



## COURSE ENHANCEMENT PROCEDURE BY REFLECTIVE CYCLE PRACTICE

(Research article)

Amir Zare Shahneh<sup>a 1</sup>  
<sup>a</sup> Cranfield University, Bedford, UK

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### Abstract

Student numbers have increased by 15% over the last five years in London. Average deal size from 2020–2022 is 43% higher than other business sectors at 30,000 sq ft. Specialist sector clusters can develop and be enhanced by the expansion of the higher education sector. The education sector is responsible of producing skilled learners and practitioners for society. Reflective or process cycles, within educational activities, have the potential to enhance the quality of a course. The reflective cycle methodology in education is employed, applied, and validated to improve the quality of an educational procedure. Experimental practices demonstrate that the application of this process leads to enhanced education. This methodology is applied and validated in the context of an innovative individual research project. Quality assurance aims to confirm success, and various modes have been utilised in institutes to validate this success. This paper focuses on the application of the reflective cycle in a real-world setting, specifically a higher education master's course, and explores two models of quality assurance for assessing educational enhancement. The results indicate that the quality assurance process favours the outcomes of the process cycle, despite being a complex and time-consuming procedure. It could be improved by adopting a simpler and more efficient model to elucidate professional achievements further. Another conclusion can be stated that in line with employing the best practices, including clearly defined and well-documented course procedures, staff training, and record-keeping, Quality Assurance is the key stage for judgment on the quality of a course.

**Keywords:** Reflective cycle, Education, Quality Assurance, Cranfield, Hertfordshire

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<sup>1</sup>Amir Zare Shahneh. ORCID ID ORCID : <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5464-3931>  
E-mail: [a.shahneh@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:a.shahneh@cranfield.ac.uk)

## 1. Introduction

Quantity of learners and quality of teaching material are the main goals in higher education. All institutes worldwide are striving to enhance their process and the quality of education. The question is how higher education can improve its delivery. Based on The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (UK Government, 2020) UK institutes have defined their targets and introduced measures the qualification to enhance the higher education sector. Innovation is the key point in teaching and research to infuse a sense of refreshment in the mind and experiment. Time and external conditions also dictate new methods of education delivery, such as the impact of Covid-19, which led to the development of online and virtual learning modes. Another consideration in higher education is equity, diversity, and inclusion, for which institutes must provide the required platform for all, including learners with special needs. The above activities and designs have a sole aim: the enhancement of higher education for all applicants. In this paper, several real practices have been introduced as evidence of successful practice.

On the other side, all these activities need to be assessed in terms of quality. All institutes must provide regulations to assess the quality of courses, levels, and higher education in general. The author studied the quality assurance of some institutes and discussed the approaches of two universities for quality assurance, along with the role of an external examiner as a part of quality assessment.

Based on this study, a list of conclusions is presented. For the work, many references have been consulted, including few from websites.

## 2. Course Enhancement

The method of this work is based on case study in the real education environment. The author has used his experience within years of education management and delivery to verify the outcome of the methods and finally a comparative study is carried out between two institutes' approaches to quality assurance.

### 2.1. Course Design Target

Course design is based on The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. Among many elements in course design improvement, the reflective cycle can augment the demands of national and international students from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Application of reflective cycle could be explained by real case as the evidence of an interesting practice: it is identified that the results of Mathematics in an MSc course were not at a satisfactory level, and on average, 30% of students had to resit the exam at the end of the term. Based on the feedback came along with suggestions from the Annual Reflective Report outcome for improvement, It is found that the content of material was standard, but the students were weak in the basics and

needed more contact time with support from the teacher. A slower teaching increment and more in-situ practice could help students apply the material with more confidence. More concentration on "Integration and differentiation" was suggested. In addition, a group exercise has been arranged so those learners who were stronger in Mathematics could help students who find it challenging. On the other side, those challenging students were stronger in the other field like English or Computing who could help the first group. The plan is implemented. This diversity recognition and group work cooperation plan was successful: the number of resit students dropped to 10% within the following years. This suggests that the method was effective. This reflective cycle process includes the "identification" of a problem, "planning" an effective solution method, "implementation" of the plan, "analysis" of the progress, "evaluation and feedback", and "conclusion". The reflective cycle process has been introduced by Gibbs (1988) as one of the most famous models of reflection. Later, an integrated model is defined by Bassot (2013) in an integrated process of Experience, Reflection, Theory, and Preparation. The feedback from students was positive according to questionnaire outcome. The outcome has been reported to the Quality Assurance department, which confirmed the effectiveness of this process.

## *2.2. Course Improvement through Innovative Topics*

The course design aims to reflect the taught modules associated with an individual research project to enhance students' understanding, leading to the critical evaluation of their skills in encountering real-world problems. The research should focus on future demand. An element in course improvement is innovation in topics, material, and the area of research to fulfil the course Intended Learning Outcomes.

Evidence of good practice is implemented in an aviation course. In the aviation industry, a priority target is to reduce carbon emissions in the UK by at least 80% of 1990 levels by 2050 (plan), and the UK was the first to set its ambition in law, with a plan outlining progress to date and assessing cost-effective next steps (UK Government, 29 April 2013). In line with this target, a research program in the area of replacing more electric aircraft against current central hydraulic power transfer-based aircraft is defined (innovative action). The research program, as a part of the course curriculum, was undertaken by a student with the title "Alternative Electro-Mechanical Actuator for Aircraft Primary Control Surfaces." The progress was observed, where it was concluded that "using an additional clutch system to the actuation solution" (plan). The outcome was evaluated and found that the solution is not an efficient method (evaluation). This was extended when the direction of the work changed towards using Integrated Vehicle Health Management for the purpose of diagnosing the probable fault prior to the occurrence of the failure (reflection and new plan). The method was a step forward to achieve the goals but not the ending point. A new idea is now planned: "use a neutral augmented gear which can engage the actuation system in the case of mechanical jam, which then releases the ball screw actuator." This plan is ongoing yet in 2024.

An interesting practice in a strategic view in the industry is finding ways to improve the frequency of flights in the aviation industry if volcanic ash erupts. On 20th March 2010, the Iceland Volcano erupted and continued for 3 weeks for the first time. Thousands of flights were banned, and millions of people were affected in Europe. This was the first natural event that caused a wide and long flight ban in the world, the biggest shutdown after the Second World War. The damage in European countries is estimated at figures in billions of Pounds, and in particular, damage of 10 million Pounds a day was estimated for Britain. After a few days, new safety rules were announced to overcome the damages: if the ash particles are less than 2 milligrams per cubic meter, the aircraft is allowed to fly. This airspace closure has both human and economic ramifications. Millions of passengers were affected each day, with a total loss of 1.1 billion Pounds anticipated (Reuter, WORLD NEWS, 2010). The main reason is that volcanic ash poses a significant risk to aircraft. The plane suffers from one of the most damaging engine flaws in two ways: corrosion of the fans and blades and blockage of the fuel nozzles. As a result, engine running time is reduced in particle-laden environments, and the engine may sustain irreparable damage. To overcome this event, a project was defined and delivered titled: “Application of Electrostatic Filter to Mitigate Volcanic Ash at the Engine Intake” by Zare Shahneh, A. (2019). The execution process of the project followed the reflective cycle concept suggested by Tripp (2005) and Smith (2001) and then developed by Zuber-Skerrit (1996) who described four steps of strategic planning, action, observation, and evaluation, and reflection and planning a next cycle of research. In February 2024, there was another volcanic eruption in Iceland but no disruption was reported. It could be as strong as in 2010. The topic has been allocated to a research team, and the reflective cycle has been followed step by step. The outcome of this research has been published in a relevant Journal as stated.

### *2.3. Education Quality Enhancement through Teaching Innovation Reflected from Research*

Teaching is a method that has evolved from the old-fashioned "one-directional speaking" by a teacher to the current active approach, allowing learners to play a positive role in discussion, challenge, disagreement, discovery, and find motivation, inevitably encouraging them to be innovative. Younie (2018) stated that the quality of teaching is a future concern and needs improvement by applying different methods. A good practice was an instance where a research concept was introduced into teaching titled “Fluidic Flow Concept in Winglet”. In a conference held in Malaysia in 2014, an innovative method called the fluidic method was introduced as an alternative to the wing flap. The idea was taken and expanded for another application: “fluidic winglet”. This has been included in the teaching material in the next year, where a researcher was inspired to work in this area, so a new research topic “Feasibility of Fluidic Winglet in Aircraft” is defined and successfully submitted by Jason (2019).

#### *2.4. Flexibility in Delivery*

In 2020, the world encountered a dangerous pandemic called Covid-19. Higher education was severely affected in the competitive market, requiring significant reshaping. Some current outdated IT systems, inflexible processes, and a lack of useful data in the institution impact the performance of higher education. An insightful study was undertaken to note the disadvantages of age-old strategies, and efforts have been made to recognize improvement methods. In adherence to this new condition, a combined remote teaching and face-to-face teaching for the MSc course has been executed. This will have difficulties that require readiness for innovation, internal flexibility, and interactive teamwork to adapt to the new situation.

One area that is quite new is the conversion of current written exam-based assessment to online or assignment-based assessment as a good measure of adaptive capabilities. Professional development in the research direction is also practiced: new projects appropriate for new industry movements have been defined. For example, a new topic for a research project, “Improvement of Air Filtration in Aircraft ECS to Tackle Corona Virus inside the Aircraft Cabin,” is recommended, and several designs were introduced accordingly by Adel (2022).

In line with showing commitment to professional and successful incorporation in research, scholarship, and teaching, the above practices have been reflected in the Education department for further scrutiny.

#### *2.5. Virtual Learning Education Tool*

In order to ensure that all students feel supported in their learning, and as a direction dictated by the pandemic situation, a flexible teaching method is practiced. A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and online lectures through MS Teams or Zoom, and videos have been implemented in an education institute. A Virtual Learning Environment enables textbook-related resources, teaching, interactions, communication, material delivery, and assessments to be collated in an Internet-based platform. In addition, related announcements, timetables, course specifications, module descriptors, assessment deadlines, assessment and feedback information, E-referencing and plagiarism information, qualitative assessment criteria, pre-reading information, reading lists, and Turnitin submission points are all accessible to learners. Therefore, students can prepare themselves before attending the lecture and also refer to the material whenever required. This technology is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week on/off campus. In VLE, all students have the opportunity to ask more questions or present their ideas and comments and have access to different learning models for content and assessment. The module leader can add discussion boards, quizzes, videos, etc., to support learners. Blackboard and Canvas are examples of those platforms. The students are obliged to check the platform for everyday updates on timetables, class relocations, cancellations, new material, events, exam date changes, and additional tutorials.

VLE provides a wider range of facilities to all, and to international students in particular. International students are less aware of UK-based facilities such as sources of scholarship. The teaching supports students with varied needs.

### *2.6. Special Needs Support*

Under the Equality Act 2010, the higher education sector is required to put in place reasonable adjustments for students who have provided evidence of a declared learning support need. In a recent instance and as a simple example of special need, it was reported that a student's condition is currently causing problems with electronic notes, so extra print credit is given to the student based on a Learning Support Agreement (LSA) arranged by the Student Experience Professional Service Unit. The results of the student showed that this assistance enabled him to find the provisions and motivation to complete his work.

In another case, it is agreed that the learner has appropriate access to the additional material content of the course in advance of any teaching sessions or lectures. He is permitted to record lectures in an agreement where they must not be reproduced or passed on or made available to anyone else other than for transcription purposes. The learner would benefit from tasks being broken down into smaller 'chunks' with clear aims and intended outcomes being stated. In the case of examinations, the learner is given 25% extra time and a 5-minute 'Stop the Clock' rest break per hour. These breaks should not be taken back-to-back. The above information will be shared only with relevant staff on a 'need to know' basis to support the learner.

In another example, a special need requirement for a student is reported. Based on a confidential survey, this Student Support Plan (SSP) has been drawn up between Cranfield University and the student, based on the UK government's document for disabled students' allowance (UK Government, 2023) and the adjustments from the report of a recognized chartered educational psychologist or certified medical practitioner. The details given to the university will only be used to help and support the student. The information will be kept secure.

Adjustments for Academic Team to Provide:

- May miss lectures due to external appointments beyond their control.
- Will require the content of course materials in advance of any teaching sessions or lectures.
- Will need to audio record lectures.
- Should be allowed to leave and enter lecture rooms without question.
- Would benefit from online lectures being video captured, with transcription where possible.
- Due to the fluctuating nature of the medical condition, the student may need to request extensions (up to a maximum of 15 working days) or deferrals for coursework assessments through the university Exceptional Circumstances policy, for which approval will not be unreasonably withheld.
- May use sensory aids to manage symptoms of conditions.

- May wear noise-canceling headphones.
- Presentations: no adjustments.
- Thesis Phase: supervisor meetings should be planned in advance and not changed without discussion with the student first.

Adjustments for Laboratory Team to Provide:

- Where possible, will require tasks to be broken down into smaller ‘chunks’ with clear aims and intended outcomes being stated.

Adjustments for Examination Team to Provide:

- Will be given 25% extra writing time.
- Will require a 5-minute ‘Stop the Clock’ rest break per hour. These breaks should not be taken back-to-back.

Adjustments for Library Team to Provide:

- Will give a personalized induction to library services should the student request one.
- The library will provide extended book loan periods.

Adjustments for Information Services (IT) to Provide:

- Will require MindManager to be installed on their personal device(s) such as a laptop, tablet, or mobile phone.
- Will require assistance connecting personal IT equipment to WiFi and guidance on accessing IT resources.

Adjustments for Onsite Accommodation to Provide:

- To be informed of the Medical Awareness form.

Adjustments for Learning Support Officer (LSO) to Provide:

- Assist with Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) application.
- The LSO will contact the student to review the SSP around six months after activation, regardless of whether there have been previous changes.

Further Information for University Staff:

- [Click here for Wellbeing information/support for students.](#)
- "Let's Talk about Neurodiversity" has a range of short courses to help improve your understanding of neurodiversity.
- [Click here for Impact on study information](#) if you wish to find further information on a condition a student shares with you.
- The Digital accessibility team has a range of information to assist with making lecture material accessible.
- Unless explicitly stated in marking criteria, taught award assignments should not be marked down for poor grammar and spelling that does not affect the communication.
- Audio recording: Module Managers/Supervisors can make a judgment about whether this is appropriate for all lectures on their modules or meetings, particularly those delivered by external lecturers.

- Audio recording: the module lead/supervisor may ask for recordings to stop during sections that are not relevant to the intended learning outcome.
- Audio recording: Module Managers can have a general disclaimer on the VLE to inform other students that audio recording may be taking place.
- Amendments to this support plan can be made any time during the student's registration, and any support team should contact the LSO if amendments are required.

Further Information and General Responsibility for Students, including Exam Arrangement, Library and IT Access:

- I understand that amendments to this support plan can be made at any time during my registration, and I should contact the LSO if this is required.- I understand that I should ensure I am registered with the appropriate Health Care/National Health services while a registered student at the university. This may include engaging with the welfare support services provided through the Student Wellbeing and Disability Support and the independent free counselling services provided by the university.
- I understand that it would be to my benefit to apply for DSA.
- There is a Study Skills Hub and a Research Student Skills Development Hub on the intranet.
- I will liaise with Supervisor and/or Laboratory Manager to discuss adjustments.
- Prior to meeting with careers, who will receive a copy of my plan, I should inform them of which reasonable adjustments I require for our meetings.
- I agree that the recordings of any lectures by me or on my behalf must be used only for my personal private study and must not be reproduced or passed on or made available to anyone else other than for transcription purposes, including by any electronic means, such as email attachment, posting on any website, or social media.
- I agree to delete any personal recordings once they are no longer needed (i.e., once they have been transcribed).
- I acknowledge that the content and delivery of the lectures remain the intellectual property of the university.
- I should receive an email from the exam team to explain how to find information relating to the date, time, and venue of my exam. If I do not receive this email and am concerned, I contact the relevant department by the given details.
- The exam team may place you in a separate room, and your exam may start earlier than the main exam.
- If awarded 'Stop the Clock' rest breaks, it is my responsibility during the exam to clearly indicate to the invigilator each time I am beginning and ending a rest break. If I do not take any rest breaks, the end time of your exam will not be revised. Breaks can only be used to rest and not as additional time for reading or writing.
- I understand that information on how to use the library and its associated resources can be found at the given address.



- The Library can provide books in alternative formats if requested.
- The Library can assist with obtaining permission for extra photocopying of material if required.
- If part-time or based away from campus, contact the Library regarding the Sconul Scheme, which can give access to libraries at other universities.
- I will contact servicedesk@cranfield.ac.uk to arrange an appointment if I need assistance with the connection of IT equipment or if I wish to have a copy of Mind Manager.
- There is a range of free Assistive technology software available.

#### Confidentiality and Circulation Agreement

The reasonable adjustments within this document have been drawn from discussions with the student, Learning Support Officer, and the adjustments listed within the evidence provided by the student.

By signing, the student agrees with:

- the reasonable adjustments made within this Student Support Plan
- the sharing of this document with relevant staff listed below on a 'need to know' basis in order that support may be put in place.

The above example shows the insight of a comprehensive agreement between the institute and the student to satisfy special needs.

### **3. Quality Assurance**

Quality Assurance's purpose is 'to ensure that students and learners experience the highest possible quality of education.' Its strategy sets out the scope of its work in terms of four focus areas: Standards (QA is the custodian of various sector reference points); Assurance and enhancement; International; Leadership which QA advises governments and has a high public profile on matters of quality (UK Government, 2023)

Quality Assurance involves the systematic review of educational provision to maintain and improve its quality, equity, and efficiency. It encompasses institute self-evaluation, external evaluation, and the evaluation of staff and student assessments. Developing strong quality assurance systems is crucial to support high-quality inclusive education. It is also important to support the implementation of the 2018 Council Recommendations on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning and on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching. Furthermore, quality assurance is vital to create the conditions for facilitating student mobility, particularly through enhanced transparency and trust. Quality assurance also plays a key role in supporting the mutual recognition of upper secondary qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad (Quality Assurance - European Commission, 2023)

The importance of Quality Assurance could be proved by stating that several universities in the USA offer Quality Assurance certified degrees and courses (Corporate Target, 2023).

### *3.1. Quality Assurance in UK Higher Education*

QA is a world-leading quality agency with unmatched experience in providing impartial regulatory and collaborative quality assurance and enhancement. They work across the UK and internationally to ensure that students and learners experience the highest possible quality of education. They are an independent charity, trusted by governments and funding bodies. They work in partnership with higher education providers and colleges, including through constructive challenge, supporting them with enhancement while respecting their academic autonomy. (Quality Assurance Agency, 2023)

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, usually referred to simply as the Quality Assurance Agency or QAA, is the UK higher education sector's independent expert quality body, with a remit to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in tertiary education in the UK and beyond. It conducts quality assessment reviews, develops reference points and guidance for providers, and conducts or commissions research on relevant issues.

QAA has a UK-wide role on behalf of the sector maintaining sector-owned reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and Subject Benchmark Statements; QAA also maintains the Credit Frameworks used in the various nations of the UK, and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, which applies throughout the UK except in Scotland.

QAA provides guidance and other publications and runs events relating to the maintenance of standards and the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning. In England, they are provided through a separate membership scheme, through which the sector in England also contributes to the funding of the sector-owned reference points.

QAA undertakes cyclical quality reviews of higher education institutions throughout the UK, except currently in England, where the regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), has not implemented a cyclical review approach and QAA has chosen to focus on its enhancement activity, including new paid-for services to help the sector meet regulatory requirements and enhance quality. In addition to its role in sustaining the reputation of UK higher education, QAA also regulates the Access to Higher Education Diploma, a qualification that enables individuals without A Levels or the usual equivalent to enter higher education. QAA works closely with other organisations that have an interest in the reputation of UK higher education, including the Scottish Funding Council, Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland, Universities UK and GuildHE.

### *3.2. Quality Assurance Approaches*

Following a generic strategic concept and the aim and target for quality assurance, each institute may initiate its own plan to achieve a reliable and efficient quality level. The corporate “Target” has established a risk-based multi-stage Product Testing Program to ensure products are tested throughout the entire production run. The program builds in periodic testing from independent, third-party laboratories validating that safety and regulatory standards have been satisfied,

including but not limited to: analytical tests (chemical), performance tests (durability/functionality), label validation, and flammability standards. A documented report shows how the quality assurance in the USA is dealing with sustainability and governance of courses (Quality Assurance Courses in the USA, 2023).

Here, a brief review of examples of two UK universities is presented and compared.

### *3.2.1. Quality Assurance in Cranfield University*

Quality Assurance is observed through confidential questionnaires provided and sent to the students. The submitted forms, reflecting their comments or judgments about each teacher, are accessible to module leaders. The course director receives and studies the outcomes, then initially appoints those teachers who showed their potential in teaching based on their expertise and experience and are recognised by the Higher Education Agency. In addition to this, a feedback session with students provides an opportunity to hear and discuss their comments, including the quality of the modules, teachers, and administration process. This helps the course director to observe the quality of the teachers to ensure that they are qualified, experienced, and the level of teaching material is kept updated. The course director reflects the feedback of students to module leaders. On one occasion, where the course director realised that the teacher was not professional enough for the module due to many complaints, another member of staff was asked to assist in delivering the module. This is in addition to other approaches that involve observing the course quality.

The faculty holds regular departmental meetings throughout the year to discuss departmental activities such as long and short course teaching and research contracts. This provides the opportunity for the course team to regularly meet and review the course delivery and curriculum content. For example, it is suggested to add a module on numerical methods for the benefit of one of the follow-on courses, which was discussed as being out of scope of the course. As part of the University quality control procedures, the course director is responsible for presenting an Annual Reflective Review every year at the end of the year.

The course is observed by an external examiner who monitors all aspects of the assessment process. This is in line with the guidance provided by the QAA, particularly in “Chapter B7 (External Examining),” which emphasises that external examining is one of the principal means for maintaining UK threshold academic standards within autonomous higher education institutions.

The course is also guided by an Industrial Advisory Committee (IAC) comprising senior members from major UK aerospace companies, government bodies, and the military services. The committee meets twice per year to review and advise on course content and acquisition skills to ensure that all graduates have the necessary skills required by the industry. They may recommend how to extend the course in terms of marketing.

At the end of each year, there might be suggestions for course changes. For example, on one occasion, a change from “independent assessment” to “part-assessment” for four modules was recommended and approved by the School’s Director of Education on behalf of Education Committee and Senate. The University has regular monitoring procedures for quality assurance, including an Annual Reflective Review for each course and an in-depth 6-year review of each School’s (total) educational provision known as the Senate Review.

The Reflective Review Process is a key stage in quality assessment. At Cranfield University, it is processed at three levels: School level, University level, and Governing body. The most important stage is at the beginning where The Course/Programme Director completes the Annual Reflective Review, including the feedback loop where the director of education identifies key themes, highlights, lowlights, and actions, and the School Executive Education Committee confirms to Senate that the ARR process is completed, highlighting key issues as a part of the Annual Academic Report. This level starts in December and concludes by April. The second level is the University Academic Assurance. The outcome of Education Committee School will be posted to the University Executive and Senate once issued. Senate Annual Report to Council provides an overview of all activities related to Quality Assurance and Enhancement, the maintenance of standards, and the student experience in the previous academic year. This level started in April and finished by September. The third level which covers October to November is the Governing Body, which includes the Audit Committee, Council, and Assurance completion. Council adopts the Higher Education Code of Governance principles that as the governing body, it actively seeks and receives assurance that academic governance is robust and effective with respect to quality and standards, the integrity of awards, and the student experience.

Different universities may have additional means of the quality assurance process. The School Scrutiny Panel is to evaluate a newly designed course proposal, including course concept and business case, structure, intended learning outcome, course specification and module descriptors, assessment efficiency, and overall quality assurance. This creates an inspired environment to observe and stimulate good program design and the importance of sharing best academic practice in the development of a course quality.

A positive relation with the industry would also enhance course quality. Some universities may have an Industrial Advisory Committee or a similar core comprising senior members from major UK companies, government bodies, and the military services (Senate Handbook: Taught Courses, Sep 2019). The committee meets twice per year to review and advise on course content and skills to ensure that graduates have what is required by the industry.

### 3.2.2. *Academic Quality Policies and Regulations in Bedfordshire University*

In Bedfordshire University, the Dean of School is responsible for the development and operation of programmes and modules and the care of staff and students. Each School is to nominate a

senior member of staff for Academic Quality in addition to a member for research, one with specific responsibility for Learning and Teaching. (Hertfordshire document, 2023).

The Academic Board of the school includes two committees with different responsibilities:

a) The Education and Student Experience Committee is responsible for the student experience of all taught students, ensuring that the student experience is aligned with the University's Strategic Plan and Student Experience Strategy.

b) The Academic Standards and Audit Committee is responsible for oversight of strategies for the assurance of academic standards, auditing compliance with the University's academic provision, and disseminates findings of good practice.

The Academic Board reports to the Board of Governors and is tasked with the development, implementation, and monitoring of all academic policies and procedures, including the admission, progression, and assessment of students, the approval and conduct of programmes, the maintenance of academic quality, research and scholarship, and the appointment of External Examiners.

The above two examples of the education quality process in the mentioned universities show that universities carry the major responsibility for the validation, monitoring, and evaluation of programmes to ensure that the quality of education is high. A competition in this process leads to complicated stages and levels of course verification and evaluation.

### *3.3. External Examiner Role in Quality Assurance If interventions or experimental*

#### *3.3.1. External Examiner in Cranfield University*

The courses at Cranfield University should be monitored by an external examiner as a part of quality assurance. One of the main responsibilities of the external examiner is to ensure that the assessment system is fair and fairly operated. These observations would be reflected in the annual report addressing all aspects of the assessment process in line with the guidance provided by the QAA, particularly in "Chapter B7, External Examining (Senate Handbook: General Student Handbook, Sep 2019). This helps maintain UK threshold academic standards within autonomous higher education institutions.

#### *3.3.2. External Examiner in Hertfordshire University*

The University of Hertfordshire has produced an academic quality assurance document stating the function of the external examiner as a part of quality assurance: "All programmes leading to University awards are required to appoint one or more External Examiners with appropriate experience and expertise, who are required to submit annual reports on the quality and standards of the programme and the students and who may also write directly to the Vice-Chancellor in the event of any major concerns (University of Hertfordshire Academic Quality Assurance Document, 2023). The Director of Academic Quality Assurance on behalf of the Academic

Board of the university is to approve the eligibility of an external examiner application. The annual report is to be scrutinised by Education and Student Experience, which is a part of annual academic quality. The university facilitates a training workshop for new external examiner nominees to ensure they have essential knowledge about the job expectation.

#### **4. Conclusions**

- Higher education courses incorporate innovation in teaching, research delivery, and every stage of the reflective cycle. The process requires independent third-party testing to validate the quality of the product.
- In line with employing the best practices, including clearly defined and well-documented course procedures, staff training, and record-keeping, Quality Assurance is the key stage for judgment on the quality of a course.
- There are several generic regulations that can be found in different institutes, such as aims and targets; however, each institute has its own hierarchy and model for the execution of higher education and course assessment.
- An insightful verification of two models of quality assurance in two higher education institutes shows that the process is complicated and lengthy. It is appreciated, showing that the institutes tried their best to verify the process stage by stage to provide a comprehensive outcome. However, a disadvantage of a long process can be described as a tiring one. So, at each stage, the assessor may refer to the previous stage with less concentration. The author suggests that the process should be shorter but in a "professional and dedicated department."

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#### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics**

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

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