

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MATHEMATICAL, PHYSICAL AND LIFE SCIENCES DIVISION

QUALITY ASSURANCE

AND

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

CALENDAR

FOR

ACADEMIC

ADMINISTRATORS

IN

DEPARTMENTS AND FACULTIES

Michaelmas Term 2008

INTRODUCTION

1. This is the second year of the joint Education Committee (formerly EPSC) and MPLS annual Calendar of the quality assurance and quality enhancement activities which underpin the University's academic infrastructure.

2. The 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) 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 proposed quality enhancement strategy. Education Committee and the Division are 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. Education Committee and Division have 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. Data availability is already improved and Education Committee and Division look to all responsible bodies to be aware of the key statistics relating to the programmes for which they are responsible. This will be considerably improved when regular data reports from OSS become available, expected in the 2009-10 academic year.

5. All faculties and 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.

6. It should also be possible 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, an appropriate web reference is provided.

MICHAELMAS TERM

1 Identification of academic objectives for the year

Confirm year's specific academic activities in the light of any review outcomes, faculty/departmental plans, Divisional five-year plans (under review during Michaelmas Term), the University's Strategic Plan.

Divisional plan at: <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/intranet/committees/papers.html>

Strategic Plan at: http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2007-8/supps/1_4845.pdf

MPLS Academic Committee, Week 6.

2 Annual Review of Graduate Admissions (including Clarendon Fund awards)

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

Consider number and quality of applications, withdrawals and take-up of places; availability of awards and other funding; number of requests to waive English language requirements. In particular, report on the number of PGT English language waivers approved and provision made for subsequent language teaching.

Consider procedures for the forthcoming admissions round.

Review graduate admissions criteria to contribute to Divisional review of graduate admissions template in TT.

Write summary report to Division on these items by the end of MT for consideration at the HT meeting of the Division's Graduate Studies Advisory Panel (for research degrees) and the annual meeting of graduate taught course directors. A circular will be sent to DGSs, MSc course directors and Academic Administrators.

3 Research Degrees

Annual review of submission and completion rates for research degrees; any trends or developments arising out of examining and reports; effectiveness of procedures for transfer and confirmation of status.

Initial consideration at MT meeting of the Division's Graduate Studies Advisory Panel, (reports from OSS on submission and completion rates will not be available until 2009-10).

On the monitoring of transfer and confirmation of status, it was agreed at the meeting of the MPLS Graduate Studies Panel on 4 February 2008 that:

“the DGS or other departmental officer should present a brief monitoring report on an annual basis to the department's Graduate Studies Committee or the departmental committee with oversight of graduate studies matters. This should include a note of any issues and summary statistics concerning: numbers transferring/confirming status

on the first attempt; numbers referred back; numbers passing on the second attempt; numbers leaving.”

Once the department has considered these matters, it is asked to write a summary report to the Division on these items by the end of MT for consideration at the HT meeting of the Graduate Studies Advisory Panel.

4 Graduate Students (Taught and Research)

Annual review of return-rates for termly supervision report forms.

Initial consideration at MT meeting of the Division’s Graduate Studies Advisory Panel. Departments then write report to Division on follow-up action by the end of MT for consideration at the HT meeting of the Graduate Studies Advisory Panel. (This procedure is to be reviewed on the introduction in HT09 of the new online Graduate Supervision System for reporting.)

5 Graduate transferable skills training

Brief reports from departments on transferable skills training to be considered at the MT meeting of the Divisional Graduate Studies Advisory Panel.

6 Course Experience Questionnaires/National Student Survey (NSS)

Report on results of the previous academic year’s course experience questionnaires – and the NSS results - identification of any areas of concern for further work and development

Results from the Oxford Course Experience Questionnaires are published in MT on the Education Committee website at: <http://ceq.oucs.ox.ac.uk/>

Results from the NSS are published (usually in September) at: <http://www.unistats.co.uk/>

Consider at departmental academic committees and JCCs. Report to Hilary Term Divisional Undergraduate Studies and Access Advisory Panel. The Division will prompt departments on this.

7 Identification of new course proposals 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.

(Example: Preliminary steps during AY 2003-4, regulations published by July/October 2005, UCAS code assigned, new course details with UCAS code published in January 2006 undergraduate prospectus, interviews MT 2006, first students register MT 2007).

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 2004-5, detailed work and approval AY 2005-6 and regulations published by July 2006, new course details published in Autumn 2006 graduate prospectus, candidates apply in gathered fields AY 2006-7, first students register MT 2007).

Education Committee guidance on the introduction of new courses is available at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/index.shtml> A new edition of the Notes of Guidance will be available shortly.

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

8 Consideration of reports from examiners and external examiners for undergraduate and graduate taught programmes

Consideration of examiners' reports in order 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. 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;
- 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 7 of the Notes of Guidance on Examinations and Assessment at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/examass.pdf>

Divisional guidance is set out in its annual circular (MPS/017 of 17 June 2008 applies for the 2008 examinations, also available at <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/intranet/teachingandlearning/tcexamprocs.html>). In particular:

Chairmen of departmental Academic/Teaching Committees are asked to arrange for examiners' reports and conventions to be considered by the departmental Academic/Teaching Committees, and for comments on examiners' reports to be forwarded to Division according to the following timetable:

- (i) Reports on undergraduate examinations should be forwarded to Dr Nigel Berry, MPLS Divisional Office, **by the end of Week 6 of Michaelmas Term (21 November 2008)**

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 me its comments by the above deadline, the end of week 6 of Michaelmas Term.

- (ii) **Reports on postgraduate taught course examinations should be forwarded to Dr Nigel Berry, MPLS Divisional Office, by the end of Week 1 of Hilary Term 2009 (23 January 2009)**

Reports to Division should include:

- (i) a copy of the report of the Board of Examiners and the latest set of examination conventions;
- (ii) a summary of the major points at issue arising from both the external and internal examiners' reports, and the department's views on them, in particular highlighting any issues which should be brought to the attention of supervising committees in the department, Division, or the wider University, and good practice that should be noted and disseminated more widely, to enable the Division and University to develop their quality enhancement strategies;
- (iii) 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);
- (iv) a report on any wider points which emerge from discussion about e.g. standards of performance (see also section 5 of circular MPS/08-017), content of courses, teaching and examining arrangements; and
- (v) comments on the examination conventions, including confirmation that they cover, to the department's satisfaction, the points outlined in section 3 of circular MPS/080-017.

9 Class percentage figures (including gender breakdown)

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 complete statistics, with five-year rolling averages, are maintained on the Divisional Website at <http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/intranet/teachingandlearning/undergradprog.html>

Report to Division as part of examination reports in the same timetable as at 9 above.

10 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 MPLS Graduate Studies Advisory Panel in Michaelmas Term in the context of the annual reports of the MPLS Academic Advisor and the Divisional CETL Committee. They are then forwarded to the MPLS Academic Committee, Week 6. Departments report to the Divisional CETL Committee.

The annual reports from the Oxford Learning Institute and the CETL are normally published in HT and are available via the OLI website at:

<http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/index.php?page=1> The 2006-7 report was published in the section 'About the Learning Institute'.

HILARY TERM

11 Publication of student statistics (UG, PGT, PGR).

It is intended that, from 2009-10, sets of statistics for all subjects, with a census date of 1 December, will be published by Student Information Systems (SIS) and circulated to Divisions in Hilary Term.

Once these sets of data become available, the Divisional Office will circulate them to departments for consideration in Hilary Term.

12 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

These should be made by the end of Hilary Term (the date will be confirmed annually by the MPLS 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 recommend 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.

13 Annual updating of departmental/Divisional plans

Identification of developments in academic objectives/quality assurance/quality enhancement/overall student number planning in relation to departmental/Divisional five-year plans.

Report to Divisional Academic Committee, Week 1, usually in the context of the updating of the Divisional Plan, in years in which that is undertaken (including 2008-9). Hence departments need to be working on this in Michaelmas Term – completion of process referred to at (1) above.

14 Student number planning

Detailed programme-level student number planning undertaken, in preparation for the Division to provide revised forecasts for future years to Student Number Planning Sub-Committee in Trinity Term.

15 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. For the latest published statistics see <http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/adstats.pdf>

Report to Divisional Undergraduate Studies and Access Advisory Panel.

16 Annual review of statements of provision for postgraduate research students and postgraduate taught courses, and the code of practice on the supervision of graduate research students.

Departments to review their statements of provision for both postgraduate research students and (where applicable) for their postgraduate taught courses, and the Divisional supervision code of practice, at meetings in HT, and to arrange feedback from students about the templates and their use. Comments to be sent to the Division by the end of HT. There will be an opportunity to discuss the Statements of Provision for Postgraduate Taught Courses at the Annual Meeting for Postgraduate Taught Course Directors in Hilary Term. The Division will review the postgraduate research statements of provision and the code of practice on supervision and comments from departments at the TT meeting of the MPLS Graduate Studies Panel, in order for changes to be discussed in time for the templates to be revised for the next academic year.

17 Quality Assurance Templates

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

The 2008-9 template will appear on <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/handbook/> following institutional consideration of the 2007-8 returns. Academic administrators will be notified when it is available.

Depending on the timetable set by the Education Committee, it is expected that the deadline for their return to the MPLS Divisional Office will be towards the end of the Easter vacation.

18 EPSRC Vacation Bursary Scheme

The EPSRC Vacation Bursary Scheme is expected to continue along much the same lines for 2008-9 and 2009-10, and given this understanding it is currently expected that we will be able to launch the scheme substantially earlier than in previous years, perhaps in late Michaelmas Term, enabling earlier advertisement to students by departments. Projects and students then to be determined by the end of Hilary Term. MPLS Divisional Office will contact departments about this.

TRINITY TERM

19 Teaching Awards Scheme

Faculty/department/Divisional arrangements for identifying award holders once launched by the Oxford Learning Institute and following the receipt of guidance from the Division.

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

20 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...* at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/collabprov.pdf>

21 Transferable Skills Training

Review departmental/faculty provision of transferable skills training and preparation for academic practice (CETL) for research students and postdoctoral researchers, and programme for coming year.

CETL co-ordinators submit departmental reports on activity in the current year to the TT CETL meeting.

22 Graduate admissions criteria

MPLS Graduate Studies Advisory Panel reviews Divisional template for graduate admissions criteria and circulates new template to departments to update statements of programme admissions criteria in the long vacation.

LONG VACATION

23 Departments/faculties review and update programme specifications and PGT and PGR statements of provision, and publish the revised documents on their websites ahead of Michaelmas Term. The documents should be accessible from outside the Oxford domain, i.e. there should be open access.

24 Departments, and Division where applicable, review and update course handbooks and website material for students.

25 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. MPLS to prompt departments for this.

26 Graduate admissions criteria

Departments review graduate admissions criteria in light of revised Divisional template, and update departmental graduate admissions webpages.

27 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.