

LTC15D190

Title: Internal Quality Assurance – Interim Report
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Issue

Recipients are invited to consider the proposals detailed in the attached report.

Recommendation

The committee is asked to endorse the proposals in principle subject to further reporting to LTC prior to implementation in 2017-18 that systems and processes have been developed to ensure a successful introduction of the new approach to Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

Resource Implications

The paper has resource implications with regard to payments to be made to student reviewers. However, the new approach to IQA is likely to provide significant efficiency gains in terms of academic staff time such that the cost of student payments is likely to be offset by academic resource gains.

Risk Implications

The University's IQA processes are designed to minimise quality risks to our taught provision. The proposals outline a new approach to IQA that retains the necessary probity and rigour, but which is less onerous in terms of time-cost.

Equality and Diversity

N/A

Timing of decisions

Endorsement by LTC at its July meeting will enable the Working Group to move into the practical planning phase in readiness for full implementation in 2017/18.

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 University schedule of policy reviews established that a review of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) should take place in the 2015/16 academic year and a Working Group comprising student representatives, academic and professional services staff was established. IQA is a complex area of activity and it is important that the University does not introduce a new set of regulations until it is satisfied that we have the processes and systems in place to enable a successful delivery of the new approach. Consequently, it was agreed that an interim report would be presented to LTC at the end of academic year 2015-16 with a series of proposals regarding the principles underpinning a new approach to IQA and that development of supporting processes, IT system developments, and guidance would take place in the academic year 2016-17 with a view to implement the policy in academic year 2017-18.

The Working Group has consulted with FLTQCs and SSLCs, discussed feedback from those groups and wherever possible incorporated the suggestions arising from that consultation exercise into the proposals detailed below. There were a number of drivers that informed the proposed changes:

- The need to make student evaluation meaningful in terms of the volume of take-up to ensure student voice is heard
- The current system is too unwieldy and potentially confusing
- There is an institutional drive to free up academic time and an associated need to make our academic administration as time efficient as possible
- There is a need to ensure that we effectively close the loop in our communications with students
- The HER requires that we more closely monitor changes made to courses as a result of review and update processes to avoid course drift that has not received committee consideration
- The NAM places emphasis on the Course rather than the module and it is at the level of the Course that strategic changes should be made – it was felt that any new IQA process needed to reflect the importance of Course level planning and design

Proposals:

The Working Group have considered a range of different possible approaches to IQA and are confident that the broad approach outlined herein offers a model that is both sufficiently rigorous, while also reducing the academic and professional services time cost involved in the delivery of our quality assurance mechanisms.

The new approach to IQA simplifies the current multiple events of module review, course review and a review of assessment and moderation into a single annual course review event that incorporates a review of modules and assessment within that singular process. The aim is to both simplify the process of quality assurance and also to facilitate as early implementation as possible of any proposed changes.

Additionally, in order to reflect the conceptual basis of the New Academic Model, the review process will be focused on the Course and updates will be driven by Course level changes with module changes being informed by any amendments at the level of the Course.

Similarly, it is proposed that student evaluation is conducted as an annual Course Evaluation that will also allow students to comment on specific modules, but by reducing the number of discrete evaluations will increase the likelihood of students completing an evaluation.

The Working Group seeks approval of the following broad principles in order that it can develop an implementation plan, regulations and supporting processes to allow implementation in the 2016-17 academic year:

1. Module Review and the Annual Review of Assessment and Moderation are discontinued as discrete events but incorporated into a single Course Review event
2. At least 20% of modules to be reviewed in each year as part of the Course Review Event, the selection of modules will be a matter for the Course Director and the system of 'triggers' will be discontinued
3. Each module will therefore have a 'Home-Course' to which it belongs
4. Where appropriate the single Course Review event may be undertaken as a review of a group of cognate courses
5. Student evaluation to take place annually as a Course Evaluation that provides for students to also make comments on specific modules
6. The timing of IQA events to be fixed to the timing of Exam Boards rather than calendar dates to properly accommodate the needs of 'non-standard' courses
7. The timing of Update activity to operate as set out in Appendix One (attached)
8. Student representatives to be trained and to receive some form of remuneration for their involvement in Course Review activity
9. Minor and Major changes to be clearly defined and those definitions to be incorporated in the regulations supporting IQA
10. Courses will be permitted to make Minor changes such that they take effect in the academic year immediately following the Course Review event
11. Where the number of Minor changes since the last Periodic Review (5 yearly review) have caused more than 20% of a course's constituent modules to be changed, any additional minor changes shall require sign off by FLTQC and LTC
12. Major changes will be considered by SSLCs, FLTQC and LTC prior to implementation

Next Steps:

In the event that LTC is content with the broad approach detailed above the Working Group shall proceed on this basis and in particular the following actions will be taken:

1. Detailed regulations, supporting materials and process flows shall be produced for consideration and approval by LTC in early 2017

2. Head LTS (Quality) to work with ADTP and Manager AQO to draft: Student Course Evaluation Form and Course Review Report Form incorporating the necessary boxes to provide for both minor and major changes to be simply actioned and reported
3. A sub-group of ADTP, SU Education Officers and Manager AQO to agree a list of minor and major changes to be ratified by LTC
4. Head LTS (Quality) to work with HR and UUEAS to organise a payment and training scheme for student reviewers
5. ADTP and Associate Deans to review role descriptors for Module Organisers and Course Directors to ensure they remain appropriate in the light of proposed changes to IQA and submit any changes to LTC
6. Head LTS (Quality) and Manager of AQO to draft online guidance and process flow maps. These will be tested with a range of academic staff, students, and professional services staff to ensure that they are transparent and useable.

