

# UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Report for consideration by Teaching Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2016

## ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW 2014/15

### 1 SUMMARY

The attached paper summarises the APR reports for the 2014/15 academic year. Issues for support offices and other committees will be forwarded to them for action and/or information.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

**UTC is asked to consider and approve the report and to discuss the questions raised about the APR process.**

A final version of this report (incorporating any comments from the Committee) will be circulated to Chairs of Boards of Studies, the Coordinating Group for Supplementary Programmes and relevant support offices: they will also receive an individual response to their APR report.

19 January 2016

ACADEMIC QUALITY TEAM, ASO

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***Report contents & attachments:***

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- *Report (7 sides)*

## Overview of Annual Programme Review 2014/15

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Members of the University Teaching Committee (UTC) and the Academic Support Office (ASO) considered Annual Programme Review (APR) reports for the 2014/2015 academic year over the course of December 2015 and early January 2016.
- 1.2. This paper provides a brief summary of issues identified from the 2014/2015 APR process by UTC and the ASO that relate to undergraduate, taught postgraduate and supplementary provision. This paper only highlights *major* issues that are common across a number of departments. Where issues relate to a single department, or small number of departments, they are not usually included unless they are of sufficient interest or concern to be raised at University level.
- 1.3. As in previous years, departments, supplementary providers and validated partners will receive an individual response to their APR report.
- 1.4. Major (and minor) issues outwith UTC's remit will be forwarded to the appropriate committee(s) or support office(s) for action and/or information. Where appropriate, an update/response from the committee or support office will be requested by the Summer Term.
- 1.5. Issues identified by UTC or ASO relating to postgraduate research provision will be fed into the equivalent paper to be presented to the Policy and Programmes Sub-Committee of the York Graduate Research School.
- 1.6. Two questions relating to the role of the UTC departmental contact within the APR process are identified for discussion by UTC.

## **2. MAJOR ISSUES**

### **Role of Faculties**

- 2.1 Computer Science raises a question about the respective responsibilities of UTC and Faculties with respect to learning and teaching, particularly the strategic-tactical boundary in relation to programme design and approval. The role of Faculties in learning and teaching is now under discussion (see elsewhere on the agenda).

### **The York pedagogy**

- 2.2 The implementation of the York pedagogy is identified as a major priority for 2015/2016 in many departments. Some concerns are raised, however, by a small number of departments particularly around the speed of implementation (e.g. History, Philosophy), the role of programme leaders (History), the lack of a resolution regarding marking pressure points (History, Philosophy), and the use of the programme map (History of Art) and these will be flagged to the pedagogy project team.

### **Student numbers**

- 2.3 Several departments (including English, History of Art, Philosophy, CWS, Economics, PEP, Sociology) note difficulties in reaching target admission numbers for undergraduates and/or taught postgraduates. Some departments (e.g. CWS, Environment, History of Art, Philosophy) request more support for outreach, marketing, and recruitment: this will be flagged to Student Recruitment and Admissions, and Communications and Marketing.
- 2.4 Concerns are raised in a number of reports (Mathematics, TFTV, History, Biology, Law) around the pressure to accept more undergraduate students and/or to reduce the admissions tariff and the impact that this can have on the student experience (e.g.

if less well-prepared students are admitted, or the increase in student numbers has implications for teaching space or means of delivery). These concerns will be flagged to Planning Committee.

### **Assessment and feedback**

- 2.5 Assessment and feedback feature in a significant number of reports, in terms of both issues resolved and issues still to be resolved, but most instances are specific to particular programmes or departments.
- 2.6 Physics and Mathematics continue to express strong concerns about the impact of the University's rules on assessment on their students in terms of progression and graduation. UTC will be aware that this issue is currently under discussion (see M15-16/36).
- 2.7 Reports from two departments (English, Philosophy) note concerns about the University's 'six week rule' and identify the need to return marks and feedback within a shorter timeframe (as they are entitled to do so, and as already happens in other departments). The continuing appropriateness of the University's 'six week rule' is to be considered by SCA this year and discussed in the context of the student partnership agreement.
- 2.8 Disquiet continues to be expressed across a range of departments (including Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Physics, Economics) about the examination timetable (e.g. overloaded days and unsociable hours) and the impact that this has on the student experience and subsequently NSS results. These concerns will be flagged to the Examinations Office, and to the pedagogy project team (to consider alternative ways of addressing this issue).

- 2.9 Mainly positive experiences with respect to e-submission are reported (e.g. English, Philosophy, Education, Sociology) but one department (Archaeology) noted that it had had practical difficulties (now being resolved).

### **Timetabling and space**

- 2.10 As in previous years, issues around timetabling and space, and their effect on the student experience and consequently NSS results, dominate the list of departmental concerns. These concerns will be flagged to the Timetabling Office and to Estates and Campus Services. UTC has the chance to discuss these issues at the annual timetabling and space update to UTC (see elsewhere on the agenda).
- 2.11 There is a recognition that the Timetabling Office is working hard to improve timetabling, particularly through the embedding of timetabling staff within departments (e.g. Archaeology, Language and Linguistic Science, Economics); nevertheless, there continue to be concerns (e.g. Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science, Criminology).
- 2.12 Issues around the availability, quality and maintenance of teaching space also feature widely (e.g. Language and Linguistic Science, CMS, Physics, Mathematics. CLL, TFTV, CPD Unit, TYMS, CLL, Philosophy).

### **Student support**

- 2.13 The demands of supporting students in crisis and concern about the heavy load placed on student support services, notably the Open Door Team, are raised by a number of departments (including History, Biology, Archaeology, CWS, Education). A number of reports (Academic Practice, Education, Economics) also mention a range of concerns about mitigating circumstances. These concerns will be flagged to the Director of Student Support Services.

### **Combined and interdisciplinary programmes**

- 2.14 A number of reports comment on the issues faced by combined and interdisciplinary programmes, including poor communication and coordination between the programme Board of Studies and the parent Boards of Studies (Criminology, PEP, SPS), difficulties in ensuring a consistent student experience (Criminology), and problems for marketing and delivery arising from a lack of a separate identity (Criminology, SPS). The emphasis on programme-level design in the York Pedagogy will provide a further opportunity to explore some of these issues with programme teams, and the ASO will continue to work with programme teams to provide support and advice where necessary.

### **Student exchanges**

- 2.15 More support for establishing student exchanges is requested by a number of departments (Criminology, PEP, Archaeology, Philosophy): this will be flagged to the Centre for Global Programmes.

### **Modifications to programmes**

- 2.16 Across the three Faculties, there are references to new programmes/programme modifications/programme withdrawals/suspensions in the pipeline that have not been previously raised with the UTC and ASO departmental contacts. The ASO will remind departments that proposed changes to programmes should be discussed in good time with their UTC and ASO departmental contacts (and should not wait until the APR process to be flagged).

### **Employability**

- 2.17 A number of departments (e.g. Archaeology, History of Art, Education, Sociology, CMS, Politics) note a desire to improve students' engagement with employability

activities, in the hope that this will improve NSS results and/or post-degree outcomes: this will be flagged to the pedagogy project team and Careers.

### **Consistency within departments**

- 2.18 A common theme that cuts across a range of disparate issues, e.g. assessment and feedback, supervision etc. is the need for departments to find ways of ensuring that good practice is applied across the board. The introduction/enhancement of the programme leader role, departmental discussion/reflection resulting from the implementation of the York pedagogy, and the impact of the introduction of the Statement on Teaching Performance Expectations should all help to reduce pockets of poor practice.

### **Workload planning**

- 2.19 Another common theme, which again cuts across a range of disparate issues e.g. the implementation of the York pedagogy and meeting student expectations with respect to feedback and contact hours, is the need for departments to think carefully about how staff workloads are planned and managed to avoid overloading individuals. The workload modelling pilot (led by the Chair of UTC) will help to explore these issues.

### **New practices/developments in learning and teaching**

- 2.20 The positive impact of developments in learning and teaching, such as the introduction of flipped classrooms (e.g. Chemistry, Health Sciences), are identified by a number of departments. These developments will be shared with the Learning Enhancement Team for dissemination where appropriate.

### 3 THE APR PROCESS

- 3.1 Overall, members of the Committee reported that the APR process seemed fit for purpose, with open and reflective departmental engagement. Changes to the APR report pro forma for 2014/2015 were generally felt to have been helpful (e.g. the introduction of forward-looking questions), although it was suggested that it might be helpful to remind departments: (i) to focus on more strategic issues rather than operational details, and exception reporting rather than business as usual, and (ii) where applicable, to remember to reflect on the provision offered by embedded teaching centres (e.g. PRDU, CAHR). A notable number of APR reports across all three Faculties received praise from UTC members.

#### **Attendance at APR meetings**

- 3.2 UTC members are expected to attend the APR meetings of those departments for whom they serve as UTC departmental contacts, in order to provide an external perspective. A significant number of 2014/15 APR meetings were, however, held without the presence of the relevant UTC member (e.g. due to diary clashes or late appointment). The role of the UTC departmental contact at APR meetings was also queried by UTC members.

#### **Questions:**

UTC to consider whether attendance of UTC departmental contacts at APR meetings should continue to be an expectation, and if so, how this can best be facilitated (e.g. by requiring departments to consult with their UTC departmental contact before fixing the date of the meeting and/or requiring departments to fix the date of their APR meeting prior to the start of the Autumn Term).

UTC to consider whether further clarification is needed with respect to the role of the UTC departmental contact at the APR meeting.