

University of York Statement on Teaching Performance Expectations

Introduction

1. The University of York has established a national and international reputation for the quality of the education it offers. This quality is founded upon collegiality, a commitment to the development of mature, independent and capable graduates, a focus on departmental and disciplinary tradition and an environment that is enriched by cutting edge research and scholarly enquiry. Students at York should expect to be engaged in an integrated, coherent and research-informed learning experience, where progression towards clearly defined objectives via carefully planned activity and work schedules is a fundamental principle of programme-level curriculum design.

2. The aim of this statement is to set out the University's expectations with regard to how all staff who teach, or are otherwise engaged in the support of student learning, will work to achieve high standards in their practice. Although good quality teaching – and therefore student learning – is a collective endeavour, success at the level of the individual will help departments (henceforth taken to include teaching centres and other specialist teaching units¹), and therefore the Institution as a whole, create and maintain a consistent culture of teaching quality that will preserve York's reputation for undergraduate and postgraduate education.

Scope

3. The achievement of a consistent culture of quality underpins this statement because instances of repeated poor quality can have a disproportional impact upon the student experience, departmental colleagues and on the broader reputation of the University's educational offering. Consequently, *any* individual who has an identifiable role in teaching and/or supporting learning, whether or not contractually explicit, falls within the scope of this statement.

Environment

4. The University aims to create a vibrant learning and teaching environment, one characterised by collegiality, creativity and intellectual challenge that will inspire both students and staff. It is incumbent upon the University to ensure that York is a place where the highest quality teaching and student learning can take place. This will include providing:

- fit-for-purpose facilities and resources (e.g. appropriately equipped classrooms, lecture theatres and teaching laboratories, libraries, offices, equipment, IT support and learning technologies);
- timetabling services where the allocation of rooms and the scheduling of teaching promotes good and deep learning;
- high quality opportunities for professional development that will support staff in meeting expected levels of performance (sections 7 to 9);
- policies and strategies that are supportive of teaching and student learning at the departmental or disciplinary level, without being unnecessarily bureaucratic or burdensome;
- an environment where teaching is valued and recognised and where development of teaching practice is supported and encouraged;
- levels of resourcing to departments that will allow them to balance the workload of individual staff to ensure that the quality and consistency of education is maintained alongside achievement of the highest levels of performance in research and service.

¹ For example, the Centre for Lifelong Learning, Academic Support Office as well as other providers of supplementary programmes.

5. Equally, the University regards Departments as having responsibility for creating an environment in which teaching and student learning can be effective. This includes:

- implementing robust recruitment processes for roles that will involve teaching so that only staff who are able, or have the capacity, to teach to the expected high standards and are committed to student learning are employed;
- allocating teaching that is appropriate to staff expertise, or providing sufficient support (including time) to staff who are allocated teaching that is outside their area of familiarity;
- operating a workload model that is fair and representative of the time required to undertake allocated teaching whilst ensuring teaching requirements do not jeopardise an individual's opportunity to progress in the other areas of academic practice encompassed by their role;
- providing appropriate support (e.g. through mentoring, peer support for teaching, observations and shadowing) to enable staff to develop/improve in their roles and/or enabling staff to access support outside of the department as appropriate (including the time to undertake compulsory programmes such as PGCAP);
- providing specialist equipment for teaching purposes when this is required;
- cultivating an environment where good quality teaching is valued and acknowledged (appendix 2).

Expected level of performance

6. The University expects all staff to contribute positively to the achievement of a consistent culture of teaching quality. In addition to being able to demonstrate a good standard of performance in relevant areas of practice, this means that staff will show an appropriate commitment to ongoing individual and collegial professional development so that the quality of their teaching is maintained. The University's expectations for teaching and the support of student learning are defined in sections 7 to 9; these have been developed through consultation with the academic community and with reference to external benchmarks, in particular the UK Professional Standards Framework².

7. Teaching and supporting student learning covers a range of activities; the University expects individuals to be effective in any of the following which are relevant to their role:

- a) **Learning design** – staff will plan teaching and student learning activity, be that at the level of the individual session, the module and/or whole programmes, that is coherent and thought-through, which encourages students to work hard and is properly aligned to relevant outcomes.
- b) **Teaching practice** – staff will manage different teaching contexts (e.g. lectures, seminars, tutorials, problem-classes, lab-classes, academic supervisions and online environments) and engage students in a variety of ways (including the appropriate use of both face-to-face techniques and learning technologies) to support inclusive and deep learning. In their teaching practice staff will demonstrate an awareness of essential principles of effective presentation and will communicate clearly and fluently in both written and spoken English.
- c) **Supervision** – students' overall progress and personal development will be properly supported, with staff aware of the range of expertise within departments and the broader University from which they can seek advice and to which students can be referred.

² https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/UKPSF_2011_English.pdf
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- d) **Creation of learning materials** – staff, with support as necessary, will take responsibility for producing high-quality and inclusive resources to support student learning (e.g. presentations, handouts, bibliographies, problem-sheets, lab-scripts, online and digital resources).
- e) **Assessment** – summative assessment will be designed to be valid in terms of assessing what it is intended to assess, in an appropriate way and at an appropriate level and robust guidance and approaches to marking will be followed to maximise consistency. Formative assessment will be well planned and timely so that it informs and drives student learning.
- f) **Feedback** – staff must provide high quality feedback to students and abide by published return deadlines; high quality feedback will include explaining the standard of work that has been submitted, providing guidance that will enable improvement and supporting students to develop their own skills of self-assessment.
- g) **Administration** – staff will ensure that the administrative tasks relating to their own learning and teaching are carried out professionally (including the coordination of colleagues and supervision of postgraduate teachers and demonstrators where relevant).

8. To meet acceptable standards in carrying out these activities, the University expects staff to have an appropriate knowledge of:

- a) **the subject material they are teaching** – staff will ensure that the material they are teaching is up-to-date and reflects contemporary thinking and themes; sometimes individuals will be asked to teach on topics which do not directly relate to their particular area(s) of expertise, but even in such cases they should be sufficiently prepared to be able to structure material sensibly, to teach clearly and to engage students in effective learning.
- b) **how students learn** – expectations of how material is most effectively learned may vary between (and within) disciplines and may also be dependent upon the nature of the learning that is intended; however, staff should be aware of credible theories of learning and should develop their own understanding based upon these theories, their own experience and that of their colleagues.
- c) **the level of learning** – staff will understand the level at which to pitch their teaching and assessment and the level of typical student learning that can be expected. Further, they should have an understanding of the structure and purpose of the curriculum as a whole so that they are clear on what it is safe to assume a student will know based on previous learning and what students will need to know to engage with future learning.
- d) **pedagogical principles** – staff should have an understanding of the fundamentals of curriculum and learning design within a research-led teaching environment and an informed perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of different teaching, assessment, feedback and evaluation approaches (including the application of learning technologies).
- e) **University and other learning and teaching policy** – staff will abide by University (and departmental) guidance and regulation regarding the organisation and implementation of learning and teaching and likewise should be cognisant of relevant external guidance (e.g. Quality Assurance Agency information and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements).

9. In undertaking teaching and in supporting student learning, the University expects all staff to demonstrate core values, these being a commitment to developing and maintaining:

- a) **Professional Behaviour**

- i. In their interactions with students, staff will be approachable, timely in communication and will behave in a consistent and equitable way.
- ii. Staff will fulfil their own learning and teaching responsibilities to agreed schedules and to a high standard.
- iii. Staff will be willing to support colleagues, share and disseminate good practice in learning and teaching and to assume departmental and university roles and responsibilities relating to learning and teaching quality and enhancement that are commensurate with experience and profile.

b) Professional Skills

- i. Staff will challenge students and set high expectations, but in doing so they will provide the academic support needed to enable committed students to succeed in their studies and develop as both independent and collegial learners.
- ii. Staff will demonstrate effective planning and organisation so that colleagues are not placed under undue pressure and students are appropriately and sufficiently supported in their learning.
- iii. Staff will engage with personal development in order to maintain the currency and effectiveness of their practice. This will mean combining their own reflections upon experience with feedback from students and colleagues and engaging with formal professional development opportunities where beneficial.
- iv. Staff will endeavour, wherever it is possible, to make sure their teaching is genuinely research-informed, be that incorporating current research findings into their teaching, providing students with the skills to undertake research and enquiry, engaging students in research and enquiry or helping students to develop their thinking as disciplinary practitioners.
- v. Staff, recognising the importance that a higher education has for the professional and personal success of students beyond University will, where appropriate, plan into their curricula opportunities for students to develop relevant transferable and lifelong skills.

Issues affecting performance

10. Although all staff should aspire towards quality, consistency and continuous improvement, the University recognises that factors may arise which impact upon teaching performance, or the perception of teaching performance. For example:

- staff new to teaching may need time to develop their ability through experience and training;
- where innovations or new modules are being delivered, time for iterative adjustments may be required to work through unanticipated issues;
- where a member of staff has to cover for a colleague or take on teaching at short notice, this may impact upon the perceived quality of their teaching;
- sickness, leave or other career breaks may cause some disruption in an individual's ability to maintain teaching performance;
- although all staff will work to make their teaching engaging, some subjects are inherently more difficult and challenging than others, require more and harder work and may be less popular; this could reflect unfairly in, for example, module evaluation scores in a way that does not actually

reflect the quality of the teaching that was provided;

- issues outside of an individual's control can impact upon perception of teaching quality by students: for instance, problems relating to timetabling and room allocation.

11. The University, however, does not expect staff to be consistently underperforming with regard to their teaching and support of student learning as articulated in sections (7) to (9). Where underperformance is identified as ongoing or pervasive, departments will take appropriate action (section 16).

Support for staff

12. Expectations with regard to performance in teaching and the support of learning should be communicated clearly by the Head of Department so that staff are aware of minimum acceptable standards and where their performance stands in relation to these standards.

13. The University will provide a framework of professional development that will be aligned to the expectations defined in sections (7) to (9). Staff should also receive support from their departments either through mechanisms that are specific to the department they are in, or through University procedures which are implemented at local level (e.g. peer support for teaching, mentoring, performance review).

14. Staff should expect to receive a workload allocation that is fair and which will enable them to carry out their responsibilities to a high standard, that will allow them to contribute to the achievement of departmental and institutional strategic objectives and which provides space for personal development.

15. Where staff believe their ability to undertake teaching to an acceptable standard is undermined, or where they believe their opportunity to develop their teaching practice is jeopardised, by a deficit in the support they are receiving, it is the responsibility of the individual to raise this issue with their Head of Department and the responsibility of the Head of Department to give such approaches due consideration.

16. Departments, in being clear and transparent with their staff on expectations with regard to teaching and the support of student learning, will have robust mechanisms for monitoring individual practice and for identifying potential issues in a timely manner. Where genuine performance problems are confirmed, the department will be proactive in addressing those problems and should have a clear strategy for action. This should begin with the implementation of an informal framework to support staff to raise their level of achievement, with eventual recourse to formal procedures of managing performance in collaboration with the Department of Human Resources as necessary. Appendix 1 to this statement provides a framework of triggers and responses which Departments are expected to adapt and use for this purpose.

17. Equally, Departments should establish processes for identifying good quality teaching, student learning support and associated achievement. This should be combined with clear mechanisms by which individual and group accomplishment is acknowledged within the Department and, where appropriate, for supporting individuals and groups in seeking recognition and reward external to the Department. Appendix 2 to this statement provides indications of how this can be done.

Appendix 1: Framework for Triggers and Responses in Regard Teaching Underperformance

The following table provides a template of Departmental action in response to issues which may arise associated with individual learning and teaching performance. It is expected that the *Triggers* are broadly applicable (although not necessarily exhaustive), and it is also expected that all Departments will adopt the principle of Performance Management escalation which structures the Framework. However, Heads of Department should adapt the precise content of the response columns to reflect the allocation of responsibility, lines of communication, feedback and reporting mechanisms within their Department.

Trigger	Interventions and responsibilities Escalate from left to right if results of monitoring show insufficient improvement		
	<p>First response:</p> <p>Review mitigating contextual factors (e.g. low module evaluation return skewing results disproportionately towards the negative; evidence for malicious reporting etc.).</p> <p>Inform teacher as appropriate given the preceding check, collect and reflect response.</p> <p><i>Responsibilities:</i> Teacher concerned and Staff-student liaison chair/officer (SSL³), Deputy Head of Department, Year Coordinators, Feedback Coordinator, Chair BoS or other designated person. Also for some cases, reporting student's supervisor, Departmental Administrator, Chair BoE (see below)</p>	<p>Second response:</p> <p>Informal management resolution with teacher. Management-Imposed actions, development and monitoring. (See Section 3 of the University's Capability Procedure⁴ or Section 3 of the University's Disciplinary Procedure⁵ as appropriate)⁶</p> <p><i>Responsibilities:</i> Teacher concerned and HoD or designate. At discretion of HoD, also HR Learning and Development, ASO.</p>	<p>Third response:</p> <p>Formal management of unacceptable performance. (See Section 4 of the University's Capability Procedure or Section 4 of the University's Disciplinary Procedures as appropriate)</p> <p><i>Responsibilities:</i> Teacher concerned and HoD, HR.</p>
Students report problems via supervisor or other face-to-face route.	Supervisor reports to SSL; SSL reports to teacher; SSL notes teacher comment and watches module feedback. Where issue does not appear resolved within a reasonable timescale, escalation to second response.	Short term intervention by Chair BoS or HoD possible to fix severe in-course problems. Subsequent 'post-mortem' leading to actions on teacher for improvements and development. Monitored by SSL.	(Further escalation only when chronic problems confirmed through other means. See below.)
Students report problems in Staff Student forum.	SSL reports to teacher; SSL notes teacher comment and watches module feedback. Where feedback shows problem is resolved, SSL considers for inclusion in "you said, we did" feedback to students, otherwise escalation to second response.		
PGR student reports problems in TAP that they would like raised with the supervisor.	Chair of TAP to take matters forward as appropriate to any agreement made with the student as to how the problem should best be addressed. Monitored by future TAP meetings. Where issue persists, escalation to second response.	If appropriate referred to HoD or Chair GSB/BoS. Discussion with the supervisor and, if appropriate, actions and support put in place to enable improvement. Monitored by TAP.	(Further escalation only when it has been demonstrated the problems are chronic, irresolvable and/or detrimental to the student's progression with their research.)
Module feedback poor relative to reasonable expectations.	Reported to module coordinator / convener; noted by SSL; SSL includes in course review report with any comment from module coordinator; SSL and module coordinator identify individual teachers concerned if team taught – inform teachers; SSL watches for future feedback. Teachers encouraged towards good practice by reference to others in department as appropriate. Where reasonable improvement within an acceptable timescale is not noted, escalation to second response.	HoD and module coordinator and / or individual teachers agree point-by-point actions for improvement. E.g. review of lecture outlines/plans; peer observation and mentoring, including preparation and revision of teaching materials; HR Learning and Development course; ASO advice on particular needs. Monitored by SSL and HoD.	

³ Note, where the Chair of SSL is a student, the designated 'officer' consulted should be the member of staff responsible for the SSL Committee. Where SSL is referred to in this table, this is a reference to this individual rather than the SSL Committee itself.

⁴ <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/resources/policy/capability/#tab-1>

⁵ <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/resources/policy/disciplinary/>

⁶ Note: where a member of staff is on probation, then issues of underperformance should be dealt with within the framework of the University's Probation Policy and Procedure: <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/resources/policy/probation/#tab-1>

PST or other peer review reveals problems.	Peer and teacher discuss changes; SSL reviews report; watches module feedback as appropriate. Where problem persists, escalation to second response.	HoD and teacher agree development needs. Monitored by SSL and HoD.	Teacher advised regarding impact upon career progression: lack of improvement is to be noted in HoD reports re. promotion, awards etc. Failure to carry out actions from previous step leads to discipline. Chronic failure to improve leads to capability process.
External review of any kind identifies deficiencies in breadth, depth or accuracy of content taught.	Chair BoS reviews observed content versus module description etc. If module needs revision, standard process. Otherwise specifies clearly to teacher where problems are, and sets up appropriate monitoring. If issue is not addressed within a reasonable timescale, escalation to second response.	HoD and teacher agree point-by-point actions for corrections of content. Monitored by Chair BoS and HoD.	
Evidence for unsatisfactory standards of written and/or oral English is identified through student evaluation, peer review or other means	SSL / CBoS or other relevant member of staff discusses the issue with the individual concerned. Where appropriate this will include seeking advice from specialist support (e.g. CELT). Situation monitored and if there is no improvement within an acceptable timescale, escalation to second response.	HoD and teacher identify development needs and put in place a structured plan which will include accessing support for the development of English language skills (via CELT or other providers). Progress monitored by CBoS and HoD.	
Assessment feedback is not returned by published deadline.	Reported to module coordinator / convener as relevant; noted by SSL. SSL and module coordinator inform teacher of requirement to return feedback by deadline and set up appropriate monitoring. If the problem re-occurs without good mitigating reason, escalation to second response.	HoD informs teacher of the requirement to return feedback to deadline; implements a process to monitor that this is done.	Disciplinary procedure.
NSS, PTES, PRES written comments clearly directed towards particular teacher / supervisor.	Chair BoS or other individual responsible for monitoring NSS comments discusses feedback with individual.	HoD discussion with teacher if appropriate	(No further escalation. Cannot reliably de-anonymise external survey comments.)
Complaint re. teacher from student.	→	HoD action based on complaints process. Subsequently, findings of complaint relating to teaching issues may lead to improvement and development actions.	
Staff member fails to provide teaching sessions or materials or to meet deadlines (detected by administrators)	Chair BoS notified and s/he reiterates all requirements to teacher; notes that next step is escalation to HoD.	HoD formally advises of actions required and notes that next step is formal procedures.	Capability / Disciplinary procedure as appropriate.
Inconsistent or otherwise poor assessment design, marking and / or feedback detected through assessment processes.	Chair BoE or Chair BoS verifies with moderators, second markers et al; informs teacher; Chair BoE watches for future problems which immediately trigger escalation.	Clear requirements specified by HoD. Monitored by Chair BoE. May also include development requirement.	Capability / Disciplinary procedure as appropriate.
Mistakes are identified internally in exam papers.	Teacher notified by reviewer and mistake(s) rectified. Only if a pattern of mistakes is identified over time, or if mistakes are gross / unacceptable, is there escalation.	HoD formally advises of actions required and notes that next step is formal procedures. Monitored by Chair BoE.	Capability / Disciplinary procedure as appropriate.
Exams Office notifies department that exam paper setter was not available during an examination.	Chair BoE or Chair BoS notifies teacher of University expectations with regard paper setter availability during examinations and watches for future problems; notes next step is escalation to HoD.	HoD formally warns teacher of University expectations with regard availability during examinations. Monitored by Chair BoE.	Disciplinary procedure.

Appendix 2: Framework for Recognising and Rewarding Excellent Teaching Performance

It is essential that the expectation of high quality teaching is embedded within the Institution and within individual department cultures. It is equally important to work towards a situation where all staff are intrinsically motivated to develop and improve their teaching on an ongoing basis. This is possible when the status of teaching has parity with research. However, there are challenges in achieving this because the means for determining research esteem are well established and understood, whereas the same cannot be said for teaching. It can be the case, therefore, that good teaching does not always receive the acknowledgement it deserves. Equally, whereas research reputation has disciplinary ramifications outside of the institution, reputation for good teaching is normally constrained to the institution and in many cases may not extend beyond the limits of the department. To address these issues, it is important that departments reinforce a culture where good teaching is valued and where it is recognised consistently both informally and via formal mechanisms.

Identifying Good Teaching

Good teaching and support for student learning may be revealed in various ways, for example:

Student Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notably improved and/or exceptional module evaluation scores • Positive comments from student evaluations: module/NSS/PRES/PTES • Positive comments from TAPs • Positive comments through SSLC • Student nomination for YUSU Supervisor / teaching award • Positive comments made to a supervisor about another teacher
Colleague Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notable PST contribution / leadership / outcome • Notable contribution to a team taught module • Positive external examiner comment • Positive BoS / DTC comment relating to curriculum development / innovation • Positive comment from mentor / mentee or other colleague on teaching leadership or support • High quality achievement noted in PGCAP report
Esteem Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to institutional enhancement activity (e.g. L&T conference, Forum magazine, PGCAP) • Contribution to external enhancement activity • Securing internal funding for L&T development • Securing external funding for L&T development • L&T peer reviewed publication • Significant innovation in Learning and Teaching • Invitation to be an external examiner
Formal Award / Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional body recognition related to education • HEA recognition • YUSU supervisor / teaching award • VC Teaching award • NTFS award • Times Higher award for teaching

Recognising Teaching

1. Individuals and teams should receive acknowledgement for their efforts when they result in success. At one level, this will involve staff taking responsibility for passing on positive feedback they have been given about colleagues as and when they receive it. It is particularly important that any member of staff who has a leadership role (ranging, for example, from module

coordinators/conveners on team-taught modules, through to Year Coordinators, Feedback Coordinators, Chairs of departmental committees associated with learning and teaching and the Head of Department) understands that it is part of their responsibility to ensure good teaching is acknowledged.

2. At another level, departments should consider mechanisms by which good quality teaching is highlighted. For example, this may include:
 - Minuted commendation at BoS, Teaching Committee, Exam Board or other staff meeting
 - Letter of commendation from HoD
 - Record in annual performance review
 - Recognition in Departmental newsletter or other circular
 - Nomination to Departmental teaching award scheme (see below)
 - Nomination to HR 'Making a Difference' scheme
 - Recognition on Departmental webpage

3. Where they do not already have one, Departments should also introduce an annual award scheme for teaching and the support of student learning. It is expected that individuals (or teams) who submit an application to such a scheme and are successful in being recognised, will then be eligible to apply for Institutional recognition via the Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award. The organisation of the Departmental scheme should be determined locally, bearing in mind that the call for the Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award is issued in the Spring term. Departments are also free to determine the assessment process themselves, although they may wish to take due note of the criteria by which the Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award is judged in order to maximise alignment:
 - Sustained excellence across a range of teaching/support activities, over a reasonable period of time.
 - A creative approach to teaching and/or learning support, focused on student learning needs.
 - That they [the member of staff or team] go above and beyond the standard remit of their teaching or learning support role, making an impact on colleagues as well as students.