

UNIVERSITY OF YORK**ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW 2018/19****Overview of Annual Programme Review 2018/19****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 2018/2019 academic year over the course of December 2019 and January 2020. 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.19-20/**70b-c-d**).
- 1.2. This paper provides a brief summary of themes identified from the 2018/2019 APR reports 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 the Weald and Downland Living Museum (validated partner) 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 several key changes to the APR process for 2018/19:

- The format of the Department-level APR report was changed from a Word format to a GoogleDoc.
- In order to remove unnecessary duplication within the National Student Survey (NSS) and APR process, the NSS pro forma was embedded into the Department-level APR report pro forma. Related to this was the addition of a departmental learning and teaching action plan (incorporating actions arising from the NSS and what was formerly the section in the APR form that asked departments to identify 'top priorities for the next 12 months').
- The question on employability was refocused to encompass a more general reflection on employability.
- The Student Representation section was broadened in scope (to capture a reflection on engagement with the Student Voice).
- Reflection on the results of the Subject TEF pilot was embedded into the APR process.

Teaching Committee is asked to consider the APR process for 2020 (section 3).

2. THEMES

Student engagement

- 2.1 A strong and recurrent (from last year) theme is that of student engagement (also noted as a theme in all three faculty summary reports (UTC.19-20/**70b-c-d**). This theme had a number of dimensions: poor attendance at timetabled teaching events (Philosophy, Education, Politics, Law, TYMS, Sociology, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Environment and Geography); concern that Lecture Capture might exacerbate problems with attendance at teaching events (History, Sociology); seminar participation / preparation for teaching events (History, Environment and Geography, Mathematics); low student satisfaction with learning community / sense of belonging (Philosophy, Economics, Social Policy); poor attendance (engagement with) at careers / employability events (TFTI, SPSW, Electronic Engineering, Environment and Geography); falling engagement with the Student Internship Bureau (Language and Linguistic Science, Sociology); difficulties in engaging students in representation mechanisms such as Student-Staff forum (Research Centre for Social Sciences [ReCSS], Sociology, Computer Science); difficulties in monitoring student attendance (IPC).

- 2.2 The primary aim of the ASO-led Student Engagement project is to identify factors that motivate or inhibit students' engagement with particular emphasis on exploring factors influencing students' attendance, participation and sense of belonging / community (UTC.19-20/37 refers). Thirteen departments (four Arts and Humanities, four Social Sciences and five Sciences) are participating as pathfinder departments. It is anticipated that reports, with recommendations, as appropriate, to increase student engagement in learning by supporting change in practice and (as appropriate) strategic change at University, Faculty and departmental levels arising from the project findings, will be considered by FLTG and UTC in the Summer term. See separate agenda item for an update report from the Project Manager (UTC.19-20/77).

Student Support

- 2.3 A number of departments (Archaeology, Medieval Studies, History, Women's Studies, Philosophy, Environment and Geography, Physics, Language and Linguistic Science) reported concerns about rising numbers of student welfare cases. The faculty-level summary report for Arts and Humanities (UTC.19-20/70b) notes that student mental health is a serious concern. Related to this are concerns about the impact on staff workload and welfare: 'Staff welfare is affected not only by workload involved in supporting students, but also in the stress and anxiety this can engender' (Philosophy); 'we would like to reiterate the importance of sufficient provision for student mental health support at University level, as much of this support currently falls on administrative and teaching staff, and can have knock-on effects to staff workload, morale, and their own mental health' (Medieval Studies).
- 2.4 University Executive Board recently (November 2019) agreed to fund a tiered student wellbeing support model with additional student-facing staff in the Open Door team. Ten generalist first response staff called Student Life and Wellbeing Officers will be based in geographical zones and embedded in departments. The main purpose of this new Student Life and Wellbeing Officer role is to provide a comprehensive advice and support service to students across the University. It is also envisaged that the new wellbeing model will reduce some of the pressure on staff in academic departments.

Combined and interdisciplinary programmes

- 2.5 Another recurrent (from last year) theme is that of the challenges associated with the delivery / management of combined and interdisciplinary programmes (also noted as a theme in the faculty-level summary reports for Arts and Humanities [UTC.19-20/**70b**] and the Social Sciences [UTC.19-20/**70d**]).
- 2.6 Limited academic and administrative resource is one dimension of this theme (Philosophy, Politics, Economics [PPE]; Social and Political Sciences [SPS]). SPS reported on its plans to integrate more closely with SPSW in order that the School 'can bring some administrative processes together, share best practice and benefit from certain economies of scale.'
- 2.7 Another dimension of the comments related to the way in which University processes / structures do not effectively support multi-departmental programmes (IPC, PPE, ReCSS, Natural Sciences, Centre for Global Programmes). PPE reported that the University's 'Optmods' system does not effectively support interdisciplinary programmes; it is restricted to one department view and is therefore difficult for PPE students to navigate because they are selecting modules over multiple departments. In order to address this the School had designed its own Google form to facilitate the selection of optional modules. As a consequence of not having 'department' status the Research Centre for Social Sciences (ReCSS) reflected on the challenges arising from not being included on important communications.
- 2.8 ReCSS, PPE and SPS also commented on the challenges arising from different approaches and practice in areas of teaching and learning (for example examination feedback and dissertation supervision).
- 2.9 English commented that, whilst there is a strong call from some students for modules with an interdisciplinary aspect to them, creating such modules is a 'huge undertaking' requiring buy-in from all partner departments.
- 2.10 The remit of the Working Group on Interdepartmental and Cross-Faculty Teaching includes consideration of the benefits and challenges of interdepartmental and cross-faculty teaching. The work of the Group will inform the new Learning and Teaching Strategy and (as appropriate) the development of practice in this area from the 2021/22 academic year. See separate agenda item for the Group's interim report (UTC.19-20/**71**).

Student number growth

- 2.11 Another recurrent theme is the impact on the student experience of growth in student numbers (also noted as a theme in all three faculty summary reports (UTC.19-20/**70b-c-d**). The impact on the student experience, highlighted by departments, arising from increasing student numbers included: pressures on teaching accommodation / laboratory facilities (Women's Studies, Music, History, Biology, Chemistry, Natural Sciences, Physics, Centre for Global Programmes); challenges in meeting specialised teaching and supervision needs (Criminology, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Careers and Placements); bunching of examinations (also connected to issues of timetabling and space) (Biology); pressure on the availability of optional modules (Women's Studies, Physics); larger class sizes (IPC, Archaeology); rise in the number of teaching staff on fixed-term contracts (Politics, TFTI); difficulties in recruiting staff (IPC); challenges to building a learning community (also related to physical space issues) (Economics, History, Psychology).
- 2.12 Conversely a number of departments commented on a challenging recruitment environment (Health Sciences, English, Education [BA English in Education and initial teaching training provision]) and concerns about low numbers on some programmes (Psychology [MSc Cognitive Neuroscience, MSc Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience], Centre for Lifelong Learning [PgDip in Astronomy, PgDip in The Geology of Northern England], Environmental Geography provision, Language and Linguistic Science [MA specialist provision], Management [BSc Actuarial Science]).
- 2.13 The IPC reported a concern with respect to the robustness of the process for calculating likely student numbers for pre-sessional provision (which over recruited by 25% in 2018/19); 'there continues to be a lack of clarity in anticipated student numbers which causes many difficulties in preparing and running these programmes.' Chemistry also raised a concern about the reliability of anticipated student numbers in relation to 'complications caused by not taking into account repeating, returning or IPC students when calculating target intakes'. These concerns will be passed to the Planning Office for response.
- 2.14 The Director of Planning attended UTC's June 2019 meeting and explained the ways in which the Medium Term Planning process had recently changed (M18-19/151 refers). During the course of 2018/19 the Planning Office had worked alongside Student Recruitment and Admissions to revisit, and in some cases 'reset', student number targets. Targets had been set to align with a department's strategy which in turn was aligned with the University

strategy. The Director of Planning explained that this holistic approach sought to protect the quality of the student experience and ensured that the Medium Term Planning process (and the resulting budget envelope) was informed by the department's (and University) strategy.

Staff workload

- 2.15 As with 2017/18 APR reports, concerns about staff workload featured heavily in this years' APRs (also noted as a concern in all three faculty summary reports (UTC.19-20/70**b-c-d**). Departments reported concerns about increasing workloads arising from: student number growth (see para. 2.11); work associated with the EU Directive on the Accessibility of Public Sector Websites and Mobile Applications (TYMS, Education); requirements arising from the University's teaching and learning framework (Law, Politics, Music, TYMS) and supporting / managing student welfare cases (Environment and Geography, Medieval Studies, Philosophy, Physics, Mathematics); involvement in University-level initiatives (Computer Science).
- 2.16 In relation to the concerns raised, departments reported actions in progress, for example Biology and Environment and Geography reported on work being undertaken to streamline processes. The Department of Environment and Geography had developed electronic systems for pastoral and dissertation supervision reporting, student welfare referrals and student module feedback. In addition the Department had introduced an interactive online schedule of assessments for use by staff and students.
- 2.17 Archaeology reported that a major topic for discussion at a recent teaching away day had been sharing of ideas and good practice on how best to teach large cohorts.

Electronic marking

- 2.18 There were fewer comments in 2018/19 APR reports about the challenges of electronic annotation / marking. Education reported that the PGCE team had ran a successful pilot of the Grade Centre assessment tool that enabled staff to mark online whilst still providing students with annotated scripts. That said, two departments (SPSW and Sociology) raised concern about the absence of University-wide access to an online marking / feedback tool which has 'hampered more innovative approaches to formative and summative assessment as well as aims for more efficiency in these processes' (SPSW). The faculty-level summary report for the Social Sciences (UTC.19-20/70**d**) supports this view reporting that 'assessment systems are not fit for purpose' and that there is the need for IT solutions to support

innovation and contribute to greater student satisfaction in the Assessment and feedback dimension of the National Student Survey.

- 2.19 As part of its consideration of 2017/18 APR reports in February 2019 Teaching Committee noted that a Digital Assessment and Feedback project had been approved (December 2018) for initiation by Enterprise Systems Strategy Group (ESSG). The project aimed to improve the digital infrastructure around assessment and feedback by introducing new services for online exams, file submission, marking and feedback. UTC is asked **to note** that this project has not yet been prioritised for development; ESSG undertook a ‘re-scoring exercise’ in December 2019 and the project was ranked fourth in the series of proposals considered (the proposals ranked one to three were prioritised for development). See separate agenda item for the annual report on E-learning services in support of learning and teaching (UTC.19-20/67).

Careers and employability

- 2.20 Whilst there are concerns of poor engagement with some employability activities (see para. 2.1), successful initiatives with respect to careers and employability are reported on widely in APRs, for example:
- the provision of a series of cohort building activities focused on ‘careers and personal effectiveness’ (including project and time management, CVs and interview skills for academic and non-academic jobs) (ReCSS)
 - embedding of employability within PGT programmes (via skills-based learning and practice-based work) (Music)
 - initiatives to develop skills progression and to design that progression more explicitly, for example use of a Skills Passport whereby students record and reflect on their practical skills as they progress through their degree (Biology)

3 THE APR PROCESS

UTC Departmental Contact attendance at APR meetings

- 3.1 Of the 34 APR meetings, 20 included attendance by the designated UTC Departmental Contact. In the case of those meetings conducted without the presence of the UTC departmental contact:
- this was due to diary clashes (in some cases the clash was another APR meeting or BoS meeting) or illness.

- departments / centres had facilitated the participation of their UTC contact in some other way (for example recording the APR meeting [TFTI], seeking comments on the draft APR report [Computer Science, Chemistry, Archaeology, Sociology]).

Student representation

- 3.2 Whilst local practice is varied with respect to supporting the participation of student representatives in APR, all departments/centres report some level of student representative involvement. Of the 34 APR meetings, 27 included attendance by at least one student representative.

Submission of the report

- 3.3 The deadline for completion of the departmental-level report was 13 November 2019. This deadline (approved by UTC, M18-19/81 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, 30 were completed by 20 November. Of the four outstanding reports, three were completed by the end of November (one of these had an extension approved by the Associate Dean) and the final one on 9 December.
- 3.4 **It is recommended that the deadline for completion of the departmental-level report (reporting on 2019/20) be Monday 16 November 2020.**

Annual reporting cycle

- 3.5 At its February 2019 meeting UTC agreed that a review of Institutional reporting processes which focused on the enhancement of the student experience be conducted during the Spring / Summer 2019 (M18-19/81 refers). At its May 2019 meeting the Committee considered a paper on scoping work undertaken for this review (the 'review of reviews') (M18-19/127 refers) and approved recommendations to revise the APR and NSS reporting processes (these revisions were designed to remove unnecessary duplication within the two processes). A key aim of the 'review of reviews' was to consider how to adapt reporting processes in the light of the (likely) establishment of Subject-level Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF). It was anticipated that the Subject-level TEF would be rolled out nationally from 2020/21 and the publication of the guidance was expected in the Autumn term of 2019. In January 2020 the Office for Students (OfS) announced that it would not conduct a TEF Year

5 exercise in 2020. The OfS further reported that ‘during 2020, we will develop a new framework for the TEF. The new framework will take account of the forthcoming recommendations in Dame Shirley Pearce’s independent review of the TEF, the government’s response to it, and the findings of the latest subject-level TEF pilot. Following these publications, we will consult on the new framework.’ This timeframe means that it is unlikely that the University will receive guidance on the Subject TEF criteria until at least the Autumn term 2020. This timeline means that it is not possible to review how far APR and Subject-level TEF reporting can be aligned and nor is it possible to fully embed Subject-level TEF into review processes in the short term.

- 3.6 During the course of 2018/19 the Business Intelligence Unit (BIU) undertook development work to create Annual Programme Review Tableau Workbooks to support departments to reflect on key student outcomes metrics in APR and periodic review. These workbooks, released at the end of October 2019, provide, in one place, key data sets relating to the student experience (e.g. degree outcomes, completion/progression and withdrawal rates National Student Survey results). UTC is asked **to note** that work to develop a ‘data dashboard’ (endorsed by UTC in October 2017, M17-18/13 refers) to enable more systematic and efficient use of data and to inform and prioritise enhancement plans is ongoing. Completion of this work, to support the APR 2019/20 reporting cycle, is dependent on sufficient resource in BIU.
- 3.7 In the light of the timeframe for the development of the new Learning and Teaching Strategy (for which work will begin upon completion of the development of the University Strategy) and the expected timeframe for publication of the new TEF framework (para. 3.5), **Teaching Committee is asked to approve that:**
- i. **notwithstanding minor revisions to the report template and guidance (as set out ii – iv below), the 2019-20 APR process be unchanged;**
 - ii. **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;**
 - iii. **the guidance be revised to signpost staff to the Annual Programme Review Tableau Workbooks;**

- iv. **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).

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

4 SUMMARY OF THE DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN

4.1 Teaching Committee is asked to:

- i. **approve** that the deadline for completion of 2019/20 departmental-level APR report be Monday 16 November 2020 (para. 3.4);
- ii. **approve** that the 2019/20 APR process be unchanged subject to minor revisions (a to c) to the report template and guidance (para. 3.7) and that these revisions be considered, for approval, by the Chair of UTC;
 - a. revise the Learning and Teaching Action plan section 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;
 - b. embed signposts to the Annual Programme Review Tableau Workbooks;
 - c. incorporate a response section into the GoogleDoc department-level APR report template.