Extract from the minutes of the meeting of University Teaching Committee held on Thursday 6 February 2020

(Full minutes available at https://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/sub-committees/teaching-committee/#tab-4)

M19-20/84   Annual Programme Reviews

The Committee **considered** a University-level summary report and a report from each faculty on the outcomes from Annual Programme Reviews for (UTC.19-20/70**a-d**). Members were thanked for having supported the process by attending their departments' APR meetings.

The faculty-level summary reports identified some common themes, which were considered by the Committee:

- *Concerns about student engagement, student community and attendance.*
All Faculties noted that student engagement remained a strong common theme. Departments were addressing issues relating to lack of student engagement, with excellent initiatives being embedded. Whilst the Faculty of Sciences had seen improvements in NSS scores for the Student Voice, there was ongoing work and good practice interventions across all faculties to address concerns relating to student engagement and the student community.

- *Concerns about student mental health.*
Student mental health continued to be a serious concern for UG and PGT within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and departments were working to address this issue by recruiting/looking to recruit departmental Student Support and Wellbeing Officers, which were in the transition stage. Related to this concern was the impact on staff workload.

- *Employability.*
The Associate Dean for Sciences reported issues with employability skills and the need for them to be embedded more in the curriculum, and identified a connection with low student engagement. This was also a strong theme within Arts and Humanities, reporting that significant effort had been made to embed skills development and employability initiatives into the curriculum, however it was noted that it was still difficult to see the impact. Further work was planned with Careers and Placements to ensure that employability activities and events were made more appealing to students.

- *Concerns relating to student number growth, impact on student experience and staff workload.*
The Faculty of Sciences reported concerns regarding large cohorts, pressures on teaching space, resources, and a negative impact on the student community. The Associate Dean for Sciences noted that, where investment had been made within departments to improve community space, this had been successful. The Faculty of Social Sciences reported difficulties with student number forecasting, resulting in recruitment challenges, resource issues, implications for staff welfare and impact on institutional and community initiatives. It was suggested that departments needed

more support with planning for student growth. Student recruitment emerged as a mixed picture within Arts and Humanities, with increasing student populations across some departments; declining student numbers were causing concern in other departments.

- *Issues associated with Interdisciplinary and combined programmes.*

The Faculty of Social Sciences reported challenges with delivering programmes across departments and difficulties with University systems that present barriers to multi-departmental working. The Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities identified obstacles to student uptake of LFA and elective modules.

The University-level summary reports identified similar themes, which were considered by the Committee. There was extensive convergence across the faculties in relation to student engagement concerns and challenges associated with combined and interdisciplinary programmes. The Committee noted that the UTC Working Group on Interdepartmental and Cross-Faculty Teaching (UTC.19/20.71) and the ASO-led Student Engagement project (UTC.19/20.77) would take forward work arising from these themes. The GSA student representative reported that the GSA has secured funding to help departments to fund Student Voice events, supported by the course representatives. A number of departments within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities had taken on these opportunities.

The Chair reported that a half Away Day was taking place on the afternoon of the 6 February, involving the PVC for Teaching, Learning and Students, the Associate PVC for Teaching, Learning and Students, the Associate Faculty Deans, the Head of ASO and the Faculty Learning Enhancement Project Managers. The Away Day session would be focusing on student engagement as a priority area. Furthermore, the Chair noted that once the outcomes of the University Strategic Working Groups were published in the summer, the Committee would have a clearer focus on the key themes being addressed.

Careers and Employability had emerged as a strong theme across the Faculty reports, and members noted the successful initiatives within departments to improve engagement. Student number growth was another recurrent theme, and the impact on the student experience, space and staff workload. It was noted that these issues would be taken forward, in the round, by the University Strategic Working Groups on Organisational Structure (Shape) and Composition of Student Body (Size).

There were several key changes with the APR process in 2018/19, which included the addition of a departmental learning and teaching action plan and embedding of the NSS pro forma into the Departmental-level report. The Associate Dean for the Faculty of Sciences noted that since completing the APR for 2018/19, a number of objectives identified on their action plans had been developed and it would be useful to highlight more recent progress within the FLTG summary reports (in the same way that the University-level summary report had).

Members **considered** recommendations in the University-level summary report regarding the APR process.

The Committee **agreed** that:

i. the deadline for 2019/20 departmental-level APR reports be Monday 16

November 2020;

ii.   notwithstanding minor revisions to the report template and guidance (as set out in iii-v), the 2019-20 APR process be unchanged;

iii.   in line with finding 1 of the PwC Internal audit report 2018-19 on the National Student Survey (UTC.19-20/33), the APR report template and guidance be revised to support departments to articulate actions that are specific and measurable and that are prioritised on the basis of their potential impact on the student experience;

iv.   the guidance be revised to signpost staff to the Annual Programme Review Tableau Workbooks;

v.   building on the revised format (Word format to GoogleDoc) of the department-level APR report (approved and implemented last year, M18-19/127 refers), the APR report template be revised to incorporate the response to the APR report (currently the response is a Word format and is circulated to departments / centres at the end of the Spring term).

Action: Academic Quality Team

Members noted that the role of the UTC contact at the departmental APR meeting was less clear now that reports were reviewed by FLTG members. It was **agreed** that the UTC contact should still contribute to the process, as an opportunity to share good practice, but it would no longer be an expectation for the UTC departmental contact to attend the APR meeting.

In the light of the nature of the recommended revisions, the Committee **agreed** that the Chair of UTC, acting on behalf of the Committee, approve the 2019/20 APR report template and guidance.