UNIVERSITYOFYORK

TEACHING COMMITTEE

The Departmental Contact System

1. The departmental contact system entails each academic member of University Teaching Committee (UTC) becoming a contact for one or more departments. The system is designed to improve the Committee’s effectiveness and improve the quality of UTC’s interactions with academic departments.

2. The role of a Committee member, in acting as a departmental contact is to:
   a. act as a panel member or Chair on periodic review, or other visits, to the department;
   b. consider, in conjunction with another member of the Committee, any proposals for new programmes of study proposed by that department prior to the formal meeting at which the proposal is considered;
   c. attend the annual programme review meeting(s) for that department;
   d. act as a contact for that department regarding any matters relevant to the work of UTC, including modifications to programmes, prior to the formal submission of a proposal to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Group.

3. It is expected that departments and members of Teaching Committee will continue to consult the Chair and/or Secretary/Quality Assurance team contact:
   http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/academic-support/staff/quality-assurance/ regarding the interpretation of policy and that departments will continue to contact members of the Academic Support Office’s QA Team directly for advice on procedural matters.

4. Members are allocated to departments by the Chair of Teaching Committee, taking into account the background and relevant experience of the members concerned. New members of Teaching Committee will be given additional support if required.

5. For new members of Teaching Committee, we would suggest that you make informal contact with the previous departmental contact, so that you are aware of any ‘work in progress’. The Academic Support Office can help in setting up meetings, if required.
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Additional notes on the role of departmental contacts

Information on the University’s approach to quality assurance and enhancement is provided on the Academic Support Office’s webpages. Please take a look and try to familiarise yourself with what is available: http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/

1. Membership of panels for periodic reviews or other visits

   - You will need to refer to procedural documents for periodic reviews, available on the web at: https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/procedure/review/periodic/

   - Periodic reviews are formal reviews of departments’ provision. Review panels comprise two external academics and two internal academics (both are members of UTC, the departmental contact usually chairs the panel) and a student representative. Internal members may attend a periodic review as an observer before participating as a full member, please contact the ASO to arrange this.

   - Periodic reviews take place over a full day, require a considerable amount of reading and preparation, and are preceded by an additional meeting of internal panel members in the two weeks prior to the review visit to identify key themes. The review visit is co-ordinated and supported by a member of the Academic Support Office, who will also write the review report on behalf of the panel.

   - UTC members can expect to be involved in at least one periodic review in a year. UTC members may also be asked to serve as panel members on other internal visits (e.g. three year review visits) or validation visits.

2. Consider any proposals for new programmes of study (or major modifications) proposed by a department

   - You will need to refer to procedural documents relating to new programmes of study and modifications to programmes of study, available on the web https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/procedure/programmes/

   These provide guidance on the information that proposals to Teaching Committee should include. Members of the Quality Assurance team in the Academic Support Office provide administrative support and guidance in relation to new programme proposals (http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/academic-support/staff/quality-assurance/).

   - Ideally, the Chair of the relevant Board of Studies or equivalent should consult you as a departmental contact informally regarding any new programme developments. Your role is to act as a sounding board, and to give your views on the proposal based on your own academic experience.
When a department is ready to make a formal submission to a meeting of Teaching Committee, the paperwork is received in the Academic Support Office three weeks in advance of the meeting. Full paperwork is sent out to the departmental contact and another nominated member of the Committee normally two weeks in advance of the meeting.

The departmental contact and other nominated member of the Committee are asked to discuss the proposal and raise any relevant matters/questions with the department concerned. The idea is to resolve any issues/answer any queries in advance of the meeting. It is helpful if you include the relevant QA Team member in any email correspondence, or forward to her/him a record of any discussions.

The departmental contact and other nominated member of the Committee inform the QA Team, in advance of the meeting, whether any significant issues have been identified or whether they will be recommending approval of the programme at the meeting. In exceptional cases, it may be recommended that a representative of the department attends to answer questions relating to the proposal.

At the meeting, the departmental contact and/or the other nominated member of the Committee are asked to speak to the relevant agenda item. The Committee then reaches a decision on whether to approve the programme. Formal correspondence relating to approval decisions is conducted by the Academic Support Office.

3. Involvement in annual programme review

You will need to refer to the procedural document relating to annual programme review, available on the web at: https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/procedure/review/annual/

Since 2006/07, a process has been in place which places greater emphasis on the process of review and less on the production of a report. This requires departmental contacts to attend a review meeting within the departments for which they are responsible.

Annual programme review: outline of the process for UTC members

Individual UTC members should attend annual review meeting(s) in the departments for which they are the contact. Departments are asked to plan meetings well in advance in order to facilitate attendance.

The role of a UTC departmental contact at an annual review meeting is to be a ‘critical friend’ to the department, providing an external perspective and acting as a sounding board. The UTC departmental contact should help the department to look at its provision holistically, to actively consider student input and to focus on the key issues, rather than details. In doing so, the UTC departmental contact will gain a better understanding of the department’s strengths and areas where further improvement is required.

Involvement of the departmental UTC contact is designed to ensure consistency and continuity and to help departments to think about ways of improving quality and the student experience.
• If the UTC departmental contact has any concerns about the annual review meeting or the subsequent APR report s/he should alert the relevant QA Team member as soon as possible.

4. **Act as a contact for the department regarding any academic matters, including modifications to programmes**

• You will need to refer to the procedural document relating to modifications to programmes of study, available on the web at: [https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/procedure/programmes/programme/](https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/procedure/programmes/programme/)

• We encourage departments to consult their contact on Teaching Committee informally about any academic developments/concerns or changes, including modifications to programmes of study.

• When a department makes a formal submission of a modification for consideration by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Group (FLTG), a decision will be taken on whether it can be considered by Chair’s action or whether it needs to go to a full FLTG meeting. Most are considered by Chair’s action. It is helpful if departmental contacts let the relevant member of the QA Team know if they have been consulted regarding any modifications/developments, and outstanding queries they may have had. This information informs the Chair’s decision regarding the submission.

5. **Developing your role as departmental contact**

Individual members of Teaching Committee take forward their role of departmental contact in different ways. Many have found it a useful opportunity to build links with other departments, and gain a better understanding of how other departments work. Some ideas for enhancing your role include:

• Attending a Board of Studies meeting to get a feel for how the Department operates
• Attending meetings relating to new programme developments, to provide early input
• Meeting informally with the Chair of Board of Studies/Chair of Graduate School Board on being appointed, or perhaps annually.