

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**SOCIAL SCIENCES DIVISION**

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

**Academic year 2008-09**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**1. In 2007, the Education Committee<sup>1</sup> and divisional officers produced a co-ordinated 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 2008-9 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 attached equal importance to these developments.**

**5. All faculties and departments within Social Sciences will not 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 is 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.**

<sup>1</sup> Under changes approved in TT 2008, EPSC is re-named the Education Committee with effect from 1 October 2008.

## **Summary of QA/QE calendar**

A summary in tabular form of the key activities and deadlines described in this document is annexed for ease of reference.

### **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, the University's Corporate Plan and the Strategic Plan 2008-9 – 2012-13

[From October 2009, reports on progress on activities identified in previous year's plans]

Divisional plan at:

Corporate Plan at: [www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2005-6/supps/corporate.pdf](http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2005-6/supps/corporate.pdf)

Strategic Plan at: [http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/prs/strategic\\_plan/strategicplan.pdf](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/prs/strategic_plan/strategicplan.pdf)

SSD Teaching Audit Committee & Teaching Policy Committee meetings, Week 1

#### **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 1

Draft divisional strategic plan considered by Divisional Planning and Resources Committee, Week 6, to be finalised HT Week 1 for submission to University PRAC

#### **3 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/> . Academic administrators will be notified when it is available.

It is expected that the deadline for return to SSD Divisional Office will be the end of Michaelmas Term.

[This would be the normal timetable but – given the extensive exercise in 2008-9 – it has been agreed that this should be re-scheduled for this year only to Hilary Term.]

#### **4 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.

Confirm admissions targets by end of MT.

[Would it be worth finding a way of putting a web address for the circular on waivers?]

Write summary report to Division on these items by the end of MT for consideration by the division's Teaching Policy Committee in Hilary Term. A circular will be sent to DGSs, PGT course directors and Academic Administrators.

#### **5 Graduate Students (Taught and Research): annual review of return-rates for termly supervision report forms.**

Initial consideration at first MT meeting of the Division's Teaching Policy Committee. Departments then write report to Division on follow-up action by the end of MT for consideration at the first HT meeting of the Teaching Policy Committee.

#### **6 Course Experience Questionnaires/National Student Survey (NSS)**

**Report on results of the previous academic year's course experience questionnaires (UG, PGT, and PGR) – 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/>*

[Please note that the PGT questionnaire was not administered in 2007-8 and the PGR questionnaire was undertaken as part of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)]

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

Consider all survey outcomes at departmental academic committees and JCCs. Report to first Hilary Term meeting of Divisional Teaching Policy Committee.

#### **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 2004-5, regulations published by July/October 2006, UCAS code assigned, new course details with UCAS code published in January 2007 undergraduate prospectus, interviews MT 2007, first students register MT 2008).

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 2005-6, detailed work and approval AY 2006-7 and regulations published by July 2007, new course details published in Autumn 2007 graduate prospectus, candidates apply in gathered fields AY 2007-8, first students register MT 2008).

*Education Committee guidance on the introduction of new courses is available at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/introcrs.pdf>*

*Divisional guidance on the introduction of new courses is available at: [to add]*

More specific advice should be sought from Ms Jane Dale in the Social Sciences Divisional Office, tel. 01865 280478, email [jane.dale@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:jane.dale@admin.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**

**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 7 of the Education Committee's Policy and 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 sent to departments and faculties in September each year and published on the divisional website at: [add]. 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 Jane Dale, Social Sciences

Divisional Office, *by the end of Week 7 of Michaelmas Term (28 November 2008) 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 the relevant joint committee, which should then send to Jane Dale, Social Sciences Divisional Office, by the end of week 9 of Michaelmas Term (12 December 2008) for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 1 of Hilary Term*

(iii) Reports on *postgraduate taught course examinations completed by September (list C courses)* should be forwarded to Jane Dale, Social Sciences Divisional Office, *by the end of Week 3 of Hilary Term 2009 (6 February 2009) for consideration by the divisional board's Teaching Audit Committee in Week 6 of Hilary Term.*

**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 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 [add URL].

## **9 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 (6 February)* for discussion by the divisional board's Teaching Policy Committee in week 6 of Hilary Term.

## **10 Consideration of issues relating to graduate skills and development in learning and teaching and in academic practice**

Divisional and faculty/department developments in relation to graduate skills and learning and teaching and academic practice are considered by the divisional board's Teaching Policy Committee as a standing item at each meeting, and in particular in Michaelmas Term in the context of annual reports on CETL and Roberts activities, and related work.

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/>

## **11 1 December - annual census date for student statistics (UG, PGT, PGR).**

Publication of agreed sets of statistics by Student Information Systems (SIS) in mid December, and circulation to Divisions. Subsequent faculty/departmental and Divisional consideration thereof in Hilary Term.

The Divisional Office will circulate data to departments for consideration. The Education Committee and divisional officers are working with SIS to provide annual data sets. The first priority is for material related to Education Committee/Divisional reviews and therefore the full roll-out of the standard annual data sets may begin in MT 2009.

## **12 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 by *the end of Week 9 (12 December)*

Divisional guidance on complaints and appeals procedures is available on the divisional website at: [add URL]

## **HILARY TERM**

### **13 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 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 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.

### **14 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 2008 see <http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/adstats.pdf>

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 Divisional Teaching Policy Committee by end HT for consideration by Divisional Teaching Policy Committee in TT.

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

Departments to review their statement of PGT and PGR provision and the Divisional supervision code of practice at meetings in HT. 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 Teaching Policy Committee, in order for changes to be discussed in time for the templates to be revised for the next academic year.

### **16 PGT Programmes and Research Degrees**

**Annual review of retention and progression 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 Teaching Policy Committee. Departments then write summary report to division on these items by the middle of TT for consideration by Teaching Policy Committee at its last meeting of TT.

## **TRINITY TERM**

### **17 Teaching Awards Scheme**

**Faculty/department/divisional arrangements for identifying award holders**

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

### **18 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.**

### **19 Research Councils' submission rates survey results**

**Departments consider outcomes of survey for report to Divisional Teaching Policy Committee at its second TT meeting.**

## **LONG VACATION**

**20 Departments/faculties review and update programme specifications, and submit updated documents to Divisions**

**21 Departments/faculties review and update course handbooks and website material for students.**

**22 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.** SSD to prompt departments for this.

### **23 Graduate admissions criteria**

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

### **24 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.