Programme Review Statement

2022

Introduction

The University operates a two-tiered approach to programme review, held annually, using key metrics and performance indicators to identify courses that require improvement. This statement outlines the approaches taken to our programme review process, how criteria are used to assess the performance of programmes, how academic governance provides oversight of the process for and outcomes of programme review, and how actions are identified, monitored and completed.

The University publishes its [Programme Review procedure](#) on its webpages, to ensure transparency of the approach with stakeholders.

Approach to Programme Review

The University introduced a revised approach to programme review in 2022, replacing the previous Quality and Standards Checks process. The new process is two-tiered, with programmes grouped into either an 'Active Monitoring' category or a 'Local Enhancement' category, dependent on their performance against a set of agreed key performance indicators, where thresholds are set and courses 'flag' if they are under the threshold.

Programmes in Active Monitoring undergo a more intensive review process, requiring the academic team to draft a commentary on the key quantitative data as well as qualitative data from students, staff and external examiners; attend a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and members of the senior management team to agree an Action Plan, and follow up in mid year (or earlier) meetings to check on progress, before the review process begins again at the end of the academic year.

Programmes that meet the majority of indicator thresholds are classified as being in 'Local Enhancement', requiring course teams to produce a commentary on their quantitative data (including any flagging indicators) and qualitative feedback, and set objectives for the coming year. Members of the senior team hold a short meeting with Local Enhancement course areas, to ensure a cross-institutional awareness of any concerns and themes, and share good practice.

Documentation requirements include the submission of an Active Monitoring Plan or a Local Enhancement Reflection. Each consists of a short set of either 7 or 8 questions, each with reflective prompts for responses that encourage the sharing of good practice, identification of areas for improvement and consideration of wider contexts. These questions are set and reviewed annually, to align with the chosen indicators for that year, as well as embed thematic areas for focus and address strategic objectives around learning, teaching and student outcomes.

Assessment Criteria Used

A set of course performance indicators are used to determine which courses are placed with Active Monitoring and Local Enhancement. The course performance indicators include a 'primary' set of indicators, each with a set threshold that 'flags', with the total number of flags across the dataset determining whether a programme area should be in Active Monitoring or not. A set of 'secondary' indicators is provided for contextual information to support programme teams and the senior management to reflect on a comprehensive collection of metrics and support trends over time and sector benchmarks.

Metrics cover recruitment, performance, satisfaction and employability indicators, ensuring the University is using data to consider both academic and financial viability of programmes. The primary indicators currently include:

1. Firm applicant rates
2. Continuation, completion and progression (to graduate employment) rates
3. National Student Survey scores for overall satisfaction and academic support

Programme areas flagging in three or more indicators are placed into Active Monitoring.

Qualitative information is also considered before Active Monitoring courses are announced, to ensure that a wider risk based approach is taken to allocation. For example, programmes subject to professional body conditions or action plans, or those in receipt of complex or significant student complaints would be considered for Active Monitoring irrespective of flagging indicators.

When programme areas undertake their Action Plans and Reflections, they are prompted to consider a wider set of qualitative information including open comments from student surveys, recommendations from external examiners, and feedback from teaching staff, industry experts and employers. Recruitment and marketing activity is also considered to take the financial viability of courses into account.

Course performance indicators, and the reflective questions on the Active Monitoring Plan and Local Enhancement Reflection templates are reviewed and reset annually, to reflect changes to external regulation and internal strategic objectives.

Institutional Governance

The Academic Board is responsible for approving the processes for programme review, and for reviewing and resetting the course performance indicators each year. The Education Committee is responsible for considering the outcomes and significant risks identified from reviews, and for agreeing institutional level action in response. School Quality Management Committees and Heads of School are responsible for ensuring the objectives and actions from Local Enhancement Reflections are monitored and for populating School Risk Registers with risks identified.

Programmes in Active Monitoring are monitored at the highest level in the institution, with the Vice-Chancellor, Provost and PVC Student Experience meeting with the Head of School and relevant course team to agree and then follow up on action plans. Objectives for programmes in Local Enhancement are discussed with the Provost and/or PVC Student Experience, and overseen by the Head of School and School Quality Management Committee.

The Board of Governors receives (appended to the Quality and Standards Annual Report) a summary of programme review activity, including notification of programmes in Active Monitoring.

Outline of How Actions are Taken

Along with clear actions at programme and School level, University level interventions and support may be proposed for programmes in Active Monitoring to improve areas where this is appropriate. This may include external consultancy; targeted training and workshops in partnership with professional services teams or curriculum redesign projects.

Programmes in Active Monitoring that do not make sufficient improvements are at risk of recruitment to the programme being suspended, or the programme being closed either permanently or for the purposes of redesign and reapproval.

The Education Committee oversees the outcomes from the programme review process, with a summary of the issues raised in the Active Monitoring meetings at the October meeting; and oversight of any risks arising from Local Enhancement Reflections that are entered onto School Risk Registers following their consideration at School Quality Management Committees.

The Chair of Education Committee (PVC Student Experience) attends all programme review meetings and is responsible for identifying institutional level concerns or outcomes to identify where the University may need to transform its provision more widely.

Document details

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Responsible Officer: Head of Academic Governance and Policy

Approving Authority: Board of Governors

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