

SEC15D020

Title: HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW OUTCOME REPORT AND ACTION PLAN
Author: Jon Sharp, Head of LTS (Quality)
Date: 14/01/16
Circulation: Student Experience Committee – 10 February 2016
Agenda: SEC15A002
Version: Final
Status: Open

Issue

Recipients are invited to note the outcome of the October 2015 Higher Education Review (HER) event and the proposals for implementing the recommendations arising from the review.

Resource Implications

The recommendations are all of a relatively minor nature and so contain no resource implications for the University.

Risk Implications

The University is required to implement its Action Plan in accordance with the timescale laid down by the QAA

Equality and Diversity

N/A

Further Information

For further information regarding the issues in this paper please contact Dr Jon Sharp (Head LTS (Quality)) on 01603 9597374 jon.sharp@uea.ac.uk

Background

The QAA HER event took place in the week commencing 12th October 2015 and represented the culmination of two years preparatory work, including the implementation of the QAA Quality Code, the preparation of our Self-Evaluation Document, the preparation by UUEAS of a Student Submission and a significant effort on the part of academic staff and professional services staff across the University to ensure that we were fully prepared for any and all questions that might arise during the visit.

We received our Key Findings letter on 30th October 2015, which indicated that the University was meeting UK expectations in all judgement areas; the provisional letter also highlighted areas of good practice, affirmed existing activity in key development priorities and indicated a number of likely recommendations.

Final HER Outcome

The draft HER report, confirming the points made in the Key Findings letter, was issued by QAA on 26th November 2015 inviting any factual corrections from the University by 18th December 2015. A small number of minor corrections were submitted to the QAA and the final report will be issued and made available to the public (via QAA's website) on **18th January 2016**.

The University has been given the opportunity to contribute text to the QAA press release that will accompany the publication of the report and this text has been produced by ARM in consultation with the Head of LTS (Quality). The publicity material will highlight the fact that this is a very pleasing result for the University reflecting our status as a student focused University with clear strategic vision for the continuous enhancement of learning and teaching within an academically rigorous environment.

The confirmed findings of the HER are as follows:

QAA's judgements about the University of East Anglia

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the University of East Anglia.

*The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meet** UK expectations.*

*The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.*

*The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.*

*The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.*

Good practice

*The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the University of East Anglia.*

The significant contribution made by Academic Advisers and the Dean of Students' Office in supporting the development and achievement of students (Expectations B4, B2 and Enhancement).

The strategic approach that is being taken to enhance the employability of students (Expectation B4 and Enhancement).

Recommendations

*The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the University of East Anglia.*

By September 2016:

take steps to address inconsistencies in its stated positioning of the Medical Bachelor /Bachelor of Surgery (MB BS) degree on the FHEQ (Expectations A2.1, A1 and A3.1)

take steps to address the approval and completeness of its programme specifications (Expectations A2.2 and A3.1)

ensure that external academic expertise is consistently obtained, documented and considered as part of the course approval process to verify threshold academic standards and to demonstrate that the appropriate external reference points have been considered (Expectations A3.4, A3.1 and B1)

ensure effective oversight and monitoring of cumulative changes and deviations to programmes (Expectation B1)

review assessment board regulations and their application to ensure greater consistency and equity of treatment of students (Expectations B6 and A2.1)

define, articulate and implement arrangements for the approval of cotutelle partners for dual awards, including taking steps to ensure that a cotutelle agreement has been signed before the relevant activity commences (Expectations B10 and B1)

put in place mechanisms to ensure effective oversight to manage the variability in practice in the provision of programme information to current students (Expectation C)

communicate effectively to students' information about programme learning outcomes at the start of, and throughout, their studies (Expectations C and A2.2).

Affirmation of action being taken

*The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the University of East Anglia is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.*

The steps being taken to implement the Code of Practice on Student Representation to enable students to contribute to the management and enhancement of their programmes (Expectation B5).

The steps being taken to improve consistency in assessment, marking and feedback (Expectation B6).

Theme: Student Employability

The University of East Anglia identified student employability as a strategic priority in 2012, which is reflected in key objectives set in its Corporate Plan 2012-16. Its approach has resulted in significant investment in a range of activities, greater student engagement with the reshaped Careers Service, and changes in the approach to the development of student employability. New posts and structures have been set up at all levels, including an Academic Director of Employability, an Employability Executive, Associate Deans for Employability in each faculty, and school-level Directors of Employability. Its new plan for the period 2016-20 will enhance the strategic approach to student employability and will be underpinned by Faculty Employability Plans.

The University aims to ensure that during their studies students achieve attributes that will equip them for graduate-level employment. The restructured Careers Service offers a comprehensive range of services and approaches to student enterprise, and the development of entrepreneurial skills has been remodelled. The University has a strong relationship with employers through the Local Enterprise Partnership and community organisations. It has developed its Student Enterprise Strategy and appointed a Student Enterprise Officer to support its development. Provision for research students has been expanded, and a comprehensive range of workshops is available through the Personal and Professional Development Programme.

Courses are designed to align with the development of graduate attributes (rather than imposing compulsory modules), expand skills training and engage employers in the delivery and development of the curriculum. A review of the University's Academic Advising System in 2014-15 has resulted in policy and resource development to enhance approaches to employability and students have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of extracurricular and volunteering experiences. [extract from HER Final Report pp. 2-3]

Postgraduate Research

The Postgraduate Research Executive noted the University's receipt of the draft HE Review report and in particular the recommendation to define, articulate and implement arrangements for the approval of cotutelle partners for dual awards, including taking steps to ensure that a cotutelle agreement has been signed before the relevant activity commences. It considered a paper on this at its meeting of 9 December 2015 and approved the introduction of a two stage

process for the approval of cotutelle agreements – the first stage being approval of the partner organisation (due diligence), the second stage being academic approval of the individual cotutelle agreement. As a result, if the University and partner institution have not collaborated before on cotutelle arrangements, the University will carry out due diligence checks to ensure that the partner institution can fulfil its role in the arrangement. A due diligence checklist is being created, to include consideration of factors such as the size, stability, reputation, supervision quality and research environment of the partner institution, as well as the benefits of the research link and effective systems of communication between the institutions and supervisors involved. The completed checklist will be considered by the Postgraduate Research Executive, and the approval of partner institutions will be reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee. The second stage will operate largely as at present but with Schools more clearly notified that they must plan sufficiently in advance to allow cotutelle agreements to be signed before the relevant activity (i.e. the student's initial registration) commences. Again, approval of cotutelle agreements will be reported to both the Postgraduate Research Executive and the Learning and Teaching Committee. Up-to-date registers of cotutelle arrangements are maintained by the Postgraduate Research Service. Schools will be responsible for annual reviews of any cotutelle arrangements they are involved in.

Next Steps

The University is required to produce an Action Plan that indicates how each of the recommendations will be implemented.

The Action Plan must be published on the University web site by not later than **29th March 2016** and the implementation of the recommendations must be completed by not later than **September 2016**. It is important to note that sufficient implementation requires that steps have been taken to address the substance of the recommendations as opposed to those steps necessarily having been wholly completed.

The Head of LTS (Quality) met with the HER Group that led on the preparation for the HER event on 21st January, at this meeting the detailed steps for the implementation of the recommendations were agreed and a timeline for their completion was established.

The full outcome report can be found [here](#)