

Apprenticeship policy: quality assurance and guidance for apprenticeship programmes

UPR AS17, Appendix I version 16.0

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 15.0 of UPR AS17 Appendix I, with effect from 1 September 2023.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

Updates to section, 2 to reflect external policy change.

Updated to section 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 reflect internal and external changes

Update to section 4.4 to reflect changes to professional development requirements

Addition of 4.5 to include Business Continuity

5.2 updated to reflect external policy and internal changes

5.3 updated to reflect external policy and internal changes

5.4 updated to reflect internal changes

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide a statement regarding the internal quality assurance and compliance arrangements for all apprenticeships delivered by the University of Hertfordshire as a Main Provider.
- 1.2 This document should be read as a supplement to the established University's Regulations and Policies¹ and sets out the additional requirements for the quality assurance and compliance for those programmes that offer both an academic award and an apprenticeship.
- 1.3 The University has embedded its apprenticeship provision within existing functions of the institution. This institution-wide approach involving collaboration between academic² and professional Strategic Business Units (SBUs) ensures academic quality is maintained, compliance requirements adhered to and professional and streamlined services for employers and learners alike are provided.
- 1.4 This policy is of interest to University staff who are involved in the design, delivery and management of apprenticeships. It will also be of interest to external agencies who have regulatory responsibility for apprenticeships: the Office for Students, Quality Assurance Agency, Office for Standards for Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and other discipline specific Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRB's)
- 1.5 Where existing policy and guidance refers to 'student' it must be considered that these are equally applicable to apprentices and learners.

¹ <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/governance/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs/uprs>
² Academic Strategic Business Units are referred to as Schools from this point onwards

2 Underlying Quality Assurance Framework

- 2.1 The University is committed to ensuring that the combined programmes of study and apprenticeship will meet the requirements of the Academic Regulations and thereby satisfy the expectations and core practices of the QAA UK Quality Code³ and the QAA Characteristic Statement on Higher Education in Apprenticeships⁴.
- 2.2 The University undertakes to deliver its apprenticeship provision in accordance with its obligations to Education and Skills Funding Agency⁵ (ESFA), the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills⁶ (Ofsted). By committing to apprenticeships, the University will take every reasonable effort to ensure that the provision is compliant with the ESFA Funding Rules⁷ and, where required, the Further Education and Skills Inspection handbook⁸ (March 2021). To achieve this, the University will aim to:
- 2.2.1 meet the requirements of the ESFA including notification to them of programme approval and subsequent listing on the Learning Aims Reference Service Database (LARS);
 - 2.2.2 meet the requirement of the quality standards as published by Ofsted for all provision that is within its scope;
 - 2.2.3 identify and provide relevant training for staff to meet the requirements of external regulatory processes (Section 3);
 - 2.2.4 meet the health and safety needs of apprentices (including Safeguarding, Prevent, British Values);
 - 2.2.7 continue to enhance the provision and to raise standards for apprentices and employers through the agreed annual monitoring and continuous enhancement process.

3 Scope and implementation of the Apprenticeship Policy

All staff involved in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes are required to engage positively with this policy. This policy is in two parts. Part 1 refers to the University process for design, approval, monitoring and continuous improvement of the apprentice’s provision. Part 2 refers to the apprentice’s experience.

3 <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

4 <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/characteristics-statement-apprenticeships.pdf>

5 <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>

7 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules>

8 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-eif>

4 Design, approval, monitoring and continuous improvement of the apprentice's provision

4.1 Programme Design and Approval

- 4.1.1 Apprenticeship programmes are approved and developed in accordance with the requirements set out in UPR AS17⁹ and the guidance provided on the Centre for Academic Quality Assurance website. Three key regulatory requirements and guidance must be followed when designing and delivering an apprenticeship:
- The QAA Characteristic Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships
 - The Education and Inspection Framework (2019) and
 - The Education and Skills Funding Agency main provider funding and performance management rules for apprenticeships
- 4.1.2 If Schools are considering subcontracted provision the ESFA rules should be consulted prior to making any proposal to the Academic Development Committee.
- 4.1.3 The periodic review of all apprenticeship programmes will be considered as part of the normal periodic review process (UPR AS17⁹). Apprenticeship Standards normally have a three-year life cycle, the expectation is that any amendments to the Standard necessitating changes to the programme will be managed through established processes.
- 4.1.4 Consideration should be given to the appointment of the External Panel Member and relevant work-based learning and/or experience of apprenticeship training programme design and delivery is required.

4.2 Monitoring and continuous improvement of Apprenticeships

- 4.2.1 All apprenticeship programme will be subject to a continuous monitoring process within the normal academic quality assurance cycle as established in UPR AS17⁹.
- 4.2.2 Programme Leaders for each apprenticeship programme are required to complete a evaluative self-assessment exercise and complete programme Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) annually. The evaluative self-assessment is in relation to the key requirements of the Education Inspection Framework. This evaluation must include consideration of the relevant apprenticeship data set and must be completed irrespective of the perceived level of risk indicated for the programme. These will form the basis for the University Self-Assessment Report (SAR), which is submitted to Ofsted annually, and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Committee will approve the SAR and QIP on behalf of the University.
- 4.2.3 The CEP process for apprenticeships will consider commentary from stakeholders: external examiners, external assessors, independent assessors, employers, staff and apprentices. Programme Leaders will consider how this feedback can be integrated into the process to inform quality improvements.

⁹ UPR AS17 'Academic Quality'

- 4.2.4 End Point Assessment outcomes will be taken account of in the SAR and QIP and any external quality assurance framework actions considered in the EPA action plan (UPR AS14, Appendix IV¹⁰).
- 4.2.5 The Department for Education National Achievement rates table for apprenticeships and education and training provide details of Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR). This measure should be used to monitor the success of apprenticeship programmes and for benchmarking purposes in the SAR.
- 4.2.6 At School level, Apprenticeship Progress Group meetings will take place quarterly and will be facilitated by the Apprenticeship Compliance and Support team. The performance of the apprentice and the apprenticeship programme against quality indicators (national and local) will be considered. Apprentices will be discussed on an exceptional basis (red or amber rating) and actions and interventions will be identified, discussed and recorded.
- 4.2.7 Deans of Schools I will report on the status of their apprenticeship provision at each HDAC as part of the University's quality assurance of apprenticeship of provision reporting cycle
- 4.2.8 Board of Governors will receive apprenticeship data reports at each meeting
- 4.2.9 The Department for Education's Apprenticeship Accountability Framework¹¹ identifies the quality indicators and thresholds that reflect minimum expectations. In the event that the University becomes aware that any threshold is 'at risk' or 'needs improvement' or the likelihood of such an event, the appropriate improvement plans must be implemented by the relevant SBU immediately.

4.3 The Apprentice Evidence pack

- 4.3.1 The University will hold sufficient evidence on each apprentice to assure the ESFA that funding is being used appropriately in accordance with the ESFA funding rules for main providers. This responsibility is managed by the Compliance and Support Team within EBD.
- 4.3.2 Schools must supply the Compliance and Support Team with evidence when requested.

4.4 Professional development of employees delivering apprenticeship training

Aligned with our Strategic Plan 2020-2025, the University has a clear vision for the professional development of its employees. This includes:

¹⁰ UPR AS 14 Appendix iv Apprenticeship Provision. End Point Assessment Policy.

¹¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-training-provider-accountability-framework/apprenticeship-training-provider-accountability-framework-and-specification>

4.4.1 Mandatory training

There are clear expectations for mandatory training for all staff, both as part of induction and probation, and as an annual requirement. This includes central induction, health and safety, equality, and diversity, GDPR and unconscious bias training. Additional mandatory training, which is specific to all those working on, or with responsibility for, apprenticeship delivery includes safeguarding, Prevent, and compliance, with other training determined on the role of the employee.

4.4.2 Developing Staff Practice

- i) those academic staff without a teaching qualification or Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy to join the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. The completion of this programme requires a successful teaching observation. This is monitored through the academic probation process for the first year, with reviews at 4, 8 and 10 months.
- ii) the academic probation 4-month review must also include an observation of teaching by the Dean/Head of Department or nominee. Once probation is successfully completed, development is discussed regularly at appraisal.
- iii) development of teaching practice through peer observation as an annual requirement for academic staff.
- iv) regular observation of practice by leaders and managers to ensure that learners benefit from effective teaching and support, including lesson visits, learning walks, work scrutiny and thematic deep dives.

4.4.3 Appraisal

Individual appraisal is used to support and monitor employees' professional development. The appraisal policy (UPR HR18) requires an annual appraisal and six-month review. The purpose of the appraisal process is to ensure that the individual's contribution is recognised, that individuals are clear about what is expected of them, to provide a constructive environment to discuss work priorities and targets, to provide an opportunity to discuss development needs for both the current role and for future career opportunities, to allow for identification of and discussion about difficulties or obstacles which hamper effectiveness and to help focus staff development.

Line managers of staff involved in apprenticeship training will work with the individuals to ensure that action plans resulting from appraisal include:

- i) how sector expertise, skills and performance is maintained and improved.
- ii) how teaching and training knowledge, skills and performance is developed, maintained, and improved, including through the use of planned lesson visits and observation of practice.
- iii) how actions are aligned to the delivery of apprenticeship training ensuring individual, customer and University needs are met.

4.4.4 Time allocated for development

- i) Providing academic staff with a contractual allowance for research and scholarly activity, which may take place throughout the year, to be integrated into the overall pattern of activities. Outputs from research and scholarly activity time are discussed at annual appraisal and mid-year review.
- ii) Providing professional staff with a contractual allowance for professional development.
- iii) Mandatory training related to the delivery of apprenticeships should be accommodated within the time allocated for development.

4.4.5 Managing performance

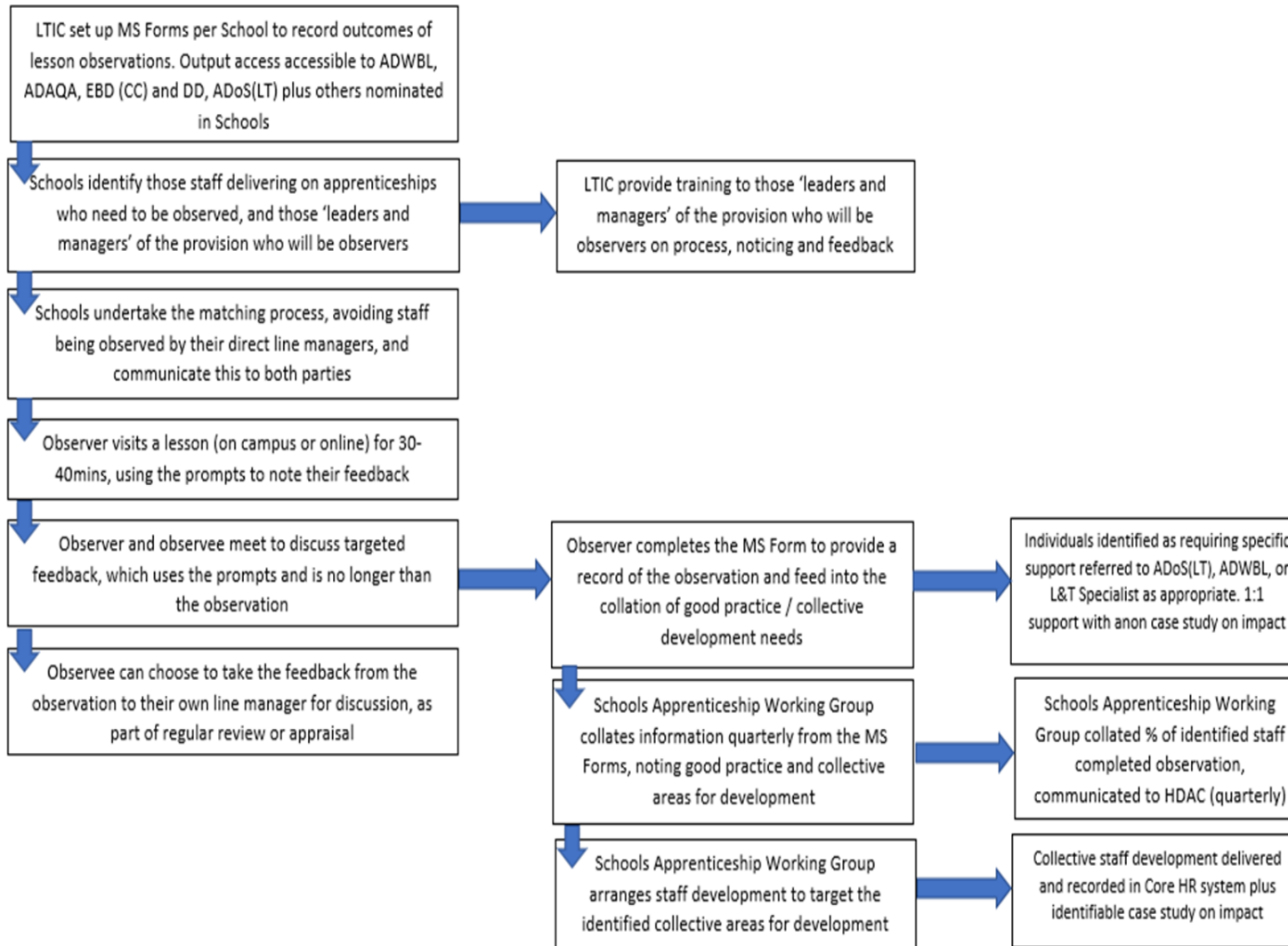
The University is committed to enabling staff to reach their full potential and to deliver at least a satisfactory level of performance. In the event that a member of staff is judged to be performing at a less than acceptable level, the University will offer reasonable counselling, support and training in order to resolve the problem. In the majority of cases this approach will result in an improvement in performance, bringing it up to the level required.

- i) Only after these approaches have been tried and there has been no improvement, or there has been a deterioration in performance, will the Managing Poor Performance policy (UPR HR19) apply.
- ii) Performance concerns which affect Fitness to Practise for members of staff who must be registered with one of the UK's regulators in order to practise and therefore teach/tutor/assess learners will be reported appropriately.

4.4.6 Oversight of Professional Development

Schools are responsible for ensuring that staff are participating in the required and appropriate staff development activities. Leaders and managers within Schools achieve this by:

- i) Receiving completion data for those staff who have been required to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.
- ii) Monitoring completion of probationary periods.
- iii) Allocating and reporting on peer review activities, through annual School reports to the Educational and Student Experience Committee. Central guidance and training are available to support those participating in the peer review process to ensure that it is effective.
- iv) Reporting regularly on leaders and managers observations activities, to the Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Committee. Central guidance and training are available to support those participating in the process to ensure that it is effective. The flowchart indicates the process in more detail.



4.5 Business continuity

Apprentices are registered students at the University of Hertfordshire and the University's Student Protection Plan applies to them, so their interests are protected as far as possible.

5 The Apprentice Experience

5.1 Admissions

The process of recruitment for Apprentices differs from that of other University students. It is a collaborative process which is determined by both parties: the University and the Employer. It is the responsibility of the University and the Employer to ensure that requirements of UPR SA03¹² and ESFA eligibility requirements are adhered to. The requirements for the admission process are such that:

- i the University sets out the minimum entry criteria for the apprenticeship and takes account of those specified in the relevant apprenticeship standard;
- ii the programme specific entry criteria is detailed in the programme specification;
- iii eligibility criteria as mandated by the ESFA Funding rules must be met in order that the University can access funding;
- iv the starting point for all Apprentices must be assessed prior to entry on their eligibility to undertake the apprenticeship using the Initial Needs Assessment (INA) process. This should be a decision made following discussion between the Employer, the applicant, and the University. The requirement is that the INA process will be completed prior to the apprentice enrolling on the apprenticeship to enable timely and accurate completion of the Training Plan. Recognition of Prior Learning is in line with the University's Flexible Credit Framework and where awarded, the duration and price of the training programme will be adjusted accordingly. Responsibility for this lies with the Programme Lead/Admissions Tutor. Monitoring arrangements and oversight for compliance with this process will be managed by the Enterprise & Business Development Compliance and Support Team.
- v it is a requirement of the ESFA that all Apprentices have a minimum of level 2 maths and English in order to complete a levy funded programme. The University requires that applicants must be able to provide evidence of maths and English at a minimum of Functional skills level 2 on entry. If this cannot be evidenced or has not been achieved prior to entry to the programme, this will result in a delay in entry to the apprenticeship;

¹² UPR SA03 'Admissions - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Students'

- vi where selection interviews are required as part of the approved admission process, representatives from both University and Employer should be involved;
- vii all offers of a place on an apprenticeship are conditional subject to full completion of Training Plan and Apprentices Service Agreement and Apprenticeship Agreement
- viii all offers of a place on an apprenticeship are conditional, subject to full completion of all documentation required by the ESFA (including the Training Plan, Apprenticeship Services Agreement, Call-off Contract/Order Form Apprenticeship Agreement and (where applicable) Sub-Contracting Schedule) prior to the programme start date. The University reserves the right to defer the start date if the above documents are not completed prior to the start date. Any deferral to proposed start date will be discussed on an individual basis with the Employer and Apprentice.

5.2 Off the job training, Attendance and Punctuality.

- 5.2.1 The University's Apprenticeship Attendance and Punctuality policy (awaiting applies to all apprentices and outlines the specific expectation of apprentices and management of non-attendance.
- 5.2.2 Off the job training is a mandatory requirement and is calculated throughout the duration of the apprenticeship. Off the job training hours can only take place during the apprentices normal working hours. The apprentice's employer and the University are both responsible for ensuring the apprentice receives the required amount of off the job learning. The apprentice is responsible for recording their off the job learning hours. The Employer Liaison Tutor is responsible for the oversight of off the job learning hours and will action deficits directly with the Employer and apprentice.
- 5.2.3 Apprentices who fail to comply with recording their off the job hours and who fail to achieve expected off the job hours at the end of each Semester may be at risk of withdrawal from the apprenticeship.

5.3 Progress review of Apprentices

- 5.3.1 All apprentices will have a named Employer Liaison Tutor assigned to them at the commencement of their training. The key function of the Employer Liaison Tutor is to provide effective and appropriate support to the apprentice and employer and monitoring the progress of the apprentice.
- 5.3.2 Progress reviews must be undertaken every 8-12 weeks but may be more frequently if the apprentice requires additional learning support or if their progress is deemed to be insufficient.
- 5.3.3 Progress reviews should be tripartite in nature and involve the apprentice, employer and the ELT or other designated member of University staff.
- 5.3.4 Progress reviews are primarily undertaken to:

- Monitor the apprentice's progress on their training programme towards their achievement of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours of the apprenticeship standard;
- Identify additional learning opportunities within the apprentice's work environment;
- Provide an opportunity for reflection on learning and work activities based on formal and informal feedback;
- Provide an opportunity for discussion of any wellbeing and safety concerns
- Monitor the apprentices off the job learning hours;
- Identify and discuss any change in the apprentice's circumstances that may impact on timely progress or their ability to complete the apprenticeship
- Oversee portfolio development where appropriate;
- Work with the apprentice to set meaningful and appropriate targets to sustain their progress.

5.3.5 All progress reviews must be formally recorded, and this record retained in the apprentice's evidence pack.

5.4 Change of Circumstances

5.4.1 Circumstances may change for the Apprentice during their course.

5.4.2 If any circumstances change that affect any agreements made between the Employer, Apprentice and the University, existing agreements must be altered. This includes but is not limited to:

- i changes to price;
- ii changes to their eligibility;
- iii changes to the apprentice's contract or working pattern;
- iv changes to the apprenticeship duration;
- v changes to the subcontractor;
- vi Breaks in Learning:
 - a the learner may request a Break in Learning (BiL) at any point during their course;
 - b employers must agree to their apprentice taking a BiL:
 - c Breaks in Learning do not apply when the apprentice has been made redundant;
 - d Academic Services must be notified of all BiLs as soon as the Programme Leader becomes aware of this as the University is obliged to record this accurately on the ILR;
 - e as a main provider, the University must re-plan the delivery, with the employer, agree any changes to price, revise Apprenticeship Services Agreements/Training Plans, and Apprenticeship Agreements and update the ILR.

5.4.3 It is the responsibility of the School to notify Academic Services if the apprentice has changed Employers as soon as they become aware of this information.

- 5.4.4 It is the responsibility of the School to notify EBD Compliance and Support Team if the apprentice has changed Employers as soon as they become aware of this information.
- 5.4.5 Where the Apprentice is withdrawn from their programme following a Programme Board, the University has a responsibility to inform the Employer (see section 4).
- 5.4.6 In the event of redundancy, the University should make reasonable efforts to support the Apprentice to find new employment, support the Apprentice to continue with their training where appropriate or provide the Apprentice with a Record of Apprenticeship Part Completion if the Apprentice cannot find new employment or continue with their training.
- 5.4.7 In the event of relocation of an employer's facilities, the University should make every effort to support the Apprentice to either continue their programme with the University or support them to transfer to another Training Provider who offers the same apprenticeship.
- 5.4.8 If the Apprentice chooses to leave their Employer, the Employer should notify the University. Every effort should be made to enable the Apprentice to continue their programme (including the possibility of transferring to a non-degree apprenticeship pathway with liability for fees becoming that of the Apprentice).

5.5 Communication with Employers

- 5.5.1 Communication with the Employer is central to the success of the apprenticeship. There are many avenues and levels where the University is required to engage with the Employer and the Apprentices; e.g. recruitment, on-boarding, progress review. Programme teams need to establish mechanisms for regular engagement with employers to ascertain feedback on the curriculum content, delivery, and levels of satisfaction.
- 5.5.2 All Employers will be provided with a University on-programme Employer's Handbook, contact details of the Programme Leader, Employer Liaison Tutor, and a general contact point within Enterprise & Business Development..
- 5.5.3 Information to the Employer in relation to the academic withdrawal of their Apprentice should be managed in a timely and transparent manner.
- 5.4.4 Employers will routinely be sent Notification of Results for their apprentices following the Programme Board of Examiner meeting.

6 Complaints

In addition to the standard complaints procedure the University has a procedure for managing employer complaints UPR GV15¹³. Details of the complaints process will be outlined in the Apprentices Services Written Agreement, Employer handbook and Employer on Programme handbook.

¹³ UPR GV15 'Complaints Policy (non-staff, non-student)' can be found at the following link: https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/253121/UPR-GV15-Complaints-Policy-Non-Staff,-Non-Student.pdf

7 Review

This policy (Appendix I UPR AS17) will be reviewed annually.

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: **1 September 2023**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.