

# Continuing to Strengthen the Programme Focus : An Academic Quality Perspective

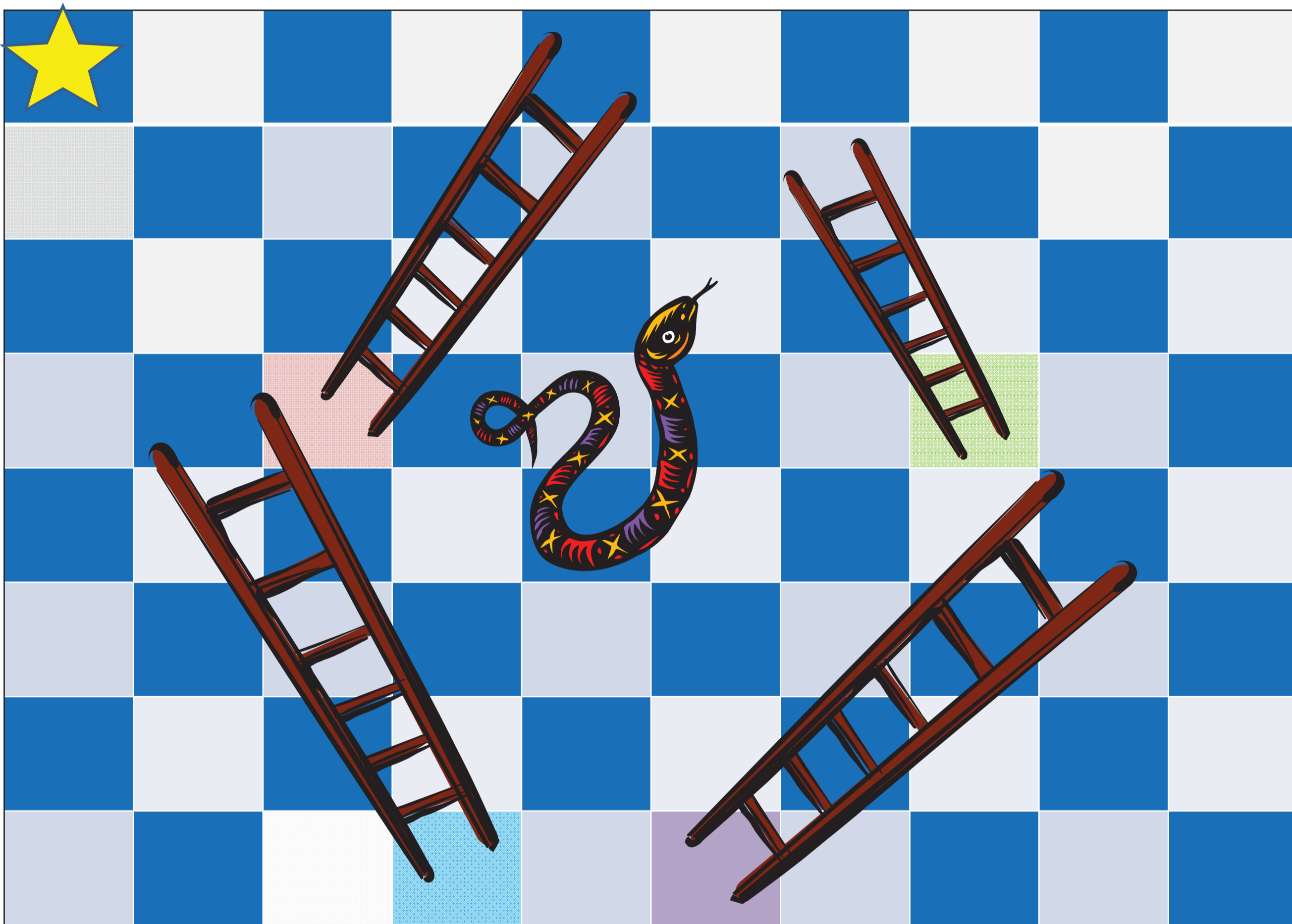
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The University is committed to strengthening the focus of the academic programme, striving to offer well-designed and coherent learning, teaching and assessment activities to shape the very best student experience. To achieve this strategic commitment Programme Leaders will have the flexibility to shape their programmes within the University's academic quality mechanisms. This poster presents a guide to aspects of the University's quality mechanisms which will facilitate the implementation of the move to strengthen the programme-focus.

## So why a snakes and ladders board?

Originally an ancient Indian board game which represented a life journey complicated by virtues (ladders) and vices (snakes). The University's academic quality mechanisms are designed to support the life journey of a programme covering design, development, approval, monitoring and review.

We have identified four ladders which provide Programme Leaders with the flexibility to shape and manage the design and delivery of their programmes. The 'snakes' reflect the perceived inflexibility and unnecessary bureaucracy within the academic quality system and Academic Quality is working proactively with faculty colleagues to ensure that such perceptions are eliminated.



Ladder Four: The **Programme Design Guidelines** (approved June 2014) set out the University's programme design principles. The guidelines state that a programme should be designed around the holistic student learning experience but within the parameters provided by the following internal and external benchmarks:

- University Academic Regulations
- University Quality Framework
- 20 credit module structure
- The UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- Subject and qualification benchmark statements
- SCQF level descriptors
- Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements

These provide the mechanisms by which we can safeguard our academic standards.

**Ladder One: The Academic Strategy 2014-2020** continues to emphasise programme focus in delivering a coherent, personalised student learning experience.

All programmes will need to demonstrate how they enable the University to meet the outcomes of the strategy.

Academic Quality is committed to supporting this aim.

**Ladder Two: The Academic Regulations** govern the University's provision delivered at SCQF levels 7-12.

Recent changes to the regulations to facilitate a strengthened programme focus include:

- redefining module categories into either compulsory or option (removing core)
- removing the requirement that all programmes incorporate at least 40 credits of optional modules.
- removing restrictions around delivering 20 credit modules over two trimesters.

**Ladder Three: The Quality Framework** provides the definitive source of information describing the University's approach to academic quality assurance and enhancement. As such the Framework is the authoritative reference point for all quality activities University-wide. Section 1 of the Quality Framework details the procedures for the approval of modules and programmes. Section 4 provides the detail for the development of programmes delivered in partnership with other organisations, both in the UK and overseas. Section 2 details the procedures for the routine monitoring and review of our provision.

Some changes are currently under-development to continue to strengthen the programme focus including, the introduction of a programme-specific assessment matrix to clearly capture the pattern of assessment types, timings and feedback schedules; and the requirement to define learning outcomes for each exit award of a programme of study.