

1.7 Teaching & Learning Quality Assurance Calendar 2015-16

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SOCIAL SCIENCES DIVISION

TEACHING & LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT CALENDAR FOR ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS IN DEPARTMENTS AND FACULTIES

Academic Year 2015-16

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INTRODUCTION

1. In 2007, the Education Committee and divisional officers produced a coordinated annual calendar of the quality assurance and quality enhancement activities which underpin the University's academic infrastructure. Social Sciences already had its own calendar but in meetings with academic administrators it has been suggested that joint divisional/Education Committee guidance on the areas of major institutional significance would be of assistance. The present document is the 2015-16 version. Please also refer to the divisional [QA calendar quick reference guide](#).
2. The calendar describes those areas which the Division/Education Committee see as critical points of quality assurance and enhancement. These are activities by which (drawing on QAA terminology) a responsible body can assure itself that
 - a) its academic standards are secure;
 - b) suitable learning opportunities are available;
 - c) 'deliberate steps' are being taken to enhance students' opportunities for learning.

The intention behind the calendar is that these should largely be based on regularly available data and reports.

3. The Education Committee and divisional frameworks form a key element in the University's quality enhancement strategy. The Education Committee is committed to quality enhancement not becoming an additional layer of bureaucracy. This depends on it being an integral part of the regular cycles of monitoring and review. In this way deliberate steps leading to improvement and enhancement can be seen as a further part of the regular quality assurance procedures.
4. The Education Committee has also endorsed the critical importance of the consistent availability and accessibility of data for the annual quality assurance cycle, and a clear demonstration of its use in annual monitoring and development mechanisms. Centrally produced data is improving and the Education Committee asks all responsible bodies to be aware of the key statistics relating to the programmes for which they are responsible. The Social Sciences Division attaches equal importance to these developments.
5. Not all faculties and departments within Social Sciences will make the same arrangements, or in the same committee structure, or at precisely the same points in the year. It is hoped that by addressing this guidance to academic administrators (with copies to Directors of Undergraduate and of Graduate Studies) it will be possible to identify which are the best forum, timing and approach to adopt in each faculty or department.
6. It should also be possible to use the calendar to check whether the existing structure is providing an opportunity for the areas to be covered appropriately, and to refine the mechanisms in order to do so. Where further background information or guidance is available, then an appropriate web reference is provided.

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ANNUAL EXERCISES

1 Identification of academic objectives for the year

Consider year's specific academic activities in the light of any review outcomes, faculty/departmental plans, divisional five-year plans, the University's Corporate Plan and the Strategic Plan, report on progress on activities identified in previous year's plans, and refer actions to the divisional Teaching Audit Committee (TAC), Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) as appropriate.

Divisional plan

Strategic Plan at:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/planningandresourceallocation/documents/planningcycle/Strategicplan2013.pdf>

2 Annual updating of departmental/divisional plans

Identification of developments in academic objectives/quality assurance/quality enhancement/student number planning in relation to departmental/divisional five-year plans. Updates on departmental strategic plans reported to Divisional Planning and Resources Committee, Week 0.

Draft divisional strategic plan considered by Divisional Planning and Resources Committee, Week 5, to be finalised HT Week 0 for submission to University PRAC.

3 Quality Assurance Questionnaires

Annual return to division relating to confirmation of key elements of quality assurance and identification of areas of quality enhancement.

In 2015-16, it is expected that there will be one questionnaire, focusing on undergraduate provision.

The questionnaire must be completed through the Bristol Online Survey system by all departments with an undergraduate programme. The date for submission is Friday 20 November 2015.

4 Teaching Excellence Awards Scheme

Faculty/department/divisional arrangements for identifying/nominating award holders.

Divisional office to send out guidance to departments/faculties and colleges regarding the application/nomination process. Nominations should be submitted to the divisional office by the deadline specified in the guidance (to be confirmed). Awards will be made by the divisional Teaching Audit Committee.

General information can be found on the relevant pages of the Oxford Learning Institute website <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/index.php>.

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5 Changes to examination conventions

Departments to review and revise examination conventions, and incorporate any changes agreed in light of discussion of the previous year's examiners' reports. Any changes to examination conventions should be approved by the Division at least one whole term prior to examination. For further information please refer to section 3.3 of the Divisional Quality Assurance Handbook, or contact Sophie Fowler (sophie.fowler@socsci.ox.ac.uk).

MICHAELMAS TERM

6 Identification of new programmes for introduction in future years

Undergraduate courses: during the year, preliminary steps for new courses to be introduced in MT three full academic years ahead; final steps for courses to be introduced in MT two full academic years ahead.

Postgraduate taught courses: during the year, preliminary steps for new courses to be introduced two full academic years ahead; final steps for courses to be introduced in MT one full academic year ahead.

(Example: Preliminary steps during AY 2015-16, detailed work and approval AY 2016-17 and regulations published by July 2017, new course details published in Autumn 2017 graduate prospectus, candidates apply in AY 2017-18, first students register MT 2018).

For further information, please refer to section 2 of the Divisional Quality Assurance Handbook and the Education Committee [guidance on the introduction of new courses](#).

More specific advice should be sought from Dr Jane Gover, tel. 01865 614864, email jane.gover@socsci.ox.ac.uk, for undergraduate programmes, and from Dr Andy Garlick, tel. 01865 614875, email andy.garlick@socsci.ox.ac.uk, for graduate programmes, as early as possible in considering proposals for new courses.

7 Major changes to existing courses/introduction of new options

For the introduction of new options or major changes to existing courses, departments should ideally identify these and begin preliminary steps one year in advance of the proposed changes coming into effect. For further information, please refer to section 2 of the Divisional Quality Assurance Handbook, or contact Sophie Fowler (sophie.fowler@socsci.ox.ac.uk).

8 Consideration of reports from examiners and external examiners

Consideration of examiners' reports in order to provide comment on any significant issues for the relevant division and through the division to the Education Committee, and to ensure feedback to external examiners on a reasonable timescale. To include identification of:

- any changes which the examination process might have suggested in relation to the existing content of the course and/or existing methods of assessment;
- any need to review specific options; the overall standard of performance in the examination, including any trends in results (especially in relation to gender) or in relation to particular areas of the curriculum;

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- any possible changes in examination conventions, procedures or regulations suggested by the examiners' experience of the examination process.

Education Committee guidance in relation to the consideration of reports from the examiners as a whole and external examiners in particular are set out in section 5.4 of the Education Committee's Policy and Guidance for Examiners and others involved in University Examinations at:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pgexaminers/>

Divisional guidance is set out in its annual circular sent to departments and faculties in September each year. In particular:

Directors of graduate studies and of undergraduate studies are asked to arrange for internal and external examiners' reports and conventions to be considered by departmental Academic/Teaching Committees, and for comments on examiners' reports to be forwarded to Sophie Fowler (sophie.fowler@socsci.ox.ac.uk), Social Sciences Divisional Office according to the following timetable:

- Reports on single honour undergraduate examinations and PGT examinations completed in Trinity Term should be forwarded by the end of Week 8 of Michaelmas Term for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 10.
- For undergraduate joint schools the reports relating to them, and the departmental Academic/Teaching Committee's comments on them, should be sent by the end of week 6 of Michaelmas Term. The reports will then be forwarded to the relevant joint committee who will send their consolidated response by the end of week 4 of Hilary Term for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 6 of Hilary Term.
- Reports on postgraduate taught course examinations completed later than Trinity Term should be forwarded by the end of Week 4 of Hilary Term for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 6 of Hilary Term.
- Reports on the Saïd Business School's MBA examinations should be forwarded by the end of Week 11 of Hilary Term for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 1 of Trinity Term.

Reports to the Division should include:

- A completed [checklist](#);
- A report from the department/faculty/Joint Committee on examiners' reports, including (i) general comments on the course, making specific reference to the areas identified in paragraph 8 above and (ii) a summary of any issues and action that will be taken to address these, and in particular highlighting any points which should be considered at divisional and/or University level (this can be in the form of the divisional [template](#));
- Draft text/letter to the external examiner(s) for the Associate Head of Division (Education) to incorporate into letters signed by her on behalf of the divisional board.

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This should make reference to the issues and concerns identified by the external examiners, and set out briefly how units will deal with these in future years.¹

Reports (redacted as appropriate) should be discussed at JCC/GJCCs or equivalent, and made available to all students.

9 Complaints and appeals

Departments and faculties should submit to the division an anonymised report giving the number and nature of complaints and appeals for the previous academic year.

10 Class percentage figures (undergraduate programmes)

Identification of any trends in relation to class percentages, outcomes by gender and any areas for further work. Class percentage figures are published annually in the Gazette, and are circulated usually in Week 7 for consideration by departments and faculties. The published figures include breakdown by gender, and consideration should take account of any major discrepancies in the results of men and women, especially in relation to the First Class, the so-called 'gender gap'.

Departments and faculties should consider these in relevant committees and report to Division by the end of week 3 of Hilary Term for discussion by the divisional board's Undergraduate Studies Committee in week 5 of Hilary Term.

11 Consideration of issues relating to graduate skills

Divisional and faculty/department developments in relation to graduate skills are considered by the divisional board's Graduate Studies Committee (under the auspices of the DTCMB) on a regular basis throughout the academic year.

The annual reports from the Oxford Learning Institute are normally published in HT and are available via the OLI website at: <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/>.

12 Consideration of issues relating to development in learning and teaching and in academic practice

Divisional and faculty/department developments in relation to learning and teaching and academic practice are considered by the divisional board's Undergraduate Studies Committee and Graduate Studies Committee on a regular basis throughout the academic year.

The annual reports from the Oxford Learning Institute are normally published in HT and are available via the OLI website at: <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/>.

¹ This does not preclude units from writing directly to external examiners themselves, but this should not be done until the departmental response has been approved by TAC.

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- 13 1 December - annual census date for student statistics (UG, PGT, PGR) including Annual Programme Statistics, subsequent consideration of PGT/PGR review of retention/progression, including Research Councils' submission rates survey results**

Publication of agreed sets of statistics by Student Administration in mid-December, and circulation to Divisions. Subsequent faculty/departmental and Divisional consideration thereof in Trinity Term. Annual Programme Statistics should be considered at the relevant departmental committees and JCC/GJCCs or equivalent.

Departments consider outcomes of the Research Councils' submission rate survey for report to Divisional Graduate Studies Committee at its second HT meeting.

Annual review of retention and progression rates for PGT/PGR programmes including: submission and completion rates; any trends or developments arising out of examining and reports; effectiveness of procedures for transfer and confirmation of status.

Initial consideration in HT by Division's Graduate Studies Committee. Departments then write summary report to division on the items by the middle of TT for consideration by the Division's Graduate Studies Committee at its last meeting of TT.

The Divisional Office will circulate data to departments for consideration.

14 National Student Survey

Receive NSS data mid-August. Departments to consider results, including consideration with student representatives at JCC/GJCC or equivalent, and submit a report to the Division. Reports should include an extract of the minutes of the committee at which the results were considered and a commentary describing their consideration, any actions agreed locally and any issues or proposed actions to be considered by the Division. Reports will be considered by the Division's Undergraduate Studies Committee in HT, and a divisional report will then be sent to EdC.

15 PGT Feedback on formative assessment

All PGT students should receive feedback on a piece of formative assessment during Michaelmas Term.

16 PBI Monitoring

Immigration reporting spreadsheets to be sent to tier4compliance@admin.ox.ac.uk at the end of term. Immigration guidance can be found at: <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/visavis/>

HILARY TERM

- 17 Graduate Students (Taught and Research): annual review of return-rates for termly supervision report forms**

Consideration at the first HT meeting of the Division's Graduate Studies Committee.

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18 Changes in regulations required for the following academic year

Confirmation of required changes in regulations for divisional and (for major changes only) Education Committee approval should be made by the end of Hilary Term (the date will be confirmed by the Social Sciences Divisional Office) to be published in the Examination Regulations (subject to this meeting the requirement for vested interest).

For purposes of registration and examination entry, the deadline for all changes to existing programmes of study is that changes to regulations, and changes to core and optional courses published in handbooks, should be made in time for the **last Gazette of Trinity Term**. Changes made after this deadline will not be approved by Education Committee for the coming academic year.

19 Undergraduate Admissions

Annual consideration of undergraduate admissions statistics; identification of trends in numbers, source and quality of applications; confirmation of meeting Common Framework requirements.

Annual undergraduate admissions statistics are published in HT.

Attention is particularly drawn to the importance attached to annual consideration of: overall changes in the quality of applicants, the number of applications, success rate by sex and by type of school.

Report to Division by end HT for consideration in TT.

20 Annual Review of Graduate Admissions

Review previous year's graduate admissions round (both graduate taught courses and research degree programmes).

Consider number and quality of applications, withdrawals and take-up of places; availability of awards and other funding and consider procedures for the forthcoming admissions round. Write summary report to Division on these items by the end of HT for consideration by the division's GSC in Trinity Term. A circular will be sent to faculties and departments.

21 Key Information Sets (KIS) (undergraduate only)

Departments and faculties to ensure that undergraduate core/option module data held in OSS is up to date and accurate by the end of January.

The divisional office will generate the KIS datasets based on the data exported from OSS, and liaise with departments to verify the integrity of the data and combination of modules selected for each undergraduate programme.

The data will be taken to the divisional Undergraduate Studies Committee meeting in HT for final sign off, and then submitted to SDMA in mid/late April.

22 Student representation arrangements

Departments to formally reflect on and review the opportunities for student representation and involvement. Consideration of arrangements should be considered at JCC/GJCCs or

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equivalent as well as departmental academic committees, and should draw on the experience of current representatives and inform the work of those serving in the subsequent year.

Further guidance can be found in the [Policy and Guidance on Student Engagement and Representation](#).

23 Undergraduate and PGT induction and study skills

Departments to consider the role and effectiveness of induction and support for the development of study skills, and to incorporate any enhancements or changes into department literature.

24 PBI Monitoring

Immigration reporting spreadsheets to be sent to tier4compliance@admin.ox.ac.uk at the end of term. Immigration guidance can be found at: <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/visavis/>

TRINITY TERM

25 Grey book proofing (TBC)

Divisional office to receive grey book proofs from Education Policy Support between mid-late TT. Proofs for individual programmes of study to be sent out to departments/faculties electronically for review.

Departments/faculties to send the proofs directly back to Education Policy Support, and also send a copy to Sophie Fowler at the Divisional Office (sophie.fowler@socsci.ox.ac.uk), having made any minor editorial amendments (e.g. accidental duplication of wording) if necessary.

The 2015-16 copy of the Grey Book is planned to be the final hard-copy edition.

26 Transferable Skills Training

Review departmental/faculty provision of transferable skills training and preparation for academic practice for research students and postdoctoral researchers, and programme for coming year. This should be discussed at GJCC or equivalent.

27 Annual review of supervision code of practice

Divisions to review the supervision code of practice at meetings in TT and send to departments to update over the long vacation.

28 Student Barometer

Receive Barometer data early TT. Departments to consider results, including consideration with student representatives at JCC/GJCC or equivalent, and submit an UG and a PG report to the Division. Reports should include an extract of the minutes of the committee at which the results were considered and a commentary describing their consideration, any actions agreed locally and any issues or proposed actions to be considered by the Division. Reports

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will be considered by the Division's Undergraduate / Graduate Studies Committee in MT, and a divisional report will then be sent to EdC.

29 Graduate admissions criteria

Departments review graduate admissions criteria.

30 Feedback on Summative Assessment

Students should receive feedback on summative assessment of over 5000 words.

31 PBI Monitoring

Immigration reporting spreadsheets to be sent to tier4compliance@admin.ox.ac.uk by mid July. Immigration guidance can be found at: <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/visavis/>

32 Review of collaborative arrangements (including student placements and exchanges)

Review written agreements governing collaborative arrangements and monitor the continued effectiveness of the arrangements, taking particular account of student feedback.

LONG VACATION

33 Departments/faculties review and update course handbooks and website material for students

Departments and faculties should refer to the Education Committee [Policy and Guidance on Course Information](#), and all handbooks should be checked against the new handbook template to ensure all relevant information is included. All handbooks should be accessible to anyone with an Oxford SSO.

34 Departments to forward details of key academic and administrative contacts as they relate to teaching and learning, as well as student representatives, to divisional office ready for the new academic year.

35 Annual review of English language waivers

Departments and faculties should submit to the Division a report of all language waiver requests and outcomes for students offered a graduate place in the previous admissions cycle. This should include details of students formally/informally set English language classes as a condition of their offer. This information will be presented to the first meeting of divisional Graduate Studies Committee in Michaelmas Term.

36 Graduate admissions webpages

Departments update departmental graduate admissions webpages.

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37 Student load apportionments

Data on the apportionment of student load between departments providing teaching for UG and PGT programmes of study is produced by PRAS for revision. Departments to review and return student load data in the long vacation.

38 Nomination of examiners and assessors and appointment of chairs of examiners

Departments should ensure that nomination of examiners and assessors and the appointment of chairs of examiners are made with the appropriate information required and that approvals are made in good time.

AS REQUIRED

39 Preparation for Divisional/Education Committee reviews of faculties and departments

Preparation for upcoming reviews including consideration of self-evaluation document. Consideration of the review report and recommendations at relevant faculty/department committees.

40 Provision of information to external examiners

Departments should ensure that external examiners are provided with the information they require to fulfil their role, particularly ensuring that new external examiners are provided with appropriate introductory material.

41 Consideration of reports from Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

Departments should ensure that PSRB reports are considered by the appropriate departmental committees.

42 Consideration of revised Subject Benchmark Statements

Revised (and new) subject benchmark statements are published periodically. Departments should ensure that revised or new statements are considered by the appropriate departmental committees, and any resulting changes or enhancements to the course discussed.