

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MATHEMATICAL, PHYSICAL AND LIFE SCIENCES ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT CALENDAR
FOR ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS IN DEPARTMENTS
2015-16

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. This calendar puts into an MPLS context the University Quality Assurance Calendar:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/qa/qualityassuranceoverview/>

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/policiesandguidance/>

Further guidance on procedures specific to the MPLS Division is available at:

<https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/study/additionalinformation>

Reviews in 2015/16

The University Review Protocol and Review Timetable is available at:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/qa/internalreviews/>

Materials

Interim Review: 9 November 2015

Chemistry

Interim Review: 25 November 2015

Mathematics:

Teaching and Learning Panel: 12 January 2016

Main review: 7 & 8 March 2016

Computer Science:

Teaching and Learning Panel: 18 April 2016

Main review: 13, 14 June 2016

Statistics

Interim review: Feb 2016

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, and University or divisional policy changes.

At divisional level, a report on expected major items of business for the year goes to the MPLS Academic Committee in Week 6 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 4 of the 'Policy and Guidance for Examiners and others involved in University Examinations', downloadable from <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/>

Divisional guidance is set out in its annual circular:

<https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/study/additionalinformation/examinations-for-taught-courses>

In particular:

(a) Schedule

- (i) *Chairs 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 2016.

- (ii) *Chairs 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 Bulvinder Gurm (bulvinder.gurm@mpls.ox.ac.uk) by the end of Week 6 of Michaelmas Term.

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 Bulvinder Gurm (bulvinder.gurm@mpls.ox.ac.uk) by the end of week 6 of Michaelmas Term.

Reports on postgraduate taught course examinations should be forwarded to Bulvinder Gurm (bulvinder.gurm@mpls.ox.ac.uk) by the end of Week 1 of Hilary Term 2015/16.

(b) Monitoring by departmental Academic/Teaching Committees

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)

Chairs 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 five-year rolling averages of class percentage figures

https://bits.uas.ox.ac.uk/views/FHS_allyears_restrictedview_0/Table1bDivisionbyCourse (restricted access through single-sign-on, please ask Bulvinder Gurm if you need access and do not already have it).

Given the diverse nature of the programmes and examinations in the MPLS Division, Chairs 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).

Departments should note a recent policy change agreed by Education Committee which requires departments to provide examiners' reports (redacted as appropriate) for discussion at joint consultative committees (or equivalent). Reports (redacted as appropriate) should be made available to all students.

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. Review Examination Conventions

Review and revise examination conventions. Incorporate changes agreed in the light of consideration of the reports of examiners from the previous year. Publish and circulate conventions to students (or by early HT at the latest).

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.ox.ac.uk/students/life/feedback>. 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.

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

Education Committee Policy and Guidance on new courses and major changes to courses can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pgnewcourses/>

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.

a. New courses:

The timelines for the introduction of new courses are long, bearing in mind the need to gather internal and external evidence and endorsement, and the need for approval at by division, STC and EdC . For example:

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

2015/16 Case made at departmental then MPLS level;
2016/17 Case made at EdC, Senior Tutors Committee and Council; Regulations published by July/October 2017, UCAS code assigned, new course details with UCAS code published in January 2018 undergraduate prospectus,
Interviews MT 2018, first students register MT 2019.

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

2015/16 Case made at departmental then MPLS level; detailed work and approval 2016/7;
Regulations published by July 2017; new course details published in Autumn 2017 graduate prospectus;
Candidates apply in AY 2017/18; first students register MT 2018.

b. Changes to existing courses

When staff are considering any change to a course they must be mindful of the impact that this change might have on students already studying for the award i.e they have a vested interest. Except in very specific circumstances changes should not be made which would impact on students who have already begun to work towards an assessment.

For courses with a multi-part FHS changes can be made to a later part whilst students are taking an earlier Part. For example, changes can be made to Part B for students currently studying Part A (unless

the change relates to a pre-requisite requirement i.e. a proposed change in Part B cannot be made if it relates to choices students will have already made at Part A unless no material or negative impact can be shown).

For all types of changes (excluding minor textual corrections) it is expected that students would be consulted in advance through the normal mechanisms such as Joint Consultative Committees. See Annex I of the University guidance.

8 Quality Assurance questionnaire

Departments are asked to complete quality assurance questionnaire 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 UG programmes in Michaelmas term 2015.

9. Other administrative tasks for Michaelmas term

- **Graduate admissions:** first application deadline is late November 2014
- **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

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 bulvinder.gurm@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 take account of any impacts on students already studying for the award. See 7b above.

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 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 and progression 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.

12. 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. 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/facts-and-figures/admissions-statistics>.

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

13. 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 pattern 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.

14. 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/>

15. Other administrative tasks for Hilary term

- **Examination Conventions:** publish and circulate conventions to students early in HT if not already done so.
- **Student representation arrangements:** It is suggested that departments/faculties should formally reflect on and review the opportunities for student representation and involvement, including the arrangements to support that work, and any developments for the following year should be discussed and endorsed. Both JCCs(or equivalent) and department/faculty academic committees (or equivalent) should be involved in this process of reflection.
- **Review of undergraduate and PGT induction and study skills:** Timetable annual consideration of the role and effectiveness of faculty/department induction and support for the development of study skills.
- **Outreach:** Departmental outreach officers provide a summary report and evaluations on activities to MPLS Undergraduate Access & Admission Panel
- **Student number planning:** The divisional office will ask departments to provide detailed plans for intakes for each programme for 2017/18 to 2019/20. 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 mid January 2016 (early January deadline used by Medical Sciences, Computer Science, Philosophy, and Politics and International Relations). Third application deadline is late January 2016 (late January deadline used by all other programmes). Fourth deadline is mid March 2016.
 - Interviews, make UAB offers, complete coversheets and forward to colleges, GAF guidance is at <https://www1.admin.ox.ac.uk/gaf/handbook/>

- **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:
- **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

16. 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. Departments should check currency of the written agreement governing the collaborative arrangements.

See Education Committee's Policy and Guidance on providing education with others:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pgeducationwithothers/>

17. Review of Student Barometer

All full time and part time matriculated students are surveyed through the Student Barometer each year in late November (with the exception of final-year undergraduate students about to be surveyed in the NSS). 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/life/feedback>. Historic data is available back to 2010.

Departments are asked to consider overall satisfaction at course level, as well as responses to other questions (especially those re assessment, feedback and course organisation) compared to University PG averages. **They should provide to joint consultative committees (or equivalent) and discuss any changes or enhancements suggested by the returns**

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 and report back to the divisional office. Departments are asked to use the Tableau data to analyse their own particular courses in detail and to review this with their JCCs.

17. Divisional review of training provision

The Divisional Researcher Training Forum 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. Researcher Training Forum:

- reviews provision and take up of training offered by each department to doctoral students and research staff in its own and other departments in 2015/16 (through the Graduate Academic Programme)
- reviews provision and take-up of training offered by the MPLS divisional office in 2016/17
- confirms plans for training offered by the MPLS divisional office in 2016/17

18. 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 of each year.

19. 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:

<https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/study/additionalinformation/examinations-for-taught-courses>

(see section on this site on *feedback*)

- **Graduate admissions:** finalise outstanding offers and funding. Close for new applications
- **GSS:** from mid June - for supervisors that have not submitted reports for MT and HT, ask them to submit a report for TT16 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 of examiners and assessors and appointment of Chairs of Examiners:** the deadline is usually early/mid July. Ensure appropriate information is provided.
- **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

20. Departments review information for applicants and students

The University's new Policy and Guidance on course information outlines the University's policy requirements in relation to the information that departments and faculties provide to undergraduate and taught graduate students in relation to their course of study.

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pandgoncourseinformation/>

Note that the information contained within course handbooks is legally binding on the University. Recent guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority (formerly the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) has highlighted the importance of providing high quality information for students. The new University guidance includes a new template for course handbook template and complaints and appeals. Departments are asked to update their course handbooks and examination conventions in line with the new and revised guidance over the Long Vacation, to be ready for publication no later than the start of Michaelmas term. All course handbooks and examination conventions should be available either publicly or to any user with an Oxford Single Sign-On.

Departments are no longer required to carry a PGT or PGR Statement of Provision on their website or in their handbooks. Two key pieces of information should be adapted from Statements of Provision that may not currently be covered in course handbooks: opportunities for skills training and development and opportunities to engage in the department research community.

Programme specifications are also no longer required. However, two key pieces of information should be transferred directly from programme specifications to course handbooks: programme aims and intended learning outcomes.

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

Guidance available at: <https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/study/additionalinformation/admissions-policies>

22. Other administrative tasks for long vacation

- **Examiners reports:** send a copy of the external examiner's report to the Chair 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:** initial analysis of course-level NSS data as it becomes available in August.
- **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.