Academic Quality and Policy Manual
Chapter 4: Annual Review and Enhancement
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1. Annual Review

The review and enhancement of provision in academic departments and schools is a continual process carried out during the academic year through activities such as peer observation of teaching, engagement with student feedback from Staff:Student Action Meetings (SSAM), surveys and questionnaires, and relevant internal and external datasets. The Annual Review provides an opportunity for staff to consolidate and reflect upon the overall success of these activities at a strategic point, when information on student progress and achievement becomes available. This process is informed by the guiding principles for monitoring and evaluation as set out in the QAA’s UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Monitoring and evaluation.

Section 2 below sets out the process for the review of taught provision and Section 3 the review of research provision. The annual reviews of taught provision are the responsibility of the School Education Committees. The scrutiny meeting once the Annual Review Report forms have been completed is attended by the Senior Academic Quality Manager for the School. The annual review of research degree provision is the responsibility of the Doctoral School. The scrutiny meeting once the Annual Review Report forms have been completed is chaired by the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Postgraduate Research) and administered by the Doctoral School with a member of the Academic Quality and Policy Office in attendance.

2. Annual Review of Taught provision

The Annual Review and Enhancement Process is a key element of the University’s quality assurance and enhancement framework and provides an opportunity for staff who have taught on the courses under review to collectively reflect on provision when data on student progress and achievement is available and a full set of feedback from students, External Examiners, relevant professional service teams and others are available. The annual review of undergraduate provision takes place early in the autumn term and the review of postgraduate taught provision early in the spring term. This reflection entails:

- Celebrating successes achieved during the year;
- Identifying ways in which teaching and learning provision can be enhanced in the coming year through building on successes and addressing areas for enhancement;
- Identifying for the School and University broader teaching and learning related issues which may drive University thematic enhancement reviews and/or lead to the development of new or revised policies/procedures to support and enhance academic provision for students.

At both departmental and School level its aim is to promote the following amongst teaching staff:

- Critical reflection and evaluation of key data and information on teaching and learning, e.g. data provided by Strategic Planning, reports from relevant professional service teams in the University;
- Sharing of experiences and good/innovative practice in teaching and learning;
- Collective planning for the next academic year, which involves the development of an enhancement plan to address concerns raised by, for example, External Examiners, student feedback, Staff:Student Action Meetings, NSS and other feedback scores, and reports from professional services teams;
- Student involvement in the process;
- Ownership of all who have a stake in the ongoing success of the course.

It is assumed that departments will be monitoring and responding to issues as they arise during the year, e.g. responding to concerns raised in module evaluation forms, issues raised at Staff-Student Action Meetings, reflecting on TEF metrics (where available) and possible enhancements. The Annual Review process as noted

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1 This chapter includes the new nomenclature which the University moved to in September 2020: ‘course units’ become ‘modules’ and ‘programmes’ become ‘courses’.

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above takes place at a point in the year when a department has a full picture of the academic provision for that year.

2.1 Stages in the Process

To ensure a timely and focused response to the previous academic year the first stage of the annual review and enhancement process should start in the summer, immediately after the meeting of the relevant examination boards in June. The second stage takes place once the data for the academic year has been finalised, a full set of External Examiner reports and responses received as well as final professional service team reports for the year. Stage 3 involves scrutiny of all the annual review documentation and the departmental enhancement plans by a sub-group of the School Education Committee. The resultant School report is reviewed by the School Education Committee prior to its submission to the Assessment and Quality Assurance and Standards Committee and then Academic Board.

2.1.1 Stage 1: Department

Departments should convene a meeting shortly after the examination boards in June (or July for PGT only) to review the academic year for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision.

Documentation and data for the meeting

The items in bold will be available in the AQPO shared working group drive: Taught-Annual-Review.

- Module report forms for each module taught during the academic year, completed by a module convenor.²
- Information from the examination process:
  - External Examiner feedback – depending on the timing of this meeting reports may have been received (UG only as PGT reports will only be submitted in the autumn term). However, at this point the department will have had verbal feedback from the External Examiners on the quality and standards of their taught modules and recommendations for actions from the examination board meeting(s) (UG) and possibly some feedback on taught modules for PGT courses;
  - For UG courses: Exam board outcomes - degree outcomes as well as continuation data for first years (bearing in mind that the Annual Review data to be made available later in the cycle will be by entry cohort NOT by year of classification);
  - For PGT courses: Exam board outcomes – module outcomes for all taught courses offered during the year.
  - Any issues relating to assessment that have arisen during the academic year or during the examination period (e.g. problems with exam papers, particular assessments);
- Student Voice Feedback which includes the following:
  - NSS results (UG) (will be available in the summer);
  - Module evaluation questionnaire data – high level outcomes;
  - Minutes of all SSAMs held during the year;
  - Outcomes of any focus group/ Town Hall meetings during the year;
  - Responses to internal surveys run by the department/ School/ University;
  - Student Voice Report from the departmental/ School academic representatives;
- TEF data for the discipline(s) covered by the department (UG only) (where available);
- Verbal/ written report on student support provision provided by the Senior Tutor;
- Annual Review Report Form from the previous academic year and the enhancement plan approved by the School, which identifies actions that the department was taking during the year;

² These are accessed via an Infoview report.
• Professional Service team reports from the Library, CeDAS, Careers, DNS, and EDC;
• Professional Services team reports on student appeals, academic misconduct and examination offences, and student complaints from the previous academic year (if not available for the first meeting).
• Relevant course specifications from the Degree Course Library and module specifications from the Module Catalogue for the courses under review;
• Reports on any interdisciplinary modules to which members of the School might contribute and/or are taken by students in the department;
• Information on the return of marked work and feedback in the department during the year;
• Plans for examination feedback for students in the next academic year;
• Report on any PSRB (re-)accreditations during the academic year.

Meeting attendees

• School Director of Education (UG or PGT)
• Departmental lead for education
• Module convenors
• Senior Tutor for the department
• Chair of Department Assessment Board
• Year tutors (where relevant)
• Head of Department

A member of the School administrative team may be in attendance to support the Director of Education.

Outcome of the meeting

• The member of staff responsible for the Annual Review and Enhancement Report, normally the UG or PGT education lead, should start completing the report and putting together the department’s enhancement plan for the following academic year;
• Any issues that need urgent attention by the department prior to the start of the academic year should be actioned;
• Any issues that need to be addressed urgently by the School or University to be escalated to the Director of Education in the School or through the Senior Academic Quality Manager to the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor (Quality and Standards), respectively.

2.1.2 Stage 2: Department

• There may be a need for another meeting on UG provision in September after the data and NSS scores have been made available (if the first meeting was held ahead of the release of results).
• The Stage 2 meeting for postgraduate taught courses will need to be held in January after the data and External Examiner reports for final autumn examination boards have been made available.

Meeting Attendees

Ideally as above although it may be that a smaller group are needed for the completion of the report in the light of any new data that has been made available. The report could also be finalised by circulation if appropriate.

Documentation and information

• External Examiner reports not considered at the Stage 1 meeting;
• NSS results (UG) (if the first meeting was held ahead of the release of results);
• OfS Survey results (PGT) – where relevant;
• Any progress/ clarification on actions identified at the Stage 1 meeting which need to be reflected in the report;
• Annual Review dashboard information and any specific data provided by Strategic Planning.
Outcome of the meeting

- The Annual Review Report and enhancement plan should be finalised and uploaded to the Annual Review folder on the shared drive Taught-Annual-Review. From there it will be accessed with other information for consideration by the scrutiny group of the School Education Committee.
- The Annual Review Report for undergraduate provision should be shared at the first Staff: Student Action Meeting of the academic year while that for postgraduate taught provision should be shared with students at the meeting in the Spring term after the School Education Committee has conducted the review.

2.1.3 Stage 3: School

The School Education Committee will set up a scrutiny group to review reports and other relevant documentation from each department in the School. This must take place before the relevant meeting of the School Education Committee (the autumn term SEC in the case of UG provision and the Spring term SEC in the case of PGT provision). The relevant Senior Academic Quality Manager will work with the Chair of the Education Committee (or the Deputy Chair/ PGT Director of Education for PGT Annual Review) to identify any issues that need addressing by departments, which have not been addressed in their enhancement plans, and advise on recurrent themes which may need to form part of the School Education Plan and/ or be escalated to the Assessment and Quality Assurance and Standards Committee or other University bodies for consideration. They will also help the Chair identify which actions from the previous year's enhancement plan have (not) been addressed.

Each department will peer review another. The pairings will be decided by the Chair of the Education Committee, with advice as appropriate from the relevant Senior Academic Quality Manager.

The report from this scrutiny meeting will be presented to the meeting of the School Education Committee using a template provided by the Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO).

Peer Review Scrutiny Meeting Attendees

Relevant members of the School Education Committee – normally Department Education leads but the Chair may include other members of the Committee.

A member of the Academic Quality and Policy Office, normally the relevant Senior Academic Quality Manager School Programme Administration Manager (to take notes and support the Chair with administrative arrangements)

Documentation

The documentation to be scrutinised for each department as part of the peer review will be on the AQPO shared drive.

For the meeting itself each member should have as a minimum the following from each department but should have scrutinised all relevant data and information for the department on the shared drive:

- Annual Review Report and enhancement plan from the previous review
- Annual Review Report and enhancement plan for the current review
- External Examiner Reports and responses
- Staff: Student Action Meeting Log
- Professional Service team reports

There may be an additional report from the University with equal opportunities data at this point.

Outcome of the meeting
• The enhancement plans should be finalised taking account of the scrutiny and comments from the Peer Review Scrutiny Meeting.
• The School Education Committee will scrutinise and, as appropriate, endorse the enhancement plan for each department in the School, which may be the enhancement plan presented with the Annual Review Report but equally may involve additional actions identified as part of the scrutiny at the meeting of the School Education Committee.
• The Chair of the School Education Committee, with the support of the Senior Programme Administration Manager and the Senior Academic Quality Manager completes the University template report provided by AQPO. This report will:
  o provide confirmation that the University Annual Review process has been followed,
  o highlight education enhancement plans for the School arising out of the scrutiny,
  o note issues for consideration by the University;
  o identify good practice in the School for dissemination to other Schools.

2.1.4 Stage 4: University
The School report will be considered by the Assessment and Quality Assurance and Standards Committee which will need to
• satisfy itself that the scrutiny group and the School Education Committee conducted its business within its remit and with due rigour;
• advise on any issues identified during the review and the appropriateness of proposed enhancements;
• take steps to address matters of institutional concern;
• assist in the spread of good practice.

The Academic Board monitors that the annual review has taken place and in accordance with the agreed procedures. The Board also notes any good practice which has been highlighted during the process.

2.2 Topics for discussion at Stage 1 and 2 meetings
Some of the data that is considered at the first meeting will have been received earlier in the year and should have already informed discussions at departmental level and/or the School Education Committee. It is anticipated that some of the prompts here may have informed such discussions and led to actions being taken during the year or actions being planned for the next academic year.

Student outcomes
N.B. Bear in mind that the data available at Stage 1 after the exam board has met will be for students who studied in the previous academic year; the data will NOT be by entry cohort. At the time of the Stage 2 meeting the data will be on the Annual Review dashboard and is by entry cohort. What does the data reveal about student progression especially continuation from first to second stage for UG students? (integrated Foundation year – from year 0 to year 1, for UG from year 1 to 2 and for PGT for PT students)
• Are there any significant changes (negative or positive) in outcome since the last academic year?
• Are there any particular groups of students who may be performing less well than others?
• What are the year on year trends in student progression, especially continuation from first to second stage for UG students? (Integrated Foundation year – from year 0 to year 1 (from the end of 2019-20 onwards) for UG from year 1 to 2 and for PGT for PT students). If continuation could be improved what actions are to be put in place?
• What are the year on year trends in degree outcomes? Are there differences between different groups of students? Are these differences diminishing/increasing over entry cohorts? Are there reasons for this? What steps is the department taking to address any gaps in achievement?
Student experience and academic support

- How has the Personal Tutor system worked during the year? Are further enhancements needed?
- What more could be done with the department and in collaboration with Careers and Employability?
- Does reflection on the year highlight any enhancements that could be made to Welcome Week/induction activities?
- If CeDAS has provided support for students, has this been successful?
- If students have been on a year aboard/industry/placement etc. are there any issues that need to be addressed in the department or with stakeholder departments, e.g. CeDAS, Careers.

Student Voice feedback

- How might the results of the module evaluation questionnaires (quantitative and qualitative) inform enhancements to academic provision?
- Have all issues discussed at Staff Student Action Committee Meetings during the year been resolved? Does the Student Voice report raise any issues that are still outstanding and/or any that might lead to enhancements? How will the department respond to these?
- How effective has Academic representation been, e.g. have representatives attended all required meetings? Are there any suggestions for enhancement to be fed back to the SU?
- Has the Department communicated effectively with students on issues raised and closed the feedback loop? Are there areas for enhancement?
- What strengths of the department (discipline) can be identified from the NSS/PGT survey scores?
- What areas of enhancement can be identified? What actions will be put in place to address these and how will success be measured, e.g. a move from out of the lower quartile within two years? stretching of upper quartile scores?

Staff feedback

- What do the module report forms indicate about student achievement and/or satisfaction?
- What are staff views on the provision during the year and possible actions to be taken, e.g. changes required to the Personal Tutor system, more support from CeDAS needed

External Examiner Reports

- Based on verbal feedback from the exam boards and written feedback from External Examiner reports which have been received, are there issues that need to be addressed? For PGT courses no written feedback will be available at this point (summer) as External Examiners are only required to submit reports after the board at the end of the academic cycle (in the autumn term).
- Have all External Examiner reports been received? What issues, additional to those raised at Stage 1, have been raised and need to be addressed?
- Have all External Examiners received a response to their reports?

Feedback from professional services teams

- What key areas of enhancement have been raised by the various key stakeholders? Do any need to be raised with the School Director of Education/Head of Department? Is a meeting required with a representative from the key stakeholder group to address issues?
- Are there (enhancements to) services that professional services could provide, that need to be raised at School/University level?
- Does the data on student complaints, appeals and academic misconduct reveal any year-on-year trends that suggest the need for departmental action, e.g. an increase in academic misconduct cases, increase in complaints about dissertation supervision and/or School or University action?

External stakeholder feedback
• Has there been any PSRB (re-)accreditation during the academic year? Has the report from the accrediting body raised any curriculum issues that need to be addressed?
• If accreditation has been lost, has AQPO been informed? The University will need to report this to the Office for Students. If the department has decided not to re-accredit, this should also be reported as there are CMA implications.
• If the School has an (Industrial) Advisory Board is there feedback from them which might be useful with respect to course enhancement?

Collaborative provision
• If there are students entering the course on articulation arrangements, are there any issues pertinent to them?
  If the course being reviewed is offered as part of a collaboration with an external provider, are there any issues that impact on student outcomes and/or experience that need addressing?

Teaching and learning practice
• What instances are there of good/innovative teaching practice that could be shared across the department/School/University?
• Are there particular areas for enhancement which might be the focus of a School Awayday and/or an area where staff might benefit from inviting a member of the EDC, for example, to talk with colleagues?
• Are there areas where colleagues in the department might benefit from briefing/training more generally, e.g. was training provided by AQPO and Student Administration about running examination boards sufficient, would colleagues benefit from any training on enhancing their Moodle pages? Could these be done at School rather than department level?

Courses and modules
Check the course specifications for the courses being reviewed on the Degree Course Library as well as the validated modules on the Module Catalogue and inform AQPO of any discrepancies
• Have changes made over the past year impacted on the learning outcomes of the course?
• To what extent have incremental changes led to a cumulative drift from the learning outcomes of the course as validated?
• Are there any University initiatives, policies which impact on either the curriculum, e.g. Assessment Futures, the feedback policy which might lead to a review of assessment across a course or embedding employability in the curriculum?
• What module changes should be worked on for consultation with students in the Autumn term? What new modules might be offered, and which ones should be permanently withdrawn?
• Are there particular combined, joint honours courses that the department might wish to withdraw before the new recruitment cycle starts mid-September?

3 Annual Review of Research Provision
3.1 Departmental/School Process
Staff with oversight of School provision for postgraduate research students, the Director of PGR Education, should review provision within the School and complete the outcomes on a PGR Annual Review Report Form. Where departments in Schools have more than 100 postgraduate research students, the relevant Departmental Research Student Lead may be asked to fill in a report for their departmental provision within the School.

Documentation and information
Student Voice Feedback which includes the following:
• Minutes of all SSAMs held during the year;
• PRES data

The following data will be provided by the Doctoral School on the Doctoral School shared working group drive:

• Reports on the previous year’s upgrade rates, submission rates and suspensions of regulations
• Summaries on the previous year’s upgrade rates, submission rates and suspensions of regulations
• Comparative upgrade, submission, and suspension of regulations data from the last three years.
• Admissions data comparing PGR actual v target numbers for the last five years.

The Director of PGR Education and, where appropriate the Departmental Research Student Lead, should also review the previous year’s enhancement plan to ensure that all planned actions have been completed.

The completed Annual Review Report(s) should, in the first instance, be discussed at the School Research Student Oversight Committee. Schools are expected to discuss the outcomes of the institutional annual review process with student representatives at a meeting of the School PGR Staff: Student Committee once Schools’ reports have been considered by the scrutiny group of the Research Degrees Programmes Committee.

3.2 Institutional process

The Annual Review Reports and associated documents are scrutinised by a University panel convened on behalf of the Doctoral School Committee by the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Postgraduate Research) with a Senior Academic Quality Manager in attendance for quality assurance advice. The Dean of the Doctoral School may decide whether it is appropriate to hold one or more panels given disciplinary differences. The process will be administered by the Doctoral School. Each nominated School representative, normally the departmental Director of PGR Education will be asked to peer review another School. Where a School has more than 100 postgraduate research students, the Departmental Research Student Lead may also be involved in this scrutiny process.

The purpose of the institutional scrutiny process is to:

• ensure that self-assessment within schools has effectively addressed any issues that are evident from the data and documentation on postgraduate research provision;
• identify issues of general concern or interest to schools and the University, including good practice;
• monitor progress on enhancement plans.

Peer Review Scrutiny Meeting attendees

• Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Postgraduate Research)
• Senior Academic Quality Manager
• School Directors PGR Education
• Departmental Research Student Leads (as appropriate)
• Doctoral School Manager

Documentation and information

• PGR Annual Review Report Forms
• Staff: Student Action Meetings log
• PRES data
• Reports on the previous year’s upgrade rates, submission rates and suspensions of regulations
• Summaries on the previous year’s upgrade rates, submission rates and suspensions of regulations
• Comparative upgrade, submission and suspension of regulations data from the last three years.
• Admissions data comparing PGR actual v target numbers for the last five years.
Examiners’ reports on doctoral vivas for postgraduate research students are not routinely considered above School level, given that they relate to individual students. Schools are expected to report to on any generic issues contained in such reports. However, the Panel can request copies of the reports for sampling purposes or to explore areas of concern.

**Outcome of the Meeting**

- The enhancement plans should be finalised taking account of the scrutiny and comments from the Peer Review Scrutiny Meeting.
- The Panel will endorse the enhancement plan for each School, which may be the enhancement plan presented with the Annual Review Report but equally may involve additional actions identified as part of the scrutiny by the Panel.
- The Doctoral School Manager (Panel Secretary) will complete the University template report provided by AQPO in consultation with the Panel Chair and with advice as relevant from the Senior Academic Quality Manager. The report will:
  - provide confirmation that the University Annual Review process has been followed,
  - highlight enhancement plans for the School arising out of the scrutiny,
  - note issues for consideration by the University;
  - identify good practice in the School for dissemination to other Schools.

Responsibility for the quality and standards of postgraduate research provision lies with the Doctoral School Committee, who will receive the report. The role of this Committee when considering the final composite report will therefore be:

- To satisfy itself that the Panel conducted its business within its remit and with due rigour;
- To advise on any issues identified during the review and the appropriateness of proposed action;
- To take steps to address matters of institutional concern;
- To assist in the spread of good practice.

The Academic Board monitors that the annual review has taken place and in accordance with the agreed procedures. The Board also notes any good practice which has been highlighted during the process.

4  **Student Voice in Annual Review**

4.1  **Questionnaires and surveys**

4.1.1  **Undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision**

Student feedback on modules and courses is an essential element in quality assurance. Questionnaires are of primary importance in the dialogue with students, since they are the best tool the University currently has for collecting objective, detailed and reasonably systematic information on a wide range of questions, which:

- informs teaching staff about students’ perceptions of the module’s strengths and weaknesses;
- can prompt changes in delivery methods, module content, the provision of resources and the structures of support and guidance for the module;
- is useful to staff maintaining teaching portfolios;
- is central to monitoring of teaching standards.

Departments are responsible for ensuring that modules on offer are surveyed each year using the University’s standard module questionnaire. The Timetabling team in Student Administration has overall responsibility for module evaluation questionnaires.

The University also annually conducts internal surveys of first and penultimate year students. These and the results of the NSS now form part of the annual review documentation.

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4.1.2 Postgraduate research provision
Postgraduate research students complete the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The analysis of responses from this survey will be provided by Strategic Planning and will be considered as part of the Annual Review of postgraduate research provision.

4.2 Staff: Student Action Committee Meetings (SSAMs)
With the School structure Staff: Student Action Meetings are run at department level for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, supported by School Administration teams, and at School level for postgraduate research students, supported by staff from the Doctoral School. Their principal role is to provide a formal channel of communication within a department or School, where matters of concern to staff and students can be considered and where students can be engaged in the development, assurance and enhancement of their studies.

The detail of membership and operation of Staff: Student Action Meetings are set out in the relevant University Terms of Reference, as well as templates for the meetings are available on the APQO website:


The minimum requirements are as follows:

- The Committee is required to meet at least once each term on dates advertised in advance.
- The action logs of each meeting must be hosted in the respective departmental Microsoft Teams channel dedicated to Academic Representation.

Action logs of meetings with postgraduate research students should be considered by the relevant School Research Student Oversight Committee and should be uploaded to the relevant departmental shared working group drive: Research Annual Reviews. In the case of taught provision these should be considered by the School Education Committee and also uploaded to the relevant departmental shared working group drive: Taught-Annual-Review.

5 Forms used for Annual Review related documentation
Available from

https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/staff/teaching/aqpo/templates-and-forms/annual-review-report-forms.aspx

https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/staff/teaching/aqpo/templates-and-forms/staff-student-action-meeting-forms.aspx

External Examiner Report(s) and Responses (taught courses only)