



Action plan relating to the recommendations resulting from the HER in March 2016: update (1 August 2017)

Introduction

The QAA made various recommendations in the report of the University's Higher Education Review which took place in March 2016¹. In response, an action plan was drafted in consultation with OUSU and the Conference of Colleges. The action plan was published on the University's website in August 2016.

This document provides an update on progress on the plan, as at 1 August 2017. It has been signed off for publication by the PVC (Education).

Recommendation 1: Work with the Conference of Colleges to establish an appropriate mechanism by which the University can, on a regular basis, be informed of the nature and extent of complaints and appeals within the Colleges (Expectation B9).

Commentary

Education Committee noted in Michaelmas term 2015 that it would be helpful to receive information about college-related OIA cases, alongside the annual summary report on OIA decisions of University cases.

The Conference of Colleges agreed in June 2016 that it will provide a copy of the annual report it receives on cases considered by the Conference of Colleges Appeal Tribunal (CCAT) and by the OIA to the University's Education Committee.

Education Committee received in HT17 a paper titled 'Summary report on OIA cases completed in 2016' (EdC(HT17)028) which included information on CCAT cases considered (Trinity term 2015 to Hilary term 2016) and on OIA college cases in 2015-16, as well as information on University-related OIA cases completed in the calendar year 2016.

An equivalent report will be presented to Education Committee in future years. The delivery of Recommendation 1 is complete, as there is now an annual mechanism in place for the University to be informed of the nature and extent of complaints and appeals (at CCAT and OIA level only) within the colleges.

¹ The report can be found at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007774>

Recommendation 2: Ensure that there are appropriate procedures in place for the development, monitoring and review of all collaborative partnerships (Expectation B10).

Commentary

A revised *Policy and Guidance on providing education with others (P&G EWO)* was approved in Hilary term 2015. The *P&G* sets out the policy framework within which any new collaborative proposal would be developed.

The Quality Assurance Subcommittee (QASC) agreed (in Michaelmas term 2015) that Education Policy Support (EPS) officers should undertake an annual process of collecting updates for the *Register of collaborative arrangements involving students* (the *Register*) and that it should receive an updated *Register* annually, alongside a report on the schedule of reviews of collaborative courses.

QASC received a report in Michaelmas term 2016 which included the recently-updated *Register*, and information on progress in relation to Recommendation 2. A further report was made to QASC in Trinity term 2017, noting that work continued in a number of subject areas to reach a position in which all relevant collaborative arrangements have a written agreement in place.

A further update will be presented to QASC in Michaelmas term 2017, alongside the annual update of the *Register*. At the time of writing (July 2017) it is anticipated that all taught collaborative programmes will have a signed agreement in place by October 2017. A number of partnerships (mainly placements and exchanges) are still working on getting signed written agreements in place, and it is envisaged that this process should be complete by July 2018.

Recommendation 3: Provide explicit guidance to enable a consistent approach to student workload across the University (Expectations B1, A3.1, B3, B4, B6).

Commentary

The HER Report suggests that the most effective way for the University to address this recommendation would be 'to provide clear guidance and expectations through its programme approval process and the definitive record of its awards' (paragraph 2.9). Given the relative stability of the University's course offering, tackling this through the course approval process alone would not be sufficiently effective. The information for colleges, academic staff and students needs to be enhanced through a systematic and comprehensive approach.

The table below reports on the detailed activities undertaken and planned in relation to this recommendation.

Affirmation: The University's progress in implementing the Policy and Guidance on Course Information and the Policy and Guidance for Examiners (C).

Commentary

This affirmation relates to the steps that have been taken to improve information for students about their courses through the implementation of the *Policy and Guidance on course information* (which includes a template for course handbooks) and the provision of a template for examination conventions in the *Policy and Guidance for examiners and others involved in University examinations*.

The activities set out in the table below (which primarily relates to Recommendation 3) are also relevant to this affirmation.

Actions still to be taken in relation to Recommendation 3

Material from August 2016 Action Plan				July 2017 update	
Action	Target date	Action by	Success indicator	Report on action during 2016-17	Plans for 2017-18
Information in course handbooks					
3A: Divisions have been tasked (by QASC) with working with academic departments to improve the content of course handbooks for 2016-17, to ensure they move towards meeting the requirements of the <i>P&G course information</i> .	October 2016	Divisions and academic departments	All course handbooks contain appropriate information about patterns of teaching.	Divisions were asked to work with departments on this for 2016-17. Central review of all course handbooks has not taken place in 2016-17 so the extent to which content was improved for 2016-17 cannot be centrally assessed.	In MT17, UG course handbooks for 2017-18 will be reviewed to assess the extent to which they meet the revised requirements of the <i>P&G course info</i> (see 3B below). This review will be reported to QASC, and relevant information shared with Senior Tutors' Committee (STC).
Recommended patterns of teaching					
3B: During the summer of 2016 and the 2016-17 academic year, EPS officers, in collaboration with Senior Tutors' Committee (STC), departments and divisions, will work to specify the format in which recommended patterns of teaching for UG courses should be presented, to ensure they are meaningful for departments, colleges and students.	June 2017	EPS Officers, STC, QASC, QAWG	Format for recommended patterns of teaching to be agreed to inform content of course handbooks and the proposal template for new courses and course changes for 2017-18.	A template for recommended patterns of teaching (RPT) was developed by EPS officers and discussed with the Standing Committee of STC (SCSTC) and with OUSU. It was piloted with a number of courses during 2016-17. During TT17, QASC agreed amendments to the <i>P&G course info</i> to require the tabular presentation of RPT	In MT17, UG course handbooks for 2017-18 will be reviewed to assess the extent to which they include RPT information in the required format. This review will be reported to QASC, and relevant information shared with STC. Divisions will then be asked to follow up with departments and faculties where necessary, to ensure full delivery of

Material from August 2016 Action Plan				July 2017 update	
Action	Target date	Action by	Success indicator	Report on action during 2016-17	Plans for 2017-18
3C: Establish a structure for ensuring the recommended patterns of teaching are kept up-to-date by departments and are communicated effectively to students and colleges.	June 2017	EPS Officers, STC, QASC, QAWG	Clear process in place for the maintenance and annual updating of information on recommended patterns of teaching, and for how they are made easily accessible to, and utilised by, colleges.	information in all UG course handbooks, and communications to all departments and faculties were subsequently issued.	RPT information for 2018-19.
3D: EPS officers will work with the Quality Assurance Working Group (QAWG) and STC to consider how the revised recommended patterns of teaching might be used by the colleges.	June 2017	EPS Officers, STC, QASC, QAWG		Course handbooks are updated each summer, so the inclusion of RPT in course handbooks provides a mechanism for them to be kept up-to-date. The <i>P&G course info</i> requires handbooks to be available to members of the collegiate University (so this means college tutors can access them).	RPT information to be reviewed in the MT17 implementation review (see 3B above) will be collated for sharing with the Standing Committee of STC.
Oversight of workload by organising tutors in colleges					
3E: Revised recommendation in the STC 'Guidance and questionnaire relating to College UG academic provision' to clarify that organising tutors should be aware of the workload planned for their students each term.	Michaelmas term 2016	Conference Secretariat, all colleges, QAWG	Revised recommendation in place and reports from colleges confirm practice in line.	Revised recommendation in place in the 2016-17 documentation. Colleges have submitted responses at the end of TT17. QAWG will consider those college responses during MT17.	QAWG will follow up with individual colleges if any indicate that practice does not align with the recommendation.

Material from August 2016 Action Plan				July 2017 update	
Action	Target date	Action by	Success indicator	Report on action during 2016-17	Plans for 2017-18
				In addition, more substantial revisions have been made to the recommendations for 2017-18, resulting in the relevant recommendation being focused solely on workload matters.	
Identifying particular areas of concern					
3F: The University will work with OUSU to identify UG courses where students have raised particular concerns about the total amount of workload, or the distribution of the workload across the terms and years of the course.	January 2017	OUSU, UG Panel / QASC	Set of courses with particular student concerns identified.	OUSU did some information gathering with students, but this resulted in relatively few responses. EPS officers have identified some possible courses for further scrutiny, and in most cases other mechanisms (eg recommendations in department review reports) mean the departments concerned will already be considering workload issues.	Once the RPT have been published in handbooks in MT17, this will provide a further opportunity to look at particular courses (EPS resource permitting).
3G: For those courses identified, engagement with the students (perhaps via focus groups), and with the relevant academic departments via the division, and with colleges via STC, will take place to map the current workload and consider its appropriateness.	September 2017	OUSU, EPS officers, departments and divisions, colleges and STC	Student workload mapped and considered by relevant academic departments, in consultation with their students and with colleges.		
3H: Scope and map the landscape of joint courses across the University (those which involve significant contributions from more than one academic department).	June 2017	UG Panel	Taxonomy of joint courses developed, and areas for further attention agreed.	Information-gathering phase being completed during LV 2017, drawing together contributions from academic	Initial paper on joint courses to be presented to Taught Degrees Panel in MT17. Further work to follow that, with a later

Material from August 2016 Action Plan				July 2017 update	
Action	Target date	Action by	Success indicator	Report on action during 2016-17	Plans for 2017-18
				divisions as well as from desk-based data gathering.	paper provisionally scheduled for TT18.
Striving towards a consistent approach					
3I: Consideration of amendments or extensions to the <i>P&G UG learning and teaching</i> to define the typical and/or maximum amounts of workload expected for students on UG courses.	June 2017	UG Panel (in consultation with STC as appropriate)	Revisions to the <i>P&G UGLT</i> agreed.	Having secured input from STC, Taught Degrees Panel agreed changes to <i>the P&G UGLT</i> to define the typical and maximum amounts of workload expected for students on UG courses. The revised <i>P&G UGLT</i> was published at the end of TT17, and appropriate cross-references are in place in the <i>P&G course info</i> to prompt courses to provide information about workload in UG course handbooks.	
3J: Provide information to students about the typical and/or maximum amounts of workload expected of them (in course and/or college handbooks) alongside information about how to seek support in relation to unusually heavy workloads.	October 2017	Divisions and academic departments, colleges	All UG course handbooks and/or college handbooks contain appropriate information about typical and/or maximum workloads.		At the start of TT18, colleges will be encouraged, via Conference of Colleges, to revise material in college handbooks on workload during LV18 in the light of the revised <i>P&G</i> .