ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW

# Review of Academic Year 2024-25

# **WORKBOOK**

# **FOR**

# **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH** **LEVEL (WITH SIGNIFICANT TAUGHT COMPONENTS)**

## Introduction

Annual Programme Review (APR) is a reflective conversation about programmes that is:

* underpinned by relevant data and evidence;
* assures the University of the academic quality and standards of our awards;
* identifies good practice and encourages continual enhancement to promote positive outcomes for students and other stakeholders;
* identifies and addresses poor programme performance including responding to any actual or potential concerns from external regulators;
* results in a set of actions for the Reporting Unit to enhance and/or address weaknesses.

APR operates at 3 levels: Undergraduate (UG), Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR).

APR reports should be received from each specified Reporting Unit as defined in the [Student Focused Dashboards](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/planning-and-analytics/staff/student-focused-dashboards/). The Reporting Unit level is intended to focus meaningful analysis and responses at a level close to students' experience of study while combining similar programmes to minimise duplication. In the context of PGR, a Reporting Unit will either be the same as a PhD programme, or a series of related PhD programmes. Your faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager will provide further guidance in this regard.

The process is divided into a series of sequential steps that break down the Review by theme based upon available evidence and data. The intention is to allow annual review to commence when not all sources of evidence may yet be available. But steps may be discussed concurrently where evidence and data are available (for example, at partners where data is not supplied by LU) and Reporting Unit Teams are encouraged to complete the Review at the earliest opportunity.

As the nature and structure of PGR activities are significantly different from UG and PG taught programmes, a PGR-specific question set has been developed, and a census point defined at the start of the academic year. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are a series of defined start points for PGRs throughout the year, overall October is the most popular, and thus deemed the most appropriate milestone to use. There are two versions of the PGR APR, a version for programmes that do not contain a taught element, and **this version** for programmes that **do** contain a significant taught element.

There are a variety of approaches to incorporating taught components within a PhD programme at Lancaster. For example, a number of programmes allow student progression from year 1 to year 2 only on the basis of having successfully completed a mandatory PhD training pathway, where an external examiner oversees the activity. Other programmes have taught components that range from 80 to 180 credits, where exam boards and an external examiner are part of the standard process. Some programmes offer an exit award following the completion of a certain number of taught elements. This version of the APR has been developed to enable Reporting Units that contain a significant amount of assessed taught material to reflect both on the research and taught elements of the programme. Some questions are specifically aimed at taught activity (labelled as **[T])**, others are relevant both to research and teaching.

## Timing

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| PGR | July  2025 | Aug  2025 | Sept  2025 | Oct  2025 | Nov  2025 | Dec  2025 | Jan  2026 | Feb  2026 | March 2026 | April  2026 | May 2026 | June  2026 |
| Step 1: Review of PGR student performance |  |  |  | PGR census point | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 2: Student voice |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 3: Standards, quality and academic integrity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 4: Student outcomes and awards |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 5: Submission of report for Departmental consideration |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 6: Faculty consideration |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 7: ASQC consideration |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 8: Institutional assurance |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Outputs

The outputs of APR for each Reporting Unit and for each relevant level of study (UG, PGT, PGR) are:

* A completed Workbook.
* A Quality Enhancement Plan (draft until the completion of Steps 1-5 to be finalised at Step 6). **Please ensure that all areas of weakness or areas requiring further enhancement identified in your responses to questions are detailed in your Quality Enhancement Plan.**
* An Appendix comprising:
  + The Head of Department response letter to the External Examiner (where the programme contains taught elements).
  + A PDF of the Reporting Unit's data contained in the Student Data Dashboard (once updated in November 2025).

*Please complete boxes from this page using question prompts:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Reporting Unit:** |  |
| **Department:** |  |
| **Faculty:** |  |
| **Lead Author:** |  |
| **Contributing Authors:** *please involve not only relevant PGR Directors, supervisory staff (and teaching staff where relevant) but where appropriate professional service staff such as PGR Coordinators and Student Programme Officers* |  |

Step 1: Review of PGR student performance

**Examples(\*)** of evidence to be considered include:

* Student performance as demonstrated during the 12 months prior to the census point
* Regularity of supervisory meetings
* Appraisals and confirmations (timing and outcomes)
* Placement outcomes
* Publications and conference attendance
* Engagement activities
* DNA completion rates
* Research training undertaken
* Activities within the Department fostering PGR development
* Any PGR external examiner comments with wider applicability
* **[T]** Student performance as demonstrated at the most recent examination board(s)
* **[T]** External Examiner's oral comments

(\*) This is an extensive list identifying areas that you may wish to reflect on – it is not the intention that you report on them all.

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| --- | --- |
| **[T]**   1. **In the light of student performance at the examination board(s) and oral comments on student performance made by your external examiner(s) either at or in advance of the exam board(s),** **identify areas of strength and areas that require further development or enhancement.** | |
|  | |
| 1. ***Does the available evidence demonstrate a strong level of student academic performance and engagement?*** |
|  |
| 1. ***Describe how you integrate PGRs in the research culture of the department, and any relevant research centres or institutes.*** |
|  |
| 1. ***In the light of the evidence provided and your reflections, identify areas of strength and areas that require further development or enhancement.*** |
|  |

Step 2: Student voice

Evidence to be considered:

* PRES results. Reporting Unit level data on PRES on the [postgraduate research student dashboard](https://tableauserver.lancs.ac.uk/t/authorised/views/Studentfocuseddashboards-PGR-suppressedversion/Frontpage?%3Aiid=1&%3AshowVizHome=no&%3Aembed=yes&%3Atoolbar=top#2) will be updated for 2025 results in November. Please note that more detailed data on PRES is available from [PRES results](https://tableauserver.lancs.ac.uk/t/authorised/views/PRESResults/UniversitySummary?%3Aembed=yes&%3Adisplay_count=no&%3Atoolbar=top#3) but that this data is not presented by Reporting Unit.
* Summary of staff-student consultative committees (or equivalent).
* Summary of staff-student consultative processes (town halls, etc.)
* Issues raised at appraisals, confirmations, vivas
* **[T]** LUMES results from [Student Module Evaluation Reports](https://evaluations.lancs.ac.uk/displayreport)

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| --- | --- |
| **[T]**   1. ***In the light of your most recent LUMES results - identify strengths and areas that require enhancement.*** | |
|  | |
| 1. ***Describe the consultative processes with PGRs within your department. How effective are your processes of soliciting comments and feeding back?*** |
|  |
| 1. ***What are the key actions that arose from this process?*** |
|  |
| 1. ***In the light of your most recent PRES results - and compared to the rest of the University - identify strengths and areas that require enhancement.*** |
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| 1. ***With regard to PGR students that take part in teaching activities, describe how you integrate them into the teaching culture of the department. What positive and negative impacts have these teaching activities had on their PhD studies?*** |
|  |
| 1. ***Please provide an outline of the department’s research training provision. Are there any particular strengths or notable gaps or problems with this programme?*** |
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Step 3: Academic standards, quality and academic integrity

**Examples(\*)** of evidence to be considered include:

* UKRI Regulatory Framework
* Researcher Concordat
* Researcher Development Framework
* Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures
* Postgraduate Code of Practice
* QAA Characteristics Statement for Doctoral Degrees
* Other external reference points (e.g. relevant non HE partners)
* Indicators of esteem of relevance to research supervision
* Any relevant feedback from REF processes
* Any relevant feedback from Athena SWAN processes
* Data on cases of poor academic practice, academic misconduct and referrals to Standing Academic Committee
* Outputs from any other review processes relevant to academic standards and quality
* **[T]** External Examiner's annual report
* **[T]** QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) level descriptors

*(\*) This is an extensive list identifying areas that you may wish to reflect on – it is not the intention that you report on them all.*

### External examiner's report

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| --- |
| **[T]**   1. ***What areas of strengths were identified by your external examiner(s) in their annual report?*** |
|  |
| **[T]**   1. ***What areas for improvement were identified by your external examiner(s) in their annual report? Indicate how you will respond to address the external examiner suggestions.*** |
|  |

*As part of the process of APR programme teams are asked to:*

* *work with the Head of Department to draft a written response to the external examiner* report(s);
* *submit this response to a meeting of the staff-student consultative committee (or equivalent)* for discussion;
* *append a copy* of the HoD response to the APR Workbook.

***(c) Please confirm that the Head of Department's response letter is contained in the Appendix to this Workbook:***

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| YES |  |
| NO |  |

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| ***(d) Note the date of the staff-student consultative committee at which this response was discussed.*** |
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| 1. ***Please comment on supervisory practices (for example distribution across academic staff, regularity of meetings, internal mentoring etc.) within your department.*** | |
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| ***f) Please comment on post-study employment support practices for PGRs within your department.*** |
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| ***g) In the light of the evidence provided and your reflections, identify areas of strength and areas that require further development or enhancement.*** |
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## Academic integrity

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| ***h) Please indicate both number of cases of poor academic practice and academic misconduct within your department during the last academic year.*** |
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| ***i) Note the steps you took to minimise and detect academic misconduct.*** |
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Step 4: Student outcomes and awards

Evidence to be considered:

* Student rates of:
  + Continuation from Year 1 to Year 2 (as per OfS definition)
  + Completion of course (as per OfS definition)
  + Progression to further study or graduate employment (as per OfS definition)
* Confirmation rates
* On time / delayed completion of studies
* PhD resubmissions (12-month corrections)
* Number of PGR degrees awarded

Relevant data by Reporting Unit is available on the [PGR student focused dashboard](https://tableauserver.lancs.ac.uk/t/authorised/views/Studentfocuseddashboards-PGR-suppressedversion/Frontpage?%3Aiid=1&%3AshowVizHome=no&%3Aembed=yes&%3Atoolbar=top#2). We expect data to be updated in early November 2025. More detailed information is available on progression in the [Graduate Outcomes dashboard](https://tableauserver.lancs.ac.uk/t/authorised/views/GraduateOutcomes/GraduateOutcomes?%3Aiid=3&%3AshowVizHome=no&%3Aembed=yes&%3Atoolbar=top#1) (but note this information is not displayed by Reporting Unit).

Condition B3 of the Office for Students’ (OfS’s) regulatory framework requires that: ‘The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.’ A fuller description can be found here: [condition\_b3\_baselines.pdf (officeforstudents.org.uk)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/490d884f-03aa-49cf-907d-011149309983/condition_b3_baselines.pdf#:~:text=Condition%20B3%20of%20the%20Office%20for%20Students%E2%80%99%20%28OfS%E2%80%99s%29,2.%20The%20condition%20is%20assessed%20in%20two%20stages.)

PhD confirmation and on-time completion

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| 1. ***Describe the processes used to move from probationary PhD to confirm as PhD, the timeframes, and an indication of the rate of those that are confirmed versus those where a decision is deferred.*** |
|  |
| 1. ***Outline performance over the last 12 months in terms of the number of candidates that have submitted:***   ***- on time***  ***- late***  ***- resubmitted.*** |
|  |

Student continuation (OfS definition[[1]](#footnote-2))

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| --- |
| ***c) With reference to your programme data for the latest available 4 years, in comparison to the OfS B3 threshold, please comment on:***  ***- the absolute level of student continuation on your programme***  ***- student continuation on your programme in comparison to overall University achievement***  ***- student continuation on your programme in comparison to wider student performance in the discipline.*** |
|  |

Student completion (OfS definition[[2]](#footnote-3))

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| --- |
| 1. ***With reference to your programme data for the latest available 4 years, in comparison to the OfS B3 threshold, please comment on:***   ***- the absolute level of student completion on your programme***  ***- student completion on your programme in comparison to overall University achievement***  ***- student completion on your programme in relation to wider student performance in the discipline.*** |
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Student progression to further study or graduate employment (OfS definition[[3]](#footnote-4))

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| 1. ***With reference to your programme data for the latest available 4 years, in comparison to the OfS B3 threshold, please comment on:***   ***- the absolute level of student progression on your programme***  ***- student progression on your programme in comparison to overall University achievement***  ***- student progression on your programme in comparison to wider student performance in the discipline.*** |
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Student degree outcomes

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| 1. ***With reference to your programme data for the latest available 4 years, please comment on:***   ***- on the absolute level of pass/fail in your programme***  ***- student performance on your programme in relation to overall University achievement***  **- *student performance on your programme in relation to wider student performance in the discipline.*** |
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Step 5: Departmental consideration

Once the Reporting Unit staff have completed Steps 1-4 the resulting report and appendices should be submitted to the Department for consideration.

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| Lead Author signature confirming APR Report is final and can be submitted to Department Teaching Committee: |  |
| Date: |  |

### Record of discussion and approval at the relevant departmental meeting:

Where the Lead Author is also the chair of the departmental meeting it is recommended that an independent chair is appointed for this item. The departmental meeting is recommended to invite the Head of Department to comment on the Report.

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| ***Please describe the relevant meeting, or process, used to review steps 1-4 and capture the departmental discussion.*** |
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| ***Please summarise below the discussion of the APR report at the relevant department meeting.*** | |
|  | |
| Date of relevant departmental meeting for consideration and approval: |  |

## Step 6: Faculty consideration

Once the APR Report has been approved by the relevant department meeting it should be submitted to the Faculty Teaching Committee via the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager.

### Record of discussion at Faculty Teaching Committee (or equivalent):

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| ***Please summarise below the discussion of the APR report at the Faculty Teaching Committee.*** | |
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| Date of Faculty Teaching Committee consideration and approval: |  |

## Actions from Previous Year(s)

*Summary of achievement on last Action Plan completed. Indicate progress made.*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **COMPLETED ACTIONS** | | | | | |
| **Issue** | **Action** | **Responsible person** | **Due date** | **Anticipated outcome** | **Update on progress** |
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| **ONGOING ACTIONS** | | | | | |
| **Issue** | **Action** | **Responsible person** | **Due date** | **Anticipated outcome** | **Update on progress** |
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## Quality Enhancement Plan

*Summarise all actions deriving from your responses to this APR in the following table.*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NEW ACTIONS** | | | | | |
| **Issue** | **Action** | **Responsible person** | **Due date** | **Anticipated outcome** | **Update on progress** |
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APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: Head of Department response letter to the External Examiner

*Insert here*

## APPENDIX 2: PDF of the Reporting Unit data contained in the Student Data Dashboard (once updated in November 2025)

*Insert here*

1. Continuation: The proportion of students that were observed to be continuing in the study of a higher education qualification (or have gained a qualification) one year and 15 days after they started their course (two years and 15 days for part-time students). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Completion: The proportion of students that were observed to have gained a higher education qualification (or were continuing in the study of a qualification) four years and 15 days after they started their course (six years and 15 days for part-time students). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Progression: The proportion of qualifiers that identify managerial or professional employment, further study or other positive outcomes among the activities that they were undertaking when responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey 15 months after they left higher education. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)