

Overview of Annual Programme Review 2015/16

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Members of Faculty Learning and Teaching Groups (FLTG), the Chair of University Teaching Committee (UTC) and the Academic Support Office (ASO) considered Annual Programme Review (APR) reports for the 2015/2016 academic year over the course of December 2016 and January 2017. This is the first year that FLTGs have been part of the review process. Members of FLTG reviewed the APR reports for those departments/centres belonging to the Faculty and completed a reflective commentary; the Dean then prepared a Faculty-level summary report, informed by members' reflections (UTC.16-17/48b-c-d).
- 1.2. This paper provides a brief summary of issues identified from the 2015/2016 APR process by FLTG, the Chair of 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/centres. Where issues relate to a single department/centre, or small number of departments/centres, they are not included unless they are of sufficient interest or concern to be raised at University level.
- 1.3. As in previous years departments, centres, 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, for report to UTC, during the Summer Term.

- 1.5. Issues identified by FLTG, the Chair of 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. Teaching Committee is asked to consider how the APR process can be revised for 2017 to support the embedding of the York Pedagogy and the role of the programme leader (paragraph 3.4).

2. MAJOR ISSUES

Faculty Structure

- 2.1 Lifelong Learning report that its position outside of the Faculty structure has presented challenges with respect to communication and the planning stage for new programmes. The Planning Officer for Arts & Humanities and members of ASO have provided advice as required with respect to the arrangements for the approval of new Lifelong Learning proposals. In the long term it is envisaged that all programmes will be designated to a Faculty (which will be responsible for the planning approval of new programmes and modifications to existing programmes). Until such time that designated faculties have been agreed for programmes which reside outside the Faculty structure it has been agreed that the Chair of Teaching Committee will advise regarding which FLTG is best placed to oversee new proposals and programme modifications.

The York pedagogy

- 2.2 As last year the implementation of the York pedagogy is identified as a major priority for the coming year (2016/17) by many departments. A number of departments raise concerns about the significant workload associated with the implementation of the Pedagogy (History, CMS, Philosophy, Music, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Academic Practice, Education, SPS, Sociology) and thus the impact on time available for other activities.

- 2.3 Whilst noting the demands placed on departmental staff with respect to the Pedagogy process, a number of departments (Education, SPS and Electronics) comment positively on the support and guidance provided by ASO.
- 2.4 Several departments highlight the benefits achieved through the implementation of the Pedagogy for example with respect to programme coherence (Electronics), employability/skills training (SPSW), progression (Environment), assessment diversity (SPSW) and the balance of formative and summative assessment (Education).
- 2.5 Specific issues raised in APR reports relating to the implementation of the York Pedagogy will be fed back to the York Pedagogy Project team and will inform the initial evaluation report of the roll-out to undergraduate programmes (see paragraph 2.8 below).

Combined and interdisciplinary programmes

- 2.6 As last year a number of departments highlight the challenges associated with the the design and delivery of joint and interdisciplinary programmes. The speed of the roll-out of the Pedagogy is highlighted by Mathematics, Natural Sciences and SPS as being particularly challenging for combined/interdisciplinary programmes in the light of departments' reliance on contributing departments to complete their programme mapping.
- 2.7 A number of departments also indicate that University guidance on the governance of joint degrees is unclear, including the relationship between programme leaders and Boards of Studies (Criminology) and where 'sovereignty' lies (SPS).
- 2.8 A review of the roles and clarity of responsibilities of Boards of Studies, Boards of Examiners, Teaching Committees, Programme Leaders, Year Leaders and other departmental structures is an outstanding action within the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-20. Later in the Spring Term UTC will consider an evaluation of

aspects of the roll-out of the York Pedagogy to UG programmes, including the governance of combined degrees and the effectiveness of the programme leader model (UTC.16-17/28) and relevant feedback gathered via the APR process will be used to inform that paper.

Student numbers

- 2.9 A number of departments including English, History of Art, Music, Economics and Philosophy note the worsening climate for recruitment and the difficulties in reaching target admission numbers in an increasingly competitive landscape. Specific issues relating to recruitment arising within individual departmental/centre reports will be forwarded to Student Recruitment and Admissions for action and/or information.
- 2.10 As last year concerns are raised in a number of reports (TFTV, History, Psychology, Law, PEP, SPS, Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences Summary Report [UTC.16-17/48d]) 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. For example the pressure on facilities and equipment (TFTV), students' anxiety levels (History), teaching group size (Law, PEP) and implications for accreditation by a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory body (Psychology). UTC is asked to note these issues and highlight the concerns to Planning Committee.

Student support

- 2.11 Related to increasing student numbers is the pressure on Student Support Services. A number of departments (including Biology, Chemistry, History of Art, History, English, Archaeology) report that students experience long waiting times to access the Open Door Team at busy times. Similarly, whilst departments acknowledge the invaluable work undertaken by Disability Services there are concerns noted by a number of departments (Archaeology, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Electronics) about the current level of resource and the impact on students in terms of waiting times and students support plans. SPSW report a substantive rise in the number of

students with a support plan and perceive there to be a lack of consistency in some instances with respect to the level of support for students with similar conditions. UTC is asked to note the concerns raised by departments with respect to the resourcing of Student Support Services and recommend that the Chair of UTC highlight these concerns to the Academic Registrar.

- 2.12 Physics, Archaeology, and Academic Practice note concerns relating to the new Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment Policy: the difficulties faced by students in obtaining contemporaneous medical evidence in relation to missed assessments in the light of the availability of GP appointments (Physics); the impact of the requirements of the new policy on Open Door services (Archaeology, Faculty of Sciences Summary Report [UTC.16-17/48c]); and the appropriateness of applying the new policy to academic staff (Academic Practice). At its meeting in October UTC requested that SCA review the new Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment Policy in early 2017/18 to consider the impact of the amendments (M16-17/5 refers) and it is recommended that the concerns highlighted in APR reports be considered within the scope of that review.

Timetabling and space

- 2.13 The issues arising from APR reports relating to timetabling and space should be considered within the context of the annual report on timetabling and space (see separate agenda item [UTC.16-17/52]).
- 2.14 Also related to increasing student numbers is the consequent pressure on space. Chemistry report that its practical laboratories are running effectively at capacity and the Management School report continuing issues around the general lack of space and poorly configured rooms in the Law and Management building. The teaching space in Wentworth is described as “sub-optimal quality” (a perception that is highlighted further when the teaching space is compared with that of Spring Lane) within Sociology’s APR report. Whilst Mathematics and Physics welcome improvements made to some teaching space (improvements with respect to Physics’

laboratory space and renovations to the foyer of the Mathematics' building) both departments raise concerns about the impact on the students' learning experience resulting from the relatively poor quality of their departmental/teaching buildings. These concerns and those raised by other departments will be forwarded to Estates and Campus Services.

- 2.15 Issues around timetabling are reported by a number of departments/centres. The 2016/17 timetable was produced using the new centralised timetabling model whereby Space Administrators spend part of their working week embedded within their designated departments/centres. Environment and Physics both note the success of the embedded-timetable specialist in improving student and staff satisfaction with timetable. A significant achievement too, highlighted in the Natural Sciences Report, is the delivery of a Stage 1 clash-free timetable. (the Timetabling Annual Report [UTC.16-17/52] also reports the successful production of a clash-free *Stage 2* timetable).
- 2.16 Specific concerns are raised by Biology (the availability of the PC classroom in Biology), Chemistry (access to the Spring Lane Building) and the Centre for Global Programmes (groups from the same university being taught in different colleges across the campus) and these will be forwarded to Timetabling to follow-up with the respective departments.

E Learning

- 2.17 The issues arising from APR reports relating to E-learning should be considered within the context of the annual report on E-learning services in support of learning and teaching (see separate agenda item [UTC.16-17/50]).
- 2.18 Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics report greater usage of lecture capture and highlight positive feedback from students from its use. Whilst Chemistry operates an 'opt-out' policy on lecture capture (along with 11 other departments – see UTC.16-17/50 appendix 2) it reports constraints with respect to further use due to the absence

of recording facilities in some rooms. Following a successful trial, video capture equipment was fitted in P/L001 and P/L002 to allow high definition recording of blackboard-led lectures. Whilst the Physics' APR report acknowledges the positive benefits of video capture it also highlights raised students' expectations, instances of videoing system failing and thus requests urgent investment in robust equipment. Similarly the Department of Mathematics report that further investment in video capture would be welcome. UTC is asked to note the concerns raised by departments and by the Faculty of Sciences (UTC.16-17/48c) with respect to investment in lecture/video capture and recommend that the Chair of UTC highlight these concerns to the Chair of the Replay Lecture Recording Steering Group.

- 2.19 A small number of departments report concerns regarding electronic submission of assessment, marking and feedback. Teaching Committee considered a report on progress with the roll-out and implementation by departments of the electronic submission of student work (via the *Yorkshire* virtual learning environment's anonymous file submission and marking workflow) at its June 2016 meeting (UTC.15-16/110; M15-16/166 refers). Chemistry is concerned about the absence of tools for "peer review/assessment and for rapid online marking of electronic submissions". Following an unsuccessful trial of electronic submission of assessment for two master's modules the Department of Archaeology is exploring a hybrid approach whereby the current system of marking and feedback is retained alongside electronic submission of student work. Music report that students have expressed a desire for the Department to adopt an electronic submission process and the Department is exploring this but notes that an appropriate system (to manage the variability of assessment materials and digital components) has not yet been identified.

Module Catalogue

- 2.20 Concerns regarding the implementation of the module catalogue feature widely in the APR reports from the Faculty of Sciences (see Faculty of Sciences Summary Report [UTC.16-17/48c]). Six departments raise concerns which include the

workload impact on departmental staff (Chemistry, Environment, Health Sciences, Psychology) and the perception of insufficient central resource to support the further development of the module catalogue to enhance its functionality (Computer Science, Physics). Whilst Physics observe that development of the module catalogue appears to have stopped the Department does recognise the advantages that a module catalogue can offer and Health Sciences report that it has received good support from the module catalogue team (to support its specific needs).

- 2.21 UTC is asked to note the concerns raised by departments with respect to the module catalogue and recommend that the Chair of UTC highlight these concerns to the Enterprise Systems Strategy Group.

Assessment and feedback

- 2.22 As in previous years assessment and feedback feature widely across reports, in terms of both issues resolved and issues still to be resolved, but most instances are specific to particular programmes or departments.
- 2.23 Physics report positively on the recently-approved amendment to the compensation rule for students in the Award Year and thank SCA and UTC for its consideration of this issue. Mathematics, too, welcome the revision although highlight the lack of parity it creates between final year students on the Bachelors programme and students who take the same modules in their penultimate year of the Integrated Masters programme.
- 2.24 In response to concerns arising from the NSS about consistency of feedback Philosophy have set up a formal feedback process, whereby feedback is scrutinised across the Department with a view to identifying examples of good practice and providing feedback to markers with respect to improving the quality of feedback. Language and Linguistic Science have begun a structured series of consultations with the Student-Staff Forum members to find out how students perceive and interpret feedback, and how the Department might improve feedback.

- 2.25 Psychology report a 5% increase in student satisfaction in the NSS in the category 'Assessment and Feedback' in 2016 (77% satisfaction in that category) and having reviewed the open comments from the last three years have identified opportunities for further improvement with respect to the Department's communication of its rationale for assessment and feedback. The Department has developed a Comprehensive Assessment Strategy which outlines the ethos of the Department's approach to assessment and explains to students how assessments support the achievement of the Programme Learning Outcomes. UTC is asked to note this good practice and recommend that it be shared with FLTGs (the Sciences FLTG has agreed to an extended discussion on assessment and feedback at its next meeting [UTC.16-17/48c, para. 21]).
- 2.26 The Academic Practice team are trialling the provision of aural feedback (via an mp3 file) to PGCAP students during 2016/17.

Careers

- 2.27 Careers and employability feature widely in APR reports this year (e.g. Economics, Politics, Biology, History of Art, History, English, Centre for Medieval Studies, Criminology, Education, SPS, Sociology, SPSW, Management, Archaeology, Faculty of Social Sciences Summary Report [UTC.16-17/48d]) and is identified as a major priority for 2016/17 in many departments. A number of reports outline initiatives to strengthen students' employability for example: further integration of employability planning into the curriculum (Biology); provision of networking meetings (SPS in partnership with the SPS Society); embedding of employability skills within existing modules (Archaeology); and the provision of scheduled meetings between supervisors and second year students at the beginning of the year to discuss career plans and to highlight the support offered by the Careers Service (History).

- 2.28 Specific issues relating to careers raised by Education (data analysis, scheduling of events) and History of Art (Careers Strategy) will be forwarded to the Careers Service to follow-up with the respective departments.

Kaplan International College London (KICL)

- 2.29 Environment report that it was very difficult to obtain the figures on and details about KICL students enrolling on Environment programmes in 2016. Following a QAA recommendation (June 2016) to KICL regarding academic oversight of KICL progression to York it has been proposed that the Pathways Management Board (PMB) oversee the KICL-York arrangement via a separate (and distinct) element to PMB's agenda. This proposal will strengthen the current arrangements and should effectively address the problems encountered in October 2016 by Environment for future cohorts.

3 THE APR PROCESS

Attendance at APR meetings

- 3.1 Last year it was reported that a significant number of 2014/15 APR meetings were held without the presence of the relevant UTC member (due to diary clashes or late appointment). Attendance of the UTC departmental contact at APR meetings has been less problematic this year: of the 34 reports completed by departments/centres the UTC contact had attended the meeting in 21 cases.

York Pedagogy – maintaining the momentum

- 3.2 Teaching Committee's oversight of progress with the implementation of the York Pedagogy will be maintained via the Annual Programme Review process in 2017 which will be revised to monitor departments' progress with (i) enhancement plans, (ii) the embedding of the role of the programme leader and (where applicable) (iii) the recommendation(s) made by UTC approval panel.

- 3.3 UTC is asked to recommend that the APR report pro-forma be amended to include a requirement for departments to report on progress made with their enhancement plans and (where applicable) to report on progress made with addressing recommendations made by the UTC approval panel.
- 3.4 UTC is asked to consider how the APR process should be amended to support the embedding of the emphasis in the Pedagogy on programme-level design and the role of the programme leader. This will also ensure that more explicit attention is given to combined programmes in future APRs. Options for consideration:
- 3.4.1 adapt the process to require a brief Annual Programme Review report for each programme alongside a departmental-level summary report which captures significant programme-level issues and/or recurrent themes occurring across the department's provision;
 - 3.4.2 revise the APR pro-forma to capture programme-level reflections on quality and standards but otherwise maintain the 'by exception' approach (and the existing requirement for one report which covers the department's entire provision);
 - 3.4.3 continue with the current 'by exception' approach with respect to the APR report but consider ways to strengthen the programme-level focus during the departmental APR meeting.
- 3.5 The APR report pro-forma and guidance will be revised to reflect UTC's consideration of how best the APR process can support the monitoring of departments' progress with the implementation of the Pedagogy. UTC will receive, for approval, the revised report pro-forma and guidance at its March meeting.