



Senate

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| <b>Paper Title</b>                                                         | Annual Programme Review Process 2013/14                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Outcome requested</b>                                                   | Senate is asked to <b>note</b> the operation of the process to review the 2012/13 academic year, <b>consider</b> the summary of issues arising from the APR meetings and <b>identify</b> any issues for further action.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This paper reports on the third year of the operation of the new style Annual Programme Review process in 2013/14</li> <li>• APR meetings were held with all Schools and Institutes to consider various sources of feedback, programme data and the student learning experience, reflecting on programme provision in 2012/13</li> <li>• All Schools and Institutes have a web-based Taught Programmes Action Plan (TPAP) on which they can identify objectives or the development and enhancement of taught provision and record progress on actions.</li> <li>• A revised Annual Programme Review process (agreed by Senate in December 2013) will be implemented in the 2014/15 academic year.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do members have views on the main points arising from the outcomes of the APR meetings?</li> <li>• Are members able to provide comments on how to ensure that the use of the TPAP as a tool in monitoring the health of all taught programmes is fully embedded in all Schools and Institutes?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Regulatory/statutory reference points and links to College strategy</b> | <p>Annual Programme Review is a key part of QMUL's quality assurance framework, it is also central to monitoring the student learning experience on all our taught programmes.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the APR process in monitoring academic standards and the student experience is a key element that QMUL will be assessed on when reviewed by the QAA (anticipated to be in 2016/17.)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Strategy and risk</b>                                                   | The Strategic Plan aims to provide the finest possible education to our undergraduate and postgraduate students. Effective annual monitoring of QMUL's taught provision underpins this aim by maintaining the currency and validity of our programmes. Failure to                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

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|                                                             | monitor the progress of actions could have serious implications for the delivery of the excellent student experience which QMUL aims to achieve. |
| <b>Reporting/<br/>consideration route<br/>for the paper</b> | The paper will also be circulated to Directors of Taught Programmes (DirTPs) and considered at Faculty DTPAGs.                                   |
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## Annual Programme Review Process

### Summary

This paper reports on the operation of the Annual Programme Review to evaluate the 2012/13 academic year.

Meetings were held with all Schools and Institutes to review their taught programmes. Part 1 of the report provides an overview of the process and procedural issues. Part 2 summarises discussions at the meetings. Key points to emerge from this process included:

- Variations in the use of the TPAP across schools and institutes - Part 1 section C, Part 2(l)
- The low level of student engagement with the TPAP – Part 1 section B, para. 9
- Concerns about the effectiveness of PGT Staff Student Liaison Committees – Part 2(b)
- Assessment and feedback issues identified in module evaluation and NSS - Part 2 (a) & (g)
- Identification of common issues across schools and institutes (Part 2)
- Identification of good practice and projects in individual schools – examples are included in Part 2

### Part 1: 2012/13 Process

#### A. Background

1. This is the third year of operation of the new style Annual Programme Review (APR), which was revised in 2011/12 in order to create a system for reviewing taught programmes that could be responsive to feedback received from various sources including students and external examiners. This is facilitated through the use of the web-based Taught Programmes Action Plan (TPAP), which should be used by schools and institutes to reflect on the operation of all taught programmes. This process should be undertaken regularly and the TPAP updated to track progress against plans and timetables.
2. The TPAP is to be reviewed at Faculty-level twice a year: once at the PAR meetings with Faculty Executives, and once at an APR meeting Chaired by the Dean for Taught Programmes / Dean for Postgraduate and Postdoctoral Studies held in the second semester. There is also a TPAP for each Faculty which is reviewed through the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning) Advisory Group once a year.

#### B. Evaluation of APR process for the 2012/13 academic year

3. The stated purpose of the APR process is to play a central role in the assurance of the academic standards of QMUL's taught provision and to strive to enhance the student learning experience. There is much evidence in the notes of the APR meetings to indicate that the process is meeting this aim. However, as was noted in last year's summary report, a review of

the TPAPs at the APR meetings has indicated that whilst there is evidence of effective and regular use of the TPAP in some Schools / Institutes this is not the case in all areas.

4. APR meetings (following a standard agenda template) were held with all schools and institutes in Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Engineering and Medicine and Dentistry (including the MBBS programme) as well as the Study Abroad Programme between February and May 2014.
5. Part 2 below provides a summary of the points from the APR meetings notes, following the headings of the agenda. This covers examples of good practice and identifies areas for further development.
6. The data scrutinised at the meetings included information on programme enrolments, progressions, final awards and widening participation statistics. Work continues to ensure that schools and institutes are clear about the definitions and datasets used. It is anticipated that the new Business Intelligence tool will be helpful in this regard and allow schools and institutes to access the relevant data year round.
7. The Students' Union worked again with student representatives to encourage them to review and comment on school/institute TPAPs. Unfortunately, few students actually took the opportunity to do so and this will need to be reviewed to assess how to increase engagement.
8. It is anticipated that the new programme-level survey of student engagement and experience, being introduced in 2014/15 to support the Student Experience, Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy (SETLA), will become a key tool in the APR process. Data on students' views about the structure of the curriculum, teaching, and assessment at a programme-level will be a valuable piece of evidence for APR.
9. The APR process to review 2013/14 has been revised following discussions with the Deans for Taught Programme (DTPs). These changes include an increased focus on utilising the results of a school/institute's internal programme review processes to inform discussions at APR meetings, a revised APR agenda and the bringing forward of meetings to November/December to allow earlier scrutiny.

### **C. Activity and engagement with the Taught Programmes Action Plan**

10. As noted in last year's report, engagement with the TPAP has remained variable with some schools/institutes updating it regularly throughout the year and others only updating it once a year prior to the APR meeting. In all meetings schools/institutes were reminded to update their TPAP, identify 'at risk' actions and close down actions that had been completed.
11. The Faculty of Science and Engineering had agreed to reformulate their TPAPs to a common template with a three tier system where level one signifies strategic issues, level two equates to operational issues and local issues are identified as level three. This is intended to help schools allocate actions correctly as well as make it easier for the Faculty to identify and review issues across all schools. This has been implemented for most TPAPs in the schools and all plans should be fully compliant by the next APR review.
12. ARCS will continue working with the Deans for Taught Programmes on mechanisms for ensuring that the TPAP is a 'live' document, owned and regularly updated by the School/Institute.

### **Part 2: Main Points from the APR Meeting Notes**

#### **1. Programme Feedback and Review**

## a) Module Evaluation

### *Feedback during the module*

- As noted in 2011/12, the score for the 'adequate feedback' statement was generally the lowest scoring of all seven core statements for both study levels. This issue was discussed in most meetings and schools are considering ways to address this. For some schools it was felt that work needed to be done on ensuring that students are aware of how and when feedback is available to them. It was noted by Barts Cancer Institute that although written feedback was provided for assignments, few students actually collected it.

### **Good Practice**

- Geography conducted a pilot to provide exam feedback to students which has proved successful and will be expanded. Law is providing feedback sessions via tutorials. The School of Business & Management (SBM) is looking at the structural barriers to feedback (for example, modules that are assessed by one final exam) to see how more feedback opportunities can be built in. The Blizzard Institute is using Turnitin to provide feedback to students.

### *Addressing low scores*

- The Deans for Taught Programmes (DTPs) and the Head of Postgraduate Studies (HPS) in SMD also considered the individual modules where there were low scores for one or more statement and how Schools / Institutes were addressing and responding to the results. Some Schools highlighted that meetings were held with module convenors to discuss the results. Others were reviewing the members of staff teaching on the module. Schools/institutes were reminded that where a module continues to score poorly year on year, that immediate corrective action was needed to address this.

### *Celebrating success*

- The data were also used to highlight individual modules delivering strong levels of overall student satisfaction and the DTPs commended those module convenors with very high scores.

## b) Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Meetings

- Many schools/institutes felt UG SSLCs were working well. It was felt that ensuring postgraduate representation was more challenging. Six schools / institutes reported challenges with the effectiveness of PGT SSLCs and engaging students given the short length of the programmes. The School of Physics and Astronomy (SPA) had tried to avoid low turn-out at the PGT SSLC by merging it with the UG SSLC. However, it was felt that the issues to be discussed were too different and therefore the school will be reverting to separate committees.

### **Good practice**

- Both the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine and the Barts Cancer Institute SSLCs included distance learners via the internet. CCLS was commended for running SSLCs for joint programmes. The DTP highlighted as a feature of good practice their work to inform students that they should bring broad issues rather complaints about specific modules or individuals, to manage expectations about what could be achieved by the SSLC. In the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR), student representatives are responsible for minuting meetings.
- Concerns had been expressed by two schools that the feedback submitted may not have been representative of the student body and another institute noted that reps were increasingly reporting issues to the SSLC that were outside its remit. Schools / institutes were working to address these issues and should be encouraged to consult with the Students' Union if appropriate.
- A few Schools were encouraged to make the recording of actions clearer and improve the tracking of progress. HSS schools were reminded to use the set template and to do a summary at the end of each year so on-going actions were clearly identified. Schools / institutes were

reminded to add major issues to the TPAP for monitoring and to ensure SSLC minutes were provided to ARCS to be placed on the website.

### c) Student Data

#### *Progression and retention*

- No major concerns were raised in regards to progression data. The S&E DTP expressed the desire that all progression rates in the Faculty were above 90% and schools should work towards achieving and/or maintaining this level. MBBS had the highest progression rate at 97%. History's progression rate had dropped from 91% to 87% - the school noted that a high number of students had interrupted but would monitor the figures. For the Science and Engineering Foundation Programme (SEFP), 73% of students completing the course moved on to study BSc programmes at the college.
- The progression rates for clearing students were also reviewed. In the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences (SBCS) the rate for clearing students (95%) was marginally higher than non-clearing (94%); this was put down to the fact that most clearing students had switched to Biomedical Sciences after failing to qualify for MBBS courses. However, in the School of English and Drama (SED) it was noted that the progression rate for clearing students was 79% as opposed to 89% for non-clearing students. The school was encouraged to check that these students were progressing as expected. SBM and the School of Engineering and Materials Science (SEMS) also had lower progression figures for clearing students. Both schools noted that they provide additional support for these students, however, it was expected that there would be fewer clearing students in future due to higher application numbers and recruitment of stronger students via increased entry tariffs.
- There was commentary on the range of initiatives that Schools had put in place to continue efforts to support progression. Electronic Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) and Geography had introduced late summer re-sits which were felt to be positively impacting these figures. In Politics, the Director of Student Engagement teaches all first years so that they are aware of his role as personal tutor. SED have introduced a new 'SED essentials' course for first years to improve their transition to HE. Maths ran late summer revision classes with PGR students – although these were not well-attended, the students who did attend achieved better results.
- Data on PGT completions over the last three years was considered. Percentage completions in some departments such as SBCS appeared low, however the actual numbers of students involved were very small and the programmes have subsequently been withdrawn. Furthermore, SBCS is working on a Student Retention and Engagement Policy to be introduced in 2014/15. Completion rates for part-time students were low, for example in SED and the School of Economics and Finance, however this was attributed to the fact that these students are likely to be working with the attendant pressures on time. Dentistry also had a lower than expected completion rate – this would be monitored and discussed at the next APR.
- Several schools and institutes felt that the progression data could be improved by separating out interrupted students as they are otherwise included as non-completers and therefore artificially increase the figures. This request will be discussed with Planning.

#### *Awards / Achievement*

- Both Maths and Law award a lower number of firsts than might be expected. Maths expects that this will not be the case for the next set of figures. In Law, it was suggested that the school should ensure that it is using the full range of marks. In the SBM APR, it was noted that UG awards were lower than the peer institution average; however, the school felt that this was due to the fact that it had a higher intake of mature / non-standard entry students than its peers. In several schools, it was intended to raise the entry tariff which was expected to improve final

awards data. In History it was noted that white students with low entry tariffs improved more than their BME equivalents – the school intends to identify a member of staff to take the lead on diversity issues.

#### **d) External Examiners Reports**

- Feedback from external examiners on programme matters and how they were being considered and progressed was often discussed in the meetings, including feedback on programme structure, curriculum content, and student performance. All HSS schools were reminded to use the full range of marks and provide additional guidance for markers on this if necessary. In terms of assessment methods, the external examiner for the Wolfson felt that too many assessment types were used with students whereas in Law it was felt that there was an over-reliance on assessment by examination. In both cases, the assessment methods had been reviewed but the institute and school felt that no changes were required. Some schools and institutes had not responded to External Examiner comments and were encouraged to do so as quickly as possible.

##### ***Good practice***

- In MBBS, external examiners had been invited to a conference where a specific assessment theme was considered. Feedback from the externals had been very positive. In History, external examiners met with the individual module leaders.

#### **e) External Reviews**

- A number of schools and institutes had successfully applied for accreditation or re-accreditation from professional or statutory bodies. This includes MBBS (GMC), Dentistry (GDC), EECS (IET), SEMS (IME) and CCLS (module exemptions from various bodies).

#### **f) Specific Taught Provision**

##### *Associates*

- The meetings showed that the growth in Associate numbers was mainly concentrated in HSS with two schools (SBM and SED) having to cap numbers due to limits on space and resources. S&E did not recruit as many Associates as hoped although it is expected that the number of Science without Borders students will increase.

##### *Joint Honours programmes*

- HSS have introduced a Joint Honours co-ordinating group to try and improve communication and co-ordination between partner schools with the aim of providing a more consistent experience to JH students.

#### **g) Student Surveys**

- As with the module evaluation reports, there was a consistent pattern of lower scores in the assessment and feedback question on the NSS. The plans to address this for module evaluation should also impact on NSS scores. Some schools had been very active in tackling lower scores. SED had received lower scores for provision of learning resources than in previous years and so had identified extra investment in this area. It was felt that it was useful to have the text comments and scores at the same time as the remarks were vital for contextualising the numerical values
- It was noted that a small dip in the response rate could have a big impact on the position of a school / institute in relation to its peers and therefore the necessity of encouraging a high student return was re-emphasised.
- The response rates for PTES were generally lower and therefore in some schools, such as

SBCS who had fewer than 10 responses, it was hard to draw any useful conclusions. However, the Blizzard Institute and EECS intended to review their induction programmes to try and improve integration and preparation for masters study. In History and Dentistry, it was felt that the lack of specific administrative support for the PGT programmes had impacted on organisational scores and this was being addressed. Wolfson will be approaching other schools and institutes for peer support in producing an action plan to tackle low scores.

- The Associate Students Survey was discussed in the Study Abroad APR. There was a high level of satisfaction amongst associate students. However, a slight concern regarding students from liberal arts colleges in the US choosing inappropriate modules in S&E was noted. The Faculty is developing pathways to try and mitigate this.

## **2. Curriculum and Assessment**

### **h) Graduate Attributes and Employability**

- Employability remains a high priority with schools and institutes and progress with embedding Graduate Attributes in the curriculum is continuing using various strategies. SBCS have three employability advisors in post. Drama has designed a comprehensive website for employability matters and a corresponding website for English students will be developed. History is using the language strategy to support employability. Maths and Physics ran joint events on graduate attributes – these were very well attended but numbers dropped when students were asked to do a presentation.

### **i) Curriculum Review**

- Several schools and institutes were either in the process of or were intending to carry out a curriculum review. Wolfson was intending to carry out a curriculum review using a peer reviewer from another University of London college.

### **j) Learning Resources**

- QM Plus was in use in all schools and institutes although full implementation varied. EECS were using it for Year 1 only whereas Maths had implemented it for all years and was intending to move all its handbooks and staff intranet pages to this environment too.
- Some access issues, for example for BUPT and Associate students, had been encountered but were now mostly resolved.

#### **Good practice**

- The E-learning Manager in History had developed a scheme for e-apprentices, usually PhD students, to help module organizers in designing and uploading materials to the individual module websites
- Blizzard noted that it was unhappy with the functionality of Q-Review and so had bought a separate media package for lecture capture.
- A few schools and institutes expressed some concerns that there were not enough teaching rooms or resources to handle the increased student numbers expected. Wolfson felt that the lack of a dedicated learning space for PGT students was negatively impacting on the student experience.



### **3. Learning & Teaching Strategy / TPAP**

#### **k) LTAS (HSS only)**

- The LTAS for HSS schools was noted. In the case of Business & Management and Politics it was noted that the strategy was due to be updated this year. Law was waiting to undergo its Periodic Review before revising this document.

#### **l) TPAP**

- All schools and institutes were reminded that the TPAP was supposed to be a live document to be updated and referred to regularly. It was noted that some schools had not updated their TPAP since the previous APR meetings.
- It was noted that where the TPAP had been updated, this had usually been done by the Director of Taught Programmes. Schools and institutes were reminded that other staff could and should be updating this document as actions arise which correspond with their areas of responsibility.
- S&E schools were also reminded to structure their TPAP in line with the Faculty framework.