Quality Assurance Management Framework
for Consultancy and Contract Research

Edge Hill University ('the University') provides professional consultancy and contract research services across a range of disciplines. We are committed to the delivery of high quality services that meet and exceed the needs and expectations of our clients and partners.

All of our staff engaged in the delivery of these services are required to work within this Quality Assurance Management (QAM) framework and receive training in its application.

Below we set out the components of this framework, identifying where responsibility for implementation rests.

Edge Hill University is not ISO 9001 accredited.

This QAM framework for consultancy and contract research is underpinned by the University's staffing, research and other practice policies and procedures including bi-annual staff performance reviews. It is the responsibility of the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic) and its implementation is monitored by the Research Office (RO).

Project Roles

For each of our projects we identify a team member who will act as Project Director and another team member who will act as Project Manager. Although the precise nature of these roles will vary and be shaped by the demands of individual projects, they are summarised as follows:

- Project Director (typically a Head of Department or Associate Dean):
  - ➤ Project design, intellectual leadership and the development of project tools
  - ➤ Client liaison at key meetings and presentations to clients and partners
  - ➤ Monitoring progress and performance
  - ➤ Quality assurance of study outputs
  - ➤ Resolving problems
- Project Manager:
  - ➤ Day-to-day study management and client engagement
  - ➤ Management and co-ordination of team members
  - ➤ Co-ordinating the production of project outputs (reports, presentations, products, etc.)
  - ➤ Day-to-day management and co-ordination of sub-consultants
  - ➤ Client liaison at key meetings and presentations to clients and partners.

The names, contact details and precise roles of the EHU Project Director and Project Manager will be identified and agreed through the production of a Project Inception Report (see below).

Provision of services – procedures and controls used

The scope of services to be provided, including methods to be followed and outputs to be generated, are discussed and agreed with the client at the commissioning and project inception stages.

Each project will begin with an Inception Phase, during which the Project Director and Manager will explore client requirements (and how these will be met) in greater detail, scoping out study challenges and responses. This Inception Phase will culminate in the production of a Project Inception Report (PIR) which, together with a project brief, contract and proposal/tender documents, will provide the framework for the delivery of the study. It will be the agreed reference document for methodology, deliverables and timescales for the commission.

The PIR will identify the:

- Agreed project objectives
- Project timetable
- A statement of method or approach
- Outputs to be delivered
- Agreed budget and payment schedule
- Initial findings or recommendations resulting from scoping tasks
- Project risks and risk management measures to be put in place.

For EHU, the production of the PIR is the lead responsibility of the Project Director. Once agreed, the PIR will be signed off by the Project Director and the client's representative.

If both parties are in agreement, the requirement to produce a PIR may be waived (for example, if study brief and proposal/tender documents are considered to provide adequate clarity).

Contract Monitoring

EHU's Project Manager will be responsible for the ongoing monitoring of the contract with reference to the PIR and project contract document. S/he will assess progress against the objectives, deliverables and timescale set out in the PIR.

The Project Manager will provide ongoing liaison with client representatives via email and telephone as required (responding to requests for discussion and information via telephone and email promptly).

Performance Monitoring and Reporting

The Project Manager is responsible for the daily monitoring of performance with reference to the PIR. The Project Manager will provide the Project Director with regular updates on the progress of individual tasks.

At intervals agreed in the PIR, and at least once every two weeks, the Project Manager will provide the client with a formal update on progress via email.

The proofing and quality assurance of all outputs will be undertaken in-house by the Project Director (and if required, by senior staff outside of the project team) prior to sign-off and submission to the client.

Final outputs (reports, presentations, products, etc.) will always be agreed with the client representative or client group.

Management of Sub-Consultants and other Sub-Contractors

The Project Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management and co-ordination of sub-consultants, just as s/he is responsible for the day-to-day management and co-ordination of University staff within the project team.

Concerns about the performance or conduct of sub-consultants should be addressed to the Project Manager for resolution in the first instance, unless the client considers that they should be directed to the Project Director immediately.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints should be addressed to the Project Director, who will seek to address and resolve any problems together with the Project Manager.

Where no resolution of issues is forthcoming within an agreed or acceptable time, complaints should then be addressed to the Dean of the appropriate faculty. If issues are still not resolved to the satisfaction of the client the issue will be considered by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic).

Post-Commission Review

Edge Hill University is committed to continuous improvement and to learning lessons from each commission its staff undertake.

At the end of each commission with a total project value exceeding £10,000 (or lower, at the discretion of RO in consultation with the appropriate dean) a member of RO will undertake a questionnaire with the client representative to assess performance and gather project feedback.

Questionnaire findings are disseminated to the consultant team for discussion, review and action to ensure improvement where necessary or beneficial. The outcome of post-commission review informs the identification of staff training and development priorities.

Integration with other responsibilities and commissions

The University monitors the workloads of all staff engaged in the delivery of consultancy and contract services closely. The University recognises the importance of ensuring that staff delivering these services are able to provide the highest standards of service. In putting forward a team for any commission we take into account known future commitments to ensure that no member of staff is over-committed and that sufficient flexibility is retained.

Before agreeing or tendering for a project, the Project Director will make an assessment of the time required to deliver high quality outputs that meet the needs of the client. Where possible, they will seek to confirm this understanding with the client.

The Project Director will also make an assessment of the other demands on their time and that of other members of the study team (particularly the Project Manager). These other demands may include existing consultancy and contract research commitments, teaching, knowledge exchange and research.

The capacity of all of the University's staff is monitored and assessed through regular discussions with line managers and heads of department. A longer term assessment of capacity and priorities is provided through the Annual Academic Review (AAR) process through which staff and line managers identify, and then monitor, commitments.

Whilst the University will always seek to ensure that there is continuity of personnel throughout the course of the study (particularly the key Project Director and Project Manager roles), it retains the capacity to bring in additional team members to deal with peaks in project work flow.

Keeping this Quality Assurance Management framework under review

This Quality Assurance Management framework is reviewed every 12 months (or more frequently as issues arise) in order to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose and evolves to meet client expectations. This annual review is based on:

- Workshops with staff engaged in the management and delivery of consultancy and contract research services
- Analysis of project performance metrics
- The results of client satisfaction surveys.

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