About the Academic Support Office

The Academic Support Office (ASO) contributes to the enhancement and quality assurance of teaching and learning across the University. We are primarily a staff-facing service but we have a developing body of work directly for students, particularly in support of academic skills.

We work closely with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Information, the University Teaching Committee (UTC), the Learning and Teaching Forum, colleagues in academic and administrative departments, and students.

The ASO has four teams:

- E-Learning Development (led by Richard Walker) / Learning Enhancement (led by Cecilia Lowe) / Quality Assurance (led by Jo Fox) / Academic Practice (led by Duncan Jackson).

Approaches to Learning and Teaching

We have wide-ranging expertise to help departments to develop curricula including:

- e-learning: the E-Learning Development Team manages the University’s VLE, Yorkshare. The team works with staff across the University to develop e-learning and blended learning provision, and with departments to develop their strategies for technology-enhanced learning;
- distance learning;
- broadening the modes of teaching and learning, such as through group work;
- managing the Replay lecture recording service and promoting its pedagogic opportunities.

Developing and managing programmes

- We advise staff on the development of programmes and on the University’s formal processes for approving new/modified programmes and modules, to facilitate good practice and UTC approval (each department has a named contact in the Quality Assurance Team).
- We advise staff who are considering collaboration with other institutions, including joint PhD programmes with European partners, and programmes delivered through the Erasmus Mundus scheme. These bring particular opportunities for staff and students, but also potential risks to the University. We quality assure all such provision.

Further information: http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/aso

Yorkshare
https://vlesupport.york.ac.uk/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp

Developing and managing programmes
https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/programme-development/
Assessment, marking and feedback

- We have particular expertise to help departments to develop their assessment and marking practices and to explore ways of enhancing the quality of feedback to students.
- We have recently introduced supported facilities for e-assessment and online handling of assessed work, including provision of feedback.

Developing students’ academic skills

- We support the development of skills through a programme of workshops and ‘transition’ resources including material specifically for international students.
- We work with departments on the development of online ‘transition’ resources for new undergraduate students.
- We deliver and develop the Academic Integrity tutorial in partnership with other colleagues.
- We project-manage the use of Turnitin software to support students formatively in developing awareness of academic integrity and good practice in academic writing.
- We run a Maths Skills Centre, with a drop-in facility, to complement departmental provision.
- We run a Writing Centre, open to all undergraduate and taught masters students interested in discussing and developing their academic writing.

Funding and resources

- We project-manage funding schemes such as the Rapid Response Fund and the Learning and Teaching Strategic Projects Fund (https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/funding-and-resources/funding/), to which departments can bid to support curriculum development.
- We assist academic colleagues with bids for external resources such as from the Higher Education Academy.
- We provide equipment such as video cameras to help departments to develop online resources.

Professional development and sharing practice

- We deliver the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice supported by a team of academic supervisors across the University. Over 100 staff are currently taking the programme. We undertake related work such as peer observation of teaching to support staff development.
- We organise a busy programme of events, including the Annual Learning and Teaching Conference, and lunchtime Learning and Teaching Forum workshops to help staff to share experiences and good practice, and to explore challenging aspects of learning and teaching.
- We publish Forum magazine termly, with articles on learning and teaching issues.
- We assist colleagues to prepare nominations for professional recognition, such as through the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme.

Monitoring and review of programmes

- We support formal processes for reviewing and improving the quality of provision including:
  - managing the programme of Periodic Reviews, advising departments and panel members, and drafting reports on reviews for University Teaching Committee;
  - liaising with departments regarding the Annual Programme Review process;
  - the validation of programmes delivered by partner institutions;
  - taking a key role in analysing results from the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Student Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and working with departments to interpret the results and plan actions to address issues arising.
- We also project-manage preparations for Institutional Reviews by the QAA.

Committees and groups

- We provide administrative support for the University Teaching Committee and its portfolio of work, HYMS Joint Senate Committee, and for related bodies such as the Learning and Teaching Forum, Co-ordinating Group for Supplementary Programmes and the Distance Learning Forum.

Project work

- We manage an ongoing suite of learning and teaching projects on behalf of University Teaching Committee, such as the introduction of the new modular scheme, and provide overall project-management support for the Learning and Teaching Strategy:

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/strategy/

Assessment, marking and feedback

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/key-areas/assessment/

Developing students’ academic skills

https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/develop-your-skills/study-skills/

Funding and resources

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/funding-and-resources/

Sharing practice and professional development

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/sharing/

Monitoring and review of programmes

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/monitoring-and-review/

Committees and groups

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/groups/