

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MATHEMATICAL, PHYSICAL AND LIFE SCIENCES ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT CALENDAR
FOR ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS IN DEPARTMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This Calendar describes those areas which Education Committee and the Division see as critical points of quality assurance and enhancement. These are activities by which a responsible body can assure itself (drawing on QAA terminology) that:

- (a) sets and maintains threshold academic standards
- (b) manages the quality of students' learning opportunities
- (c) enhances its educational provision
- (d) manages the quality of its public information.

In addition, this Calendar highlights other regular administrative tasks that are not necessarily related to quality assurance and quality enhancement which involve academic administrators interacting with the MPLS divisional office or central university administrative sections.

All departments will not make the same arrangements, or with the same committee structure, or at precisely the same points in the year. It is hoped that by addressing this guidance to academic administrators it will be possible to identify which is the best forum, timing and approach to adopt in each faculty or department.

Education Policy and Guidance is available at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/qa/policies/>

Further guidance on procedures specific to the MPLS Division is available at: <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/node/352>

Reviews in 2013/14

The Review Protocol and Review Timetable is available at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/qa/internalreviews/>

The full review of Physics is expected to take place in MT 2014. Preparation of documentation in advance of the review will take place in 2013/14.

- Interim reviews due:
 - In MT 2013, carried over from 2012/13: Maths, Computer Science
 - Plant Sciences, Zoology
- Reviews of new PGT courses after 5 years:
 - MSc Software & Systems Security
 - PdDip International Wildlife Conservation Practice

MICHAELMAS TERM

1. Identification of academic objectives for the year, and annual updating of departmental/Divisional plans

Departmental committees confirm the year's specific academic objectives in the light of any review outcomes, departmental plans, the Divisional five-year plan, or the University's Strategic Plan (the most recent versions of the University and MPLS Strategic Plans can be found at: <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/node/348>)

At divisional level, a report on expected major items of business for the year goes to the MPLS Academic Committee in Week 1 and the Graduate School Committee in Week 4.

2. Consideration of reports from examiners and external examiners for undergraduate and graduate taught programmes to provide comment on any significant concerns for the relevant Division and through the Division to Education Committee, and to ensure feedback to external examiners on a reasonable timescale.

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 1.8 of the 'Policy and Guidance for Examiners and others involved in University Examinations', downloadable from <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/qa/policies/>.

Divisional guidance is set out in its annual circular (<http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/taught-course-examination-procedures>). In particular:

(a) Schedule

- (i) *Chairmen of examiners* have been asked to forward reports and the latest set of conventions (incorporating any suggestions they may have for changes for the future) to the relevant department. *External examiners* have been asked to submit their reports to the Vice-Chancellor within four weeks of the last examiners meeting. On receipt, those reports will be forwarded to departments via Education Policy Support and Divisional Offices.

For undergraduate examinations, this should enable the reports to be considered at the first meetings of departmental Academic/Teaching Committees in Michaelmas Term.

For graduate taught course examinations, this should enable the reports to be considered by the relevant course and departmental Academic/Teaching Committee and submitted to Division by the first Week of Hilary Term 2014.

- (ii) *Chairmen of departmental Academic/Teaching Committees* are asked to arrange for examiners' reports and conventions to be considered by the departmental Academic/Teaching Committees (see (b) below), and for comments on examiners' reports to be forwarded to Division according to the following timetable:

Reports on undergraduate examinations should be forwarded to Catherine Goodwin (catherine.goodwin@mpls.ox.ac.uk) by the end of Week 6 of Michaelmas Term (22 November 2013).

Reports relating to joint degree courses, and departmental Academic/Teaching Committee's comments on them, should be sent in the first instance to the relevant

joint committee, which should then send its comments to Catherine Goodwin (catherine.goodwin@mpls.ox.ac.uk) by the end of week 6 of Michaelmas Term.

Reports on postgraduate taught course examinations should be forwarded to Catherine Goodwin (catherine.goodwin@mpls.ox.ac.uk) by the end of Week 1 of Hilary Term 2013/14 (24 January 2014).

(b) Monitoring by departmental Academic/Teaching Committees

As set out in section 1.8 of the 'Policy and Guidance for Examiners and others involved in University Examinations', the University regards the reports made on behalf of all the examiners as an important element of its quality assurance arrangements. Departmental Academic/Teaching Committees should use the annual reports by examiners, with their detailed breakdown of the assessment process, to monitor:

1. any changes which the examination process might have suggested in relation to existing methods of assessment;
2. any changes which the examination process might have suggested in relation to the existing content of the course;
3. any need to review specific options;
4. the overall standard of performance in the examination, including any trends in results or in relation to particular areas of the curriculum;
5. any possible changes in examination conventions, procedures or regulations suggested by the examiners' experience of the examination process.

(c) Reports to Division should include:

1. a copy of the report of the Board of Examiners and the latest set of examination conventions;
2. a draft response to each external examiner, addressing all the substantive points in their reports (this will be used as the basis of the Division's reply to the external examiner);
3. a report to the Division on the outcome of the monitoring outlined in (b) above.

(d) Class percentage figures (including gender breakdown)

Chairmen of Examiners are asked to include in their reports any comments they may have about performance in their honour school, compared with other MPLS subjects, and about differences in performance by gender, taking account in particular of the latest five-year rolling average of class percentage figures <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/mpls/fhsstats> (restricted access through single-sign-on, please ask Catherine Goodwin if you need access and do not already have it). Given the diverse nature of the programmes and examinations in the MPLS Division, Chairmen of Examiners and Departmental Academic Committees are asked to compare their results with similar subjects. Such groupings might be:

- four-year programmes with no exit point

- programmes with an exit point after the third year, for their three and four year versions
- the mathematical and computer sciences
- three-year only programmes (compared with the University average).

In considering this, departments should also refer to the detailed resources being published by Education Committee's Gender Panel at <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/policy/gender/page/home> (also restricted access).

3. Annual Review of Graduate Admissions (including Clarendon Fund awards)

Departments review the previous year's graduate admissions round (both graduate taught courses and research degree programmes) at their MT meetings.

- Consider number and quality of applications, the use of over-offer ratios, withdrawals and take-up of places; availability of awards and other funding; number of requests to waive English language requirements. A Tableau report providing this data will shortly become available from Graduate Admissions, and the URL will be circulated to departments.
- Report on the number of English language waivers approved and provision made for subsequent language teaching. The divisional office will present English language waiver information to the Graduate Admissions Committee at its second meeting of Michaelmas Term, for onward transmission to Education Committee. Consider procedures for the forthcoming admissions round.
- Review graduate admissions criteria. Write summary report to Division on these items by the end of MT for consideration at the HT meeting of the Division's Graduate School Committee. A circular will be sent to DGSs, MSc course directors and Academic Administrators.

4. Annual review of return rates for termly GSS reports for graduate students (taught and research)

Departments are asked to review termly their own supervision report statistics and any issues arising, such as common concerns raised by students and supervisors (suitably anonymized).

Consideration at MT meeting of the Division's Graduate School Committee. Advice will be issued to departments after the committee's meeting, if/as appropriate.

5. National Student Survey

Results from the NSS are made available by Student Information in Student Administration (student.information@admin.ox.ac.uk) to departments and the divisional office at course level in late July/early August. Data is published at JACS code level 3 for the general public in mid August (at <http://www.unistats.com/>) for subjects with response rates greater than 50%.

The Division will circulate a detailed and comparative analysis of the NSS survey to departments and ask them to consider their own results at departmental academic committees and JCCs in the light of comments from the University's Education Committee and MPLS Academic Committee.

There is a University web page on which summary results of recent surveys are also published: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ac-div/surveys/>. An archive of all past student survey data is kept on a Weblearn site:

https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/central/aad/adm/sdma/reporting/student_data. Contact student.information@admin.ox.ac.uk if you need access and don't already have it.

6. Identification of new course proposals for introduction in future years

Undergraduate courses: during the year, preliminary steps for new courses should be introduced in MT three full academic years ahead of the admissions round.

Example: 2013/14 Case made at departmental then MPLS level; 2014/15 Case made at EdC, Senior Tutors Committee and Council; Regulations published by July/October 2015, UCAS code assigned, new course details with UCAS code published in January 2016 undergraduate prospectus, interviews MT 2016, first students register MT 2017.

Postgraduate taught courses: during the year, preliminary steps for new courses to be introduced two full academic years ahead of the admissions round.

Example: 2013/14 Case made at departmental then MPLS level; detailed work and approval 2014/5; regulations published by July 2015; new course details published in Autumn 2015 graduate prospectus; candidates apply in AY 2015/16; first students register MT 2016.

Education Committee guidance on the introduction of new courses is available at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/qa/policies/>.

More specific advice should be sought from Jared Hutchings in the MPLS Divisional Office, tel. 01865 282463, email jared.hutchings@mpls.ox.ac.uk, as early as possible in considering proposals for new courses, or major changes to existing courses.

7 Quality Assurance Returns

Departments are asked to complete quality assurance returns for each level of study (UG, PGT, PGR), every three years. These returns ask department to confirm that they comply with key aspects of the University's quality assurance processes, and to identify aspects where they have made systematic improvements (quality enhancement). Departments will be asked to complete the return for PGR programmes in Michaelmas term 2013.

8. Other administrative tasks for Michaelmas term

- **Outreach:** Departmental outreach officers provide a summary report on activities to Undergraduate Access & Admission Panel (week 3)
- **Graduate admissions:** first application deadline is Friday 22 November 2013
- **Examination Conventions:** publish and circulate conventions to students (or by early HT at the latest).
- **Immigration:** prepare CAS requests for research students needing an extension to their visa
- **Immigration monitoring:** send reporting spreadsheets at the end of term to tier4compliance@admin.ox.ac.uk. Immigration guidance at: <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/visavis/>
- **GSS:** chase supervisors for incomplete MT reports.

HILARY TERM

9. Analysis of Annual Programme Statistics

The Annual Programme Statistics (APS) are published by the Student Data Management and Analysis Team (SDMA) in Student Administration in early December, with a census date of 1 December.

Departments are asked to use these data for their own monitoring exercises, in particular:

- Degree outcomes for undergraduate students (e.g. First, 2:1) and PGT students (e.g. distinction, pass), split by gender and fee status.
- Outcomes for undergraduate and PGT students (e.g. qualified, withdraw, failed), split by gender and fee status.
- Submission rates, and time to transfer and confirmation for research students

Divisional committees will look at the data in parallel in Hilary Term, and may also ask departments to look at specific aspects which are of particular concern.

10. Changes in regulations required for the following academic year

Major changes to regulations should be approved by departmental committees by 4th week of Hilary term so that they can be considered by MPLS Academic Audit Committee in week 5 of Hilary term, and if necessary, by Education Committee in week 8 of Hilary term. 'Major' changes might include changes to the number of papers student must sit, or the way they are assessed (e.g. dissertation versus timed-written examination).

Minor changes need to be approved by the department in Hilary term, but not by MPLS Academic Audit Committee. Minor changes can be approved by the MPLS Associate Head of Division (Academic) by Chair's action. If a department wishes for minor changes to be incorporated into the printed version of the Examination Regulations, these should be submitted to the divisional office by the end of Hilary Term (the date will be confirmed annually by the MPLS Divisional Office).

Please send any regulation changes to catherine.goodwin@mpls.ox.ac.uk, and she will advise on the appropriate route for divisional approval.

The 'effective' date of any changes to Examination Regulations must meet the requirement for vested interest i.e. where a change has a direct personal consequence for an individual. For example, students would have a vested interest if a new examination is set for which they may not have studied the full 'new' syllabus. If a progression hurdle is raised, this would also be a vested interest. In such cases, changes should be either brought in within a timescale that does not affect students, alternate plans for those affected should be put into place to ameliorate any affect, or agreement from those affected should be gained prior to the change taking effect

For purposes of registration and examination entry, the recommended latest 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 July, for data upload in August prior to annual registration. However, it is recognised that, for programmes which do not use the MT entry dates, changes to optional papers may continue to be made up to the start of MT of the year in which the examination is sat unless required earlier by vested interest.

11. Analysis of undergraduate admissions statistics

Departments should consider undergraduate admissions statistics on an annual basis, identifying trends in numbers, source and quality of applications.

Annual undergraduate admissions statistics are published in HT. From 2013/14, SDMA intend to issue detailed statistics in late HT for departments and divisions on the admissions round that has just passed. These will be considered at the meeting of Undergraduate Admissions and Access Panel in week 8 of HT.

The data is available at: <https://bits.uas.ox.ac.uk/workbooks/DepartmentalOffersReport>

Statistics for the general public are published at the following site:

http://www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/facts_and_figures/undergraduate_admissions_statistics/.

Departments must also confirmation to AdEx that they meet Common Framework requirements.

12. Teaching Awards Scheme

The Teaching Award Scheme celebrates success, and recognises and rewards excellence in teaching. Awards are available to all those who teach, including graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and learning support staff. The scheme is administered by the MPLS Divisional Office. Awards will be made on merit, across the departments, and judged by a cross-departmental panel chaired by the Associate Head of Division (Academic). The awards are celebrated by the Head of Division at the MPLS Summer Party and at the Oxford Learning Institute's ceremony in Michaelmas Term.

Departments are asked to make students and staff within their department aware of the scheme and encourage them to make nominations.

Deadlines will be confirmed at the start of Hilary term, but typically the patterns is as follows: Students and staff are asked to make nominations online, and a link is provided from late January. Department are asked to publicise the awards. Nominations close in mid to late May and departments will receive shortlisted applications by early June [dates will be confirmed at the start of HT]. Departments will need to return shortlists, with additional support material as appropriate, by mid June.

<http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/mpls-teaching-awards-scheme>

13. Key Information Sets

Departments will be asked to verify or update the data on their undergraduate programmes published in the Key Information Sets ahead of the publication for the following academic year. KIS data is published at: <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

14. Other administrative tasks for Hilary term

- **Examination Conventions:** publish and circulate conventions to students early in HT if not already done so.
- **Student number planning:** The divisional office will ask departments to provide detailed plans for intakes for each programme for 2015/16 to 2017/18. The division will in turn collate and aggregate plans from all departments, and submit them for approval to MPLS

General Purposes Committee. This data will then be submitted to the Joint Student Number Planning Sub-Committee.

- **EPSRC Doctoral Prize scheme** (formerly PhD Plus): A call is made for nominations in late March, with a deadline typically in early May.
- **EPSRC Vacation Bursary Scheme**: Subject to a decision on its funding, we would expect the EPSRC Vacation Bursary Scheme at Oxford to continue along much the same lines as for 2013-14. If funding is agreed, we would launch the scheme during Hilary Term, enabling early advertisement to students by departments. The MPLS Divisional Office will contact departments about this as soon as possible.
- **Fees**: The division will propose a level for the annual percentage increase for fees at the start of term. Departments should review the proposed level of increase, and in particular consider the increase for PGT fees against the competitive environment. Final approval at divisional level will come through GPC in week 6 of term.
- **Graduate admissions**:
 - Second application deadline is Friday 10 January 2014 (early January deadline used by Medical Sciences, Computer Science, Philosophy, and Politics and International Relations). Third application deadline is Friday 24 January 2014 (late January deadline used by all other programmes). Fourth deadline is Friday 14 March 2014.
 - Interviews, make UAB offers, complete coversheets and forward to colleges, GAF guidance is at http://www.ox.ac.uk/restricted_access/graduate_admissions_and_funding/handbook/uab_decisionmaking/uab_decisions.html
- **Graduate funding**: award of Clarendons and other scholarships; consider Research Council college partnership awards to maximise the number of new graduate students with funding. College awards can be found at: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/feesandfunding/prospectivegrad/scholarships/university/rc/partnershipawards/>
- **GSS**: chase supervisors for incomplete reports from MT and HT.
- **Immigration**: send reporting spreadsheets at the end of term to tier4compliance@admin.ox.ac.uk. Immigration guidance at: <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/visavis/>

TRINITY TERM

15. Review of Collaborative Provision arrangements

Agreements for collaborative provision are for a set period of time, and have to be monitored annually and before they come to an end prior to any renewal.

The University requires:

- (1) an annual review by the faculty/department of any collaborative provision;
- (2) an appraisal of the collaboration agreement in advance of the end of the first period of collaboration.

Departments are asked to carry out the annual review, and when appropriate the appraisal, in Trinity Term, and to report the outcomes to the Divisional Office.

See paragraph 4.4 of the Education Committee's Policy and Guidance on Collaborative Provision: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/ga/policies/>

16. Review of Student Barometer

In AY 2013/14, all full time and part time matriculated students will be surveyed through the Student Barometer (with the exception of final-year undergraduate students about to be surveyed in the NSS). Students are surveyed in late November 2013, and data will become available in mid Hilary term 2014. Data is available to students, staff and the general public through Tableau Public software (no long in required) at:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/living/surveys/>. Historic data is available back to 2010.

MPLS Academic Committee and Graduate School Committee will review a detailed and comparative analysis of this data in Trinity term, and may ask departments to address any specific weaknesses that are identified. Departments are asked to use the Tableau data to analyse their own particular courses in detail.

17. Departments review information for applicants and students

The new 2013 edition of the 'Policy and Guidance on Research degrees' (section 4) includes an extensive and specific list of information for PGR applicants that must be included on a course website. Once this information has been included on a course website, departments will no longer be required to carry a PGR Statements of Provision. Significant changes to website content describing provision for PGR students should be considered in departments in Trinity term.

Statements of Provision for PGT students remain, and are available for each course on the online graduate admissions prospectus.

http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/course_guide/index.html. Departments should review this information in Trinity term and provide updated versions to Graduate Admissions.

Departments should also review programme specifications.

In Trinity term (week 4), the Divisional Graduate School Committee will review the guidance on information for prospective and on-course PGR and PGT students and the Code of practice on Supervision, and provide any recommendations or guidance to departments as necessary.

18. Divisional review of training provision

The Divisional Graduate Training Committee oversees skills training for both doctoral students and early career researchers provided by departments and by the divisional office, and will report to Graduate School Committee. These reports in turn feed into Education Committee's Skills Group in Trinity Term. Shortly after the end of Trinity Term, Graduate Training Committee will:

- review provision and take up of training offered by each department to doctoral students and research staff in its own and other departments in 2013/14 (through the Graduate Academic Programme)
- review provision and take-up of training offered by the MPLS divisional office in 2013/14
- confirm plans for training offered by the MPLS divisional office in 2014/15

19. Graduate admissions criteria

Policies for selection criteria for graduate admissions are reviewed by the University's Graduate Admissions Committee at the start of Trinity term. UABs are then asked to carry out a full review of their selection criteria during Trinity term and the start of the Long vacation. Work needs to be completed by mid-August at the latest, in good time for the start of the new admissions round on 1 September 2013. The UAB selection criteria template can be found at:

<http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/node/352>

20. Other administrative tasks for Trinity term

- **Feedback to PGT students:** Chairs of Examiners ensure all PGT student receive feedback on their dissertation using the divisional template:
<http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/node/352>
- **Graduate admissions:** finalise outstanding offers and funding
- **GSS:** from mid June - for supervisors that have not submitted reports for MT and HT, ask them to submit a report for TT13 covering the entire academic year.
- **Assessment Unit Collection:** review and annotate exam entry forms to reflect which assessments, including any corresponding rules about student selection of options, will be available in the next academic year, in accordance with the Examination Regulations guidance at:
<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/adm/aro/dept/auc/page/resources>
- **Nominations for Chairmen of Examiners:** the deadline is usually early/mid July
- **Immigration:** send reporting spreadsheets by mid July to tier4compliance@admin.ox.ac.uk. Immigration guidance at:
<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/central/aad/visavis/>

LONG VACATION

21. Departments/faculties update and publish information for applicants and students

This should include:

- **Information for prospective research students.** Note that the new 2013 edition of the 'Policy and Guidance on Research degrees' (section 4) includes an extensive and specific list of information for PGR applicants that must be included on websites (see 17 above).
- **PGT statements of provision** for prospective taught course students. These should be provided to GAF who will publish them on the online graduate prospectus (http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/course_guide/index.html on individual course pages).
- **Programme specifications.** These should be accessible from outside the Oxford domain, i.e. there should be open access. See Education Committee guidance on Programme Specifications: <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/publication-handbooks-and-other-material>.
- **Course handbooks and departmental website** material for both prospective and on-course students. See check-list on the content of undergraduate handbooks: <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/publication-handbooks-and-other-material>

22. Departments provide information to divisional office at the end of the admissions cycle on English Language test waivers

Guidance available at: <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/node/352>

23. Other administrative tasks for long vacation

- **Examiners reports:** send a copy of the external examiner's report to the Chairman of Examiners for that examination.
- **Graduate admissions:** issue contracts when all conditions (both academic and financial) have been fulfilled
- **Student load apportionments:** Data on the apportionment of student load between departments for UG, PGT and PGR programmes of study is produced by PRAS for revision. Departments to review and return student load data in the long vacation. Returns are usually due in early September.
- **Immigration:** prepare CAS requests for new students
- **Student surveys:** analysis of course-level NSS data as it becomes available in August (see item 5 in MT).
- **Transcript:** Update subject-specific transcript text.
- **Contacts:** Departments to forward details of key academic and administrative contacts as they relate to teaching and learning to Divisional Office ready for the new academic year. The MPLS divisional office will prompt departments for this.