POLICY FOR ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW
FOR TAUGHT PROGRAMMES (APR (T))

APR forms a core element of the University’s framework for quality assurance and enhancement. This policy applies to all taught programmes, including those taught at partner institutions and the taught component of postgraduate research programmes. A list of current programmes can be found in the Code of Practice for Taught Programmes.

For review of research postgraduate programmes, please see the Policy for Annual Programme Review for Research Programmes (APR(R)).

1. Purpose and Principles of Annual Programme Review for Taught Programmes

1.1 The value of Annual Programme Review (APR) lies in the opportunity for schools to reflect on all aspects of their teaching. Its purpose is to improve the quality of the programmes offered by the University, through:

a) providing a developmental opportunity for schools to review the effectiveness of a programme or programmes and the extent to which aims, objectives and learning outcomes are being achieved;

b) providing an opportunity to update programme specifications and unit forms and thereby keeping this information current and accurate;

c) initiating the planning of consequent changes to units and/or programmes.

d) considering any relevant external comments on the wider aspects of the programme(s), including those of external examiners and, where appropriate, employers;

e) considering feedback from students obtained through school¹ student questionnaires, the NSS (National Student Survey) for undergraduates and any other internal and/or external surveys;

f) providing key information for Faculty Quality Teams (FQTs) through the APR reports, which are considered before carrying out annual FQT visits to schools;

g) encouraging and disseminating good practice by providing feedback to FQTs;

h) providing input through the APR reports into School Reviews and external quality assurance visits.

1.2 APR (T) must be undertaken for every taught undergraduate and postgraduate programme. This includes Pathway Certificates, Certificates of Higher Education, Diplomas of Higher Education and all programmes delivered through an external partnership/collaborative arrangement (for the latter see also sections 1.3).

1.3 A unit of review (and therefore the review report) may consist of a school, a department, a suitable grouping of cognate programmes or a single programme. A school may therefore choose to produce a number of APR reports. However, the following programmes must be reviewed individually and a separate APR report produced for them:

- Programmes delivered through partnerships/collaborative arrangements. The types of partnership programmes include the following (if unsure whether your programme falls into one of the categories, please contact the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office (AQPO) for advice):

  o Clinical Academies

  o Joint Awards (e.g. MSc Robotics)

¹ Use of the word ‘school’ in this document also relates to departments or centres.
o Jointly Delivered Programmes (e.g. MSc Applied/Clinical Neuropsychology)
  o Flying Faculties (e.g. the provision in Hong Kong)

- Distance learning programmes
- Programmes that are teaching out

1.4 APR(T) should be undertaken for all programmes which are in the process of teaching out, including for the final year of the programme(s), using the separate template for teaching out programmes. In these circumstances, the APR should focus on the student experience and how any specific issues encountered as a result of teaching out have been addressed.

1.5 Careful consideration should be given as to the rationale for grouping other programmes for the purposes of APR. Where a set of programmes is grouped together, measures should be taken to ensure that the process still enables effective scrutiny of any specific issues arising for individual programmes (e.g. by ensuring adequate representation at the APR meeting).

1.6 For joint honours programmes, it is the responsibility of the host school, in consultation and with the involvement of the partner school, annually to review the programme(s) as part of APR. See the AQPO website for further guidance on Joint Honours.

1.7 Where a school contributes towards a number of joint honours programmes (e.g. French and German, French and Italian), these ‘halves’ of programmes may be reviewed as a group of cognate programmes. In these cases, however, the review process should still consider the student experience across each joint honours programme.

1.8 Where a programme has a very small cohort (e.g. <5), an APR should still be submitted but this can be brief and should focus on how standards are assured and the student experience maintained in the context of small numbers of students.

1.9 Unit Directors are responsible for ensuring that any inter-disciplinary units, which are not connected to a ‘programme’, are reviewed as part of the APR process for their home school. Further guidance on the management of interdisciplinary units is available on the AQPO website.

2. Submission of APR Reports

2.1 The University deadline for submission of APR reports for undergraduate programme is November 30th. The deadline for submission of taught postgraduate APR reports is January 31st. The purpose of the University deadlines is to ensure that annual programme review takes place in a consistent cycle across the university and that suitable information is available to FQTs at the time of making their visits.

2.2 APR reports and any appendices must be submitted electronically to the AQPO at apr-admin@bristol.ac.uk. The AQPO will make the report available to the relevant Faculty officers.

2.3 Any requests for an extension should be made at the earliest possible opportunity, via email to the AQPO at apr-admin@bristol.ac.uk, so that these can be considered well in advance of the deadline.

2.4 Late submissions will be reported first to the Head of School before being escalated to the Faculty Dean, and then to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students).

3. Outline of Procedure

3.1 Normally APR meetings take place during the autumn term. This does not preclude any urgent action being taken, prior to the APR, as and when the school becomes aware that change is required. It is considered good practice to conduct an initial APR discussion at the end of the summer term to capture any urgent issues.

3.2 Heads of School or their nominees (e.g. Directors of Teaching & Learning or equivalent) are responsible for ensuring that designated school staff have clear responsibility for
carrying out APR, with respect to all programmes within the school. Unless otherwise specified, it will normally be the responsibility of the Programme Director to ensure the preparation of documentation for APR.

3.3 The school should collate the outcomes of routine monitoring activities on its undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes such as feedback from external examiners, students and staff. Documents should be circulated in sufficient time before the meeting and should normally include:

- a) feedback from external examiners, either in the form of their most recent report or an extract of the minutes of the exam boards if the report is not yet available;
- b) copies of all external examiner school response forms that were sent to the externals;
- c) student feedback on units (including open units that are not attached to a programme of study) and programmes (quantitative and qualitative);
- d) quantitative and qualitative results from the NSS and any other internal and/or external surveys;
- e) staff feedback on units;
- f) a standard set of statistical information for the relevant year;
- g) a report of unit changes that were approved by the Faculty during the last academic year, provided by AQPO on the UPMS reporting pages;
- h) programme specifications as shown in the Programme Catalogue, including the sections of descriptive text;
- i) unit specifications (as shown in the Unit Catalogue, see above);
- j) any other information relevant to the programmes in that year, e.g. the last FQT visit report, School Review report, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body accreditation report(s);
- k) minutes of the Board(s) of Examiners meeting;
- l) review of the content of the year abroad or year in industry units, where applicable;
- m) relevant feedback from partners, e.g. placement providers;
- n) if relevant, consideration of the University of Bristol Ethical Considerations document;
- o) the previous year’s APR report and progress on any actions arising from it;

3.4 A review of the operation of student support provision should be provided at the APR meeting by the Senior Tutor (or equivalent).

3.5 All elements are then discussed at an appropriate school meeting, e.g. a dedicated APR meeting or a dedicated section of a teaching and learning committee meeting. This policy alongside the APR(T) report template (see section 4) should be referred to during the APR meeting to ensure that all relevant matters are covered.
3.6 It is important that the APR constitutes a collective reflection on the programme(s) and not the views of a particular individual or information compiled from a range of other meetings held throughout the period.

3.7 Attendees of the APR meeting will typically include the Director of Teaching and Learning, Programme and Unit Directors, the Senior Tutor and student representatives (although this is not an exhaustive list). In relation to student representation at APR, please refer to the Code of Practice for Student Representation (Taught Students). Where programme(s) to be reviewed are delivered through an external partnership/collaborative arrangement, attendees would typically include the Collaborative Partner where appropriate, e.g. for Joint Awards. It must be ensured that appropriate representatives of all such partners have access to the supporting information contribute to and attend the APR meeting. For joint honours programmes, the host school may wish to invite a representative from the partner school to attend the APR meeting.

3.8 Where student representatives attend the main APR meeting, schools may have a Reserved section of the meeting agenda for any discussions to be attended by staff members only.

4. **The Report**

4.1 The APR report must be prepared using the standard APR(T) template for taught programmes or the template for teaching out programmes, as appropriate, in order to ensure that all issues relevant to APR have been covered and to enable ease of reference to particular issues in the APR report during subsequent quality enhancement processes (e.g. FQT visits, School Reviews). It should include a list of the programme(s) reviewed, the date of the meeting and a list of those attending indicating which members of the review are students. It should be obvious from the report that all elements have been discussed, positive/negative issues raised and any outcomes/actions noted.

4.2 **Programme structure, content, specification and learning outcomes (Template Section 5 and 16):** This is the annual confirmation that the programme specification (including structure) is accurate. The current programme and unit specifications are published in the Programme and Unit Catalogues. Further guidance relating to joint honours programmes is available on the AQPO website.

i. In relation to review of assessment load and methods, please refer to the University Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes and the Institutional Principles for Assessment and Feedback.

ii. In completing this section, please also refer to Expectation A3.3 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which states that: “Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.”

“Threshold academic standards are the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. For equivalent qualifications, the threshold level of achievement is agreed across the UK and is described by the qualifications descriptors set out in the national frameworks for higher education qualifications” (UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, QAA). Please refer to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (QAA 2008).

iii. Please also use this section to comment on other key aspects of the programme, such as how it contributes to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and any developments that have taken place in the use of technology to support learning (TEL).

iv. Further guidance on the review of interdisciplinary units is available on the AQPO website.

4.3 **Unit changes and learning outcomes (Template Section 6):** Unit changes that were approved by the Faculty during the academic year should be discussed to analyse how
these may accumulatively impact upon the programme aims and intended learning outcomes, and whether the assessment is still aligned. Were the programme intended learning outcomes updated as a result of any changes to mandatory units? How well does the assessment and feedback align with the Institutional Principles for Assessment and Feedback?

4.4 Discussion of external examiner reports/feedback (Template Section 7): The meeting should include a discussion of the existing school’s responses to External Examiner reports, which should have already been sent to the External Examiner. The discussion should include all comments and recommendations arising from the external examiner’s reports and how these have been responded to. If the school disagrees with a recommendation from the External Examiner, this should be ratified at the APR and reported in the template. Progress on actions arising from the External Examiner response forms should be reviewed.

4.5 Review of Student progress and attainment (Template Section 8): Statistical information for the current year should be discussed to review student intake, progression and exit data. This information is drawn from the central student record system (SITS) and will be sent to the school by early October. Earlier data on intake analysis is available for undergraduate programmes and this will be circulated to all schools with undergraduate programmes before the end of the academic year being reviewed.

4.6 Other internal and external review (Template Section 9): Any internal or external reviews of programmes should be discussed, for example, FQT, School Review or Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body accreditation visit/reports. What issues/actions arose and what actions have been taken?

4.7 Student experience and support (Template Section 10): The appropriate Senior Tutor (or equivalent) should provide a review of the operation of student support provision. Guidance on the provision of support to undergraduate students is published on the AQPO website.

4.8 Review of student feedback (Template Section 11): Student feedback on units and programmes, both quantitative and qualitative, should be considered at the meeting. The APR meeting should also consider how internal school feedback compares with that gathered from the NSS or other external surveys, how students are involved in deciding any actions needed, and how they are informed of actions taken in response to their feedback.

4.9 Strategic issues (Template Section 12): The Head of School should be invited to include within the report a brief summary of strategic issues that affect the programme(s); for example, school management/administration arrangements, financial context, student recruitment, impact of sector developments, and significant learning facilities and resources (such as library resources, IT provision, lecture/seminar and laboratory space).

4.10 External partnership programmes/collaborative arrangements (Template Section 13): Where there are partnership programmes or collaborative arrangements in place, this section gives the school an opportunity to discuss the mechanisms in place for such provision. The school should highlight any issues and/or risks and discuss how these may be mitigated. This is also an opportunity to comment upon any study abroad, in industry or placement arrangements. The essential underlying principle for any units/programme delivered collaboratively that lead to a University of Bristol award of credit or qualification is that academic standards and quality are safeguarded, regardless of where learning opportunities are delivered or who delivers them. See Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code.

4.11 Dissemination of APR outcomes (Template Section 14): The outcomes of the APR must be reported to students. The school should consider the best way to achieve this. This should include a paper containing the highlights of the APR being received as an annual standing item at Staff Student Liaison Committee and the report uploaded onto the relevant Blackboard site (see 5.2).
4.12 Appendices: The APR report should include references to other documents where appropriate, although it is not necessary to append these additional documents to the report.

5. How is the APR used?

5.1 The outcomes of the APR must be reported to students. This should include a paper containing the highlights of the APR being received as an annual standing item at Staff Student Liaison Committee and the report uploaded onto the relevant Blackboard site.

5.2 AQPO will upload the full APR report to Blackboard unless the School submits the paper containing highlights that went to the SSLC (see 5.1) for this purpose.

5.3 The APR reports should be received by the relevant School Teaching and Learning Committee.

5.4 The outcomes of the APR should be used developmentally by Schools. The APR report should specify any actions identified as a result of the review discussions, who will follow up on these, and within what timeframe.

5.5 The outcomes of APR feed into the work of FQTs, which consider APR reports as a key source of information before carrying out their annual visits to schools (see Guidelines for Faculty Quality Teams). The annual FQT report will include reference to APR. APR reports are considered as part of the School Review process.

5.6 Where a review of a newly approved programme was stipulated after one year of operation, the APR report will be shared with the relevant Faculty Education Director and considered by University Education Committee.

5.7 An annual overview report of APR activities that identifies University-level issues, aspects of good practice, and a summary of the APR reports of all programmes that are teaching-outs compiled and reported to the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee (UAQSC). The UAQSC will actively monitor the progress with any University level issues that have been identified. Aspects of good practice that are identified in the annual overview report will be published in the Good Practice Directory.

5.8 AQPO maintains a shared folder (\ads.bris.ac.uk\filestore\misappusers\APR-and-ExEx) in which are stored read-only copies of APR reports received in the last three years and the statistics supplied by AQPO for APR meetings. FQT members and faculties use this folder to access APR reports prior to FQT visits.