

Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference 2024–25

Audit and Risk Committee is a committee of Council, mandated by the Office for Students (OfS) under the Terms and conditions of funding for higher education institutions. The Committee oversees Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)'s arrangements for external and internal audit, financial control and risk management, providing assurances in these key areas through its annual report to Council.

1. External and Internal Audit

- 1.1 To make recommendations to Council at least annually on the appointment of external and internal auditors.
- 1.2 To commission a competitive tendering process:
 - for external audit services at least every 5 years; and
 - for internal audit services at least every 5 years.
- 1.3 To oversee external and internal audit services by:
 - promoting co-ordination between external and internal audit services;
 - providing input to, and approving, an annual external audit strategy and internal audit plan;
 - reviewing reports and recommendations from the external and internal auditors;
 - reviewing the adequacy and implementation of the Executive response; and
 - reviewing the effectiveness and objectivity of the external and internal auditors.
- 1.4 To review the draft annual financial statements with the external auditors and recommend their adoption by Council following satisfactory resolution of matters raised.

2. Financial Control and data assurance

- 2.1 To review the adequacy and effectiveness of the Executive's systems for:
 - management and quality assurance of external data returns;
 - financial control;
 - obtaining value for money; and
 - responding to alleged financial irregularities.
- 2.2 In relation to alleged financial irregularities:
 - to receive regular reports from the internal auditors and the Executive on reports received, investigations conducted and action taken; and
 - to obtain assurances that any significant losses have been appropriately disclosed and (where appropriate) reported to the OfS and other external bodies.

3. Risk management

- 3.1 To review the effectiveness of mechanisms operated by the Executive for identifying, assessing and mitigating risks (including, where appropriate, mitigation by insurance).

- 3.2 To regularly consider the current status of core risks to the QMUL Strategy, through the review of data and documents presented by the Executive and derived from the Strategic Risk Register.
 - 3.3 To periodically test scores and controls in selected areas of activity through consideration of specific reports, including a report on cyber security.
 - 3.4 To review the outcomes of audits and reviews undertaken by institutional regulators, funders and other relevant organisations.
 - 3.5 To oversee the Public Interest Disclosure (whistle-blowing) policy and receive regular reports from the Executive on cases.
- 4. Legal and Statutory Compliance**
- 4.1 To consider an annual report on exceptions to legal and statutory compliance from the Executive, and request follow up action, including investigation and reporting where identified.
- 5. Committee evaluation**
- 5.1 To review the Committee's effectiveness and the suitability of its terms of reference annually.

Membership of Audit and Risk Committee

- No less than three and no more than five external members of Council, one of whom will be the Chair of the Committee.
- Up to two co-opted members who are external to QMUL and have relevant expertise.

Mode of Operation

1. Audit and Risk Committee meets at least three times per year. The Committee holds one annual *in camera* meeting with representatives of internal audit and one annual *in camera meeting* with representatives of external audit, normally immediately before scheduled meetings.
2. The Committee will prepare an annual report covering the institution's financial year and any significant issues up to the date of preparing the report. The report will be addressed to the Council and the President and Principal, summarising the activity for the year, and providing an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for risk management, control and governance, sustainability, economy, effectiveness and efficiency (value for money) and the quality of the data submitted to regulatory bodies in line with the Committee of University Chair's Audit Committees Code of Practice. The Committee's opinion is based on the conclusion provided from the programme of internal audit through the year as well as other assurance reports from management and on occasion other parties.
3. The Committee reports to the next meeting of Council following each of its meetings through the provision of its minutes. Specific proposals requiring Council consideration and approval are identified in the terms of reference.