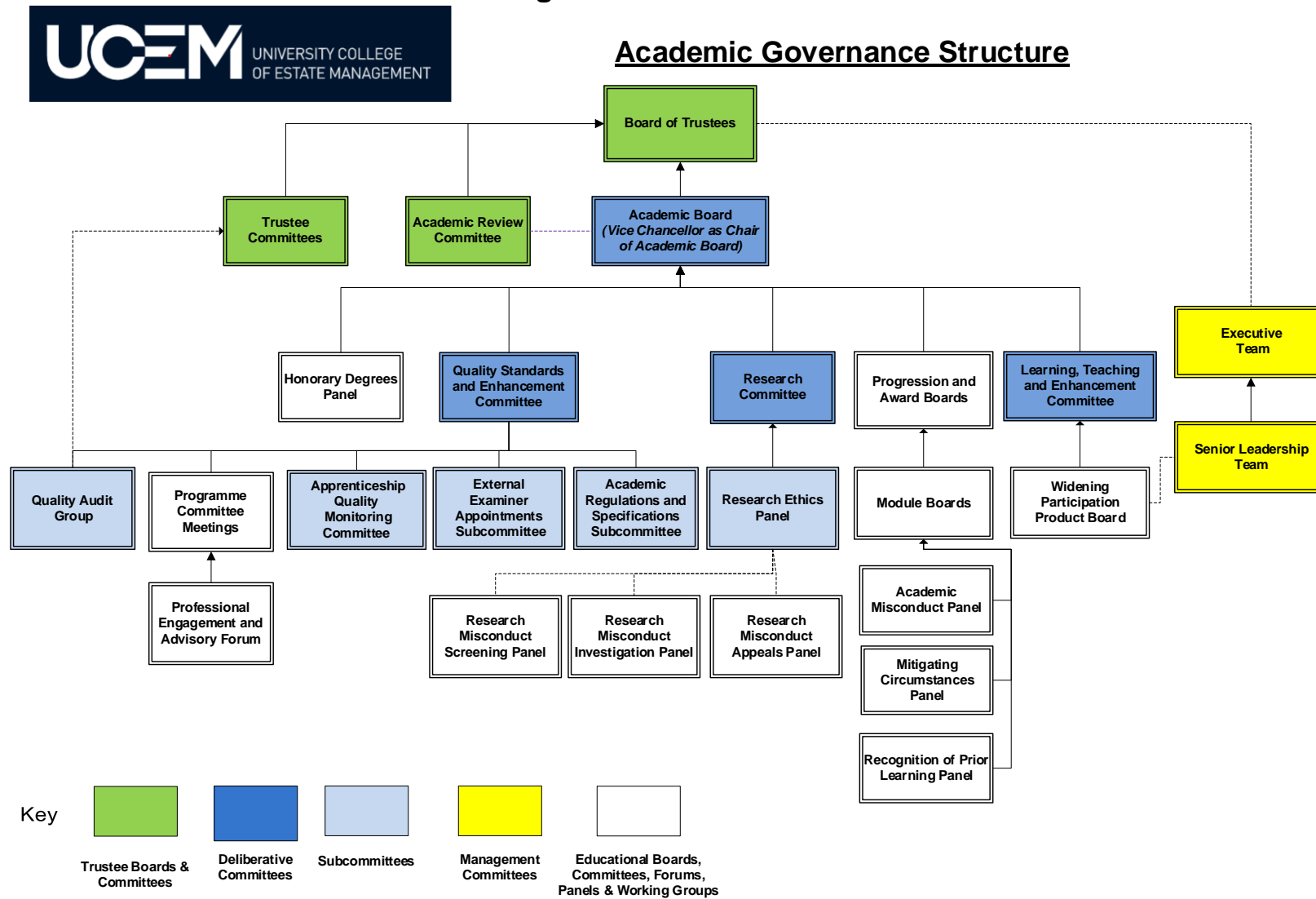
The governing documents of UCEM are its Royal Charter and Byelaws. The former sets out the objects and purposes for which UCEM is constituted, and the latter make arrangements for the governance and control of UCEM.

UCEM is governed and controlled by its Board of Trustees. The Vice Chancellor, who is an ex-officio Trustee, acts as UCEM's Chief Executive and has overall responsibility for policy implementation, and for leading and directing UCEM's academic activities and internal management. In addition to this, UCEM has a framework of committees to undertake academic decision making and apply academic standards to students' work across all programmes.

UCEM maintains a definitive archive of the full terms of reference for all of its deliberative committees on the [Academic Governance SharePoint page \(opens new window\)](#). This can be accessed by student representatives and staff.

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## Academic Governance Structure Diagram



### 5.1 Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees' main functions are to determine the educational character and mission of UCEM; to approve long-term plans for the development of UCEM and to approve annual operating plans and budgets for expenditure. The **Academic Review Committee** functions as a subcommittee of the Board and undertakes an annual Academic Audit. The purpose of this is to enable the Board to be able to verify that the expectations of all stakeholders that the UCEM is continuing to function as *'a well-founded, cohesive and self-critical academic community that can demonstrate firm guardianship of its standards'* (QAA, 2013) are being met.

### 5.2 Academic Board

The Academic Board is UCEM's supreme academic authority and guardian of the academic quality and standards of its higher education (HE) awards. The Academic Board is a standing committee of the Board of Trustees and exercises powers vested in it by the Byelaws and Regulations, or as delegated by the Board of Trustees. The Academic Board monitors the work of its subcommittees: **Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee**, **Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee** and **Research Committee**.

#### 5.2.1 Quality Standards & Enhancement Committee

Acting as a subcommittee on behalf of the Academic Board, QSEC has responsibility for securing the standards of UCEM awards and reviewing the effectiveness of the appropriate strategies, policies and procedures. This includes the development and enhancement of the UCEM Code of Practice and supporting strategies, policies and procedures relating to academic standards. The following subcommittees perform the duties outlined on behalf of QSEC:

##### 5.2.1.1 The Academic Regulations and Specifications Subcommittee (ARSSC)

The key purpose of this subcommittee is to produce, amend, review and evaluate all academic regulations. It is also responsible for annually reviewing and approving Programme Specifications as well as evaluating and approving major modifications to existing programme specifications and module descriptors before they go forward to Academic Board for approval.

##### 5.2.1.2 The External Examiner Appointments Subcommittee

The key purpose of this subcommittee is to review and approve nominations for the appointment of External Examiners to programmes offered by UCEM by reference to the criteria laid down in the UCEM Code of Practice.

##### 5.2.1.3 The Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committee (AQMC)

The key purpose of this subcommittee is to monitor the quality and standards of UCEM's apprenticeship programmes.

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### 5.2.2 Learning, Teaching & Enhancement Committee (LTEC)

LTEC oversees the development and implementation of the LTA strategies across all programmes. The Committee provides advice on issues of curriculum enhancement. Examples of such advice include, strategy selection, study design, assessment, programme delivery, internationalisation, tutoring and learning support.

### 5.2.3 Research Committee

The purpose of the Research Committee is to encourage and provide focus, leadership, and monitoring for the institution's research activities. In this capacity, the Committee's role is to develop a research strategy, to facilitate, monitor, and record all research, to review and update the Research Policy, and to advise the Academic Board on all matters pertaining to research. In addition, the Committee will monitor, promote, and enforce ethical practice.

## 6. Advice and Support

### Academic Quality Unit (AQU)

The AQU supports the oversight of the quality and standards of UCEM awards and the student experience. It does this via coordinating the development and implementation of the documents, processes and procedures signposted within this document. AQU also manages external quality assurance relationships with partners including the QAA and PSRBs.

The AQU works closely with colleagues across UCEM and is committed to providing support and training to all UCEM staff involved in quality processes to ensure that UCEM quality and standards are maintained and where possible enhanced.

For further information, suggestions, advice, or support, please contact [AQU@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:AQU@ucem.ac.uk).

### Academic Governance Team

The Academic Governance team has responsibility for ensuring that there are effective academic governance arrangements in place on UCEM's deliberative committees and subcommittees. The team also provides comprehensive and professional support and advice including the servicing of the meetings.

## Glossary of Terms

A 'live' UCEM glossary of terms can be accessed via the [VLE \(opens new window\)](#).