International Quality Review

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation

Review Report

March 2024

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation. The review took place from 6 to 8 March 2024 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Rong Huang
- Mr Vlasios Sarantinos
- Mr Matthew Adie (student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Yue Song.

International Quality Review (IQR) offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity to have a review by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The review benchmarks the institutions' quality assurance processes against international quality assurance standards set out in Part 1 of the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)](#).

In International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

- makes conclusions against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG
- makes conditions (if relevant)
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- comes to an overall conclusion as to whether the institution meets the standards for International Quality Review.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section: [Key findings](#). The section [Explanations of the findings](#) provides the detailed commentary.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission. A dedicated section explains the method for [International Quality Review](#) and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [Glossary](#) at the end of this report.

Key findings

Executive summary

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (APU) is among Malaysia's premier private universities, and is where a unique fusion of technology, innovation and creativity works effectively towards preparing graduates for significant roles in engineering, computing, business, and other fields globally.

Established in 1993 as the Asia Pacific Institute of IT (APIIT), the institution was granted University College status under the name Asia Pacific University College of Technology & Innovation (APIIT) in 2007 and full university status under its current name Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (APU). Privately owned, the University is part of the APIIT Education Group and has a vision to be 'a leading university of technology and innovation transforming students into highly employable, competent and future-proof professionals'. APU's Mission is 'We provide high quality, affordable, innovative and internationally benchmarked education and research in a professional, ethical and student-centred manner by designing and delivering a range of enriching and distinctive learning experiences'.

The University comprises 14 academic schools including 11 discipline-based schools and three programme-based schools. Its student population of over 13,000 students is drawn from more than 130 countries. All programmes provided by APU must comply with the Malaysian Qualifications Framework and adhere to both Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) requirements.

The University's management structure is headed up by a Chief Executive Officer and covers all the main functional areas associated with the management of the University. The Vice-Chancellor, Senior Director of Administration and Human Resources (who is also the Registrar), Chief Operating Officer, Senior Director Student Services, Chief Financial Officer, and the Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer report to the Chief Executive Officer.

The academic governance structure is headed up by the Senate, chaired by the Vice Chancellor, and includes the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer, Registrar, Senior Director, Partnerships and Standards, Head/Lead for Quality, Regulatory and Compliance, Heads of School, no more than 10 professors or associate professors determined by the Vice Chancellor, no more than 10 other members appointed by the Vice Chancellor and a representative of the Student Council (by invitation). Normally meeting every trimester, the Senate maintains oversight of the University's academic regulations and policies governing student admission, progression and conferment of degrees and awards as well as approving examination results and receiving, considering and endorsing reports from other bodies involved in academic governance.

The University also works in partnership with De Montfort University (DMU) to provide a range of programmes leading to dual awards of APU and DMU. A Joint Academic Board involving APU and DMU representation operates to provide academic oversight of the dual award provision offered under the partnership between the two universities.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation meets the 10 ESG Standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the handbook for International Quality Review (October 2023). The University provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. During the review visit, which took place from 6 to 8 March 2024, the review team held a total of seven meetings with the CEO, Vice-Chancellor, senior management team,

academic staff, professional support staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders. The review team also had the opportunity to observe the University's facilities and learning resources in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In summary, the review team found five examples of good practice and was able to make recommendations for improvement/enhancement. The recommendations are of a desirable rather than essential nature and are proposed to enable the University to build on existing practice which is operating satisfactorily but which could be improved or enhanced. The review team did not set any conditions that the University must satisfy before achieving QAA accreditation.

Overall, the review team concluded that Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation **meets** all standards for International Quality Review.

QAA's conclusions about Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation.

European Standards and Guidelines

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation meets all of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Conditions

The review team did not set any conditions.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation:

- active engagement with industry within the development of new academic programmes (ESG Standard 1.2)

- active engagement with industry in the design and delivery of learning, teaching, and assessment (ESG Standard 1.3)

- close relationship between APU and industry to support students' ongoing professional development and success (ESG Standard 1.6)

- effective use of industry advisory panels to monitor and review the programmes across different schools to ensure its programmes reflect the changing needs of society (ESG Standard 1.9)

- proactive engagement of different external quality assurance activities to inform internal continuous improvement of its academic provision (ESG Standard 1.10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation:

- develop a systematic review mechanism to ensure its quality management documentation is consistent among different policies and procedures (ESG Standard 1.1)

- produce and publish a commercially sensitive version of the policy for quality assurance (ESG Standard 1.1)

- clearly define the relationship between various committees in the governance structure to ensure effective oversight of its academic provision at all levels (ESG Standard 1.1)

- broaden the involvement of internal stakeholders (such as students and academic staff) at APU's committee structure in developing and implementing its policies for quality assurance (ESG Standard 1.1)

- urgently update Student Conduct and Discipline Policy to ensure it refers to the correct policy once the Senate approves the APU Academic and Research Dishonesty Policy (ESG Standard 1.1)

- review its student assessment feedback policy across various documentation to ensure consistent standards (ESG Standard 1.3)

- reconsider its approach to managing how changes to academic regulations, policy, and practices are applied to student-facing documentation (ESG Standard 1.3)

- reflect on whether the value conferred by the online feedback system is best expressed as an additional mechanism for collecting informal, ad hoc feedback from students or whether this should constitute the formal mechanism for gathering formalised student complaints (ESG Standard 1.3)

- develop a more systematic approach to planning and reviewing learning and support services to ensure they are sufficient, efficient and easily accessible to students (ESG Standard 1.6)

- ensure EMRs are appropriately completed, effectively discussed with involvement of module tutors to share their practice and learned lessons to support the continuous module and programme improvement (ESG Standard 1.7)

- adopt a consistent approach to recording committee minutes to ensure they reflect actual committee discussion, fully aligning with their Terms of Reference, and subsequently informing continuous quality improvement activities (ESG Standard 1.7)

- develop a systematic approach to involve students and staff in planning follow-up activities in relation to teaching and learning and subsequently enhancing the quality of the programmes and the student experience (ESG Standard 1.7)

- formulate and use a systematic process to clearly define and explain the different levels of access for both internal and external stakeholders (ESG Standard 1.8).

Explanation of the findings about Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a brief glossary at the end of this report. A fuller glossary of terms is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the review method, also on the QAA website.

Standard 1.1   Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Findings

1.1   The Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (APU) is one of Malaysia's premier private universities. The quality policy of APU is 'to provide education and training services of international quality standards and to meet customer requirements First time, On time and at All times'. The meeting with the senior leader and the senior management confirm that APU has no specific policy for quality assurance. However, it has the Quality Management System (QMS) to oversee its quality management and assurance process.

1.2   'Quality Management System-Quality Processes' provides an overview of the system and different procedures. Quality Manual APU APIIT_2020 contains an overview of the activities and services including the scope of the QMS, policies, and how the University intends to satisfy the requirements of the different elements of ISO9001:2015 standards, and the Quality Policy. The Quality Management Manual (QMM) includes procedures for control of documented information; conduct of internal audits; nonconformity and corrective actions; management review; and risks and opportunities assessment. The Quality Procedure Manual (QPM) contains core procedures (QPs) - Academic; Teaching; Assessment; Administration; Graduation; Career and Job Placement which are in a range of individual quality procedures for Degree Programmes (QP1-QP12), master's programmes (MP1 - MP11), corporate Training (CP1 - CP5), and support services.

1.3   However, a comparison of its Quality Manual and Quality Management Manual reveals that the order of sections (QMM3 and QMM4) in the QMM is reported incorrectly in the two key documents. Furthermore, the Quality Manual and Quality Management Manual are developed for ISO purposes, with limited references to the academic context; therefore they are less effective in dealing with student and staff feedback and complaints. The quality processes implemented at APU were originally certified under ISO 9002:1994 in December 1994 and subsequently audited on a yearly basis. The certification was updated to ISO 9001:2015 on 25 December 2017. The meeting with the senior managers indicates that APU has already planned to secure ISO academic-related accreditation instead of continuation of current ISO general accreditation.

1.4   The Staff Conduct and Discipline Policy sets out the expectations for staff behaviour in the APIIT Education Group and provides a framework for dealing with instances of alleged staff misconduct. It is in conjunction with the APIIT Education Group Staff Handbook. The Discipline Committee is mentioned in the policy. The APU Staff Disciplinary Procedure was shared with the review team and indicates that no disciplinary committee is mentioned in the process. Misconduct investigation and action are undertaken by HR. The meetings with the senior management and the academic staff also reveal different views on the roles of the Disciplinary Committee.

1.5   Considering the above analysis, the review team therefore **recommends** that APU develops a systematic review mechanism to ensure its quality management documentation is consistent among different policies and procedures.

1.6   The Quality Policy is formally outlined in its Quality Manual. The SED and Management Review meeting minutes indicate that the quality policy, the quality process and procedures were communicated and promoted among employees, and relevant

stakeholders through management review, academic meetings, new staff induction, intranet (APSpace), the APU Knowledge Base, town hall/school presentations, and meetings (for example, the senior management team's quality management review meeting) or in documents as appropriate. The meeting with the senior leader and the senior managers confirms that the QMS, Quality Manual and Quality Management Manual are listed in the Knowledge Base. The students, the academic staff and the professional staff also reported in the meeting that they knew where to find these documents. The review team was able to see these documents in the Knowledge Base during the facility demonstration. Furthermore, the external programme adviser commented that 'All policies, procedures and manuals are made easily accessible via the share point/website'.

1.7   However, a review of the APU website reveals that its Quality Manual, Quality Management Manual, and Quality Procedure Manual are not made publicly available. The meetings with the senior leader and the senior managers confirm that these documents are commercially sensitive; meanwhile there are no requirements from the Ministry of Higher Education and Malaysian Quality Authority for the institutions to do so.

1.8   To meet ESG Standard 1.1 which requires that institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is publicly available, the review team **recommends** APU produce and publish a commercially sensitive version of the policy for quality assurance (that is, its QMS, Quality Management Manual and Quality Procedure Manual).

1.9   APU incorporates traditional university structures with the Senate being the supreme academic body to oversee the institution's academic affairs and ensure the proper functioning of academic processes. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) letter approving the APU constitution has been provided. This is based on the MOHE template and all institutions in Malaysia must have their university constitution approved by the Ministry. The responsibilities of the Senate have been specified and approved by MOHE. The sample of Senate meeting minutes and a range of evidence related to the Senate, confirm that the Senate has performed as its Terms of Reference (ToRs) indicate.

1.10 The SED indicates that the Academic Committee is the main committee focusing on academic development and academic standards. All academic development is managed through the Academic Committee, which reports directly to the Senate. Its Terms of Reference reflect its purpose. The Academic Committee meeting minutes also demonstrate that the committee performs as required.

1.11 However, other available evidence indicates a confusing organisational structure of the quality management process within the APU:

- Terms of Reference of the Senate indicate that one of its responsibilities is 'to receive, consider and endorse reports and/or recommendations' from Senior Management Team, Quality Assurance Board, Academic Committee, Partnership and Standards, Teaching/Learning Enhancement, MQA Accreditation, Industry and Professional Certification/Accreditation, Student Experience-Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs) and Professional Appointment Committee. It is appropriate for the Senate to receive, consider and endorse reports and/or recommendations from its subcommittees and SMT. However, it is unclear why it should consider reports from Partnership and Standards, Teaching/Learning Enhancement, MQA Accreditation, Industry and Professional Certification/Accreditation, Student Experience-Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs) as the reports from these committees should have been reported to its subcommittees for discussion. Furthermore, the PCM minutes indicate that approved PCM minutes after each meeting are to be submitted and presented to the next available Academic Committee meeting. In addition, PCMs for Dual

programmes are required to report to JMC/JAB or its subcommittee and PCMs for non-dual programmes are required to report to QAB.

- The Senate includes four committees as indicated in the figure: Academic Committee, Professorial Appointment, School Boards, and University Appeal Committee. However, the figure indicates no relation among these committees. But in consideration of ToRs of Programme Committee, internal result review committee, IRRC, they are directly related to similar subcommittees of Academic Committee or University Appeal Committee.

- The Senate's ToRs indicate it receives reports and/or recommendations from the Senior Management Team. However, the figure in the SED does not demonstrate such a link.

- A review of ToRs of Senior Management Team reveals that it is the senior academic decision-making body for APU/APIIT which provides strategic and academic leadership in line with APU/APIIT's overarching organisation goals and objectives. The ToRs and its disclosed SMT minutes clearly confirms that SMT instead of the Senate makes strategic academic decisions for APU.

- Although R20 provides a clarification on responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team and Senior Management Team, in consideration of their responsibilities, and related SLM minutes and SMT minutes, they seem to deal with very similar matters.

1.12 Although the meeting with the senior leader and the senior managers provided further information on how the University is managed in relation to quality assurance processes, relationships among different committees are not clear. Although ToRs' updates for Senate approval provide more up-to-date information regarding different committees, very limited information is included regarding the relationships among the committees. In consideration of the above analysis, the review team therefore **recommends** that APU clearly defines the relationship between various committees in the governance structure to ensure effective oversight of its academic provision at all levels.

1.13 A review of available programme handbooks indicates that students are made aware that their feedback to programmes is collected through the online feedback form (http://feedback.sites.apiit.edu.my/), Mid/End Semester Survey System, and Programme Committee meetings. The processes are the same for the single or dual degree programmes. In relation to individual modules, the students are made aware that they can share their views on the module with their lecturers at any time. Views may also be expressed through the Programme Leader or via Programme Committee Meetings (PCM), and online student surveys as indicated in a range of available module handbooks.

1.14 Although the APU indicates that 'student voice' is an integral part of stakeholder input into APU's monitoring and enhancement of academic standards, a review of memberships of different committees and available meeting minutes (for example, Programme Innovation Committee, Academic Committee, Senate, Quality Assurance Board) reveals that there is very limited involvement of students in the current quality management system as there is no student representation at such committees or boards. Students and alumni reported in the meeting that they have expressed their opinions to different aspects of their study experience through surveys and PCMs. However, they confirmed that there is very limited student involvement in other University committees which influence their academic study.

1.15 The online feedback system is a platform for students or staff to provide feedback on services, facilities and activities offered. These are incorporated into the Operations, Security, Safety and Health (OSH) meetings. Three sets of minutes were provided but they are brief, and it is clear what is raised by staff. While some points are relevant to the learning

environment, none of them are related to staff feedback in teaching practice and student support.

1.16 Management review is incorporated into the Senior Leadership Meeting. Samples of minutes/presentations relating to the review of the quality management system were included. However, the meeting minutes bear very limited evidence of how staff are involved in developing and implementing the policy.

1.17 Three further sets of staff meeting minutes were provided from different schools. They reveal that the staff have been informed of changes and instructions to comply with processes and procedures to improve teaching. However, little is related to how staff are involved in developing and implementing the policies and procedure documents.

1.18 Two staff engagement survey results were provided to the team. The survey investigates a range of dimensions (for example, employee engagement and work on campus experience, two aspects and 11 dimensions). However, they are not directly related to policy for quality assurance.

1.19 The meeting with the academic staff reveals that they know how to provide feedback through the online feedback system. They were also aware of memberships of different committees. However, as normal module tutors, they have limited involvement in developing policies and procedures for quality assurance. They confirm their involvement is more related to the implementation of these policies and procedures.

1.20 In consideration of the above analysis of the involvement of students and academic staff, although their feedback has been consulted, their involvement in developing the policy for quality assurance is limited. The review team therefore **recommends** that APU broaden the involvement of internal stakeholders (for example, students and academic staff) at APU's committee structure in developing and implementing its policies for quality assurance purposes.

1.21 The SED indicates that APU offers dual award degrees in collaboration with De Montfort University (DMU), UK. Both partners have the shared responsibility of maintaining the academic quality and standards of its awards while supporting the continuous enhancement of the student learning experience. To that end, a Joint Academic Board (JAB) was set up in 2020 to act collaboratively and oversee the operational, strategic and quality-related management of dual award programmes involving APU and DMU. The new programme and newly named specialism development process and the related timescale clearly illustrate different steps of the development involving a school's initial idea generation, the curriculum development team, QAB/JAB to Senate endorsement before MQA accreditation and partner university approval.

1.22 The Quality Assurance Board (QAB) and the Joint Academic Board (JAB) are equivalent bodies but deal with different categories of programmes. The QAB focuses on APU wholly developed and delivered programmes which lead to a single APU award. These include certificate programmes, foundation programmes, diploma programmes and research programmes (MPhil and PhD). The JAB focuses on dual award programmes which result in 'Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body'. Both the QAB and JAB provide inputs as/when required for Senate acknowledgement.

1.23 The APU Academic and Research Dishonesty Policy (dated 13/01/2024) establishes the standard of behaviour expected from APU students in maintaining academic and research integrity. It provides a framework for addressing academic and/or research dishonesty, including issues such as plagiarism and the improper use of Generative AI, as well as breaches of these standards. The document also details the process, procedures,

and responsibilities to ensure a fair and consistent approach in dealing with the aforementioned issues. The policy mentions the existence of both a School Academic Dishonesty Panel and a University Academic Dishonesty Panel, which deal with different types of misconduct. The meetings with the senior managers, the academic staff and the professional staff reveal that there is a clear understanding of the differences between the two panels. Furthermore, it was also confirmed that although the policy was shared, this has not been finally approved by the Senate and hence it has not been widely publicised. The incoming Senate meeting agenda was shared with the team which included the request of the approval of the policy.

1.24   APU shares its ToRs for APU Research Ethics Committee (AREC). Research ethics considerations and conduct will include, but not be limited to, all research involving human participants, the processing of personal data or animal subjects carried out at APU or under the auspices of APU/DMU dual award scheme, research integrity and the sources of research funding. Three examples of research ethical approval from students and staff were provided to the team. They collectively demonstrate that APU has ensured academic and research integrity in its research undertaken by the students and staff.

1.25   The Student Conduct and Discipline Policy (date effective: 22/08/2023) sets out the expectations for student behaviour at APU/APIIT and provides a framework for dealing with instances of alleged student misconduct which includes general misconduct and academic misconduct. The policy indicates that the APU/APIIT Policy and Procedure for Dealing with Academic Dishonesty and APU/APIIT Policy on Plagiarism documents set out further guidance on the types of behaviours, principles and procedures for consideration of a breach of academic misconduct. However, R20 20240219 reveals that towards the end of 2023, the APU/APIIT Policy and Procedure for Dealing with Academic Dishonesty and the APU/APIIT Policy on Plagiarism were consolidated into a single document titled 'APU Academic and Research Dishonesty Policy'. The review team is informed that the Student Conduct and Discipline Policy will be updated once the Senate approves the APU Academic and Research Dishonesty Policy.

1.26   The policy clearly explains how different general misconducts are dealt with by the University Disciplinary officer, Disciplinary Committee and Disciplinary Appeals Committee. Of the three disclosed Academic Dishonesty minutes, the minutes explicitly state only the school's name, leaving ambiguity in the other two documents regarding their association with either the School or the University Dishonesty Board. Additionally, several minutes refer to APU's Professional Code of Conduct instead of the APU's Academic and Research Dishonesty Policy. Most of the meetings are referred to as Academic Misconduct Hearings instead of Disciplinary Committee. The minutes from three Disciplinary Appeals Committees are supplied and indicated such committee deals with the students' appeals against their schools' decisions.

1.27   The external stakeholders for APU programmes include external examiners (EEs), external advisers and Industry Advisory Panel members. APU has adopted the UK approach to employ external examiners (both from Malaysia and the UK) to review assessments and marking schemes and to conduct moderation of marking to accept APU's marking standards and to provide an independent perspective on the performance of all students as required by the MQA. The external examiners verify and moderate assessment papers while external advisers serve to provide suggestions for improvements to the programme as a whole. The difference between external examiners and programme advisers is defined in the MQA circular dated 17.7.2015.

1.28   A range of EE reports, and external adviser/assessor reports were provided. They collectively illustrate the involvement of external stakeholders in the quality assurance of APU programmes. The meeting with the externals indicates that the external examiners

were fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to related programmes. The employers were included in the meeting. They confirm their involvement in providing suggestions on teaching topics, internships and employment opportunities, as well as potential teaching methods. Some of them were also involved in market insight surveys when the University planned new modules or new programmes.

1.29 Overall, APU has a quality management system covering a range of policies and procedures which are operationalised and appropriate to prove effective quality assurance mechanisms that form a cycle for continuous improvement and contribute to the accountability of the institution. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance is **met**.

Standard 1.2   Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications' framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Findings

2.1   The University currently delivers a range of academic programmes spanning pre-university, undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study. While technology has traditionally been a central theme across its programme portfolio, the University continues to grow and diversify its offering, expanding into a range of wider academic disciplines in response to both student and local market demand.

2.2   As a provider of Higher Education within Malaysia, the University maintains a close working relationship with both the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi, (KPT)) and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA). Both play a significant role in the regulating and approving of both the scope and structure of programmes offered by APU.

2.3   Additionally, APU places significant value on the role of external accreditation, with several of its programmes subject to additional voluntary accreditation by the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB).

2.4   APU has a formal procedure and process in place to manage the end-to-end design and approval of new academic programmes and courses. The University has recently revised this process, implementing a new 'Gated Approach' from 2023 to help streamline the end-to-end process and address existing challenges relating to the consistency of programme documentation and engagement of stakeholders. The new approach comprises four key stages: Stage 1: Idea Generation; Stage 2: Market Intelligence; Stage 3: Programme Development and Approval; and Stage 4: Launch of Programme.

2.5   Appropriate supporting documentation, including a formal process map, procedure, and indicative timescale, has been developed by the University to guide those responsible for leading the development of new programmes within the new process. University staff who met with the review team demonstrated a clear understanding of the purpose of the new process and could articulate their role within it, across both academic schools and the professional services departments.

2.6   Before commencing formal development of a new programme, all ideas are required to undergo an initial feasibility study. The outputs from this process include both a Programme Portfolio Plan (PPP) and Programme Value Canvas (PVC). Both documents are subject to formal review by the Head of School and Senior Management Team. Where endorsed, the feasibility study will be progressed to the Programme Innovation Committee (PIC) for formal approval to prioritise the development of the programme and undertake a detailed market analysis. The PIC is responsible for ensuring appropriate consideration is given to the alignment of each proposed programme to the University's strategic priorities and to ensure the robustness and sustainability of the intended programme. Evidence shared with the review team showed this Committee giving detailed consideration to the merits of each

proposal and highlighting areas for further refinement prior to ensuring the robustness of each proposal, before seeking formal internal approval.

2.7   In meeting with the review team, University Senior Management noted the value that had been realised through introducing the Value Canvassing exercise, which helped to ensure the strengths of a proposed programme and its alignment to the University's strategic objectives were well reasoned and articulated.

2.8   In Stage 2, a formal Market Intelligence Report is prepared and presented to both the School Internal Review and PIC by the Head of the School. The University leverages the expertise within its own Marketing and Communications Function, as well as its network of global agents, to ensure the attractiveness and sustainability of a given programme is accurately determined. Evidence provided to the review team concerning the proposed BA (Hons) Financial Technology Programme illustrated a detailed benchmarking of the proposed programme against comparative qualifications offered by local and international competitors, as well as a substantive record of student and staff perspectives on the attractiveness and likely market demand for the intended programme.

2.9   Formal approval in Stage 3 comprises both a minuted motion of approval from the University's Senate and external approval of the programme by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and Ministry of Higher Education (Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi, (KPT)). To support these approvals, schools are required to prepare and submit the relevant Academic Planning Form and associated MQA-required documentation by the deadline agreed upon with Academic Quality. Where necessary, approval may comprise the additional syndication of accreditation from a designated PSRB.

2.10   Schools are required to work with the University's Marketing Team throughout the programme launch stage to ensure sufficient awareness and demand is generated for the programme. While planning and preparatory work for this stage can commence prior to securing approval from KPT, the programme cannot be formally marketed until the University has received official approval from KPT.

2.11   The review team considered APU's arrangements for handling the development and approval of new programmes to be robust and effective. The review team noted that the University's transition to the new 'Gated Model' had been driven by its own desire to continuously improve its own internal processes. Notably, staff who met with the review team were consistently positive as to the benefits that had been realised through the new model, noting specifically the value of installing routine checkpoints within the development process and the opportunity to increase engagement with stakeholders.

2.12   The APU Academic Planning Form acts as the primary document through which the finalised scope of the intended programme is defined before progressing the proposal for approval. This document will detail the rationale and resource implications associated with each proposed programme, as well as any associated risks. The form also requires summative comments to be provided detailing the extent to which consultation has been undertaken with both employers and students/alumni on the proposal.

2.13   The Planning Form is supported by a series of documents, which establish a formal record of the structure and design of each programme, including a specification of how the constituent courses will contribute towards realising the intended programme learning outcomes (PLOs). Descriptors for each module/course are also provided in support of the proposal.

2.14   A course/module descriptor is produced for each of the constituent courses within a programme of study. This document will detail both the focus, credit rating, and intended

course-level outcomes (including how they contribute to intended programme-level outcomes) along with the assessment methodologies to be used. A detailed assessment of student workload, including the proportion of time spent in face-to-face provision versus asynchronous is also provided within the descriptor. All module descriptors are made available to students via the University's virtual learning environment (VLE - Moodle), and have comparable content transcribed into module handbooks.

2.15 A Programme Structure Document is used to provide an aggregated view of the constituent modules that will form the basis of the intended programme of study. This includes a specification of the associated credit load per individual module/course, and per semester, to comprise the overall programme. The credit load relating to each code is comparable to the general requirements and credit structure of the national Malaysian Qualifications Framework, which is comparable in structure to that of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

2.16 A mapping of course learning outcomes to programme learning outcomes (PLOs) is also appended to each proposal. This document specifies how each of the constituent courses on a given programme of study will contribute to realising the intended PLOs, which are developed in alignment with the programme educational objectives (PEOs) specified by MQA. A mapping of each assessment methodology deployed across the constituent courses of a given programme of study is also provided to ensure balance and that a variety of assessment types are being utilised across each programme.

2.17 The review team was provided with access to the Academic Planning Form, and supporting Appendices, for the University's new Bachelor's in Financial Technology Programme. The review team was also provided with access to a range of module descriptors and programme and module handbooks. The team considered the University to be maintaining documentation concerning their programmes and courses that was comprehensive and completed to a high standard, reflective of local regulatory requirements.

2.18 The University may periodically make changes to the scope or structure of its academic programmes or modules. This can be the result of the University's internal continuous improvement initiatives (for example, receipt of student or industry feedback, annual monitoring) or may be driven by external factors, such as a revision by MQA to their published programme standards. In such scenarios, the University will consolidate all required changes into APU's Programme and Module Amendment Form, which will detail the scope and rationale for each change.

2.19 While all proposed amendments are subject to formal review within the University's committee structure, the process through which this is exercised will vary, depending on whether the impacted programme is wholly owned by APU (single award) or delivered as a dual award with their collaborative partner, De Montfort University (DMU). Those amendments affecting APU's wholly owned (single award) programmes are reviewed and approved by the University's Quality Assurance Board Amendment Subcommittee (QABASC), while any changes to dual award provision are separately reviewed by the APU-DMU Quality and Curriculum Development Committee (QCDC).

2.20 Notably, the documentation supporting this process requires staff to assess the operational impact of such changes on existing supporting documentation (for example, module descriptors, programme handbooks and marketing material). Where changes are required, staff are required to specify the individual responsible for carrying this out and provide the revised documentation within a specified timescale.

2.21 The review team was provided with access to a sample of documentation relating to recent programme and module amendments. These evidenced staff undertaking a

considered evaluation as to the scale, justification, and impact of proposed changes. The forms included a clear audit trail of the review and approvals proposed, amendments had been subject to APU's committee structure and were additionally supported by a running programme change log. The review team considered APU to have an effective process in place for handling the design and approval of programme changes.

2.22 As a provider of higher education within Malaysia, APU is required to develop all academic programmes in alignment with the Malaysian Qualifications Framework, which stipulates the title and classification of each named qualification, the expected learning outcomes and achievements, as well as the prescribed academic load. The review team noted recurrent reference to the MQF, and its requirements, within the documentation produced within the programme design and approval process, particularly the module descriptors.

2.23 The review team noted that there was considerable evidence of the University consulting and engaging with external representatives from industry within its work to develop and deliver academic programmes reflective of local and international industry requirements. Representatives from the industry who met with the review team identified multiple examples of where they had shared ideas for new courses or programmes which had been subsequently acted upon by the University. The review team noted that beyond such anecdotal cases, there was evidence of a wholesale and systematic approach to engaging the industry within the development of new programmes. This included both the requirement for a survey of industry representatives to be completed as part of the market research into a proposed programme and the requirement for staff leading programme development to summarise the extent to which industry had been engaged within the Academic Planning Form. The review team identified the University's engagement with industry within the development of new academic programmes as a feature of **good practice**.

2.24 Similarly, there was widespread evidence of students being seen as key stakeholders within the programme development and approval process. Students who met with the review team highlighted that they had been consulted previously on ideas for new courses and programmes and could identify at least one case where such an idea was now being pursued by the University. The review team received evidence of student views on prospective programmes forming a key aspect of Market Intelligence Research and being documented within each Academic Planning Form.

2.25 Notably, APU also requires staff to engage external examiners on any form of module or programme amendment to ensure they are provided with the opportunity to opine regarding the proposed changes.

2.26 The review team considered APU to be making appropriate use of external reference points and stakeholders within their approach to handling the development and approval of new programmes.

2.27 Overall, the review team considered APU to have robust arrangements in place for handling the development and approval of new programmes and courses. The team viewed the introduction of the new Gated Model to Programme Development to be a positive development within the University, as this internally drives enhancement to APU's own processes and procedures which enables the University to enact stronger oversight over the end-to-end development and approval process and ensures newly created programmes are aligned to the strategic objectives of APU. The review team considered APU to be making appropriate use of external reference points within the development process, which ensured new programmes were clearly aligned to the Malaysian National Qualifications Framework and were aligned to the needs of both students and employers. The University's process for

programme development supports the production of high-quality programme documentation which ensures a detailed record of the structure, design and learning outcomes that students are expected to obtain by studying each course and academic programme, while also detailing the resulting academic qualification level and credit load in line with the requirements of the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.2: Programme design and approval is **met**.

Standard 1.3   Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Findings

3.1   The University transitioned to an 'Outcome Based Education' approach in 2018, which has increased its focus on the knowledge and capabilities students will develop through studying a particular course and degree programme and how these may be practically applied by graduates upon completion of their studies. Staff who met with the review team indicated that this was an all-encompassing approach, with the defined learning outcomes often influencing the specific teaching, learning and assessment methodologies that would be deployed within the course.

3.2   As noted previously (see Section 1.2), a broad framework of learning outcomes has been established at the national level through the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF), against which all APU programmes are structured to ensure students can demonstrate the necessary general learning outcomes of the framework upon completion of their studies. In turn, APU has defined intended learning and employability outcomes for all its programmes which are used to drive the approach to pedagogic delivery across the underlying courses.

3.3   Typically, each course will involve delivery through both lectures and small group tutorials/seminars. Where appropriate, practical workshops and laboratories and group-based projects and activities also feature. All courses also involve a set of defined independent learning activities. Programme documentation provided to the review team evidenced the University routinely assessing the structure and range of delivery methods used at the level of each course and aggregated to the programme level to ensure appropriate breadth - within the tolerances permitted by MQA. Academic staff who met with the review team noted that workshops had been put in place by APU to assist staff in defining appropriate course-level learning outcomes for their modules.

3.4   The University has also used a range of blended and flipped classroom pedagogical methods which ensure the active engagement of students within the learning process. All activities comprising the approach to delivering a particular course are specified and communicated to students within the relevant scheme of work (SoW) document for the course. The SoW, along with the module handbook and module descriptor, state the learning outcomes of the course to students and how these articulate against the programme-level outcomes. These are additionally communicated to students via the course briefing session and via the VLE.

3.5   Students who met with the review team demonstrated an awareness of the intended learning outcomes for their programmes and courses and could identify how these were used by APU in delivering their programmes. Additionally, students noted the importance of the course briefing session in helping clarify the purpose and focus of each module. Staff would typically explain the learning objectives of the course and their relationship to both course structure and assessment.

3.6   The review team noted the view of academic staff who considered the University's adoption of an approach to delivering programmes which went beyond rote learning to focus on deeper and more practical applications of knowledge. The review team considered the University to have effectively embedded its approach to 'Outcome Based Learning' which

had resulted in the creation of clear and coherent outcomes for programmes and courses, on which both students and staff were clear.

3.7   The review team noted the considerable role played by the University's industry partners in supporting both the delivery of learning opportunities and assessment. For example, the review team learned of recent Cyber Security War Games which had been conducted with input from a local partner operating within this industry. The University also offered opportunities for students to experience and simulate trading within the Financial Services Industry via a dedicated learning space. A number of industry partners had also recently provided final year projects through which students could demonstrate their learning within their programme, while also gaining professional experience relative to their chosen industry.

3.8   While such industrial partnerships are fairly commonplace across higher education providers, the review team considered the scale and degree to which these partnerships were deployed by APU across the design and delivery of learning, teaching, and assessment and the degree to which partners spoke positively of the value they confer from their engagement with the University and its students. The review team therefore identified the active engagement with industry in the design and delivery of learning, teaching, and assessment as a feature of **good practice**. The team noted across many industry partners that there was a view and hope to continue growing their relationship with APU and its students as a long-term investment.

3.9   APU recognises the diverse range of backgrounds represented within its student population, specifically the University highlights students' proficiency with English language and the range of prior education instructions and academic disciplines its students enter from. APU notes that the teaching and learning strategies promoted by the University ensure the delivery of learning opportunities which suit the various types of learners, enabling them to attain the intended learning outcomes.

3.10   To aid students in making the transition to university-level study, all students are assigned an academic mentor upon enrolment. Typically, as an academic or programme leader, the mentor assumes formal responsibility for coaching students throughout their time at APU and acts as an initial point of contact for students. APU provides formalised training for mentors on their roles to ensure they are equipped to take on this role alongside their existing commitments. The role of the academic mentor is explained to students upon enrolment and is reinforced as a key support system within the programme handbooks.

3.11   Where students may require additional academic support throughout their time at university, they are able to use both APU's English Language Centre and regular weekly consultation hours in which academic staff will be made available for face-to-face discussions.

3.12   The University also provides a range of pastoral and non-academic centralised support services, including Career Guidance Counselling and Personal Welfare Counselling (see Section 1.6).

3.13   APU makes use of both formative and summative assessment as a means of ensuring students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes for a given course of study. The University notes that it endeavours to strike a balance between the different assessment methods used on a given course of study. The University's commitment to ensuring a fair and consistent assessment process, in which students' attainment of intended learning outcomes is holistically evaluated is expressed within its Assessment and Feedback Policy.

3.14 All instruments of assessment are subject to internal verification by module teams and academic leaders to ensure the quality and appropriateness of the intended assessment relative to the level of award and allotted time. Summative assessments are subject to further review by external examiners to ensure comparability against international standards and alignment with the intended learning outcomes of the course. Standardised documentation is used by APU to formalise the recording of both internal and external verification for each assessment.

3.15 APU has also devised a template Test Specification Table which is used to illustrate the alignment of each assessment to both the intended learning course/programme learning outcomes and Bloom's Taxonomy. The University notes that this template helps ensure consistency in the approach taken to assessment 'from year to year, semester to semester and from one lecturer to another'.

3.16 Students who met with the review team indicated that APU staff were particularly strong in clarifying the expectations of a given piece of assessment. As such, students had a clear understanding of how they should approach a particular assessment and the performance that was needed to secure a grade at a particular level. Students considered this a strength of APU relative to other local providers.

3.17 Academic staff partly attributed this to the standardised marking rubric and approved marking scheme that is currently used to ensure judgements on student performance are made in a fair and transparent manner. The review team was provided with access to a selection of these, which evidenced how the University clarifies the expectations placed on students in a particular assessment, and how these align to the overall intended learning outcomes of the course.

3.18 All completed summative assessments are subject to both initial marking and internal moderation within module teams, prior to undergoing external moderation. The University formally documents its approach to undertaking internal moderation through its Marking to Result Release Protocol. This is also supported by a standardised Internal Moderation Report (IMR) template which is used by APU to formalise feedback from the primary marker and moderator and rationalise any adjustments that have been made to initial marks. Moderators provide a justification within the IMR wherever more than 25% of students have failed a module, 30% have failed a particular assessment or 25% have achieved an A/A+/Distinction Grade.

3.19 The University's Internal Result Review Committee (IRRC) has formal responsibility for reviewing student results and recommending appropriate courses of action to address concerns around student progression, such as the requirement for students to retake assessments and courses. It is the responsibility of the Modular Board to ratify the final marks at a course level prior to the Programme and Award Boards making any decisions as to the progression and conferment of awards. The review team noted evidence from a sample of external examiner reports of these boards being consistently conducted in a fair and professional manner.

3.20 APU notes the value of feedback in supporting effective student learning. The University expects all lecturers to provide students with feedback on their performance in assessed work, this expectation is communicated to staff via the Lecturing Handbook. The University commits, within its Assessment and Feedback Policy 2023, to communicate marks and feedback on assessments to students within 15 working days from submission, and that the feedback provided to students will be of a suitable quality to support them in reflecting on the strengths and weakness of their own performance.

3.21 While there was recognition from students that feedback provided on assessment enabled them to critically reflect upon their own performance within assessments, there was notable confusion as to whether the University committed to provide feedback on all assessed work and the timelines within which this should be provided. The review team learned of some areas in which students indicated feedback was not provided on assessed work, such as class tests. Also, the scheduling of assessments sometimes does not allow for feedback to be provided to students before subsequent assessments were due. As a result, students were not given the opportunity to apply constructive feedback to continuously develop their own performance.

3.22 While these concerns appeared to be limited to particular areas of the University, comments from students concerning the availability of feedback on assessed work had also been raised in the sample of Programme Committee meetings provided to the review team.

3.23 In meeting with academic staff, the review team learned that the University provides feedback to students via several channels, including the VLE and Teams. The review team considered the risk that feedback provided via these channels may not be perceived by students as comprising the style of quality of feedback which is of the most use to them. As such, the review team would encourage the University to holistically review, in partnership with its students, the definition and approach it applies to providing students with feedback on their assessed work, so as to ensure this is being consistently applied across all areas of the University, and that students are clear as to the specific styles in which feedback may be delivered.

3.24 The review team noted that while the Assessment and Feedback Policy 2023 referred to a 15 working day turnaround period for the provision of feedback, the sample of Module Handbooks provided by the University for courses running in the same period (2023-24) referred instead to a 20 day turnaround period for students to receive on assessed work, other than examinations. To this effect, the review team **recommends** that APU reviews its student assessment feedback policy across various documentation to ensure consistent standards.

3.25 While recognising the challenges associated with managing four student intakes per year, the review team considered there to be value in the University considering effective practices in managing such changes in other areas of the University, notably the implementation of amendments to programmes and courses. The team recognised that the University does currently maintain an official change log which documents such amendments to each policy and their official effective date, but that access to these was limited to a small number of individuals within the University.

3.26 The review team considered the University to have established a robust approach to assessing student learning relative to the intended learning outcomes for the given courses and programmes. Appropriate processes are in place to ensure that published assessments and the resulting student marks are subject to appropriate internal and external moderation and verification and that marks are subject to appropriate ratification within the University's governance structure prior to publication.

3.27 However, the review team noted considerable confusion between staff, students and published academic policy and regulations as to the processes through which students were to be provided with feedback on their academic work. To this effect, the review team encouraged the University to holistically review, in partnership with its students, the definition and approach it applies to providing students with feedback on their assessed work, and **recommends** that the University reconsider its approach to managing how changes to academic regulations, policy, and practices are applied to student-facing documentation.

3.28 APU has an established set of 'academic dishonesty regulations' through which it ensures assessments are fairly conducted and academic standards are maintained. This policy was currently undergoing review at the time of the IQR to ensure it better reflects the increase in online and digital learning. The new policy is also expected to cover misconduct in academic research, given the recent growth in APU's postgraduate research provision.

3.29 The current policy provides a comprehensive, but not exhaustive, list of actions that could constitute potential academic misconduct under the regulations. The regulations provide guidance to staff on how suspected cases of academic misconduct should be investigated, reported and determined within the University. Guidance on academic integrity is also provided to students via their Module Handbooks.

3.30 Where the appropriate deliberative panel (University/Faculty Academic Dishonesty Panels; Senior Faculty Members) determines, beyond reasonable doubt, that the student has committed an offence under the regulations, the panel has the authority to apply an appropriate penalty to the student. These penalties are clearly stated within the regulations for each class of misconduct.

3.31 Students can appeal against a decision of academic misconduct. The grounds on which an appeal may be made by the student are confined to a procedural error or irregularity having been committed, or the emergence of new evidence not previously available during consideration of the original misconduct case.

3.32 The University notes the responsibility placed upon faculties to ensure that their students are informed of the Academic Dishonesty Regulations, and the parallel obligations for students to seek out further information and guidance where needed. Students are informed of this policy within their Module Handbooks. Students who met with the review team demonstrated an understanding of the term 'academic dishonesty' and how the University would handle alleged cases. Students noted that they had been provided with training on this as part of their induction to the University.

3.33 The review team considered the University to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure alleged cases of academic misconduct/dishonesty were subject to fair but robust review within APU. The review team noted that the impending introduction of the revised policy would likely strengthen the University's own practices in response to the growing prominence of online learning, which the review team considered to be evidence of the University's own continual improvement of its internal processes.

3.34 The University has an established Student Academic Appeals Procedure which governs the terms under which a student may appeal against an academic decision that has been made in relation to their programme, assessment or academic award.

3.35 Students are required to submit academic appeals using the correct Academic Appeal Form for the type of stage of appeal being made, within 14 days of receiving the original information. The School Academic Appeal Committee is responsible for considering all School Academic Appeals, typically within 14 days of receiving the appeal. Students should be informed of the outcome of their appeal within five days of a decision being reached. All appeal decisions are reported to the relevant Exam Board meetings for awareness.

3.36 A separate University-level Appeals Committee exists to consider appeals made against appeals previously considered at school-level. Appeals at this level are typically considered within 30 days, with students informed of the outcome within five days of a decision being reached. The University Appeals Committee has the authority to uphold or dismiss appeals, as well as to refer them back to the School Appeals Committee or hold a formal appeal hearing.

3.37 The University notes that it has experienced challenges in continuing to manually manage appeals in conjunction with an increase in student numbers. In response, an online appeals system was launched in 2021 which has helped ensure consistent tracking of appeals cases and compliance with the University's targeted 14-day turnaround window for consideration of appeals.

3.38 Students who met with the review team demonstrated an awareness of the University's appeal procedures and confirmed that in the event they required further information on this, they would likely approach the Lecturing Team in the first instance.

3.39 The University's Appeals Policy is supplemented by a recently updated Extenuating Circumstances Policy which was established in response to a rapid rise in claims made during the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy, established by APU, outlines the conditions under which a student may and may not submit a claim for extenuating circumstances, the process through which a claim is to be submitted and the requirements for certified supporting evidence.

3.40 All applications for extenuating circumstances are considered by both the University's 'Office of Extenuating Circumstances Claims' and the appropriate school. The former will evaluate the merit of the claim being made and will validate any supporting evidence, with schools recommending a decision to the Office of Extenuating Circumstances Claims. The University commits to determining and communicating the outcome of a claim to students within seven days of receipt of the original claim. Students are permitted to appeal the outcome of such claims via the University's Academic Appeal Policy.

3.41 The review team noted that the University had recently invested in the development of MIS Reporting Dashboards to enable Academic Operations to monitor, in real time, the extent to which extenuating circumstances and appeals enquiries were being processed to target timelines. The review team considered this to be a positive example of the University exercising data-driven monitoring of its service provision.

3.42 The University values feedback from its students as a means of supporting the continuous improvement of its courses and programmes. As a result, APU has established multiple mechanisms through which students may, and are encouraged to, provide feedback to the University on their learning experience:

- routine course evaluation via mid and end-semester surveys
- real-time feedback via the University's Online Feedback System
- biannual Programme Committee meetings.

3.43 APU regularly surveys its students as to the quality of their learning experience at both the mid-point and end of each academic semester. These course evaluation surveys are hosted via the VLE and require students to provide Likert-style ratings across the three themes of module, lecturer and facilities. Students are provided with guidance by APU on how to complete these evaluation surveys via the VLE. The review team noted that the release of students' results is tied to students having completed the module evaluation. Once this is completed, students are permitted to access their feedback via the VLE, likewise failure to complete the evaluation will result in student results being withheld from publication.

3.44 The scores from these surveys are shared with the relevant academic leaders and are fed into both the end-of-module reports used within APU's annual monitoring system and into staff appraisal evaluations. Where action is required in response to these results, an action plan will be created and discussed in the quarterly School Quality Review meeting to ensure appropriate senior oversight.

3.45 The University also operates a twice-yearly Programme Committee meeting which provides a means of bringing University and school senior management together with students in an open forum to review matters pertaining to the design, delivery, and assessment of academic programmes. The facilities in which they are delivered and the quality of resources supporting them are also considered. The feedback gathered through this forum is subject to further review by the University's Academic Committee. Senior staff who met with the review team noted that the actions stemming from the Programme Committee were subject to review and monitoring by school leadership to ensure these were considered efficiently.

3.46 The review team was provided with access to a selection of Programme Committee meetings minutes which evidenced students and staff engaging in wide-ranging discussions around the quality of both the student learning and wider University experience. The team noted that there was a clear linkage between the feedback provided from students and the resultant actions that were agreed to be taken forward.

3.47 Students who met with the review team identified the PCMs as an example of how they had typically been engaged by the University to provide feedback on their learning experience. Students were able to provide multiple examples of where changes had been made as a result of feedback provided in this forum, for example changes in lighting within practical laboratories and issues with the University Wi-Fi.

3.48 Staff who met the review team highlighted the value of the PCM in providing them with ongoing feedback on the quality of the services they provide within the University. These staff were also able to provide multiple examples of how feedback provided from students had been used to shape changes within the University, such as improvements in library resources and making improvements to the public transportation links with the University campus to ensure students can attend classes on time.

3.49 APU handles student complaints under its general approach to eliciting and responding to student feedback, operating a real-time online feedback system through which students can raise issues directly to University staff for their attention. Complaints raised through this mechanism can be directly responded to by the University, ensuring the complainant is aware of if and how the University will respond to their concern. The system also enables the production of real-time insights into the volume and nature of complaints being handled by the University.

3.50 The University's procedure and policy for handling student complaints is documented within the University's Quality Management Manual (QMM) as 'QMM 4: Feedback, Corrective and Preventative Action'. It is within this document that the University confirms the kind of issues on which a student may raise feedback and the standard turnaround time for University staff to review and respond.

3.51 The review team noted that a standardised wording was used in all Module Handbooks to advise students on how feedback could be submitted via end-of-module surveys and PCMs, but that this wording did not cover the submission of feedback via the online system. While guidance on providing feedback via the online system was included in the selection of Programme Handbooks made available to the team, this wording did not reference the term 'complaint'.

3.52 The review team considered the University's QMM 4 to be sufficient for the purposes of providing a documented procedure through which APU seeks to manage the handling of student complaints. However, the team considered the frequency with which the term 'feedback' was used interchangeably with 'complaint' and the limited marketing of this

system, and process, as the University's Complaints Process limited its effectiveness relative to the expectations of the European Standards and Guidelines.

3.53 To this effect, the review team **recommends** that the University reflects on whether the value conferred by the online feedback system is best expressed as an additional mechanism for collecting informal ad hoc feedback from students, or whether this should constitute the formal mechanism for gathering formalised student complaints. If the latter, then the review team would recommend appropriate reframing of this service to ensure it is clearly and consistently communicated to students as a means through which formal complaints may be submitted.

3.54 Overall, the review team considered APU to be delivering and assessing its academic programmes in a way that offered students various opportunities to play an active role within the learning process.

3.55 The University has established a clear educational philosophy and structured means of defining and aligning learning outcomes to delivery and assessment. The University's partnership with industry continued to be seen as a strength and area of good practice. APU takes appropriate steps to ensure all students were supported to participate within the available learning opportunities provided to them, and thereby had an equal opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.56 Appropriate mechanisms are in place to assure the quality and standards of the instruments of assessment used by APU to assess student attainment of the intended learning outcomes. The review team encourages the University to reflect upon its definition and perception, in partnership with students, to address concerns around the availability and quality of feedback provided to students in some schools. Additionally, the review team considered further work was necessary to improve the application of changes in academic policy and regulations in student-facing documents, ensuring consistency in the management of change relative to other University processes, such as programme amendments.

3.57 The team considered APU to have effective procedures to promote academic integrity among its students and to systematically investigate and adjudicate on alleged cases of dishonesty in a fair and transparent manner. Likewise, where a student seeks to appeal a prior academic judgement or make an application for extenuating circumstances, appropriate policies have been established to ensure effective and systematic handling of these cases within the University.

3.58 Lastly, the University was found to have appropriate systems in place to collect and act upon feedback from its students. Multiple examples were shared with the review team which indicated how APU had previously responded to student feedback to enhance the student learning experience. The team noted the extent to which the University's feedback mechanisms were interconnected with the University's approach to quality review and annual monitoring. The review team considered it necessary for further work to be undertaken to reframe the University's current approach to handling student complaints, in order to ensure this is clear and transparent to students.

3.59 To this extent, the review team considered Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is **met**.

Standard 1.4   Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life cycle', for example student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1   APU has a clearly laid out admissions and credit transfer policy, encompassing both international and local students, including the option of credit transfer. There is a clearly defined cycle beginning from when the students will access the relevant application on APU's website and submit it along with all the relevant documentation. The requirements and associated documentation are laid out clearly for both home and for international students, also detailing the steps required to apply and navigate through the visa process.

4.2   Once the prospective student has submitted an enquiry form, dedicated staff will contact the student to provide all the relevant information about the course and support them with their application. Following successful completion of an application form, it is then passed to a specific evaluator who will review the documentation and make a decision to make an offer or reject the candidate. Once that decision is made, the counsellor will be notified within the same day to alert the student and from there proceed with the ensuing steps which include issuing an acceptance letter, arranging to pay the required fees and visa application for international candidates.

4.3   Qualifications and pertinent documentation are reviewed against the University's entry requirements and Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) regulations. There is clear consideration for students with disabilities and the steps to ensure they are not disadvantaged as well as appeals procedure.

4.4   Credit transfer refers to the practice of granting exemption to a course in a programme on the basis that the requirements of a course or courses have been demonstrated to have been fulfilled through the previous study by the applicants. This allows mobility of learners between programmes, between institutions and between nations. The Credit Transfer and Module Exemption Policy is compliant with the credit transfer policy set by MQA. This policy is currently under review to include the requirements of the newly introduced programmes, including architecture, hospitality and tourism. APU has a vertical and horizontal credit transfer system, with the former involving students transferring to a higher degree programme while the latter students transferring between degree programmes of the same level, with clearly laid out criteria.

4.5   The Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) is committed to recognising the value of learning acquired through different phases of life. This is stipulated in the MQA Act 2007 where credit transfer and prior learning is an integral part of higher education. This process is known as Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) and is embedded in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). Through APEL, it recognises lifelong learning and enhances social inclusion by providing access to academic qualifications for those who might otherwise be excluded by lack of formal qualifications or work demands. APU, in line with MQA requirements, values the learning experience wherever it occurs, from providing access: APEL.A - APEL for Access to awarding credits for the individual courses in the programme; APEL.C - APEL for Credit Award, to the introduction of APEL.Q - APEL for Qualification which leads to the award of academic qualifications.

4.6   APEL for Access (APEL.A) means admission into a programme of studies in higher education institutions. Although APU is not an APEL.A assessment centre, the University

reported that they do accept learners who have met the entry requirements after being assessed through APEL.A. Candidates who applied for admission through APEL A will normally need to be interviewed to ensure that they have the right attitude and be able to handle the programme offered.

4.7   APEL for Credit Award (APEL.C) is the award of credits through prior experiential learning towards a course in an accredited programme of a higher education provider. APU has been approved by MQA to conduct APEL.C. The credit award is granted based on the knowledge and skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning. These forms of learning emphasise achieving the learning outcomes of a course through experiential learning which needs to be formally reviewed and assessed.

4.8   APEL for Academic Qualification Award (APEL.Q) is the award of academic qualifications to individual learners through the evaluation and assessment of prior experiential learning towards fully accredited programmes offered by higher education providers in Malaysia. The award of APEL.Q is granted on the basis of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through formal, informal or non-formal learning. APU is in the process of applying for APELQ for the programmes including Master of Business Administration and MSc in Data Science and Business Analytics (pending approval).

4.9   The process for APEL, as laid out, is standardised and well set out. The process for APEL involves an adviser to assist the student's application, an assessor who will design the means to evaluate the candidate and a moderator who will conduct the actual evaluation (with contribution by the assessor). Under APEL.Q, there are quite rigorous vehicles of assessment as part of the process, with sufficient diversity to reflect subject areas and levels.

4.10   The Admission Policy clearly lays out the steps to guide the application process for both international and home candidates, including initiating the application, receiving confirmation of admission, visa processing and student arrival. This process is administered by members of the marketing team who oversee admissions in conjunction with academic staff. Information for prospective students is available on the University's website. In addition, the applicants could have personal contact/conversation with the relevant counsellors, including agents in different countries who are trained to answer any pertinent questions both from domestic and international candidates.

4.11   In terms of student progression, at the end of each academic year of a programme, an exam board reviews the academic profile of each student to determine whether they can proceed to the next stage of the programme, such as the next year or the dissertation/ project. If students have failed a module, the board will decide what opportunity, if any, they will have to be referred in failed components of assessment and whether they will be required to refer all components or whether to permit them to commence their studies at the next academic level.

4.12   In the programme specification, there is clear information on the main principles and processes of student progression: Progression from Year 1 to Year 2 requires a student to have secured 80% of credits and maintained a GPA of 2.0 in Year 1; Progression from Year 2 to 3 requires a student to have secured 80% of credits and maintained a GPA of 2.0 in Year 2. Students failing modules in Year 1 are required to have subsequently passed these modules in Year 2. To progress from Year 3 to 4 (currently only applicable for engineering programmes), a student must have secured 80% of credits and have a GPA of 2.0 in Year 3. Additionally, students failing modules in Year 2 are required to have subsequently passed these modules in Year 3. The institution has a very student-centred approach to ensure they are supported throughout their studies and the right mechanisms are in place to identify any 'stragglers' where appropriate corrective actions are taken. Depending on the situation, this

is carried out either through module/assessment-specific help, general academic skills support or appropriate counselling if there are any personal/mitigating issues.

4.13 The University systematically collects data around student progression through module and programme leaders, which is reported to the school. Early interventions will be provided to poor performing students who are weak at entry points and to those unable to cope with the studies. An initial diagnostic measure will be conducted as a form of formative assessment to identify student needs. Where applicable, the school will organise remedial classes for a couple of weeks to ensure the students raise their knowledge to an acceptable level.

4.14 For students who have difficulties in study during the semester, revision classes and peer support are introduced to them. The APU Peer Support Programme is conducted with the assistance of well performing students and an academic staff member as the facilitator, in order to aim to improve students' knowledge and skill levels. The Student Welfare Officer oversees this process. The school assists students who are taking referral assessments to ensure they are able to cope with the added workload. Revision classes are organised by a dedicated faculty member to provide guidance to students who have no adequate time or resources to revise for referral on their own.

4.15 APU assists students with accumulated failures that potentially stop them from continuing their studies. The Student Welfare Officer will consult the students and develop a detailed plan to redo the failed module with the assistance of relevant faculty members. This is done in liaison with the Programme Leader.

4.16 The review team confirmed that the University has in place robust and inclusive policies and practices to support students across their learning journey, promote the diversity and internationalisation of the student body, and enrich student experience and skills development.

4.17 In terms of student certification, students at APU can opt for an APU single degree or a dual degree with De Montfort University (DMU), UK. Both degrees are recognised locally and internationally. APU's partnership with De Montfort University enables students to be awarded dual awards with separate degree certificates from each institution, which enhances not just students' learning experiences, but also career prospects.

4.18 Upon graduation, students will receive two degree certificates and transcripts: one from APU, Malaysia and one from DMU, UK. The MQA defines and sets the relevant benchmarks that the University must follow and gain relevant accreditation at the programme and module levels. Students upon graduation receive the relevant certificates and transcripts, which clearly outline the level of qualification obtained and grades.

4.19 Overall, APU has appropriate processes to support progress across the student journey. The admission process is robust, with a clear focus on ensuring prospective candidates have clear access to information about entry requirements, what the course entails and prospective employability. There are clearly delineated processes around APEL, in line with MQA requirements. The University is committed to supporting students throughout their studies, with a strong focus on ensuring their progression and addressing any relevant issues that require intervention. The University provides appropriate certification timely to all their students, both for single and dual awards, conforming to the requirements of both MQA and DMU. The review team therefore considered Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification is **met**.

Standard 1.5   Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Findings

5.1   The University has in place a comprehensive suite of policies governing the end-to-end process through which staff are recruited, managed, and developed throughout their time with APU until exit.

5.2   The recruitment of new staff to APU is driven through the University's annual planning process, and in response to the ad hoc departure of its existing staff members, with all vacant positions subject to review and approval by the University's Senior Director, Administration and HR prior to advertisement.

5.3   Applicants to advertised posts are required to attend a panel-based interview and may also be required to undertake additional assessments (where mandated by the nature and scope of the role (for example, mock lectures and psychometric testing). The University has a standardised set of applicant evaluation forms to ensure consistent and fair scoring of an applicant's competencies. These forms are completed immediately after the conclusion of the interviews and filed with HR. The senior managers, HR and functional managers are all involved in making the appointment decision, with the University's HR Talent Acquisition Team responsible for informing the successful candidate.

5.4   The University undertakes a range of pre-arrival activities to ensure a smooth onboarding of new members of staff, this includes the set-up of staff workspaces and provision of technical equipment. These pre-arrival activities complement a formal induction programme offered by the University to new staff members. The induction programme comprises both a general induction for all staff and a supplementary induction programme specific to academic staff which delves further into the University's expectations for teaching and assessment.

5.5   The University seeks out staff feedback on the induction programme via a standardised feedback form, with the content of the programme reviewed periodically. The review team was presented with a summary of feedback from those new staff members who had recently attended the induction programme. The review team noted that feedback from participants was consistently positive with many noting the value of the induction programme in helping them transition into their new role.

5.6   New staff members are also allocated a mentor by their Functional Head. Where potential areas for development are identified by the mentor, these will be referred to the Head of School to arrange appropriate development opportunities. The review team was provided with access to a sample Mentor and Mentee Feedback Form which the team noted provided a formalised way of ensuring effective exchange of feedback between either party on performance, and ensured key development opportunities were highlighted to support continuous improvement of pedagogical delivery.

5.7   Notably, the local quality assurance agency, MQA, is considerably involved in establishing a baseline standard for the academic qualifications and experience required of teaching staff in Malaysia. This includes both outlining the expected baseline qualifications of staff at a subject and programme level and providing formal teaching permits to staff seeking to teach within the country. The examples provided by the University in respect of the Accounting Programme Standards evidence a comprehensive specification to which

academic staff are required to individually align, and a series of overall thresholds for academic staff ratios which the University is required to achieve and maintain.

5.8   The University also seeks to ensure that any recruited staff have relevant industrial experience. The value of such credentials is noted in ensuring a meaningful learning experience for students, through which they can appreciate real-world applications of knowledge they develop in their courses. At the time of the review, 70% of APU staff had experience within the industry.

5.9   The review team considered APU to have fair and transparent processes to govern the recruitment of staff to the University. The regulatory obligations enforced by MQA with respect to the licensing of individual staff members to teach also ensured the appropriateness and competence of staff recruited to academic positions.

5.10   The training and development of academic staff within APU is closely intertwined with the University's approach to managing the performance of its staff. All staff are required to undergo a formal appraisal process upon completing their probationary period and annually thereafter. APU uses this process to assess each staff member's performance against the relevant performance objectives and standards. The appraisal is also used as an opportunity to provide constructive feedback to staff and, where necessary, identify opportunities for further training or support. Staff can highlight their individual professional achievements and accomplishments from the year, with APU using the outcome of the appraisal process to evaluate eligible staff for salary increments.

5.11   The University's processes and criteria for the advancement of academic staff are defined within its Academic Staff Promotions Policy. This states the specific criteria required of staff at each level against which applicants must align, as well as the broad commitments made by the University to ensure fair, transparent, and merit-based promotions. Staff who met with the review team indicated an awareness of both the academic promotions policy and the accompanying process. The review team noted that staff were confident that, should they wish to pursue promotion, they could access appropriate support and information from the University to assist them in this endeavour.

5.12   In contrast, where a particular staff member is found to be underperforming, the University will seek to remediate their performance through the use of a Performance Improvement Programme (PIP). This will comprise the setting of a mutually agreed action plan between the staff member and their immediate superior. Progress made in addressing these areas will be monitored at regular intervals. Should staff fail to satisfactorily address the points raised in the plan, then further disciplinary action may be taken by APU.

5.13   Outside of the formal staff appraisal process, staff are permitted to identify and discuss potential training opportunities of interest with their line manager. Where there is agreement for staff to pursue a certain opportunity, then a Course Nomination Form must be completed which is then subject to formal review and approval by their Line Manager, Head of School, Vice Chancellor, and Chief Executive. The review team noted that the Course Nomination Form required staff, when seeking approval for a given training opportunity, to formally document how learning from the training could be further disseminated within the University upon their return.

5.14   APU's Human Resources Department is responsible for managing the collation and delivery of an annual programme of staff training and development opportunities. The scope and content of this plan is guided by both the agreed development needs of individual staff members and the overarching strategic priorities of the University. Additionally, Human Resources will inform the content of the training programme by reviewing the finalised staff

appraisals to ensure high priority and recurrent development opportunities are being addressed within the University's offering.

5.15 The review team saw a list of training initiatives staff had participated in during 2023, along with access to a sample of prior training sessions and their accompanying post-training evaluation surveys. The review team noted that feedback from participants on these sessions had been positive and highlighted how the session had supported their personal and professional development. This view was reflected by academic staff who met with the review team and spoke positively as to the quality and range of training offered by the University in its annual development programme.

5.16 The University makes available a range of financial support to academic staff seeking to engage in either the presentation or publication of their research at academic conferences and journals. The University's HR policies establish the conditions and restrictions under which such financial support is provided. Staff participating in these training opportunities also have the time spent in training recognised as core working hours, removing the need for them to undertake such opportunities in their personal time.

5.17 Staff who met with the review team indicated that they felt supported by the University to identify and participate in relevant training opportunities to aid their continuous personal and professional development. The review team noted that staff viewed the training offering prepared by Human Resources positively and that the offering was supplemented by regular evaluation to ensure its continuous improvement.

5.18 MQA requires all licensed academic staff to participate in at least 40 Hours of continuing professional development (CPD) and training activities per year. To assure compliance with this directive, APU staff are required to complete a 'monthly return' outlining the impact and contributions they have made across teaching and learning, research and development, student support and institutional developments. The University notes the contents of these returns as being 'critical for analysis and performance management of staff'. HR are responsible for maintaining the University's centralised log of staff training and development, which is populated from individual records maintained by HR. Routine monitoring of staff attendance and engagement with internal training opportunities is also used to verify the data within these returns.

5.19 The review team considered the University to have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure training and development opportunities were routinely provided that would assist staff in meeting their personal and professional development goals, as well as the strategic people objectives of the University.

5.20 APU is a research-active University and while research has not historically represented its majority focus as an institution, the University actively encourages staff to engage with research to progress their personal and institutional research-linked objectives. Within its current strategy, the University is targeting to more closely integrate its research and innovation activity with its teaching, so as to ensure its curriculum remains at the cutting edge of developments within subject disciplines. This strategic objective is supported by a series of detailed KPIs which qualify how this ambition will be realised across each of the schools.

5.21 Academic staff who met with the review team endorsed the view of Senior Management that APU encouraged staff to engage with research and actively apply this within their teaching.

5.22 During a tour of the campus facilities, the review team encountered multiple examples of students and staff being engaged in either industry-linked research activity, or within

learning opportunities that were closely informed by current industry practices. This included students supporting the development of realistic augmented reality capabilities which could be used to support general and medical education with partner institutions and participation in Cyber Security War Games. The review team noted the enthusiasm with which the students participated in these activities and considered these to be strong examples of how APU was seeking to more closely integrate its activity across research and teaching. The review team would encourage the University to explore how such innovative opportunities could be further extended and embedded within the core curriculum.

5.23   While the University makes use of a number of well-known pedagogical modes of delivery (see Section 1.3), it also encourages its staff to innovate beyond the norm and continuously develop their own individual approaches to pedagogical delivery. To support this, the University operates several mechanisms through which it seeks to identify and disseminate good pedagogical practices across the University.

5.24   APU operates a Class Observation of Teaching Scheme, through which staff can elect to have their teaching observed by a peer on a non-evaluative basis. Upon completion of an observation session, the staff member will be provided with feedback from the observer which will be used to support staff to critically reflect upon their own pedagogical practices and continuously enhance their approach to delivery at an individual level. The review team was provided with a sample of observation reports which indicated a mix of both positive and developmental feedback being provided to staff via this scheme. Staff who met with the review team identified this scheme as one of the key means through which good individual practices were identified within the University. Where such practice is identified it is frequently shared with academic leaders and then disseminated to colleagues via school meetings.

5.25   The University has also previously provided coaching sessions on specific teaching strategies and best practices with respect to the practicalities of teaching. Notably, the University has invested in the development of a new Digital Learning Hub to support staff in transitioning their approaches to teaching and learning in response to the increasing prominence of online and blended learning delivery models. The Hub is currently chaired by a leading academic within this space and aims to work across the APU community of academics, students, and professional services staff to provide innovative resources that support the delivery of a high-quality learning experience. Academic staff who met with the review team noted that the Digital Learning Hub has been a valuable resource in assisting them to rethink their existing approaches to teaching and adapt these for both online-only and blended delivery.

5.26   Overall, the review team viewed APU as having appropriate policies in place to handle the recruitment, management, and development of its staff throughout their time with the University. These policies were supported by fair and transparent processes and staff met by the review team exhibited a knowledge of and confidence in them. The requirement for all teaching staff to be centrally licensed by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) provides additional external assurance as to the academic credentials and competence of APU staff.

5.27   There is evidence of the University offering a comprehensive programme of training and development opportunities to its staff, which is closely aligned to both individual and collective development needs of the University and its staff and is subject to routine evaluation to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.

5.28   The review team noted some strong examples of how APU's partnership with industry was being used to not only support its research and innovation agenda but also inform student learning experiences and provide opportunities for students to engage within this

research and innovation work. As the University pursues its research and innovation ambitions, the review team would encourage it to explore opportunities to continue expanding such activity to a wider group of students.

5.29 The review team considered the University to be actively creating an environment that was supportive of staff to innovate their own teaching methods and embrace emerging technologies. The review team considered that the University's recent investment in building out its Digital Learning Hub would likely be key in further driving this work in the years to come.

5.30 To this extent, the review team considered Standard 1.5: Teaching staff is **met**.

Standard 1.6   Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Findings

6.1   APU has a strong emphasis on technology, as reflected by the available resources for students as well as the University's overall strategy which is in line with MQA's requirements. Within its campus, the University includes a range of appropriate teaching spaces, including a variety of lecture theatres, auditoriums and a range of laboratories to support learning and teaching, including specialist laboratories for their programmes in Cybersecurity. The relevant processes are set and operated under the relevant sections of the University's quality management system and they capture overall technology services and laboratories, library and information resources and wider infrastructure and facilities.

6.2   APU has well established policies and procedures for the review and acquisition of library resources. The aim is to ensure that the library has sufficient copies of all prescribed and recommended texts for the academic programmes offered by the University. The library also provides access to online resources and databases. The selection of learning resources for the library is done through various methods, including participation in book fairs, recommendations from academic staff, and checking reading lists provided by the heads of schools. The learning resources are carefully selected based on relevance, currency, and alignment with the programmes offered.

6.3   Requests for new library resources are submitted to the library acquisition team who validate suitable requests. Quotations and availability are obtained from vendors, and the decision to order from a specific vendor is based on price and delivery time. Purchase orders are prepared and forwarded for approval, and once approved, they are sent to the vendors. Information about new resources is disseminated to staff and students through the library website. The library facilities at APU are equipped with the necessary resources, including furniture, computers, Wi-Fi access, and study areas. Special facilities are provided for students with disabilities, such as wheelchair ramps, disabled toilets, and designated parking spaces.

6.4   The University has a range of support services for students' academic development, diagnosing and addressing any academic issues and enhancing the overall student experience. At both the programme and module levels, students receive both formative and summative feedback which provides an opportunity to identify any issues, including the need for academic skills development and personal issues, and apply appropriate interventions. Furthermore, students are assigned an academic mentor who is responsible for communicating and supporting students further, signposting them to relevant information and learning resources for their academic development. Data about the effectiveness of the relevant interventions is considered at the school level during PCMs and included in the school's annual monitoring reviews.

6.5   Looking at how the APU invests in learning resources in terms of students' academic development, the University has a diagnostic mechanism in place. The diagnostic mechanism starts from when students are allocated an academic mentor during their induction, with whom they collaborate throughout the period of study. In the taught modules lecturers carry out diagnostic tests to identify students who are facing or might face difficulties through specific tests, enabling early identification.

6.6   Through the use of formative feedback assessment as part of each module, academic staff can gauge levels of engagement and students who might not be able to successfully complete the module. Based on the relevant information, a personal developmental plan is developed, which can include remedial class/clinic and possibly the use of blended learning to support revision. In addition to the proactive identification and intervention, module statistics are analysed and where a module has more than 20% failure, the school organises revision classes after the publication of the results to provide guidance to the students which can also be facilitated by peer tutors, while the programme leader takes responsibility for informing the students.

6.7   The University has in place dedicated counsellors to help support students' wellbeing development. At present, the institution has two full-time qualified staff which meets the baseline requirement by MQA. The University reported that given the student population and volume of issues for these services, there is a capability to increase the number of counsellors for student support. Students reported in the meeting that they were fully aware of the student counselling services.

6.8   The University is career-focused and committed to the employability of the students through internships, partnerships with the industry, and specialised career services. The University has a strong track record - reaching 100% of graduates being employed by graduation. The publication of these statistics is a requirement by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. As part of enhancing employability, APU places a lot of emphasis on practical work experience, embedding employability as part of the curriculum and actively supporting students in seeking and securing relevant opportunities.

6.9   The process of planning for the internship commences with a briefing that takes place during Week 14 of the students' second semester in their second year, explaining the mechanics, expectations and allowing students sufficient time to prepare. The process of researching and applying for roles has the careers centre taking an active stance in empowering students to prepare their CV, attend interviews and support other requirements of the application process. The students are also assigned two mentors, an academic (from the institution) and an industrial mentor (from the organisation) to oversee and advise on the process to help ensure the smooth transition of the student. Students undergoing internship must keep a logbook where they capture all documentation pertaining to their journey as an intern, including reflections about their learning, acquired skills and knowledge. The logbook is in line with MQA requirements and is approved by both supervisors. Following the completion of the three-month internship, students submit their work for assessment as it forms part of their study.

6.10   The career centre of APU not only supports students to identify, secure and complete their placements, but also provides ongoing support to help them develop their employability skills through their studies and supports them in obtaining relevant employment post-graduation. Collaborating with all the relevant schools across the institution and a range of strategic stakeholders, such as employers and professional associations, not only publicises relevant opportunities to students but also involves employers through a range of activities such as career talks, resumé-building workshops, career path consultation and career interview sessions. During the meeting with the external stakeholders, there was a diverse range of employers, all of whom spoke highly of the career services the University offers. They confirmed its coordination work to support high quality student internship experiences and advertises to help with recruitment, hence supporting a smooth transition from graduation to employment. Beyond that, the employers spoke highly of their close engagement with the University, participating in ongoing involvement in the University's learning and teaching through numerous events, such as 'live briefs', case studies and guest lectures. They commented that APU's close engagement with industry ensures the currency of their courses and high employability of their students. An employer representative gave an

example of how APU engaged with them, taking their advice when investing in new resources/facilities for the Cybersecurity and Networking Laboratories. The strong partnership with industry undoubtedly contributes significantly to students' employability development. The review team commended the close relationship between APU and industry to support students' ongoing professional development and success and is identified as a feature of **good practice**.

6.11 Information about the relevant learning resources and support services is communicated to the students from the point of enrolment as part of induction and is outlined in student handbooks. Students reported in the meeting that they were fully aware of what learning resources and support services were available to them.

6.12 APU has a number of ways to gather data and evaluate the effectiveness, sufficiency, currency and access of the resources. At the institutional level, the University carried out independent audits in 2022 with regards to its IT infrastructure, which was positive overall, indicating a number of strengths. The audit proposed a set of recommendations that the Senior Leadership Team is considering. The learning resources and overall facilities were also inspected by DMU as part of a five-year collaborative review of the partnership. The DMU panel commended the facilities and campus in Malaysia and how they meet the needs of the new programmes being developed. Additional evidence through external stakeholders can be seen in the collaboration of APU with the Chartered Management Institute from the UK, as the professional body provided positive feedback about APU's infrastructure. Data is collected systematically across the different schools at the module and programme levels, which is fed into the Programme Committee meetings and then considered as part of the School's annual monitoring reviews. The Senior Leadership Team is also presented with updates through the Management Review meetings. Additional consideration of the availability, effectiveness, accessibility and suitability of resources is captured through the programmatic period reviews.

6.13 In terms of planning and allocating resources, the University takes a flexible approach, which means that APU does not operate on 'fixed' budgets so there is flexibility to cater for any additional allocation required once the necessary justifications are put in place. Requests are raised through Programme Committee meetings and annual monitoring reviews and acted upon following the Senior Leadership Team's approval.

6.14 The University's Senior Leadership Team has oversight of the learning recourses and support services and, where necessary, makes decisions around investment in facilities and resources, drawing on academic input and professional services. The Chief Executive Office and the Chief Operating Officer have a broad remit and oversight of infrastructure, digital transformation, career services, facilities, logistics; the Senior Director for Business Development and Student Services is responsible for marketing and communications, student services, placements and international business development. Finally, the Senior Director for HR is responsible for the human resources, academic administration and regulatory compliance. The Chief Executive Office and the Chief Operating Officer are responsible for decision-making to approve new facilities and resources, depending on the need and business case made by the relevant party (for example, Head of School or Professional Services member of staff).

6.15 There was evidence of reviewing the technical infrastructure as well as clear processes for Technology Services and IT Laborarories, Library and Information Resources and Infrastructure, Logistics and Facilities Management and Student Accommodation. Furthermore, there is a gathering of relevant information at school level and due consideration in Programme Management Committees and engagement with the Senior Leadership to ensure that the needs are met. While it is positive to see that the University has some procedures for reviewing learning resources and support services at different

levels, particularly through regular monitoring at the school level and a positive mandate by management to provide the necessary investment, there was a lack of an institution-wide approach to planning, reviewing and evaluating to ensure that learning resources and support services are sufficient, efficient and readily accessible. The review team therefore **recommends** APU to develop a more systematic approach to planning and reviewing learning and support services to ensure they are sufficient, efficient and easily accessible to students.

6.16 Overall, APU recognises the importance of maintaining the currency, suitability, accessibility and relevance of their learning and support resources and takes the necessary steps to ensure they are in place. There are a number of appropriate mechanisms to evaluate these resources and make adjustments as required, with systematic mechanisms existing at the module, programme, school and institutional levels. The review team considered that Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support services is **met**.

Standard 1.7   Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Findings

7.1   At APU, information in three key areas is collected and analysed to assist APU in measuring the performance of staff, students and programmes and processes; staff training and development; enhancement of quality progress; and programme development and management.

7.2   Regarding staff training and development in the Malaysian context, APU not only needs to collate and maintain information relating to staff academic qualifications, work experience and teaching permits but must also record details of training. All staff are expected to take part in CPD activities, and they have to submit a CPD portfolio each trimester which is to be approved by the Head of School or Academic Leader. Examples of academic staff CPD activities and support staff CPD activities indicate that APU supports its staff for CPD activities for internal and external opportunities. A snapshot of the training conducted for staff within the School of Computing in the Software Engineering cluster for 2023 indicates that there is a vast array of training opportunities for APU staff. Staff attendance to three different training themes is provided. To comply with MQA rules, APU systematically records staff training activities through a centralised database which was confirmed by the senior managers during the visit and shown on its dashboards. This ensures that APU maintains accurate and up-to-date records of staff training activities as required by MQA.

7.3   Staff views on training opportunities are gathered through two main processes. Performance appraisals allow employees to express their training needs, providing a comprehensive understanding of individual development requirements. An analysis of the examples indicates the process is interactive between the appraiser and the staff. Additionally, the Training Needs Analysis process collects insights on training needs, involving data input from line managers who provide valuable perspectives on team skill gaps. During the visit, the senior managers confirmed that this analysis has been used for many years which informs their planning of training resource requirements in the coming academic year.

7.4   Regarding enhancement of quality processes, APU adopts yearly ISO and internal audit processes to identify improvements for future activities. This evidence indicates that APU takes the quality enhancement process seriously. Furthermore, within 2022-23, several quality processes have been widely discussed by its Senior Management Team (SMT) members and recorded in the minutes of its five SMT meetings.

7.5   Regarding programme development, APU uses a gated approach to determine the suitability and sustainability of a newly proposed programme of study. Evidence associated with two new programme developments - Master of Cyberpsychology and Bachelor of Financial Technology - was shown to illustrate the process APU follows when considering whether to run new programmes. The information is gathered from APU's student marketing team, market analysis, programme agents, employers, students, and any other relevant government reports. A report is presented at the PIC, Academic Committee and Quality Assurance Board/Joint Academic Board. These pieces of evidence collectively show that new programme development at APU is well supported by clear data analysis following well organised procedures.

7.6   The End of Module Report is used to enable members of staff to provide an insight into their thoughts about the delivery of a module. A review of an example reveals that the staff provide detailed analysis of the student performance in relation to the module learning outcomes and plan to improve the practice to support students. It also provides students' quantitative and qualitative feedback from the mid and end-of-semester online feedback, although areas for improvement are not mentioned. Moreover, a review of the included Programme Committee meeting minutes reveals that lecturers are not invited to the Programme Committee meetings. Hence, it is unclear what other channels academic staff can use to share their views of curriculum development in relation to the associated programme and compare student performance with other courses associated with the programme to gain a holistic view of his/her student performance. Although the staff are invited to school meetings to discuss matters at the school level, there is a lack of sharing practice at the programme level. Furthermore, at the school level meeting, student performance at the programme level is not discussed.

7.7   APU students are encouraged to provide feedback through the mid-semester and end-of-semester online course feedback and students are guided by the Student Feedback Submission Guide. A module sample of mid-semester and end-semester online appraisal reports was provided. This indicates that the students identify a range of good things in the module and areas for improvement. The End of the Module Report and an online feedback system allow the students to identify any issues that they feel need to be improved within their programme of study. However, the results of the students' feedback were not discussed at the Programme Committee meetings as the minutes make no reference to such data.

7.8   The module tutors prepare an End of Module Report (EMR) once they complete each module. A range of EMRs was provided in relation to its bachelor's and master's programmes. There are detailed analyses of the students' performance against different course learning outcomes. However, there is no discussion of the effectiveness of the procedures for the assessment of students. The samples reveal that the academic staff provide limited information of student feedback despite all the students having to provide feedback; otherwise, they will not be able to see their results which are confirmed by the students and academic staff. The EMR invites the module leader to summarise his/her experience as a module lecturer, interpretation of the student feedback, action taken to address student feedback, and any external examiner comments related to the preparation of the assessment. However, these samples reveal that the academic staff showed very limited consideration of students' feedback or the external examiner's comments.

7.9   R20 indicates that within an academic cluster, the academic leader can receive feedback from a range of module lecturers which may be used to identify more widespread opportunities for improvement. School meetings allow for discussion at the school level which may help to enhance school-wide delivery. The Programme Leader for each programme has oversight of the performance of their students across all modules. If an individual lecturer wishes to compare the performance between their module and others on the programme they need to speak to the Programme Leader. Module Leaders can attend the Internal Results Review Committee (IRRC) meetings where modules for a specific intake of students are reviewed. These points are also confirmed by the senior managers and the professional staff. However, the academic staff indicate that they develop their EMRs and upload them to Moodle to share with their colleagues. They also confirm only the programme leaders attend the IRRC meetings, not the module leaders. The meeting with professional staff confirms that the module Moodle sites are available only to the teaching team members; other colleagues who teach the same cohort have no access to the reports, hence they are unable to know their performance, success and issues of the same cohort students in other modules. However, the Heads of School can share the EMRs if they think there is good practice to share.

7.10 In consideration of the above analysis, the review team **recommends** that APU ensures EMRs are appropriately completed and effectively discussed with the involvement of module tutors to share their practice and learned lessons and to support continuous module and programme improvement.

7.11 EMRs are considered by the Internal Results Review Committee as indicated in the SED. Two examples of IRRC minutes were provided for a wide range of modules. Although there is a 'remarks' column for each module considered, its contents are purely related to students' marks and progression decisions. The meeting with the senior manager confirms that there is a discussion of the EMRs at IRRC, but such discussion was not recorded in the minutes.

7.12 The School Quality Review (SQR) meeting aims to assess and enhance quality-related functions at the school level and implement corrective actions when necessary. A review of its Terms of Reference (ToRs) indicates that the meetings focus on the development, submission, and feedback of assessments, as well as on staff performance and workloads. Four school quality reviews were made available. While data analysis is present, it specifically relates to assessment submissions, feedback, and staff ratings, aligning with the ToRs of the School Quality Review meeting. Although there is consideration of the EMRs, there is no consideration of student progression, success and dropout rates, or their career paths.

7.13 Considering the above evidence, the review team therefore **recommends** that APU adopts a consistent approach to recording committee minutes to ensure they reflect actual committee discussion, fully aligning with their Terms of Reference and subsequently informing continuous quality improvement activities.

7.14 The SED indicates that there are multiple points by which student profiles and performance are reviewed. APU has four undergraduate intake points with a performance review point associated with the end of each intake. Intakes normally start in February/March; May/June; September and November. At the institutional level, the full review of progression and graduate-on-time (GOT) analysis are held at the School Academic Plan and Review meeting twice per year. The review data including the action plans are extracted as per the slides attached for the School of Marketing and Management and the School of Technology. Schools present the progression data for the past three to four years and examine any anomalies in the progression rates. Action plans are developed based on issues identified. The findings and action plans discussed in the School's Academic Plan and Review sessions are reported to the Academic Committee. Students' performance/ results are presented on the examination board, that is modular board, progression board and award board. Subsequently, the award board results are presented in the Senate for endorsement.

7.15 Individual student progression data is reviewed at the Internal Results Review Committee (IRRC) prior to results release. The review is guided by programme regulations and APU Guideline on Progression for the criteria of progress under 'Academic Probation'. At IRRC, the committee reviews student results to identify the implications for students' progression in their programmes of study. It endorses student progression including cases of 'progress on probation' and confirms cases in which students are not permitted to progress. In all the latter cases, the committee asks the Programme Leader for a plan to assist and guide the student to regain satisfactory progress. In addition, the University has implemented early and timely coursework interventions and a post-semester progression strategy to manage students' progression.

7.16 APU currently has three full-time master's intakes and five part-time master's intakes per year. The senior managers confirm that the master programmes follow the same review

and monitoring procedures as the undergraduate programmes (an example AMR Graduate School of Technology also illustrates the confirmation). For PhD studies, there are nominally five entry points per year, but this is flexible to enable students to enrol at any point if supervision workloads and expertise allow. The Moodle sites were created to monitor the students' participation and progression through various milestones in the research students' journey. The results of student achievement in the proposal defence, mid-candidature defence etc that are required in the programme handbook are recorded in a related transcript and when students meet the requirements for graduation, their results are presented to the Senate.

7.17 APU does not conduct its own exit survey as this is conducted by the Ministry of Education. Tracer study for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 from the Ministry of Education was provided. AMRs consider the data in their annual monitoring of related programmes. However, the data only focuses on whether the students obtain employment after the study, no further details, such as career types or salary are considered. As part of the School Academic Plan and Review meeting, graduate-on-time (GOT) analysis is also reported. The GOT analysis aims to identify the factors affecting students' graduation time and to plan the strategies to effectively support the students on the path to graduation. The reasons for non-GOT are examined and module analysis is also conducted on modules that most non-GOT students could not perform. Issues at the module level are scrutinised to identify the root cause and action needed. One of the modules identified as the major reason for non-GOT, across a majority of the programmes, is the Final Year Project (FYP). The action was taken immediately to enhance the efficiency of the FYP system and coordination. The FYP system, that is, the FYP Bank System, is currently being revamped to enhance the administration process of the FYP from the stage of supervisor allocation to the marking of the report. In addition, more FYP managers were appointed by schools which have a large enrolment of FYP students. For example, the number of FYP managers has increased from one to five for the Schools of Computing and Technology. At the module level, one of the common reasons for failure was due to non-submission of assessment. The 'Guideline on Coursework Intervention and Post Semester Progression Strategy' as described above was implemented to combat the problem.

7.18 Until the start of 2024 APU had not focused on KPIs. APU is currently reviewing all KPIs across all levels of the institution. One set of KPIs that has been finalised is for research. Other KPIs are currently being developed by the University to roll out in 2024. The Senior Leaders Meeting minutes reveal an academic strategy focusing on six pillars and the University's plans to map out KPIs and cascade these to schools. During the final meeting, the academic strategy and related KPIs were explained, and a presentation slide to the Board of Governors was also disclosed. As the strategy and the related KPIs were only introduced this year, it is too early to share any sensible data analysis and actions to address potential issues.

7.19 The key quality metrics are made available through 'Jaspersoft', which is a reporting and analytics platform. It is customised to host quality data through dashboards or reports. One of the SMT meetings discussed quality metrics. Key stakeholders/users are authorised to access the data for the respective analysis and review needed. The senior managers and the professional staff confirm that Heads of School have access to the dashboards and then share the relevant data with their staff to develop AMRs and School Quality Reviews.

7.20 The final meeting with the senior management reveals that feedback from the students and academic staff has informed APU to refine or develop guidelines or policies. For instance, details of the feedback from the students regarding generative AI have informed the development of 'Guidelines on Use of Generative AI at APU'. The staff feedback regarding industry leave opportunities, while employed, informed its development of the 'Scholarly Industry Activity Policy'. However, as mentioned in Standard 1.1, except for

PCMs, there is a lack of a systematic approach to engaging its students in the discussions of their feedback to develop activities to improve their experience. Furthermore, there are inefficiencies in involving the module tutors in developing improvement activities for the modules and the associated programmes as mentioned above. The review team therefore **recommends** that APU develops a systematic approach to involve students and staff in planning follow-up activities in relation to teaching and learning and subsequently enhancing the quality of the programmes and student experience.

7.21 APU's policies on the security of records including all academic records are governed by its Document Management, Control and Security procedures as documented in its ISO-9000 certified Quality Management System. These procedures are subject to regular (quarterly) internal audits and annual external audits and are also subject to continuous review by the Quality Improvement Team.

7.22 To conclude, APU has implemented various methods to collect reliable data and analyse information about the study programmes, student performance and outcomes. Despite some identified issues, the results have been fed into the internal quality assurance system to inform its continuous improvement of the study programmes and the student experience. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1. 7 Information management is **met**.

Standard 1.8   Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Findings

8.1   The University reported that in Malaysia, the private education landscape is quite competitive and there is caution among providers to ensure that information is accessible to the relevant stakeholders with appropriate levels of access: 'Private institutions are cautious about providing all information in one open environment. As a consequence, institutions normally provide partitioned access to information, which is initially limited, but as staff become more formally engaged with the institution or as students enrol, access to a broader range of information is provided.'

8.2   With regards to the wider public, the marketing team is responsible for managing the information that is available to prospective candidates and other external stakeholders, following a process outlined in the Quality Management System (QMS) covering both the website and other advertising/public relations documentation. The breadth of information made available in the public domains covers programme offerings (with details on the programme duration and intake dates, admission requirements, modules and relevant structure, fees and MQA accreditation information), scholarships and career prospects.

8.3   The marketing team is responsible for ensuring the information about programmes of study is updated and remains accurate and accessible through systematic communication with the relevant schools and other departments as per the process outlined in the QMS. A log sheet is maintained to record all changes and updates.

8.4   In addition, to ensure a correct understanding of the information publicly available, the University's counsellors respond to any further enquiries from prospective candidates and their families. The appropriate mediums are used to ensure the easy accessibility of information. This was also confirmed in the meeting with students and with representation from the marketing department.

8.5   Programme information that is available on APU's website and in the e-brochure/ marketing material for the wider public is:

- a description of the programme duration and upcoming intake dates
- admission requirements which are in accordance with MQA requirements to include general academic qualification requirements and English language requirements
- a programme outline, which includes the general objectives of the programme
- programme structure information across each level/year of the programme, including common modules, specialised modules, elective modules and Malaysian compulsory modules as required by the Malaysian government
- programme certification information
- industry collaborations linked to the programme
- career options and opportunities for graduates
- course fees
- details of the accreditation status of the programme including the MQA accreditation number which can be checked on MQA's website.

8.6   Considering the culture and competitive nature among private higher education institutions in Malaysia, the information available to the wider public (non-University account

holders) is mainly to do with background facts/information about the institution and programme-related details.

8.7   All students and staff have access to the dedicated University's intranet where all information is stored. Only University account holders have access. The intranet Knowledge Base has a preset functionality, classifying information and assigning different levels of access to information, including restricted access for senior management, wider access for dissemination to staff, and open and full access to all staff and students. The University's Senior Leadership Team, working with Heads of Schools/Departments, determines for each document the level of access. To ensure that the published academic regulations and policies are current, the Head of Quality Enhancement reviews and updates the relevant documentation, producing a new version, which is then approved by the University's senate and uploaded onto the Knowledge Base. The review team was able to access Knowledge Base and saw the various information that is available for students, which covers all the expected academic regulations, policies and procedures.

8.8   Students generally receive all information about their course and have access to the University's regulations but not to committee meetings or other reports. Staff within the school also do not have direct access to committee meeting minutes but can request from the Head of School reports from within the school or from another school or general information. The decision will be made accordingly by the relevant member of management (school or University management team) and actioned by the Head of Quality Enhancement. The Head also has general oversight for making information available and ensuring updates to internal documents are captured and processed after gaining relevant approval from the Senate, particularly for any policy changes/updates.

8.9   Although the process was explained during the meeting with the respective teams, there was no documentation provided that details precisely who should have access to what information and also a relevant categorisation with criteria and rationale. The review team therefore **recommends** APU to formulate and use a systematic process to clearly define and explain the different levels of access for both internal and external stakeholders. It should also provide an accurate record of what is available for both internal and external stakeholders to guarantee fully that public information is accurate, clear, objective and readily accessible to the relevant users.

8.10   When discussing with the Head of Quality Enhancement, who has the general responsibility to ensure all documentation pertaining to policies and procedures is up-to-date and accurate, it was established that APU has adopted recently a log sheet to capture all such changes and indicated the various versions for the entire institution. Following the same logic, the marketing team records updates and amendments to the public information regarding programmes.

8.11   Overall, the University has attempted to adopt a balanced approach in terms of access to public information, trying to ensure both accuracy and access bearing in mind relevant contextual influences. The breadth of information available freely to external stakeholders is on par with other providers in Malaysia and covers the expected requisites set out by the ESG. Similarly, internal stakeholders have access to the key pieces of information, with the caveat that some of the restricted information is not widely available, but can be obtained by staff through relevant requests to the Head of School. The marketing team has a clear and formulated system to record and monitor changes to public information for the external facing outlets (website/publications) but this seems to be less well captured for policy and regulation documents. Recording and review of information updates in policy documents is carried out but could be further strengthened through a more central log/recording mechanism. Overall, the review team confirms that Standard 1.8: Public information is **met**.

Standard 1.9   Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Findings

9.1   Programmes at APU are subject to continual monitoring and review throughout delivery, as well as annual and periodic reviews. Curriculum development, monitoring and review details the procedure that APU follows for programme monitoring and review. The APU procedures indicate that there are three levels: End of Module Report, Annual Monitoring Report, and Periodic Review (internal and partner) report. The subject of EMRs has been thoroughly reviewed and inefficiencies identified in Standard 1.7 section.

9.2   The SED indicates that annual monitoring is led by the Programme Leaders which focuses on the maintenance of the quality of the students' educational experiences and improvement of the programme delivery system. It identifies the key issues related to academic standards, quality of student learning experience as well as programme design and content. It analyses issues raised in student performance: admissions, enrolment, retention, progression, and completion. Four comprehensive examples of annual monitoring reports (AMRs) (for example, Sample Annual Monitoring Report, AMR School of Technology, AMR School of Engineering and AMR Graduate School of Technology) were provided. They collectively demonstrate that APU monitors and reviews its curriculum design and programme delivery to ensure it responds to the expectations, needs and satisfaction of the students and the changing needs of society based on its extensive engagement with industry practitioners through active industry advisory panels and a wide range of guest sessions. These AMRs provide detailed statistical analysis of students' workload, progression and completion. The effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of students is confirmed and supported by feedback from the external examiners. The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purposes of the programmes are also reviewed and monitored in consideration of the views of the students, external examiners, and employers.

9.3   However, a review of these AMRs reveals that they include all the programmes in the school instead of individual programme-level monitoring reports. APU indicates that as there are many programmes (about 70 in total) in APU, the AMR should be produced for each cognate cluster of programmes within a school with the agreement of the Partner University (DMU) as indicated in Page 17 of the APU-DMU Dual Award Collaborative Management Handbook.

9.4   The AMRs for dual degree programmes must be submitted to the Department of Academic Quality (DAQ) for review and subsequently approved by the Quality Curriculum Development Committee (QCDC). Upon approval, these reports are then endorsed at the Joint Academic Board (JAB), which is tasked with overseeing the implementation of actions as outlined in the APU DMU Collaborative Management Handbook (2022-23). Evidence pertaining to the JAB's operations, such as the JAB Constitution and Terms of Reference for 2023-2024, and minutes from meetings held on February 8, 2023, May 3, 2023, and October 18, 2023 were provided. These documents collectively demonstrate that the JAB periodically reviews the curriculum development, student experience, and operational efficiencies of the

dual degree programmes, taking collaborative actions with partners to address any arising issues.

9.5   However, not all programmes at APU are APU-DMU awards. For instance, the Graduate School of Technology has a range of APU's own awards. The meetings with the senior manager, professional staff and final meeting confirmed that APU reviews its single awards at its twice-a-year school review meetings between the head of schools and Vice-Chancellor. Nevertheless, these disclosed AMRs illustrate that APU continuously improves its programme design and delivery.

9.6   APU conducts periodic reviews of various programmes, as demonstrated by the provided sample for the BA (Hons) Tourism Management programme, Masters Periodic Review 2021 and PhD Periodic Review 2023. These examples clearly show that the programmes have undergone a thorough review, covering aspects from curriculum design and delivery to staff resources, development, and facility resources. The review processes also incorporate feedback from a broad spectrum of internal and external stakeholders, including students, staff, industry advisers and alumni. Additionally, corresponding action plans have been developed, with recorded progress on the implementation of these actions.

9.7   Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. Programme Committee meetings are held thrice annually to gather student feedback on various aspects, including curriculum design, academic delivery, assessment, student selection, support services, educational resources, and facilities. Documentation from these meetings, such as the sample of Programme Committee meeting minutes and PCM minutes, demonstrates a thorough evaluation of student expectations, needs, and satisfaction regarding their programmes, learning environment, and support services. These records also show that appropriate actions are identified to address student concerns. APU also involves alumni in its programme review as shown in the examples of alumni meeting minutes and alumni feedback for programmes ranging from bachelor to doctoral programmes.

9.8   For programme monitoring, APU appoints external examiner and external adviser roles which is consistent with the requirements of the MQA circular dated 17.7.2015. They play different roles in programme monitoring. Examples of external examiners' reports and programme adviser reports demonstrate that APU programmes are reviewed by external stakeholders. Furthermore, the comments from these experts indicate that APU has continuously addressed their concerns and improved the programmes.

9.9   Various schools within APU have established Industry Advisory Panels (IAP) with well-defined ToRs. Records from numerous IAP meetings across different schools have been disclosed, revealing that APU has presented its curriculum development and research practices to industry advisers. In response, these advisers offer strategic guidance to enhance programme development and bolster the partnership between academia and industry. The meetings with the senior managers, students and alumni and externals also confirmed the proactive engagement of the industry practitioners to review and improve programmes and the students' employability. Therefore, the review team identifies the effective use of industry advisory panels to monitor and review the programmes across different schools to ensure its programmes reflect the changing needs of society as a feature of **good practice**.

9.10   An example of a completed Non-Dual Programme Amendment Form shows how proposed changes to programmes not only address the new BOK requirements for the Computing Area but also consider the attractiveness of relevant programmes. An APU DMU Dual Programme Amendment Form illustrates the proposed changes to enhance its dual programmes in Banking and Finance to address technological development and

comprehensive legal regulations in an Islamic context. Both forms include clear communication with relevant external examiners. The two pieces of evidence illustrate the proposed changes to the content of the programmes in the light of new regulations and standards thus ensuring the programmes reflect the changing needs of society and are up to date.

9.11 One of the ToRs for the Programme and Module Amendment Sub-Committee of the Quality Assurance Board is to ensure that changes in policies and regulations are clearly and effectively communicated to teaching colleagues and students. Depending on the nature of the amendments, information is provided through academic briefings to students or communicated through email as shown in the sample communication regarding regulations and elective module changes. Staff are invited to discuss potential changes to existing programmes at the school meetings, and at such meetings they are also informed of new agreed changes to the existing programmes. Furthermore, the samples of the programme periodic review reports explain how changes in the programmes were communicated to students and staff, and the external stakeholders. The meetings with the senior managers and the professional staff confirm that the revised programme specifications are published in the Knowledge Base once they are approved by the Academic Committees. The students, the academic staff and the external examiners also show their awareness of different changes to their modules and programmes and different channels where they are updated with the changes.

9.12 Overall, APU effectively monitors, reviews and revises study programmes to ensure that the provision remains appropriate thereby creating a supportive and effective learning environment for the students. All the changes and revisions to the programmes have been communicated to all relevant stakeholders. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.9: Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes is **met**.

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Findings

10.1 All APU programmes undergo external accreditation by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) as a requirement to deliver a programme. Programme accreditation is carried out in three stages: Provisional Accreditation, Full Accreditation and Compliance Evaluation. APU Provisional Accreditation List 08112023, APU Programme PA Certificates, APU Full Accreditation List 08112023, APU Programme FA Certificates provide ample evidence of the current status of the APU programmes (ranging from Foundation to Level 8 PhD programmes) with the MQA. There is no formal requirement for institutional accreditation at the government level. APU has undertaken a reaccreditation of all programmes conducted by the MQA in 2019. MQA Certificates Provisional Accreditation Level 8 PhD, MQA Certificates Full Accreditation Level 8 PhD, and Public Information PhD provided evidence to triangulate its claim of successful Compliance Audit done by the MQA in relation to its Level 8 PhD programmes.

10.2 In line with UK expectations APU employs external examiners (both from Malaysia and the UK) to review assessments and marking schemes and to conduct moderation of marking to accept APU's marking standards and to provide an independent perspective on the performance of all students. This is beyond the expectations of MQA which only required periodic review of assessment methods. A range of examples of local external examiner (EE) reports, UK Dual EE reports and programme adviser reports was provided in relation to a variety of different programmes. Collectively, they demonstrate that APU has made sure it has addressed EE/programme advisers' concerns in its practice and hence no outstanding issues were identified in the reports.

10.3 The SED, the senior managers and the academic staff confirmed that a range of programmes at APU have professional body recognition. Such accreditation is a process through which organisations or individuals are officially recognised as meeting specific standards set by a professional or industry association. A sample of quality review reports from the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries is provided in relation to its BSc Actuarial Studies. The APU has followed the comments to address identified issues and implement changes accordingly.

10.4 APU has undergone a number of external reviews at the institutional level, notably, the ISO Quality process review, SETARA Rating exercise, Premier Digital Tech Institution (PDTI) review, the QS World University Rankings and QS Stars rating exercises, and DMU partnership review.

10.5 APU introduced a QMS and processes in 1993 and obtained ISO certification in 1994. The most recent certification was issued until the end of December 2023. A two-day recertification audit was completed in November 2023, and the ISO Quality Audit Report indicates no significant matter. However, the Nonconformity Report identified one minor matter and six areas of opportunity for improvement. The senior managers confirmed that APU has addressed all the issues and responded accordingly. Subsequent to the IQR visit, APU's ISO Certification was received on 1 April 2024 valid until 1 December 2026. A review of the Internal Quality Audit and ISO Quality Audit Report indicates that APU has ensured that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

10.6 APU participated in the SETARA Rating exercise in Malaysia. SETARA was developed under the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 for Higher Education and employs a rigorous assessment methodology to rate an education institution's three core functions, namely teaching, research and service. Previously SETARA utilised a star-based rating system to evaluate the performance of universities and colleges in Malaysia, with APU maintaining an Excellent Rating in the SETARA 2011, 2013, 2017 and 2020. A new SETARA rating was released in 2023. Senior leaders and senior managers confirmed previous successes and continuous improvement has ensured APU achieved a rating of Berdaya Saing (Competitive) which indicates that the institution is 'excellent and has fulfilled all the criteria under the Malaysian Higher Education Institution Rating. These institutions are capable of competing at a higher level'.

10.7 The Premier Digital Tech Institution (PDTI) review was undertaken to demonstrate that APU has an excellent track record in providing education and training that aligns with the needs of the digital technology sector. This review considered the portfolio of programmes offered as well as the curriculum, to ensure that they equip students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies required by industry. APU was awarded PDTI status and recognised as demonstrating a commitment to delivering high-quality education and producing job-ready graduates.

10.8 APU also participated in both the QS World University Rankings and QS Stars ratings exercises. These institutional reviews resulted in APU becoming the first institution in Malaysia to achieve the QS '5 Stars Plus' Rating as well as being ranked in the QS World University Ranking 2024, where APU is ranked in the top 2.2% in the World.

10.9 The partnership with DMU required a full audit of the institution in 2018-19 which resulted in the partnership being established. The subsequent partnership review was scheduled for the week of 26 February, 2024. The outcomes of that review were disclosed during this review visit. The APU will address minor issues identified in the report in the coming weeks.

10.10 In consideration of the disclosed evidence and triangulation of the discussion with the head of APU and chair of the Governing body, the senior managers and the academic staff during the visit, the review team identifies that APU's proactive engagement of different external quality assurance activities to inform its internal continuous improvement of the academic provision as a feature of **good practice**.

10.11 Overall, the effectiveness of the internal institutional quality assurance system is verified by a wide range of external quality assurance processes at the programme and institutional levels. A range of disclosed evidence and discussions with the senior leaders and the senior managers confirm that these exercises have effectively contributed to APU continuously improving its practice. The review team, therefore, concludes that Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance is **met**.

Glossary

Action plan
A plan developed by the institution after the QAA review report has been published, which is signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

Annual monitoring
Checking a process or activity every year to see whether it meets expectations for standards and quality. Annual reports normally include information about student achievements and may comment on the evaluation of courses and modules.

Collaborative arrangement
A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education provider. These may be degree-awarding bodies with which the institution collaborates to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies. Alternatively, they may be other delivery organisations who deliver part or all of a proportion of the institution's higher education programmes.

Condition
Conditions set out action that is required. Conditions are only used with unsatisfactory judgements where the quality cannot be approved. Conditions may be used where quality or standards are at risk/continuing risk if action is not taken or if a required standard is not met and action is needed for it to be met.

Degree-awarding body
Institutions that have authority, for example from a national agency, to issue their own awards. Institutions applying to IQR may be degree-awarding bodies themselves, or may collaborate to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of degree-awarding bodies.

Desk-based analysis
An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, that enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

Enhancement
See **quality enhancement**.

European Standards and Guidelines
For details, including the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg.

Examples of practice
A list of policies and practices that a review team may use when considering the extent to which an institution meets the standards for review. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgment that not all of them will be appropriate for all institutions.

Externality
The use of experts from outside a higher education provider, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.

Facilitator
The member of staff identified by the institution to act as the principal point of contact for the QAA officer and who will be available during the review visit, to assist with any questions or requests for additional documentation.

Good practice
A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision.

Lead student representative
An optional voluntary role that is designed to allow students at the institution applying for IQR to play a central part in the organisation of the review.

Oversight
Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

Peer reviewers
Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or have recent experience of being a student in higher education.

Periodic review
An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education providers. It covers areas such as the continuing relevance of the programme, the currency of the curriculum and reference materials, the employability of graduates and the overall performance of students. Periodic review is one of the main processes whereby institutions can continue to assure themselves about the academic quality and standards of their awards.

Programme of study
An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification. UK higher education programmes must be approved and validated by UK degree-awarding bodies.

Quality enhancement
The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.

QAA officer
The person appointed by QAA to manage the review programme and to act as the liaison between the review team and the institution.

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 necessary standards, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

Recognition of prior learning
Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences.

Recommendation
Review teams make recommendations where they agree that an institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure in order to improve the institution's higher education provision.

Reference points
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document
A self-evaluation report by an institution. The submission should include information about the institution as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of its quality systems.

Student submission
A document representing student views that describes what it is like to be a student at the institution, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes.

Validation
The process by which an institution ensures that its academic programmes meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.

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