



**GUIDE TO POLICY AND PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE
ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS
AND QUALITY OF TAUGHT PROGRAMMES OF STUDY (THE 'RED
BOOK')**

ANNUAL MONITORING GUIDELINES

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ANNUAL MONITORING GUIDELINES

1. Purposes of Annual Monitoring

1.1 Academic Standards and the Quality of Learning Opportunities

The main purpose of annual monitoring is to ensure that programmes, subjects and schools, following their review of and reflection upon the appropriateness of the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities achieved during the previous year's operation, devise and implement the necessary action to address any identified weaknesses and to further embed and spread more widely any identified good practice.

1.2 Enhancement

Although annual monitoring necessarily involves responding to agreed procedures and deadlines via completion of various proformas and reports, it should not be viewed simply as an instrumental, maintenance-led activity but as one which provides an enabling framework through which programmes, subjects and schools can engage in the self evaluation, critical analysis, open debate and action planning directed towards **continuous enhancement** of the University's provision.

1.3 Evidence Generation

The procedures are also designed to facilitate the accumulation of evidence to help demonstrate that the relevant parties have engaged with the process in an appropriate way (see Annex 1). Thus, the various reports generated through annual monitoring are to be discussed as appropriate by Course Committees, School Boards of Study, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and by the Executive Team Planning Group, as described later in these guidelines. Careful consideration and clear actions and feedback by these groups is not only a valuable input into the process but, through appropriate recording of the discussions and outcomes, will also help to generate the necessary audit trails demonstrating that issues are considered and acted upon via the flow of information both upwards and downwards through the relevant bodies which make up the University's deliberative structure.

1.4 Continuity

Although annual monitoring is in one sense based on a sample of activity from a defined period of time, steps have been taken to help ensure that links are also made over time. Thus, Programme Quality Enhancement Plans (PQEPs – See Annex 2), generated in response to a particular year of operation of a programme, will be updated and revisited throughout the following year at Course Committee level. Data Analysis Reports will evaluate trends and comparisons with previous years and other data sets. Subject Annual Self Evaluation Reports, (SASERs) will evaluate the past year but simultaneously look forward to achieving goals during the coming period and will also place their evaluation of the provision within the context of continuous enhancement. School (or Institute/Unit) Quality Enhancement Plans (S/I/UQEPs) will be on the agendas of School /Institute Boards of Study throughout the year to monitor progress in achieving the goals set, and will be incorporated into the local planning process.

1.5 Integration

To help ensure that the annual monitoring process and its outcomes are viewed as an integral part of the quality assurance infrastructure, account has been taken in the design of the reporting requirements of their fit with other elements of the quality assurance framework. Thus, PQEPs, SASERs and S//UQEPs will be structured around the 'aspects' of provision (aims, outcomes, curricula, assessment, etc) in detailing the issues arising from monitoring and their related action points, at programme, subject and school level as appropriate. The Self Evaluation Documents required as an integral part of internal subject reviews and of the QAA's discipline audit trails followed during institutional audits are similarly structured. In compiling a series of PQEPs, SASERs and S//UQEPs over a period of time, and by engaging in the sort of thinking necessary to respond to the questions asked during preparation for and engagement with internal and external review, programmes and subjects should find themselves better placed to respond to their demands.

2. Components of Annual Monitoring (see Annex 1 for a summary of the Main Stages of Annual Monitoring)

2.1 Programme Quality Enhancement Plan (PQEP)

- 2.1.1 These Plans are normally prepared by the Programme Leader for an individual programme by mid-October each year and presented to the Course Committee along with an updated version of the previous year's Plan. If a PQEP incorporates more than one programme then it should be made clear to which programme or programmes the issues apply. The format of Plans is to be according to the template shown in Annex 2. The typical sources of information used to inform the Plan are listed in Annex 1. The list is indicative and not exhaustive. Plans are intended to record the 'aspect' of provision to which the issue relates, the source of the issue, the nature of the issue, what action is to be taken, by whom, by when, and at what cost, and how attainment of the objective will be assessed.
- 2.1.2 Plans will be approved by the Course Committee and will form a standing agenda item throughout the year, updated as actions are progressed and completed. In their original form, they will also go to the School Board of Study, which may seek clarification and/or amendment. Discussion of the Plan should result in clearly recorded actions and feedback in each case.
- 2.1.3 The timing of meetings in relation to production and approval of the Plan should not delay the passage of the Plan through the committee structure, as long as the status of the Plan is made clear at each Stage.
- 2.1.4 As well as taking account of operational issues, student feedback, module reviews, retention data, progression and achievement statistics, course committee discussions, external and internal review outcomes, etc, current practice is to incorporate within the Plan responses to each point raised by external examiners. This should include points where it is not intended to take action in response – and provide the reasons.
- 2.1.5 The template is otherwise designed to facilitate recording of objectives which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related (SMART), along with an identifiable postholder or individual to be responsible for carrying the action through.

- 2.1.6 Procedurally, it would be useful if Plans were considered alongside the sources of evidence used to identify the issues to be addressed and actions to be taken, particularly external examiner reports, statistics on retention, progression and achievement, and student feedback on the programme.
- 2.1.7 Where the programme includes Collaborative Provision it should be encompassed by the PQEP, showing clearly to which part of the programme any issues apply.

2.2. Data Analysis Report (DAR)

- 2.2.1 Data Analysis Reports are normally produced by the Programme Leader by the end of January each year. Reports are based on the annual monitoring statistics provided for each programme at around the end of November annually.
- 2.2.2 The intention of the Report is to provide evaluative comment on the major patterns, trends and comparisons evident in the data. Patterns can be evident in the data itself, through departures from typical expectations (e.g. perhaps a higher proportion of candidates than would be expected gained first class awards). Trends may be observed over a period of time which require explanation (e.g. retention rates are improving). Comparisons can be made and reasons advanced for unexpected departures from aggregated data based on one or more appropriate groupings of programmes, eg. all undergraduate or postgraduate programmes, a subject-based data set, whole University statistics. Guidance on producing the report is provided in Annex 3.
- 2.2.3 The main sections in the Report should typically cover data on recruitment, entry profile, retention, progression, and achievement. There is also the opportunity to determine whether different groups of students, classified e.g. by gender, ethnic grouping, age, are differentially represented when considering each of the main data sections. Possible explanations should be advanced for departures from the norm and actions described to investigate and determine the causes.
- 2.2.4 The length of the Data Analysis Report will be at least partly determined by how atypical the data set is. However it is the major patterns, trends and comparisons which are important, concentrating on unusual patterns, changing trends and favourable or unfavourable comparisons with appropriate aggregate data sets. It is not anticipated that every set of tables within the annual monitoring statistics will necessarily be deserving of comment and in most cases the proportion drawing comment will be small. In addition, comment, evaluation, explanation and further action should be concisely expressed. A guide length of two typewritten sides of A4 is offered as an indication of what is expected.
- 2.2.5 Data Analysis Reports follow the same route as PQEPs, through the Course Committee and School Board of Study, with clearly recorded outcomes, actions and feedback arising from each.
- 2.2.6 As for the PQEP, the Data Analysis Report should include consideration of any collaborative provision within the programme.

2.3 Subject Annual Self-Evaluation Reports (SASER)

2.3.1 The Subject Annual Self-Evaluation Report is a statement which demonstrates that the Subject provision, comprising those programmes allocated to the Subject for this purpose, has been evaluated in a constructively self-critical manner, encompassing the following dimensions:

appropriateness of the academic standards set;

effectiveness of the curriculum in delivering the intended outcomes;

effectiveness of assessment in measuring attainment of the intended outcomes;

extent to which the intended standards and outcomes are achieved by students;

quality of the learning opportunities provided for students.

2.3.2. The document should identify how identified strengths are being built upon and weaknesses addressed. These may have arisen as a result of the earlier stages of annual monitoring or of internal and external reviews occurring over the previous year.

2.3.3 A reflective, evaluative document is sought which makes reference to the relevant sources of evidence in support of the statements made (see 2.3.8 and 2.3.9 for examples of evidence sources). The length of the document will be determined partly by the number of programmes encompassed and their complexity. It is permissible to group programmes into sub-disciplines of a subject or into separate subjects if this will aid presentation. About 1,000 – 1,500 words should suffice in most instances, reflecting a focussed, concise, summative evaluation of the major strengths and weaknesses revealed and action (to be) taken to promulgate and address these over the current (and subsequent) year. It should cover the main issues and common and recurring themes arising from the previous year, concentrating on 'higher order' concerns arising from a synthesis of evidence from earlier stages of monitoring and elsewhere. The Document is produced by the Subject Leader or other postholder designated by the Dean of School and goes to the School Board of Study.

2.3.4 Where the programme includes Collaborative Provision it should be encompassed by the SASER, showing clearly to which part of the programme any issues apply.

2.3.5 The Self-Evaluation Report should be structured around the following headings:

A list of award and programme titles covered by the document.

Evaluation of:

learning outcomes;

curricula and assessment;

quality of learning opportunities;

maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality.

These are covered in more detail below. The phrase 'evaluate any changes', as used below, requires a description of the issue, how it arose (ie. the evidence source), how it was (or is being) addressed, the (anticipated) outcome and how it is, or will be, measured. Both positive and negative changes should be included, referring to promulgation and embedding of the former and action to address the latter.

2.3.6 Learning outcomes

Evaluate any changes in the appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes in relation to the overall aims of the provision, relevant subject benchmark statements, and other external reference points. Changes to measures intended to ensure that staff and students understand the aims and outcomes of the provision should also be considered.

2.3.7 Curricula and assessment

- i. Evaluate any changes in the effectiveness of the content and design of the curricula in enabling the intended learning outcomes to be addressed. Specific issues might include:

academic and intellectual progression in the curriculum;

appropriateness of content for the level of the award;

inclusion of recent developments in the subject;

incorporation of best pedagogical practice.

- ii. Evaluate any changes in the effectiveness of student assessment in measuring achievement of the intended learning outcomes, considering:

measures to enable students to demonstrate achievement;

discriminating between different categories of performance;

promoting student learning (especially via formative assessment).

2.3.8 Quality of Learning Opportunities

- i. Evaluate any changes in the effectiveness of learning and teaching in relation to the aims of the provision and curriculum content. Specifically consider:

range and appropriateness of teaching methods;

encouragement of participation by students;

quality of learning materials;

staff development to enhance teaching;

effectiveness of team teaching;

student workloads.

- ii. Evaluate any changes in the effectiveness of strategies of academic support to enhance student progression, including the way in which they take account of the ability profile of the intake in relation to aims of the provision. Specifically consider:

recruitment and induction;

dealing with special educational needs;

feedback to students on their progress;

overall academic guidance and supervision;

tutorial support.

- iii. Evaluate any changes in the adequacy of learning resources and how effectively they are used. Evaluation should link resources to the intended learning outcomes. Physical and human resources are relevant, including induction, mentoring and development of staff.

2.3.9 Maintenance and Enhancement of Standards and Quality

- i. Evaluate any changes in the effectiveness of measures taken to maintain and enhance the quality and standards of provision. Specifically consider changes in the effectiveness of the evaluation and use of quantitative and qualitative data in a process of enhancement and continuous improvement.

- ii. Quantitative data encompasses:

statistics on student achievement in summative assessment;

degree classifications;

entry qualifications;

progression and completion rates;

first employment destinations.

- iii. Qualitative data encompasses:

student feedback;

staff feedback;

external examiners' reports;

employers' views on graduates they've recruited;

professional and statutory body reports;

internal and external reviews.

2.3.9 Annexes

Relevant PQEPs and DARs should be appended to each SASER.

2.4 School/Institute/Unit Quality Enhancement Plan (S/I/UQEP)

2.4.1 School/Institute/Unit Quality Enhancement Plans address objectives, their source(s), actions, responsibilities, timescales and performance indicators which relate to academic standards and quality matters as they affect the School, Institute or Unit as a whole. Following consideration by appropriate committees in the School, Institute or Unit the S/I/UQEPs will form one part of the Annual Local Plan submitted by each School, Institute or Unit to the Executive Team Planning Group in May each year as part of the annual planning cycle.

2.4.2 The precise nature and format of the S/I/UQEPs will be influenced by the requirements of Annual Local Planning as determined from time to time by the Planning Group. As with Subject Annual Self Evaluation Reports however, they should represent a synthesis of the major, common and recurring issues arising from earlier stages of annual monitoring and elsewhere (see Annex 1), with which whole Schools, Institutes or Units or significant parts of them need to engage. **They are not intended to significantly repeat or summarise each and every issue arising from Subject - or Programme-level evaluations, but to focus on those which affect the School or Institute as a whole.**

2.5 University Overview of Annual Monitoring Outcomes

2.5.1 This report is a synthesis of the major, common and recurring issues arising from earlier stages of annual monitoring and elsewhere (see Annex 1), with which the University or significant parts of it need to engage. It is not intended to significantly repeat or summarise each and every issue arising from School, Institute or Unit-level evaluations, but to focus on those which affect the University as a whole.