

UNIVERSITY OF YORK**ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW 2017/18****Overview of Annual Programme Review 2017/18****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 2017/2018 academic year over the course of December 2018 and January 2019. Members of FLTG reviewed the APR reports for those departments/centres belonging to the Faculty and completed a reflective commentary; the Associate Dean then prepared a faculty-level summary report, informed by members' reflections (UTC.18-19/60b-c-d).
- 1.2. This paper provides a brief summary of issues identified from the 2017/2018 APR process by FLTG, the Chair of UTC and the ASO that relate to undergraduate, taught postgraduate and supplementary provision. This paper highlights substantive 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 later in the Spring term.
- 1.4. 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 have been fed into the equivalent paper to be presented to the Policy and Programmes Sub-Committee of the York Graduate Research School.

1.6. There were three key changes to the APR process for 2017-18:

- the requirement for a programme-level reflection for undergraduate provision (introduced for the 2016/17 reporting year) was extended to postgraduate taught programmes (or cluster of related postgraduate taught programmes);
- the programme-level pro forma was simplified to support a concise reflection (that focused on major issues, risks and planned actions);
- the focus on employability within the departmental-APR was strengthened (to include a requirement to reflect on employability data).

Teaching Committee is asked to consider the APR process for 2019 (section 3).

2. THEMES

Combined and interdisciplinary programmes

2.1 As in previous years several departments highlight the challenges associated with the delivery / management of combined and interdisciplinary programmes. The faculty-level summary report for the Social Sciences (UTC.18-19/60d) also notes, as a theme, the complexities associated with administering and co-ordinating combined programmes.

2.2 A number of the issues relate to resourcing. As last year, Criminology and Social and Political Sciences (SPS) note the challenges arising from delivering interdisciplinary provision with limited administrative support. The School of Politics, Economics and Philosophy report similar concerns but these are raised in the context of rebuilding administrative capacity (as a result of the implementation of the reorganisation of the School) and progress is noted; 'a new admin team is now in place and is gaining the necessary experience to handle the complex and complicated degree requirements. Communication with students has also improved as a consequence of a working admin team'.

2.3 Two departments in the faculty of Arts and Humanities note challenges arising from the abolition of Combined Boards of Studies; English (communication / student voice) and History (decision making with respect to Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment [ECA]). English has established programme-specific groups (including student representatives) to ensure that individual programmes continue to have a bespoke forum. Concerns related to

the responsibility for ECA cases for students on a combined programme residing in the lead department had been discussed at Arts and Humanities FLTG meetings in October and November; it had been 'agreed that current practice (lead Department to consult with the other Department only where the ECA claim is not straightforward but otherwise not routinely) was sensible and appeared to work well' (FLTG synopsis report, UTC.18-19/52a).

Student number growth

- 2.4 As in previous years concerns are raised in a number of reports around the impact on the student experience of growth in student numbers. The faculty-level summary reports for Sciences (UTC.18-19/60c) and Social Sciences (UTC.18-19/60d) also note significant concerns about the impact of unplanned student number growth; Social Sciences report that 'it is frustrating that this is now the third year that there is little or no co-ordinated response to the ongoing large scale, unplanned growth in student numbers' (page 2, UTC.18-19/60d).
- 2.5 The pressures, highlighted by departments, arising from increasing student numbers included: workload for staff (Environment and Geography, Biology, Archaeology, Music, Politics, Criminology, SPS); teaching accommodation / laboratory facilities (Computer Science, Environment and Geography, TFTV, Law, Management, Women's Studies, Archaeology, Chemistry); rise in the number of teaching staff on fixed term contracts (Politics); regulatory concern arising from the impact on the staff/student ratio (Psychology).
- 2.6 In response to the concerns last year raised via APR reports (2016-17) about the impact of increasing student numbers on the student experience (M17-18/79 refers) the Chair of UTC discussed, with the Chair of Planning Committee, ways to embed more deeply the weight of the student experience as a factor in decision-making regarding student growth. In addition, during the Autumn term 2018, the Chair had been in touch with the Director of Planning to highlight the Committee's concern about the way in which the student experience was considered in the Medium Term Planning cycle and during the Confirmation, Clearing and Adjustment period; the Chair intended to invite the Director of Planning to a future UTC to discuss how student number allocations were informed by consideration of teaching quality. **UTC is asked to note that the Dean of the Faculty of Science is Chairing a Working Group which includes consideration of unplanned student growth and the process for decision-making during the Confirmation, Clearing and Adjustment period.**

Workload and managing change

- 2.7 Concerns about staff workload feature heavily in this years' APRs. The faculty-level summary report for the Arts and Humanities (UTC.18-19/**60b**) notes 'staff welfare and workload' as a serious and growing concern and related to this, 'managing high levels of change in teaching and learning' and the 'demands of responding to issues around student well-being'.
- 2.8 Departments report concerns about increasing workloads arising from: student number growth (see paras 2.4 to 2.6); increasing administrative load (Medieval Studies, Music, Environment and Geography); requirements arising from the University's teaching and learning framework (Archeology, Education) and managing Student Support Plans / student well-being (Mathematics, Research Centre for Social Sciences, Sociology, Biology, History, TFTV).
- 2.9 In relation to the concerns raised, departments report actions in progress, for example Music has a new workload module (designed to distribute workload more evenly and transparency with respect to administrative roles) and Environment and Geography is considering ways to streamline processes (and improve assessment patterns and loads). Notwithstanding department-specific actions in this area, **Teaching Committee is asked to recommend that departments (via the Head of Department) discuss more widely the issues at Faculty Executive Groups (including sharing workload models and the identification of effective practice therein).**

Student engagement / attendance

- 2.10 Another continuing theme from last year is that of student engagement / attendance, and is also noted as a theme in the faculty-level summary report for the Social Sciences (UTC.18-19/**60d**). A number of departments report pockets of problematic attendance (Education, Politics, Management, Sociology) and request a centrally developed (and supported) attendance monitoring system (Politics, TFTV, International Pathway College).
- 2.11 Three departments (Management, Sociology, Education) raise concerns that Lecture Capture might impact negatively on attendance and participation.
- 2.12 In July 2017 Senate approved an Attendance Monitoring Policy for implementation once an IT system has been developed to support it. An Attendance Monitoring project has recently been approved (December 2018) for initiation by Enterprise Systems Strategy Group. The

high-level scope of the project is to implement a University-wide attendance monitoring solution, aligned with the Policy approved by Senate, including new hardware and new software (which will be integrated with the University Master Data Layer). The scope will be validated and expanded on once the project has started. The start date of the project has not yet been confirmed but it is expected to start later in the Spring term /early in the Summer term (the start date has a number of dependencies which include the successful delivery of other Enterprise Systems projects).

- 2.13 Whilst the implementation of the University's Attendance Monitoring Policy will support a consistent approach to the monitoring of attendance, the monitoring (and reporting) of attendance will not, in isolation, address poor attendance or increase engagement. Those departments who have raised concerns regarding poor attendance will be encouraged to work with the designated Educational Adviser department contact (in the Programme Design and Learning Technology team) to explore (i) potential contributory causal factors and (ii) possible actions to improve attendance / engagement.

Electronic marking

- 2.14 Several departments (Sociology, SPSW, Education, History of Art) comment on the challenges of electronic annotation / marking. The Digital Learning Resources Co-ordinator (Programme Design and Learning Technology team) is working with the respective departments to understand the specific issues and to provide guidance to help address the problems. In respect of more wide-ranging issues relating to the assessment workflow **Teaching Committee is asked to note that a Digital Assessment and Feedback project has recently been approved (December 2018) for initiation by Enterprise Systems Strategy Group.** The high level scope is to improve the digital infrastructure around assessment and feedback by introducing new services for online exams, file submission, marking and feedback. The time frame for the start of the project has yet to be confirmed (and is dependent on resource).

Module Catalogue

- 2.15 Given its prominence in 2016-17 APRs it is worth noting that, whilst concerns were raised in four departments (Computer Science, Mathematics, Music, Chemistry) about the functionality of the module catalogue, these were fewer in number. The programme module catalogue project team is following up, with respective departments, on the specific issues raised.

Careers and employability

- 2.16 The departmental-level APR reporting (on 2017/18) template was revised to require a reflection on graduate employability (informed by Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education and Longitudinal Education Outcomes datasets). The Faculty Employability Managers (FEM) used the amendment to the APR reporting template as a platform to actively engage with the APR process. Meetings were held between FEMs and the department (in most cases the departmental representatives included the Head of Department and the Careers and Employability Coordinator); this discussion informed the department-level APR report. In order to build on this constructive dialogue, the FEMs produced a summary of the key findings (arising from the meetings) for consideration by the Employability Operations Group.
- 2.17 Successful initiatives with respect to employability are reported on widely in APRs and a number are highlighted, in the three faculty-level summary reports (UTC.18-19/60b-c-d), as examples of excellent practice. The support provided by Careers and Placements is explicitly commended in several departmental reports (Sociology, SPS, Criminology) and also in the faculty-level summary report for the Arts and Humanities (UTC.18-19/60b).

3 THE APR PROCESS

UTC Departmental Contact attendance at APR meetings

- 3.1 Of the 34 APR meetings, 19 included attendance by the designated UTC Departmental Contact. In the case of those meetings conducted without the presence of the UTC departmental contact:
- 2 departments (Environment and Geography and Management) were not allocated a UTC until after the APR meeting had taken place;
 - 8 departments/centres could not fix the date of the APR meeting in coordination with the designated UTC Departmental Contact due to the timing of members' appointment to UTC.

Student representation

- 3.2 Whilst local practice is varied with respect to supporting the participation of student representatives in APR, all departments report some level of student representative involvement.

Submission of the report

- 3.3 The deadline for submission of the departmental-level report to the Academic Support Office was 14 November 2018. This deadline (approved by UTC, M17-18/79 refers) was chosen to align with FLTG consideration of the reports (in January) and to allow sufficient time for FLTG members to review the reports (and submit a reflective commentary to the Associate Dean by mid December). Of the 34 reports which are considered by FLTG, 32 were submitted to the Academic Support Office by 20 November. The 2 outstanding reports were submitted on 3 and 5 December.
- 3.4 **It is recommended that the mid November deadline be maintained and that the deadline for submission of the departmental-level report (reporting on 2018/19) to the Academic Support Office be Wednesday 13 November 2019.**

Annual reporting cycle

- 3.5 Music and Medieval Studies raise concerns about the additional administrative burden associated with completing the programme-level APR reports (taught provision). At FLTG Social Sciences January meeting the SPS representative also queried duplication of effort with respect to the completion of a programme-level report in addition to SPS's departmental-level report. Biology also raise workload concerns but in relation to the additional reporting requirement arising from the Subject-level TEF and suggest 'integrating TEF reporting into the annual cycle of University reporting (including APR)...to at least maintain the workload as is. There may be opportunities for improvement at University level'. Likewise the faculty-level summary report for the Arts and Humanities (UTC.18-19/60b) requests University-wide consideration of ways to better align APR and Subject-level TEF reporting.
- 3.6 **UTC is asked to note that development work is already underway in the Business Intelligence Unit (BIU) to create Tableau Workbooks to support departments to reflect on key student outcomes metrics in APR and periodic review.** Completion of this work, to support the APR 2018/19 reporting cycle, is dependent on sufficient resource in BIU.
- 3.7 The University's participation in the OfS's final pilot Subject-level TEF exercise will allow the University to understand and learn from the process (including ways to streamline consideration of TEF metrics in existing reporting processes). The remit of the Steering Group for the Subject-level TEF pilot includes 'reviewing implications for institutional and subject-level planning, as informed by TEF metrics in conjunction with other indicators of the quality

of teaching and the student experience' (UTC.18-19/50). Subject-level TEF will be rolled out nationally from 2020/21 and publication of the guidance is expected in the Summer term. Release of the guidance will enable a review of how far APR and Subject-level TEF reporting can be aligned.

3.8 In addition to APR there are other forms of teaching and learning reporting (for example action-planning arising from the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught/Research Experience Survey, periodic review, graduate outcomes data) which may well give rise to duplication of workload and disparate action-planning with respect to enhancement of the student experience.

3.9 In the light of the timeframe for evaluating the pilot Subject-level TEF exercise and the expected timeframe for publication of the guidance for national roll-out of the Subject-level TEF, **Teaching Committee is asked to:**

- **approve that, notwithstanding minor revisions to signpost staff to the Tableau Workbooks (currently in development), the APR report templates and guidance be unchanged;**
- **endorse that, a review of Institutional reporting processes (including, but not limited to, APR) which focus on the enhancement of the student experience, be conducted during Spring/Summer 2019 [the outcomes of this review, including recommendations for 2020 APR process, to be reported to UTC in the Autumn term 2019];**
- whilst the current expectation is that the 2019 APR process be largely unchanged, **recommend that a final decision about the 2019 APR process** (reporting on 2018/19 academic year) **be informed by early input from the review and be taken at May UTC.**

4 SUMMARY OF THE DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN

4.1 Teaching Committee is asked to:

- **recommend** that departments (via the Head of Department) discuss more widely workload issues at Faculty Executive Groups (including sharing workload models and the identification of effective practice therein) (para. 2.9);
- **approve** that the deadline for submission of 2018/19 departmental-level APR reports be Wednesday 13 November 2019 (para. 3.4);
- **approve** that, notwithstanding minor revisions to signpost staff to the Tableau Workbooks (currently in development), the APR report templates and guidance be unchanged (para. 3.9);

- **endorse** that, a review of Institutional reporting processes (including, but not limited to, APR) which focus on the enhancement of the student experience, be conducted during Spring/Summer 2019 (para. 3.9);
- **recommend** that a final decision about the 2019 APR process (reporting on 2018/19 academic year) be informed by early input from the review and be taken at May UTC (para. 3.9).