

A05 Academic Quality Assurance Policy

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1 Introduction

This policy outlines the principles and mechanisms which SAE Institute uses to assure academic quality, as well as high-quality learning, teaching and assessment practices, across all campuses involved in the delivery of validated provision. Detailed processes and procedures are found in related policies and documents.

SAE Institute ensures a high quality of provision through:

- the safeguarding of academic standards
- the assurance and enhancement of academic quality
- the implementation of an effective quality assurance and improvement cycle throughout the operations of the Institute.

This policy supports the key areas for effective quality assurance of learning, teaching and assessment: curriculum design and development; delivery; assessment; enhancement and development of student experience.

1.1 Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- A04 Academic Governance
- A07 Learning and Teaching Review Policy
- A08 Assessment Policy
- A08.3 Academic Misconduct Policy
- A14 Complaints Policy
- SAE Student Handbook or Programme Handbook (as applicable)

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Academic Standards

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

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

1.2.2 Academic Quality

Academic quality. Any activities and functions that contribute to a student's academic experience, including:

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

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

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

1.3 Induction to Higher Education

SAE acknowledges and embraces the diversity of background and experience of students entering its programmes. Students will be given a thorough induction to the learning and teaching approach at SAE to prepare them for the practices and expectations of Higher Education. Induction will include: a general introduction to SAE's culture and history; an introduction to academic conventions and concepts of scholarship; orientation to SAE information systems and support structures; expectations of study load and the balance between work and life.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all modules and programmes, including self-accredited and certificate courses, delivered at SAE campuses involved with delivery of validated programmes.

3 Principles

3.1 Safeguarding of Standards

For all programmes and their constituent modules delivered at SAE Institute:

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

3.2 Assuring and Enhancing Quality

The principles of SAE Institute with regards to academic quality assurance are that:

- The quality of the student experience will meet the requirements of the University partner(s) for the programmes under validated or accredited status as appropriate.
- The quality of the student experience will meet the requirements of relevant governmental or professional or other regulatory bodies.

- Assurance will be informed by programme approval, monitoring, review and student feedback processes which identify and take action to resolve any issues related to students' academic experience.
- SAE's approaches to quality assurance will have regard to relevant industry standards and good practice.
- Students will have opportunities to be involved in the processes of programme approval, development, monitoring and review.
- The views of external assessors will be taken into account when the quality of programmes is established or reviewed.

A key priority for SAE is to enhance the student experience on a continuing basis, processes for which are outlined in the A07 Learning and Teaching Review Policy. Towards this aim:

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

3.3 Foundations for Academic Standards and Quality Assurance

The major foundations which safeguard academic standards and guide academic quality assurance for SAE Institute are:

- The *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, which applies to all Higher Education operations in the United Kingdom: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>.
- The *University of Hertfordshire University Policies and Regulations (UPRs)*, which is the principal means by which the University of Hertfordshire publishes its institutional policies, procedures and regulations:

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/governance/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs>.

- The *SAE Quality Manual*, outlines the SAE Regulations, policies and procedures aligned with the QAA Quality Code, University partner policies and regulations, as they apply to SAE Institute operations, and which are reviewed on a regular basis with our partner Universities.
- The *comprehensive system of External Examiners*, who act as independent moderators to maintain national and international academic standards, and ensure equitable application of University and SAE regulations for all students. The External Examiner system and processes are subject to the provisions of the QAA Quality Code.

Final responsibility for all academic quality assurance lies with the Academic Board and its sub-committees. The University Partnership Standards and Quality Committee (UPSQC) of SAE Institute coordinates academic quality assurance and enhancement for all campuses involved in the delivery of validated programmes.

3.4 Curriculum Design and Development

In the design and development of curricula for all programmes, SAE will:

- Be informed by expert scholarship, industry practices and sector best practices in teaching.
- Develop capacity and opportunities for self-directed learning and free enquiry for students.
- Be designed for reasonable and equitable student workloads.
- Be designed for equitable and timely student assessment and feedback, with transparent assessment practices.
- Ensure comparable and appropriate resource provision.
- Ensure content, feedback and assessment are constructively aligned and scaffolded.
- Embrace the learning needs of a diverse student profile to be inclusive and equitable.
- Conform as required to both UK sector quality standards and the standards and regulations of University partners.

3.5 Delivery of Programmes

In the delivery of programmes, SAE Institute requires that:

- Students receive study materials, assessment tasks and assessment criteria at the commencement of a programme and module.
- Systems that are robust and secure are in place to record and track student feedback and achievement.
- Teaching that serves to enhance creative and transformational learning with timely and effective feedback and a notified and transparent schedule of assessment that is effective in supporting learning and safeguarding academic standards.
- Learning and teaching technologies are used to support student learning, are accessible and regularly maintained.
- Learning and teaching technologies, including the VLE, are deployed to optimise student engagement, support development of digital literacy and good practice, and enhance an expanded and critical scholarship.
- Faculty engage in a formal system of peer teaching observations, with feedback provided to support continued professional development.
- Supervisors engage in teaching observations to provide feedback and support.
- Course content and assessment are delivered in an authentic industry context to demonstrate current industry practice, support career planning and the development of professional skills.

4 Assessment of Learning

SAE assessment practices will:

- Promote, enhance, and improve the quality of student learning through feedback that is clear, informative, effective, timely, constructive, and relevant to the needs of the learner.
- Measure and confirm the standard of student achievement in relation to published learning objectives.
- Reward student effort and achievement with an appropriate grade.
- Certify student outcomes and achievement according to approved quality standards.
- Be regularly and systematically reviewed by all stakeholders (including students, faculty and industry) to continuously evaluate and enhance the quality of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the learning and teaching process.

In the assessment of learning, which may use criterion-based, holistic, or another approach to assessment as befits the programme, SAE Institute requires that:

- Assessment is constructively aligned to learning outcomes.
- Assignment and project titles are authentic.
- Assignment and project descriptors clearly outline expectations and have associated rubrics.
- All module assessment details, including submission deadlines, weightings, descriptors and rubrics, are provided at the commencement of a module.
- Summative assessment (including title, weighting, learning outcomes, and descriptors) cannot be modified amended without the approval of the Programme Committee and, where relevant, the University partner.
- Published submission deadlines for assignments and projects cannot be varied without good reason, and without the consent of all students in the module, and the campus Academic Coordinator.
- Assessment must be transparent and fair, following approved assessment standards.
- Where appropriate and feasible, assignments and projects will permit learner choice.
- Campus faculty and academic leadership are responsible for ongoing appraisal of the quality of student assessment practices, and the reporting of this appraisal to the relevant Programme Committees.
- Assessment outcomes and feedback are provided to students in a timely and effective manner to ensure that students can monitor their learning through reflection on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff.
- Students can consult with faculty to clarify any outcomes or feedback on assessment.
- Assessment practices are reviewed regularly and systematically by Programme Committees and SAE academic governance structures.
- Feedback on assignments and projects is clear, timely and effective with the purpose of providing students with information on the quality of work and the enhancement of learning.
- Assessment will contribute to the achievement of graduate and programme outcomes of digital literacy, enterprise and entrepreneurship, internationalisation and ethical behaviour.

Submission of assignments and projects on all programmes is expected to be provided in electronic form (including those accompanied by a live presentation) to allow for the possibility of remote moderation and oversight by External Examiners.

Official assessment grades and feedback for all programmes are provided in electronic form through the Virtual Learning Environment.

SAE Institute academic staff are committed to promoting innovation in technology-enhanced learning and teaching.

4.1 Assessment Boards

SAE Institute delivers validated degree programmes in multiple languages as approved by University partners. Final award and assessment outcomes are processed through a tiered Panel and Board system, aligned with the University partners' regulations, discussed in A04 Academic Governance, and detailed in Appendix A.

Student results are confirmed by second tier Finalist Assessment Board (FAB), having passed through internal and external verification through the first tier Content Specialist Panel (CSP), and Regional Assessment Panels (RAPs), and Campus Assessment Panels (CAPs) pre-boards. The assessment board framework is intended to ensure fair, consistent, equitable and comparable assessment across all validated programmes for all campuses, and in all languages of instruction. Membership of these assessment boards and panels includes External Examiners, University partner representatives, SAE Academic Leadership and members of faculty. Membership and terms of reference are provided in Appendix A.

The SAE University Partnership Standards and Quality Committee (UPSQC) has responsibility for monitoring the consistency of academic quality and comparability of standards across all regions and campuses.

5 Policy History

Policy Created:	June 2022
Date of Last Revision:	November 2022
Approved by:	CM, November 2022

Appendix A: Assessment Board Regulations

A.1 Finalist Assessment Board (FAB) – Second-Tier Board

A.1.1 FAB Membership

- University partner Nominee (Chair)
- Chief External Examiner *or* representative for panel of Examiners
- University partner faculty (Link Tutors or Collaborative Partnership Leaders)
- Regional Deans
- Regional Learning Managers and Quality Managers
- Manager of University Partnerships

A.1.2 Terms of Reference

1. To award, in the light of recommendations from the first-tier boards, qualifications on behalf of the Academic Board.
2. To consider the implementation of assessment policy and related matters.
3. To consider any matters brought forward from Content Specialist Panels or the External Examiners.

The FAB will normally meet three times each year to consider finalists from all validated programmes. Documentation for the FAB will be provided by SAE’s Directorate of Academic and Student Services (DASS) team, and a secretary will be appointed from the DASS team to support the business of the Board. Other guests and observers may attend the meeting subject to prior approval by the Chair.

A.2 Content Specialist Panels (CSPs) – First-Tier Board

CSPs are formed for each cognate area of SAE provision, as follows:

- **Audio and Music**, including BA/BSc (Hons) Audio Production, BA/BSc (Hons) Music Business, and all nested Diploma of Higher Education and Certificate of Higher Education awards.
- **Film, Animation and Media**, including BA/BSc (Hons) Film Production, BA/BSc (Hons) Digital Film Production, BA/BSc (Hons) Game Art (and) Animation, BA/BSc (Hons) Visual Effects (and) Animation, BA/BSc (Hons) Media Production and Publishing, BA/BSc (Hons) Content Creation and Online Marketing, and all nested Diploma of Higher Education and Certificate of Higher Education awards.

- **Interactive Media**, including BA/BSc (Hons) Web Development, BSc (Hons) Games Programming, and all nested Diploma of Higher Education and Certificate of Higher Education awards.

A.2.1 *CSP Membership*

- Regional Deans or University Partner nominee (Chair, depending on University partner processes)
- External Examiners for relevant programmes
- University partner faculty (Link Tutors or Collaborative Partnership Leaders) for relevant programmes
- Programme Committee Chairs or Module Leaders for relevant programmes
- Regional Learning Managers and Quality Managers
- Manager of University Partnerships

A.2.2 *Terms of Reference*

1. To determine the grade awarded to each student in respect of all modules.
2. To make recommendations to the programme progression committee, where appropriate, on the progression of all continuing students.
3. To discuss and monitor academic standards of all programmes across all campuses where they are taught, across all languages of teaching and assessment, and to make any recommendations arising to the Finalist Assessment Board.
4. To undertake a comparative analysis of student achievement and grade distributions.
5. To recommend to the Programme Committees, within the approved regulations, the form and nature of assessment and reassessment for all modules which comprise a programme.
6. To make recommendations to the Finalist Assessment Board on the classification of final qualifications awarded.
7. To make recommendations to University partners on changes to the regulations and procedures governing the academic standing of students.
8. To consider any matters brought forward from regional assessment panels by External Examiners, University partner representatives, and SAE Programme Committees.

Each CSP will normally meet 3-4 times each year to consider candidates from all validated programmes. Documentation for the CSPs will be provided by SAE's DASS team, and a

secretary will be appointed from the DASS team to support the business of the Panel. Other guests and observers, including staff involved in the delivery and assessment of the programmes may attend the meeting subject to prior confirmation with the Chair.

A.3 Regional Assessment Panel (RAP) – Pre-Board

Each RAP has an assigned set of campuses that may include multiple languages of instruction. Its primary objective is to review all the grades presented, ensuring that they are true and accurate, and make provisional recommendations for progressing students and all finalists. The RAP provides samples to the panel of External Examiners (EE) for review, covering the range of language and programmes.

A.3.1 RAP Membership

- Regional Dean (Chair)
- Regional Quality Manager
- Regional Learning Manager
- Programme Committee Chairs
- Academic Coordinators
- Members of faculty, as appropriate

A.3.2 Terms of Reference

1. To review all module grades for all campuses in the region. The RAP may refer to any assessment material for a module including but not limited to scripts, coursework materials, project reports, design, artefact or similar material relating to an assessment, industrial training requirements, workplace experience or similar reports. The Panel may review selected samples of scripts for assessment at final or key intermediate stages where assessment by coursework or continuous assessment forms part of the approved examination arrangements.
2. To recommend to the CSP, within the approved regulations, the form and nature of assessment and reassessment for all modules which comprise a programme.
3. To undertake a comparative analysis of student achievement and grade distributions.
4. To review and recommend to the progression board student's eligibility for progression from between Levels (4, 5, and 6), as well as into modules with specific prerequisites.
5. To make provisional recommendations for finalists to the CSP.

6. To make recommendations on changes to the regulations and procedures governing the academic standing of students.

Each RAP will normally meet 3 times each year to consider finalists from all validated programmes. Documentation for the RAP will be provided by SAE's DASS team, in liaison with the campus Academic Coordinators. Other guests and observers, including staff involved in the delivery and assessment of the programmes may attend the meeting subject to prior confirmation with the Chair.

A.4 Campus Assessment Panel (CAP)

The CAP ensures that all student assessment is undertaken in a timely manner, and that all student grade profiles are checked for completeness and accuracy, and relevant commentary and documentation is gathered for any candidates that have any special circumstances that require consideration by the first or second tier board.

A.4.1 CAP Membership

- Academic Coordinator (Chair)
- Programme Coordinators
- Members of faculty covering all programmes taught at the campus

A.4.2 Terms of Reference

1. To collate all results for all modules for all programmes delivered at the campus
2. To ensure that all results are complete
3. To provide an explanation for any anomalies or circumstances which may have had an impact on the conduct of campus assessments
4. To make recommendations on changes to the regulations and procedures governing the academic standing of students

Each CAP will normally meet 3 times each year to consider students from all programmes. Documentation for the RAP will be provided by SAE's DASS team, in liaison with the campus Academic Coordinator. Other guests and observers, including staff involved in the delivery and assessment of the programmes may attend the meeting subject to prior confirmation with the Chair.

Appendix B : Protocol on Languages

This protocol aims to define the threshold standard for translation of documentation in SAE Institute campuses. The protocol is a fundamental part of the quality process, in order to:

- Ensure equality of student experience (providing translations where the language of tuition is not English).
- Ensure quality standards in the region through translations of the SAE Quality Manual and related documents.
- Ensure consistency of the key academic documents (programme specifications, module documents, assessment guidelines).

From English to language of instruction:

Category	Student (STG) / Staff (TTG) facing	Document / Content	Translation level	Comment
Curriculum	STG	Programme Handbook	Pro agency	
Curriculum	STG	Course Handbook	Pro agency	
Curriculum	STG	Programme Specifications	Pro agency	
Curriculum	STG	Course Specifications	Pro agency	
Assessment	STG	Assessment Guidelines		
Assessment	TTG	Grading Rubrics		
Content	STG	Session Plans, Handouts, Quizzes		
Policies and procedures	STG	SAE Quality Manual	Pro agency	Only campuses which need to comply with local regulations.
Learning Objects (where needed)	STG	Reading, listing, viewing, URLS list		
Advertising	STG	Website / Advertising material		
Advertising	TTG	Website / Advertising material	Good	Local support.
Submission	STG	Major Project Abstract + Overview	Proofreading	Local support.
Academic Governance	TTG	Board of Studies minutes	Proofreading	Local support.