

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SOCIAL SCIENCES DIVISION

**TEACHING & LEARNING QUALITY
ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT
CALENDAR FOR ACADEMIC
ADMINISTRATORS IN DEPARTMENTS AND
FACULTIES**

Academic Year 2013-14

INTRODUCTION

1. In 2007, the Education Committee and divisional officers produced a coordinated annual calendar of the quality assurance and quality enhancement activities which underpin the University's academic infrastructure. Social Sciences already had its own calendar but in meetings with academic administrators it has been suggested that joint divisional/the Education Committee guidance on the areas of major institutional significance would be of assistance. The present document is the 2013-14 version.
2. The calendar describes those areas which the Division/the Education Committee 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 quality enhancement strategy. The Education Committee is 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. The Education Committee has 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. Centrally produced data is improving and the Education Committee asks all responsible bodies to be aware of the key statistics relating to the programmes for which they are responsible. The Social Sciences Division attaches equal importance to these developments.
5. Not all faculties and departments within Social Sciences will make the same arrangements, or in the same committee structure, or at precisely the same points in the year. It is hoped that by addressing this guidance to academic administrators (with copies to Directors of Undergraduate and of Graduate Studies) it will be possible to identify which are the best forum, timing and approach to adopt in each faculty or department.
6. It should also be possible to use the calendar 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, then an appropriate web reference is provided.

ANNUAL EXERCISES

1 Identification of academic objectives for the year

Consider year's specific academic activities in the light of any review outcomes, faculty/departmental plans, divisional five-year plans, the University's Corporate Plan and the Strategic Plan, report on progress on activities identified in previous year's plans, and refer actions to the divisional Teaching Audit Committee (TAC), Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) as appropriate.

Divisional plan at:

http://www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0015/6531/ssd_5_year_plan_0809_to_12_13_v5_final_publication_version.doc

Corporate Plan at: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2005-6/supps/corporate.pdf>

Strategic Plan at:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/planningandresourceallocation/documents/planningcycle/Strategicplan2013.pdf>

2 Annual updating of departmental/divisional plans

Identification of developments in academic objectives/quality assurance/quality enhancement/student number planning in relation to departmental/divisional five-year plans. Updates on departmental strategic plans reported to Divisional Planning and Resources Committee, Week 0.

Draft divisional strategic plan considered by Divisional Planning and Resources Committee, Week 5, to be finalised HT Week 0 for submission to University PRAC.

3 Quality Assurance Questionnaires

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

In 2013-14, it is expected that there will be two questionnaires, one focusing on postgraduate research provision, the other on postgraduate taught provision.

The postgraduate research questionnaire was opened on Friday 27th September 2013. The deadline by which questionnaires must be completed and submitted online through the Bristol Online Survey system is 11pm on Thursday 31st October 2013.

Departments will be notified when the postgraduate taught questionnaire is available for completion.

MICHAELMAS TERM

4 Identification of new programmes 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.

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 2010-11, detailed work and approval AY 2011-12 and regulations published by July 2012, new course details published in Autumn 2012 graduate prospectus, candidates apply in AY 2012-13, first students register MT 2013).

Education Committee guidance on the introduction of new courses is available [here](#).

More specific advice should be sought from Dr Jane Gover, tel. 01865 614864, email jane.gover@socsci.ox.ac.uk, for undergraduate programmes, and from Dr Andy Garlick, tel. 01865 614875, email andy.garlick@socsci.ox.ac.uk, for graduate programmes, as early as possible in considering proposals for new courses.

5 Major changes to existing courses/introduction of new options

For the introduction of new options or major changes to existing courses, departments should ideally identify these and begin preliminary steps one year in advance of the proposed changes coming into effect. For further information, please refer to section 2 of the divisional quality assurance manual, or contact Daniel Meacoe (daniel.meacoe@socsci.ox.ac.uk).

6 Consideration of reports from examiners and external examiners

Consideration of examiners' reports in order to provide comment on any significant issues for the relevant division and through the division to the Education Committee, and to ensure feedback to external examiners on a reasonable timescale. To include 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 1 of the Education Committee's Policy and Guidance on Examinations and Assessment at: https://www1.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/proctorsoffice/oxonly/documents/Policy_and_Guidance_for_Examiners_2012-13.pdf

Divisional guidance is set out in its annual circular sent to departments and faculties in September each year. In particular:

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

- (i) Reports on single honour undergraduate examinations and PGT examinations completed by June (list A courses) should be forwarded to Daniel Meacoe, Social Sciences Divisional Office, by the end of Week 8 of Michaelmas Term for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 10.
- (ii) For joint schools (list B courses) the reports relating to them, and the departmental Academic/Teaching Committee's comments on them, should be sent in the first instance to Daniel Meacoe, Social Sciences Divisional Office, by the end of week 6 of Michaelmas Term. The reports will then be forwarded to the relevant joint committee who will send their response by the end of week 4 of Hilary Term for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 6 of Hilary Term.
- (iii) Reports on postgraduate taught course examinations completed by September (list C courses) should be forwarded to Daniel Meacoe, Social Sciences Divisional Office, by the end of Week 4 of Hilary Term for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 6 of Hilary Term.
- (iv) Reports on the Saïd Business School's MBA course examinations completed by September (list D courses) should be forwarded to Daniel Meacoe, Social Sciences Divisional Office, by the end of Week 11 of Hilary Term for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 1 of Trinity Term.

Reports to the 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 below), 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 the divisional guidance.

7 Class percentage figures (undergraduate programmes)

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 are circulated usually in Week 7 for consideration by departments and faculties. The published figures include breakdown by gender, and consideration should take account of any major discrepancies in the results of men and women, especially in relation to the First Class, the so-called 'gender gap'.

Departments and faculties should consider these in relevant committees and report to Division by the end of week 3 of Hilary Term for discussion by the divisional board's Undergraduate Studies Committee in week 5 of Hilary Term.

8 Consideration of issues relating to graduate skills

Divisional and faculty/department developments in relation to graduate skills are considered by the divisional board's Graduate Studies Committee (under the auspices of the DTCMB) on a regular basis throughout the academic year.

The annual reports from the Oxford Learning Institute are normally published in HT and are available via the OLI website at: <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/>.

9 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 divisional board's Undergraduate Studies Committee and Graduate Studies Committee on a regular basis throughout the academic year.

The annual reports from the Oxford Learning Institute are normally published in HT and are available via the OLI website at: <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/>.

10 1 December - annual census date for student statistics (UG, PGT, PGR), subsequent consideration of PGT/PGR review of retention/progression, including Research Councils' submission rates survey results

Publication of agreed sets of statistics by Student Administration in mid December, and circulation to Divisions. Subsequent faculty/departmental and Divisional consideration thereof in Trinity Term.

Departments consider outcomes of the Research Councils' submission rate survey for report to Divisional Graduate Studies Committee at its second HT meeting.

Annual review of retention and progression rates for PGT/PGR programmes including: submission and completion rates; any trends or developments arising out of examining and reports; effectiveness of procedures for transfer and confirmation of status.

Initial consideration in HT by Division's Graduate Studies Committee. Departments then write summary report to division on the items by the middle of TT for consideration by the Division's Graduate Studies Committee at its last meeting of TT.

The Divisional Office will circulate data to departments for consideration.

HILARY TERM

11 Graduate Students (Taught and Research): annual review of return-rates for termly supervision report forms

Consideration at the first HT meeting of the Division's Graduate Studies Committee.

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 should be made by the end of Hilary Term (the date will be confirmed by the Social Sciences 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 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.

13 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.

Attention is particularly drawn to the importance attached to annual consideration of: overall changes in the quality of applicants, the number of applications, success rate by sex and by type of school.

Report to Division by end HT for consideration in TT.

14 Annual Review of Graduate Admissions

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

Consider number and quality of applications, withdrawals and take-up of places; availability of awards and other funding and consider procedures for the forthcoming admissions round. Write summary report to Division on these items by the end of HT for consideration by the division's GSC in Trinity Term. A circular will be sent to faculties and departments.

15 Annual review of statements of provision for postgraduate students and supervision code of practice

Divisions to review their statement of PGT and PGR provision and the Divisional supervision code of practice at meetings in TT and sent to departments to update over the long vacation. Comments to be sent to the Division by early TT. The Division will review the templates and comments from departments at the second TT meeting of the Divisional Graduate Studies Committee, in order for changes to be discussed in time for the templates to be revised for the next academic year.

16 Student Barometer

Consider the outcomes of the Student Barometer survey at a meeting of the Divisional Graduate Studies Committee during HT and invite responses from departments as appropriate during TT.

17 Key Information Sets (KIS) (undergraduate only)

Departments and faculties to ensure that undergraduate core/option module data held in DAISY (Department Activity Information System) is up to date and accurate by the end of January.

The divisional office will generate the KIS datasets based on the data exported from DAISY, and liaise with departments to verify the integrity of the data and combination of modules selected for each undergraduate programme.

The data will be taken to the divisional Undergraduate Studies Committee meeting in HT for final sign off, and then submitted to SDMA in mid/late April.

TRINITY TERM

18 Teaching Excellence Awards Scheme

Faculty/department/divisional arrangements for identifying/nominating award holders.

Divisional office to send out guidance to departments/faculties and colleges regarding the application/nomination process. Nominations should be submitted to the divisional office by the deadline specified in the guidance (normally by the end of July). Awards will be made by the divisional Teaching Audit Committee at the first meeting of MT.

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

19 Grey book proofing

Divisional office to receive grey book proofs from Education Policy Support between mid-late TT. Proofs for individual programmes of study to be sent out to departments/faculties electronically for review.

Departments/faculties to send the proofs directly back to Education Policy Support, having made any minor editorial amendments (e.g. accidental duplication of wording) if necessary.

20 Transferable Skills Training

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

LONG VACATION

21 Departments/faculties review and update programme specifications

22 Departments/faculties review and update course handbooks and website material for students

23 Departments to forward details of key academic and administrative contacts as they relate to teaching and learning, as well as student representatives, to divisional office ready for the new academic year.

24 Complaints and appeals

Departments and faculties should submit to the division an anonymised report giving the number and nature of complaints and appeals for the previous academic year.

25 Annual review of English language waivers

Departments and faculties should submit to the Division a report of all language waiver requests and outcomes for students offered a graduate place in the previous admissions cycle. This should include details of students formally/informally set English language classes as a condition of their offer. This information will be presented to the first meeting of divisional Graduate Studies Committee in Michaelmas Term.

SSD to prompt departments for items 21-25.

26 Graduate admissions criteria

Departments review graduate admissions criteria and update departmental graduate admissions webpages.

27 Student load apportionments

Data on the apportionment of student load between departments providing teaching for UG and PGT programmes of study is produced by PRAS for revision. Departments to review and return student load data in the long vacation.

28 National Student Survey

Receive NSS data mid-August. Divisional office conducts analysis of data and reports to the MT meeting of divisional Undergraduate Studies Committee. Departments invited to comment/make observations on the results.