

MEMORANDUM

To: Continuing Professional Development Unit
Careers & Placements
Centre for Global Programmes

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CC: Chair of Board of Studies for the Centre for
Lifelong Learning
Head of Lifelong Learning

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Action: Annual Programme Review reporting processes

This memo explains changes to the Annual Programme Review (2018-19) reporting processes applicable to supplementary programmes, approved by University Teaching Committee at its May 2019 meeting.

Review of Institutional Reporting processes

The changes approved by Teaching Committee can be summarised as follows:

- The APR forms for all departments will move from being Word-based to GoogleDoc based, allowing academic departments to complete different sections at different times, moving away from the idea that such documents should be static. For supplementary programmes, the form will most likely be completed at one time, though it should remain 'live' throughout the year. The principal value of moving to a GoogleDoc is to aid effective report sharing. A pdf version of the pro forma is appended below – for information only – the actual pro forma will be a GoogleDoc.
- The revised form incorporates a departmental Learning and Teaching Action Plan, which incorporates what was formerly the section of the APR form that asked departments to identify their top 3 priorities.
- The wording for the question on Student Representation has been amended to be a more general one on student partnership (i.e. not just focusing on representatives).
- Some redundant questions have been removed; some sections have been merged into others to avoid unnecessary overlap in the form.
- Departments that receive National Student Survey results are expected to comment on these and to provide enhancement actions within the Learning and Teaching Action Plan shortly after the release of NSS results and then to update and complete the form early in the autumn term.

- Reflection on the results of the Subject TEF pilot has been embedded into the APR process, where this is appropriate.

The wider changes act to remove unnecessary duplication within the NSS and APR processes. They form part of a wider ongoing review of the University's reporting processes for learning and teaching, which has as key aims a desire to avoid unnecessary workload whilst moving towards holistic (rather than overlapping and separate) processes.

The changes, particularly those for supplementary programmes, create a process that is not fundamentally dissimilar to the previous process. The main difference is the idea of a single action plan that is populated and monitored at different times. The point is that this action plan should be a 'live' document, supporting continual enhancement throughout the year rather than simply being looked at in the APR process.

The deadline for completion of the APR pro forma is **Wednesday 13 November 2019**.

Managers of supplementary programmes are responsible for determining the internal deadline for submission of any information required from within their sections to enable reflection by colleagues and student representatives at the APR meeting and to inform the final APR report.

Next steps

The Academic Support Office (ASO) is in the process of setting up departmental folders in Google Drive and also creating a bespoke version of the departmental-level APR form which will include some prepopulated sections (e.g. section 2 will be pre-populated with the top three APR priorities identified in last year's report). The APR forms will be available no later than Thursday 4th July; a further communication with respect to this process will follow in due course.

UNIVERSITY OF YORK
TEACHING COMMITTEE
YORK GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

Annual Programme Review (APR) Pro Forma
Supplementary Programmes Review of the Academic Year 2018/19

| | |
|--|--|
| Department? | <i>Name</i> |
| Form completed by? | <i>Name(s)</i> |
| Scope of the APR? | <i>List the programmes/range of activities this APR covers</i> |
| Form approved by (e.g. Head of Section, Dept. Management Team)? | <i>Name(s)/body</i> |

Please read the guidance notes, which include a series of prompts on the content of this report, before completing this pro forma.

1. Success and innovative practice 2018/19

In the context of the quality of the student/participant (undergraduate, postgraduate and CPD [including online credit and non-credit bearing programmes]) and staff experience, what has gone well over the past year? Please comment on notable successes and examples of innovative practice that are particularly noteworthy, if these have been introduced in the past year.

Indicative length: no more than 500 words

2. Reflection on last year's APR Priorities

Please reflect on progress made against the 'top 3' priorities for learning and teaching identified in last year's APR and provide a brief update on these. What impact has this work had?

| Action | Update |
|---------------|---------------|
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3. Reflection on Challenges

What significant issues have emerged in relation to the student/participant experience that have not been resolved? If these do not form part of the action plan (below), what actions (if any) are being taken to resolve these issues?

For the APR process to be forward thinking, discussion of outstanding issues and disappointments is essential. This section may highlight difficult issues and potential new solutions. It is important that departments complete this section in an open and honest way.

This section also provides an opportunity to raise any pressing or unresolved issues with UTC that have not been covered above. APR should not be used as a form of feedback to support offices and services – departments should contact these offices and services directly about any issues as they arise to ensure a timely response/action. Any issues raised here that are outside UTC's remit will be forwarded to relevant committees/offices with a request for a response/update where appropriate.

Indicative length: no more than 500 words

4. Learning and Teaching Action Plan

Looking forward, please identify the priority actions that the department will focus on during the 2019/20 academic year in relation to teaching and learning. It is suggested that the action plan consist of between 3 and 6 actions.

| Action (and Brief Explanation) | To be completed by whom and when? | Update |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|
| | | |
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5. Student / Participant Voice

Please reflect on the department's mechanisms for engagement with the student / participant voice in 2018/19, including the ways in which student / participant feedback is gathered, any enhancements that have arisen as a result of feedback, and how these were communicated (where appropriate) to students/participants.

Reflection might focus not only on listing any initiatives, but also the benefits and limitations of these mechanisms.

Indicative length: no more than 300 words

The deadline for completion of this form is Wednesday 13 November 2019.

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAMMES

The following guidance notes are divided into two parts: Part A provides specific advice on completing the Review Pro Forma and Part B provides general background information on the APR and the process by which departments are expected to identify the salient points to present to University Teaching Committee (UTC) through the pro forma.

Purpose of the Annual Programme Review

The principal objectives of the APR are to ensure that academic standards are maintained and to improve programme quality through the engagement of staff and students/ participants in reflection and action planning. This is a continuing process, and should not be confined to the APR meeting.

The APR is an opportunity for departments to reflect on the teaching and learning activity of the previous academic year, and to raise any issues with UTC. This reflection includes celebrating successes, identifying addressed issues and proposing solutions for any areas which remain unresolved.

The APR process should:

- reflect on both quality and standards;
- encompass undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate, CPD and distance learning programmes/provision;
- encompass individual programme/activity level review and overarching departmental themes and priorities;
- support enhancement of provision through reflection and action planning;
- engage all staff in the department.

The review is an important part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement framework, which in turn contributes to the key principles of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, particularly: excellence in learning and teaching. An important aspect of the APR is to provide assurance that issues identified, both internally and externally, are acted upon and to inform university level priorities for support and policy development.

Within the department the APR should promote:

- student involvement in quality review;
- reflection and evaluation;
- honesty and openness;
- forward planning;
- sharing of experiences and good practice;
- consideration of interdisciplinary and external perspectives;
- ownership throughout the department of the APR outcomes.

It is important that the review does not replicate existing work; rather that it takes a *holistic* review of provision, drawing on the review activities that take place in the department during the year.

A. Completion of the pro forma

Departments are asked to complete the Review pro forma by commenting on those matters which are of *particular significance* to students/participants and staff in terms of the teaching and learning experience, be they related to successes, good practice, risks to quality, or challenges. This '*by exception*' approach is intended to encourage reflection and discourse with UTC, rather than providing a lengthy descriptive account or set of data. It will also help UTC to share good ideas more widely, so that the University as a whole can benefit from this experience.

Please note: The APR process is intended to cover all levels of study and all modes of delivery, including distance learning and CPD activities, so please bear this in mind when consulting colleagues, arranging meetings and completing the pro forma itself.

Indicative *maximum* word lengths under each section. Please note that these should be treated as an upper limit.

1. Success and innovative practice 2018/19

Please use this section of the form to comment on what has gone well over the past year and to highlight innovative practice introduced during the year.

This section might highlight achievements such as:

- a programme/initiative which adopted innovative learning and teaching techniques and received exceptional feedback;
- improvements in student/participant achievement through completion rates or grades;
- initiatives to develop students'/participants' employability skills (reflection which might be informed by comments from employers, placement providers or survey data);
- enhancement projects which have resulted in exceptional student/participant feedback and/or developed themes such as internationalising the curriculum;
- improvements which have been made in response to student/participant feedback;
- an increase in the number and quality of admissions/registrations;
- external examiner/stakeholder comments which indicate exceptional achievements;
- successes by individual staff or teams such as Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards, YUSU Excellence in Teaching and Supervision awards, commendation from a professional body;
- significant issues that were identified and resolved by the department, and comment on how were identified and resolved. [*Reference to issues/problems identified and resolved helps to assure UTC that departments are self-regulating, committed to a consistent culture of quality and responding to issues as they arise, and are engaging in dialogue with students on matters of quality. This also informs UTC of issues that are being experienced around the University. This may make it easier to find solutions to common problems, and will inform UTC's future agenda.*]

2. Reflection on last year's APR Priorities

Please use this table to provide an update to UTC on progress against the 'top 3 priorities' identified in last year's APR. If the Department has evidence on the impact of actions taken (e.g. within student/participant feedback; survey results), it would be useful to list this here.

3. Reflection on Challenges

This section should be used to comment on significant issues in relation to the student/participant experience that have not been resolved. The discussion might encompass challenges evident in for instance, student/participant engagement or student experience data.

Student/participant input in this discussion is very important as the University is committed to gathering, acting upon and monitoring the outcome of responses to student feedback. This section helps to assure UTC that departments are self-regulating, committed to a consistent culture of quality and responding to issues as they arise, and are engaging in dialogue with students/participants on matters of quality.

The section also informs UTC of issues that are being experienced around the University. This may make it easier to find solutions to common problems, and will inform UTC's future agendas. The APR process should be forward thinking and so taking stock of outstanding issues and disappointments is essential. Using APR to discuss and reflect on difficult issues can identify solutions which may not have previously been considered, and can help UTC to identify or refine institutional priorities. Departments should therefore complete this section openly and honestly.

APR should not be used as a form of feedback to support offices and services for issues that are best resolved directly. Departments should contact relevant support offices and services directly about any issues as they arise during the year to ensure a timely and proportionate response/action. Any issues raised here that are outside UTC's remit will be forwarded to relevant committees/offices, where appropriate, with a request for a response/update to the Department/ UTC.

4. Learning and Teaching Action Plan

This section of the form asks departments to identify priority actions relating to teaching, learning and the student/participant experience in the next 12 months. These priorities should be identified as a result of the reflection captured within the APR form. The identification of priorities and actions helps UTC to identify patterns and shared issues across the University and offer timely support and guidance.

It is suggested that the action plan consist of between 3 and 6 actions.

The 'By Whom / When' column allows departments to identify who in the department has responsibility for supporting the identified actions, and when it is expected they will be complete. The 'Update' column can be used to keep track of progress (during the year) against the actions.

5. Student / Participant Voice

This section should outline how the department provides opportunities for effective partnership with students/participants, how it addresses any issues that may have arisen as a result of student engagement, and how it uses student/participant feedback in the APR process.

If the department has introduced any supplementary mechanisms to engage with students/participants (such as focus groups, regular meetings between senior departmental staff and students/participants, etc.) these should also be mentioned. Please also outline any improvements within your programmes/activities, or in the student/participant experience more generally, that have resulted from your processes for engaging students/participants and how these changes have been communicated back to them.

B. Departmental Annual Programme Review Meeting

The role of the APR meeting should serve as a focal point for: (i) consolidating the various discussions on programme quality that take place in different fora in a department and (ii) formulating a programme of action to address identified issues and build upon identified strengths. It should be useful for the department and not just an exercise required to comply with University policy.

Attendance

The format and constitution of the APR meeting will vary between departments, (i.e., it may take place in a full staff meeting or an exceptional staff meeting).

However, *all staff* who teach or supervise on the programmes/activities concerned should contribute to the APR. The 'conduct of the meeting' section below suggests ways of engaging a large group of staff at a single event.

Student/participant involvement

The involvement of students/participants in the APR meeting is encouraged where practicable. To facilitate this, it is recommended that the Chair briefs any student attendees in advance of the meeting, to ensure that they understand the process and the opportunities to contribute, and to clarify any matters with regard to possible topics for discussion.

Timing

The APR process reflecting on the previous academic year is completed in the Autumn Term, but will often start in the Summer Term, with departments completing the APR documentation by mid-November. The Academic Support Office and UTC will then consider the reports and provide departments with feedback in the Spring Term.

Conduct of the meeting

Departments can decide for themselves how they conduct their APR meeting(s).

Suggestions include:

- splitting the meeting into break-out groups to stimulate creative thinking and reflection, asking each to discuss an issue relating to the student experience. This enables all staff to contribute fully to the process and helps to create a greater sense of ownership. It may also be particularly helpful to make meetings more manageable in large departments. Each group could identify examples of excellent practice from within the department and beyond, and consider how to share this across the department, as well as identifying where improvements are necessary (supported by evidence such as programme evaluation feedback or external examiner reports) and how to achieve these;
- identifying recurrent issues raised by staff, students/participants and other stakeholders over the past 2-3 years and using these as key agenda items to explore where improvements can be made;
- considering a theme such as the development of a particular set of skills and tracing the student experience through programmes/activities;
- adopting 'creative thinking' techniques such as brainstorming, feasibility/impact matrix, identifying and challenging underlying assumptions.

Content

Consideration of the following is a minimum requirement:

- last year's APR report (in particular progress with issues that were unresolved at that time) and the feedback received from UTC and YGRS;
- feedback from students/participants, e.g., from internal activity/programme evaluations, cohort meetings, focus groups, exit questionnaires and from external surveys (looking at trends across the last three years where possible);
- feedback from staff, in particular programme/activity leaders' reports;
- the impact of introducing new programmes/activities or modifications to existing ones;
- experiences of significant new University policies or procedures;
- reports and action plans from UTC reviews or visits, and how they have been used to facilitate programme development and improvements;
- reports from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation exercises/visits, and how they have been used to facilitate programme development and improvements;
- student/participant achievement data from the last three cohorts (completion/ withdrawal rates, grades achieved);
- (if relevant) appeals and complaints and data;
- any issues of equality and diversity, such as differential attainment rates by students from different groups and/or the effectiveness of support for students with disabilities;
- external reference points (such as benchmark statements);
- feedback on public information about programmes/activities (such as handbooks and websites).

After the APR meeting

The APR pro forma should be completed. All parties should have the opportunity to comment on the content and should take collective responsibility of the key successes, issues and risks, and the identified measurable future actions.

The completed pro forma should be approved/signed-off by an individual or group with responsibility for teaching and learning matters in the department (e.g., Head of Department, Department Management Team).

Central Support

You are encouraged to contact the Academic Quality Team in the Academic Support Office (aso@york.ac.uk) who can suggest ideas for ways forward, disseminate good practice from within the institution and generally assist in helping departments to make the most of the APR.