



Senate

Paper Title	Annual Programme Review
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to note the outcomes of the annual programme review process during 2014-15 and the approach for programme review during 2015-16.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2014-15, programme reviews were undertaken by programme leads/teams and the outcomes of these reviews were considered during the annual programme review meetings, chaired by the Deans for Taught Programmes during semester one. • A review of this process took place in March 2015, and it was agreed that revised guidance would be issued to programme teams in order to strengthen further this aspect of the annual review process. • The focal point of annual programme review is the work undertaken in schools/institutes at the level of the programme/cluster of programmes. It is recommended that schools and institutes should conduct these reviews after examination boards, to be completed by September (undergraduate) and December (postgraduate).
Regulatory/statutory reference points	Senate has general responsibility for the academic activity of QMUL, including the management of academic standards and the quality of provision.
Strategy and risk	<p>Annual programme review aligns with Strategic Aim 3, <i>'to provide all our students, wherever based, an education that is judged internationally to be of the highest quality, and which exploits innovations in teaching, learning and assessment.'</i></p> <p>The QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education recommends that, <i>'Programme monitoring and review takes place in a planned cycle based on a transparent rationale which may include assessment of the risks involved in the provision concerned'</i>. The close alignment of annual programme review with the point of delivery enables risks to be identified and outcomes to be reported to the Education Quality Board and Senate.</p>
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	n/a

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Annual Programme Review Process 2014/15

Summary

This paper reports on the operation of the Annual Programme Review (APR) to evaluate the 2013/14 academic year. Part 1 provides background on the process, Part 2 raises key points from APR meetings and Part 3 identifies further developments to refine APR processes.

Part 1: Process and Procedure for 2013-14 Review

A. Background

1. The Annual Programme Review (APR) plays a central role in the assurance of the academic standards of QMUL's taught provision and enhancement of the student learning experience. The process also allows the sharing of good practice between schools and institutes and assists with the identification of any QMUL-wide themes or issues. It requires schools and institutes to review their taught provision and make use of supporting data such as Student-Staff Liaison Committee minutes and statistics on enrolment, progression and award in order to evaluate whether their programmes meet the standards expected by QMUL, the sector and wider stakeholders such as professional bodies.

B. Evaluation of APR process for the 2014/15 academic year

2. The meetings were held with all schools and institutes and the Centre for Academic and Professional Development (CAPD) following the revised process agreed by Senate in December 2013. As part of this revised agenda schools and institutes were required to provide a formal summary of the results of their internal programme review processes as part of the APR documentation.
3. In order to assist schools and institutes a template document was produced that gave a series of questions and prompts to be considered that would be discussed at the APR meeting. Schools in the faculty of Science and Engineering (S&E) were required to complete the template with the requested information whilst schools in Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) and institutes in the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD) were permitted to either use the template or submit alternative documents such as minutes of relevant meetings. In the event most schools and institutes opted to use the template to present a record of their reviews.
4. There was considerable variation in regards to how the template was completed. The best reviews were well-evidenced and had drawn on a wide range of available data to support the conclusions reached. Based on this first year, guidance has been produced for schools and institutes to provide further clarification on what data should be provided for programme review purposes.
5. The timings of the meetings in 2014/15 were brought forward with the majority taking place in November and December 2014 – the APR meetings for the Centre for Academic and Professional Development and for the Associates programmes took place in January and May respectively. Minutes from the meetings suggest that most schools and institutes felt this move was beneficial as it was a useful forum to consider whether extra resources should be requested during the next Planning and Accountability Review. However, this did mean that some of the datasets

considered in previous years, such as PGT awards data, were not available in time for discussion at the meetings.

6. Part 2 below provides a summary of points from the minutes of the APR meetings. This covers examples of good practice and identifies areas for further development.
7. 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. As in previous years, very few course representatives took the opportunity to comment on their school/institute TPAP. The re-timing of the meetings also meant that the Students' Union were unable to run their annual TPAP training as elections had only just concluded and many representatives were still undergoing introductory training. However, from 2014/15 representatives are now being elected for the duration of the course. It is hoped that this continuing cohort will be more confident in engaging with the TPAP.

Part 2: Main Points from the APR Meeting Notes

1. Programme Portfolio and Review

- a) As noted, the consideration of the results of the individual or cognate internal programme reviews was a new element for APR meetings. It should be noted that although documentation varied between schools and institutes, the discussions that were held under this item were productive and allowed a comprehensive overview of programme function.

b) Specific Taught Provision

Joint Honours programmes

- Several schools mentioned issues with co-ordinating Joint Honours programmes with other schools. These included partner schools withdrawing or limiting modules at short notice or without communication, students noting inconsistency of support between schools and lack of synchronicity between schools when selecting dissertation topics and supervisors.
- There is a Joint Honours co-ordinating group run by HSS to try and improve communication and co-ordination between partner schools but it appears that further work in this area would be helpful especially regarding programmes run by schools in different faculties.

c) Student Data

Progression and retention

- Progression statistics for new UG students specifically showed higher variation in progression rates for direct entry students and those recruited through Clearing. This was particularly noted in the schools of English and Drama (83% vs. 65%), History (91% vs. 78%) and Languages, Linguistics and Film (87% vs. 68%). This was discussed at the relevant meetings with schools being encouraged to consider how to further support these students.
- It was notable that several schools had introduced study-only modules for first year students in order to assist students with the transition to university-level study.

Awards / Achievement

- A few schools noted that the number of first and upper second class degrees awarded were lower in comparison to their sector peers (Physics and Astronomy, Law, Electronic Engineering and Computer Science) or other Russell Group institutions (Engineering and Materials Science, Mathematical Sciences, Economics and Finance). Both Mathematical Sciences and EECS felt this may be due to the lower entry qualifications of students. This was also considered to be an explanation for the lower number of firsts awarded in Chemistry programmes in comparison to the other programmes in SBCS.

d) External Reviews

- A number of schools and institutes had applied for accreditation or undergone re-accreditation visits from professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. This includes SBCS (IBMS), SEMS (IMechE and RAeS), Dentistry (GDC), Economics and Finance (CISA) and the BUPT programme in EECS (IET).

2. Programme Feedback

e) Module Evaluation

Feedback during the module

- As in previous years, 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 including the actions that have already been undertaken by schools and institutes in tackling this area.

Addressing low scores

- The Deans for Taught Programmes (DTPs) and the Head of Postgraduate Studies (HPS) in SMD also considered the actions being taken by schools and institutes to address low scores. In several cases, the underlying issue was one of staff development and schools and institutes were taking steps to address this through targeted support and development, although only the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR) noted that it would be approaching the Centre for Academic and Professional Development to discuss work on staff development.

f) Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Meetings

- Many schools/institutes felt UG SSLCs were working well and student issues were being dealt with effectively. Some issues were noted with PGT SSLCs - for example, attendance at meetings in Maths had been poor so the school was now operating an open forum for all PGT students which was proving more successful.

3. Student Experience

g) Student Surveys

- Some schools and institutes noted very good National Student Survey (NSS) scores (BDS and MBBS) whereas others had noted a decline in scores in several areas. 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 vital.
- As in previous years, response rates for the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) were lower than NSS, with the average response rate across all schools and institutes just under 24% (as opposed to almost 65% for the NSS). Some schools (SBCS, Geography and Mathematical Sciences) had fewer than 10 respondents making it hard to draw any useful conclusions from the data. All schools and institutes were encouraged to look at how they could improve response rates.

h) Graduate Attributes and Employability

- Employability remains an ongoing focus in schools and institutes. Several schools which offer placements noted increasing demand from students for this opportunity which schools would like to meet but are constrained by the number of placements they are able to procure.

i) Learning Resources

- QM Plus was in use in all schools and institutes although the level of usage varied. The School of Economics and Finance had introduced a template to improve QMplus consistency between modules.
- QReview was also widely in use with many schools and institutes moving to an opt-out policy. Several schools noted issues with reliability for AV and Eduroam which impacted on teaching. PC availability was also of concern particularly on the Charterhouse Square site.
- Several schools and institutes expressed concerns that there was not enough physical teaching space to contain increased student numbers. Institutes based at the Charterhouse Square site felt that PGT rooms were allocated very late and were often changed at short notice leading to increased student dissatisfaction.

j) Academic Support and Personal Advising

- Many schools and institutes were looking at the way that students engaged with their academic advisors or personal tutors. Business and Management is aiming to ensure that a student's personal tutor is also a seminar leader for them in the first year. Several study-only modules also incorporated regular meetings with advisors as part of the structure of the module.

4. Learning and Teaching

k) 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.

Part 3: Alterations to the 2015/16 process

1. The Dean and Deputy Deans for Taught Programmes in HSS, the Dean for Taught Programmes in S&E and the Head of Postgraduate Studies for SMD met with ARCS on 19 March to discuss the implementation of the new APR agenda and its impact on the meetings. It was agreed that the introduction of a specific item to discuss the results of internal programme reviews was useful but that schools and institutes needed further guidance to produce reviews that fully addressed the required areas. Draft guidance has subsequently been produced. These reviews will be analysed and any themes and examples of good practice will be identified. Issues of concern would be addressed by the Deans or Head of Postgraduate Studies as part of their normal meeting schedule with schools and institutes.
2. At the APR meeting held to discuss Associate students it was agreed that it may not be appropriate to discuss these schemes as part of the Annual Programme Review process. Instead it was suggested to hold an Annual Review that will consider the separate categories of associate students rather than treating discrete populations as a homogenous cohort. Holding this meeting in advance of the APR meetings could allow any specific issues to be directed to the relevant school or institute as appropriate. This approach will be discussed by the Vice Principal (International), the Lead for International Student Experience and staff with responsibilities for these activities. If agreed, it would be anticipated that this new format would be implemented in October 2015.