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Annual Programme Review - Supplementary Questions

1. Context

Annual Programme Review (APR) provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on a programme – or cognate suite of programmes – to ensure that there is a focus on the overall student experience, including in any minor subjects, and that due account is taken of combined/consortial programmes involving multiple departments.

It should be noted that the focus of the annual review process has shifted significantly from previous years, towards consideration of the programme rather than modules and/or departments. As such the discussion fora may also be different from previous years with less emphasis on departmental reviews and more on groups of individuals who contribute to the delivery of the programme(s). The process is not prescriptive about how these discussions are organized or facilitated, and where cross-faculty provision exists it may well be the case that these groupings cannot come together physically in one location at one time. Effort should be made, however, to enable virtual discussions, or at the very least for the whole group to be able to review and contribute to the completion of the APR form prior to submission to Faculty Teaching Committee in order that a truly holistic review is presented.

Therefore, it is an expectation of the process that all those connected with the delivery of the programme will have the opportunity to be involved in the review, and that students will also have opportunity to input, through staff-student committees or other means.

The APR questions are drawn around 3 areas: specified, enacted and experienced. Those who have completed the CAP or ATLAS programmes will be familiar with these terms as foundations of good programme design, being; what is described, what is delivered, and how it is experienced. Thus the questions take reviewers through a journey considering at first how the programme is designed, its purpose in terms of learning outcomes, and how they are tested through assessment. Secondly the APR seeks reflection on how the programme has been delivered by considering teaching, learning and assessment practice, the use of technology, and in particular any innovations that have been implemented or challenges that have been faced. Finally the APR seeks a commentary on how the programme has been experienced both from a student and staff perspective. Here the data packs will be particularly useful, along with feedback from students, external examiners (through their reports) and other stakeholders.

Taken together the sections should provide an opportunity for all those involved in the delivery to think holistically about the programme, and to identify successful practice and enhancements for the future. These may be revisions to structure, assessment, or content; it may equally be a decision to expand further practice or activity that has proved to be particularly effective. The resulting activity creates a feedback loop as described in figure 1.

2. Analysis

Departments will be presented with data packs for cognate subject areas prepared by the Institutional Data Analytics team. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the data for detailed statistical analysis, subject teams are asked to use these data packs to inform reflection on each programme’s performance in the preceding year, to highlight areas for celebration or concern, and to inform action plans for future years.

Figure 1: Quality enhancement ‘feedback loop’
3. Reporting

The process has been designed to be predominantly forward-looking, acknowledging the performance of the previous academic year, identifying good practice and building on these foundations. The process aligns to the Programme Monitoring and Enhancement Principles of Quality Assurance for Quality Enhancement (QA4QE):

- Engage programme teams, students and external stakeholders
- Note and share effective practice
- Highlight the importance of the programme
- Analyse data to inform decision-making and action planning
- Nurture innovation in teaching and learning
- Collaborate across departments, faculties and services to optimize students’ experience
- Encourage continuous reflection and improvement

Teams are encouraged to consider these principles when addressing the APR questions. To aid in the reflective process and in identifying actions, further supplementary questions/prompts have been provided below, alongside each question. Teams are not required to respond to these supplementary questions directly, but may wish to factor them in to their deliberations and when completing the APR report form. In addition, programme teams are encouraged to seek input from colleagues providing more specialist support, such as the Transitions Officers, the Inclusive Practice Development Consultant, the Disability Advisors, or your EDI and Disability Reps.

Where collaborative partnerships exist, the programme team is required to consider these as part of the suite of programmes and respond within the questions appropriately. However, the designated Regional or International Teaching Partnerships (LU Ghana, LUC@BJTU, Sunway, Blackburn College and Blackpool and the Fylde College) will undergo annual review processes separately; ITPs will undergo the same APR process but on their respective timescales, with the exception of EMBA which will be managed through LUMS irrespective of delivery location. RTPs have a separate process which they follow.

In the case of ITPs, the faculty’s Director of ITPs will review each ITP APR on receipt and provide input to the relevant year’s Faculty APR report.

It is anticipated that departments will review APRs relevant to their portfolio through the most appropriate extant mechanisms. Heads of Department will have the opportunity to add a ‘wrap-around’ statement to each APR which falls under their department’s administration responsibility. Non-administering departments may choose to also review relevant APRs in a formal setting, with the Head of Department contributing to the wrap-around statement, but this is not in itself a requirement of the process unless there are specific issues or highlights that require report and/or escalation.

4. Rolling Action Plans

Any actions identified through this process should be included in the Rolling Action Plan for the administering department and appended to the report.

5. Supplementary Questions

The following section provides detailed guidance for programme teams to consider when completing the annual programme review template. This document is divided into the same sections as the template, and contains each APR question followed by supplementary prompts and questions to provide both context and structure for team discussions when preparing responses.

5.1. Section 1: Specified

5.1.1. Question: To what extent are the programme specifications and associated module specifications up to date and comprehensive, reflecting any changes over the last year (or
longer)? Do they accurately describe the programme, its purpose and content, so that prospective applicants and students are clear about what they should expect during the course of their studies and what is expected of them? What processes are in place for the regular review of programme and module specifications?

The programme team may wish to consider the following points which may have impacted on the programme:

- a general review of the curriculum
- developments to introduce or increase international study or work placement opportunities
- staff changes
- PSRB visits/reviews of programmes which resulted in particular actions
- actions/suggestions identified in External Examiner report(s)
- activities or developments to address problems that have been highlighted through performance indicators, such as NSS/PTES
- developments or initiatives to engage with educational collaborative partners, other external bodies such as employers, or industry representatives which identified changes to the programme content and/or delivery
- any issues arising from the delivery of work-based learning partnerships
- actions identified from student feedback, for example through Staff-Student Committees.

5.1.2. Question: Considering the 5 assessment and feedback principles, briefly describe how the programme aligns with the principles, or what plans are in place to achieve alignment through programme-level design and delivery.

The principles were developed by the Assessment and Feedback Working Group, which was convened to review and recommend how the University could achieve significant achievements to the assessment and feedback experience of our taught course students.

The principles have been informed by University-wide practice, sector guidance, educational research and student consultation, and the idea that assessment and feedback should be considered within the context of programme-level design.

5.2. Section 2: Enacted

5.2.1. Question: In the programme team’s opinion, what has been most innovative and/or challenging this year in relation to teaching, learning and assessment, and how might this reflection inform actions for next year?

The programme team may wish to consider the following points when reviewing teaching, learning and assessment practice:

- a module/programme which adopted new learning and teaching techniques or assessment methods
- examples of developments in research-led/informed teaching
- initiatives to develop students’ employability skills (reflection which might be informed by comments from employers, placement providers, PSRBs, or DLHE data)
• enhancement initiatives which have resulted in notable student feedback and/or developed the themes of the Education Strategy
• external examiner comments
• successes by individual staff or teams such as awards for teaching or commendation from a professional body
• initiatives undertaken to provide or promote teaching development or enhancement within the programme team
• student successes in award or recognition schemes related to their academic activities
• the successful resolution of problems or challenges identified since the previous APR/ATR
• any particular examples of excellence in teaching which you have disseminated or which you wish to report for wider dissemination
• any lessons learned from your experiences which would be helpful to disseminate to colleagues

5.2.2. Question: What resource or programme management issues (staffing, equipment, teaching space, student support needs, etc), if any, have been identified during the year? How were these issues addressed during the year? If it was not possible to address the issues, what plans or resource requests will help address them in future years?

For example, the programme team may wish to consider:

• where the programme content, delivery or assessment has been/needs to be revised, if the collective expertise of the academic team remains/will be appropriate for the programme provision, including an understanding of the differing demands of the different modes of study being proposed,

• if sufficient and appropriate learning resources are available to all students, including where students have documented study/support needs. In particular, are the required reading materials for the course available in the Library?

• are there any timetabling issues or challenges which have an impact on teaching, learning and/or assessment?

• for joint/combined programmes, if there is there an appropriate structure to manage and administer the programme across departments/faculties, with an identified academic and administrative lead and shared programme team approach to regular cohort meetings and the annual monitoring and review of the programme,

• how students’ transition to higher education (in the UK) can be supported, with students prepared for the teaching, learning and assessment methods to be used in the programme, so that such methods are not unfamiliar at the point at which students are summatively assessed, and that the programme gives an early opportunity for students to experience these methods,

• if there is an appropriate strategy for academic and pastoral support which meets the University’s and the programme’s requirements and fulfills students’ needs.
5.2.3. Question: To what extent has the use of technology within the programme enhanced the teaching, learning and assessment experience?

When considering the use of technology within the programme, the programme team may wish to review:

- if there has been a performance improvement in a curriculum area that students previously struggled with,
- if students are more engaged in class, if lecture attendance has increased, if feedback from students has improved,
- if the level of engagement remained steady over time, or declined after an initial high,
- if different demographic variables within the student cohort have shown any significant trends, for example in the use of the resource, or assessment performance,
- if academic staff satisfaction of teaching or marking and assessment has changed,
- if the level of academic staff engagement in the use of technology has increased.

5.2.4. Question: What challenges, if any, have the mode(s) of delivery of the programme and its modules presented this year, and how have they been addressed? Has this driven any innovative practice which could usefully be shared?

By ‘mode of delivery’ we mean face-to-face, online, blended, full-time, part-time, work-based, etc. either at a programme or module level. However you may also want to include modules which have particularly large cohorts which require double or triple teaching during a term.

Other areas for reflection include:

- a move to the use of a particular technology to deliver (an aspect of) teaching,
- technical aspects of delivery where technology has been used, or where delivery is wholly online,
- access to learning and support services for part-time students or students studying at a distance,
- cohort identity where a cohort does not meet physically (e.g. distance-learning) or meet regularly (e.g. part-time students),
- adaptations to teaching styles (e.g. the use of flipped classrooms),
- the balance of contact time (e.g. lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, etc.),
- modules which are delivered across different levels, for example at levels 6 (UG) and 7 (PG),
- work-based learning modules (e.g. placements or internships), or study abroad modules for which learning outcomes are specified,
- the prior experience of staff involved in these delivery modes, and/or their confidence in moving to these delivery modes,
- the prior experience of students subject to these delivery modes and their response
5.3. Section 3: Experienced

5.3.1. Question: Reflecting on the data provided and the programme team’s experience, what key areas of enhancement can be identified?

Do the data indicate any trends, either positive or negative, that are of particular interest or need to be addressed?

Are there any factors outside the programme team’s control which are affecting performance indicators, positively or negatively? Is there any support which could be provided at department, faculty or university level which could help with this? What support would this be?

In particular the programme team should reflect on performance in the following areas:

- admission numbers, entry qualifications, relevant characteristics of the cohort (including any admissions through access, articulation, exchange or study abroad agreements, where available)
- progression between years (failure rates, retention, module, programme level averages)
- final award outcomes of students
- graduate destinations
- particular improvements in areas of the NSS/PTES
- benchmark data

5.3.2. Question: Has the programme team successfully engaged, or developed new ways of engaging, with all students on the programme to support their learning? What evidence is there of the effectiveness of these methods?

Engagement may be through ‘normal’ established mechanisms common across the university, or it may be through new approaches that are being, or have been, trialed. Any outcome, considered by the team to be positive or negative, should be recorded as it’s useful to share experiences and lessons learned within the wider context offered by APR.

5.3.3. Question: Given the reflection of the programme or suite of programmes above and feedback from External Examiners, to what extent, and on what basis, is the programme team confident that the programme is both current and provides a cohesive learning experience to students? Have any issues been raised by External Examiners this year, and if so, have they been addressed?

The response should be drawn from consideration of the data packs, student and external examiner feedback and performance indicators such as survey and league table results, and the reflections of the programme team as a whole and should be a determination of the students’ experience of the programme or suite of programmes that are being considered.

5.3.4. Question: On the basis of feedback received this year from students, external examiners and other stakeholders, and the programme team’s reflections above, what are the top 3 priorities relating to the programme or suite of programmes in the next 12 months?

These three priorities are those actions identified through the review process which the programme team believe are critical to maintain and/or enhance the quality of the
student experience. All actions identified through the review process, including the three priorities, should be listed in the Rolling Action Plan which accompanies the APR report.

5.4. Section 4: Collaborative Partners

5.4.1. Question: Where collaborative partnerships exist (other than the designated RTPs or ITPs), is the programme team confident;

a) That the arrangements in place to manage the partnership are secure and working well

b) That the arrangements for managing the programme are secure and equivalent to those of a programme delivered at Lancaster

c) That the partner is delivering a programme equivalent to the quality and standards of a Lancaster degree delivered at Bailrigg

d) That the student experience is of a standard equivalent to that of a student studying at Bailrigg

By ‘collaborative partners’ we specifically mean any programmes of study which lead to a Lancaster degree (notwithstanding the award offered by the partner) to which Lancaster may contribute only part of the teaching, or none at all, but for which Lancaster retains oversight for the quality and standards of the provision. The programme team may wish to consider the following in relation to each point a) – d):

a) For example, are there effective lines of communication which are open and transparent, and is the partnership resourced appropriately with staff identified for key roles and responsibilities?

b) For example the arrangements for marketing, recruitment and admissions, entry requirements, provision of resources, marking and feedback, assessment and award, monitoring and review, etc.

c) Is there evidence that the partner has processes for the monitoring and review of programmes, modules, teaching and/or learning (including revisions to programmes and modules) to which Lancaster has the opportunity to contribute, that the arrangements for marking and moderation are robust, equitable and fair, that the admissions criteria are appropriate for the level of the award and the process for admitting students commensurate with that of the link department?

d) Is there evidence that student satisfaction is at an acceptable level or higher, that sufficient and appropriate resources and facilities are available to students, and that feedback and support is available such that students are able to achieve the learning outcomes.

5.5. Section 5: External Engagement, including Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

5.5.1. Question: How has external engagement with employers and other agencies contributed to enhancing the quality of the curriculum?

Engagement could be through contributions to the development of new programmes or modules, or acting as advisers in the review of current provision, providing specialist input to lectures, seminars or workshops, providing placement or project opportunities, mentoring or coaching or students or staff, etc. Please also add any planned or in-progress engagements to enhance curriculum quality, and
how you anticipate this will be evident.

5.5.2. Question: Please list all PSRB accreditations or re-accreditation associated with the programmes which have occurred during the year under review.

Any Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body activity has occurred within the previous academic year (the year under review) for each and any programme forming part of the cognate subject group covered by the APR, must be listed within this section of the report, as it informs the central register of PSRB activity, including accreditations, reviews, or other interventions, that ASQ maintains on behalf of the University.

5.6. Section 6: Postgraduate Research Programmes

5.6.1. Question: Which aspects of the PGR student experience have been of particular note (strengths and/or challenges) in the past year?

This could include reference to:

- Induction and support
- quality and frequency of supervision;
- the sense of being part of an academic community;
- annual progression rates;
- percentage of successful outcomes (e.g. pass without referral) though you do not need to summarise all completion data as it will be available in the data packs;
- improvements as a response to student feedback;
- employability, training and development and other student-focused activities.

In years when PRES results are available please comment on your PRES results and note any actions being taken to address identified issues. In subsequent years, it would be helpful to receive an update on actions initiated in previous years.

5.6.2. Question: Have any i) new PGR programmes, ii) PGR programme changes, or iii) PGR organisational changes been implemented this year? If so, what successes and challenges have you faced?

For example these could include reference to:

i) distance learning, partnerships, or in DTPs,

ii) changes to taught elements, progression requirements, thesis format,

iii) changes to student representation in decision making, programme directors, or administrative support.

5.6.3. Question: Are there any further PGR programme or student experience issues or strengths that the programme team wishes to raise? In particular, are there any examples of effective practice which might benefit others by being shared?

For example this may include reference to:

- accommodation or facilities
- access to training or conferences
- entrant quality or quantity
• implementation of policy or regulation

5.6.4. Looking forward, what are the top 3 priorities for the programme team relating to the student experience of PGR students or the academic quality of PGR programmes in the next 12 months?

These three priorities are those actions identified through the review process which the Programme team believe are critical to maintain and/or enhance the quality of the student experience. All actions identified through the review process, including the three priorities, should be listed in the Rolling Action Plan which accompanies the APR report.