Policy for Education Action Planning

1. Purpose of the Education Action Plan (EAP) process

1.1. The EAP process has been developed in order to streamline and condense existing processes, taking account of:

- The Annual Programme Review (APR) process, which was seen as time consuming and unwieldy and did not encourage timely changes.
- Feedback from schools in relation to the time lag in existing quality review processes, such as APRs/ Faculty Quality Team (FQT) visits and implementing subsequent changes;
- The student survey action planning and school meetings which have developed over the years but have been somewhat isolated from other quality review processes.
- Proportional and appropriate action planning within schools given their size and range of taught programmes.
- Enabling changes to units/programmes to be made before the start of the next academic year, if deemed necessary.

1.2. The process of annual monitoring and action planning, provides a holistic review and record of school education activities and will both support and enable alignment with faculty and University planning. A diagram of the EAP process is available.

1.3. The output of the process of annual monitoring is the EAP, which will provide an efficient means of drawing together all outcomes.

1.4. The EAP process, as part of the Quality Assurance Framework, enables the University to meet its obligations, including supporting its quality assurance statement regarding the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and the reliability of degree standards, which the Board of Trustees is required to annually submit to HEFCE.

1.5. Postgraduate research programmes should continue to undertake an ‘Annual Programme Review’ and the actions from this should be included in the EAP.

2. Education Action Plan (EAP)

2.1. Each school has a single EAP, following a University template, that records any actions from the different components of the Quality Framework and the school’s internal review of its educational provision. Actions within the EAP may relate to the school, a constituent department or a programme. The EAP is live, iterative and is used to track actions and monitor progress.

2.2. Management of the EAP is the responsibility of the School Education Director, although its administration may be the responsibility of the Student Administration Manager, or designate. The plan will be updated by the school throughout the year as necessary and will include reference to Education Strategy priorities and themes.

2.3. The school should monitor its EAP throughout the year and it should be shared and discussed with school staff and students at appropriate points, for example at SSLC, particularly to clarify whether suggested actions address the feedback received and the prioritisation of those actions.

2.4. Three priority action areas must be identified by each school every year.

2.5. EAPs must be considered annually by the relevant faculty committee and contribute to faculty plans.
2.6. The EAP must show how each action relates to either the University Education Strategy, or the impact on the student experience.

3. **Scope of the Education Action Planning Process**

3.1. The EAP is a live and iterative record of actions arising from the review of annual programme monitoring activities including those in response to External Examiners, student survey feedback, SLSCs and unit evaluations, exam boards, and any Faculty Quality Team (FQTs) visit and Periodic Programme Review. The EAP should also capture any programme and unit changes that are proposed/approved in-year.

3.2. All actions recorded in the EAP should be actions for the school. This includes actions which the school believe should be taken forward by other areas of the University (e.g., the School Education Director will raise the issue of increased pressure on lecture theatres with Timetabling).

4. **Completing and using the EAP**

4.1. An EAP template is provided for each school to use which is held in a central filestore (\mis-app1.admin.bris.ac.uk\users\Education Action Plans) to allow access by schools, FQTs etc. At the end of each annual cycle (April) a new tab for the next cycle will be added to the spreadsheet by the Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO). The school is responsible for carrying forward any outstanding actions from the previous year.

4.2. Actions must indicate the primary source, for example, External Examiners comments; secondary sources of the action can also be identified if applicable.

4.3. The EAP must be updated following each review activity and specifically in advance of and subsequent to any University-level and faculty-level review points. Outside of this, progress on the actions within the EAP should be kept up to date at regular intervals and the outcomes and progress of the EAP shared with students through SLSC meetings and with staff at school meetings.

4.4. Periodic reviews of education (School Review, Periodic Programme Review (PPR), professional accreditation) will utilise the school’s EAP to gauge the plans and priorities of the school, and any progress made, as part of the review process.

4.5. Detailed guidance on completing the EAP is available as part of the EAP template provided to each school in the central shared filestore (\mis-app1.admin.bris.ac.uk\users\Education Action Plans).

5. **Schools internal review of their education provision**

5.1. Schools should carry out a two-stage review of their taught programmes with the output from these captured in the EAP. This gives schools the opportunity to reflect on all aspects of their teaching in a timely manner. Its purpose is to improve the quality of the programmes offered by the University through:

- providing a developmental opportunity to review the effectiveness of a programme or programmes and the extent to which aims, objectives and learning outcomes are being achieved;
- providing an opportunity to update programme specifications and unit forms and thereby keeping this information current and accurate;
- initiating the planning of consequent changes to units and/or programmes.
- considering any relevant external comments on the wider aspects of the programme(s), including those of External Examiners and, where appropriate, employers;
• providing key information for FQTs, including encouraging and disseminating good practice, through the EAP, which is considered before carrying out FQT visits to schools;
• providing input through the EAP into School Reviews and external quality assurance visits.

5.2. Stage one reviews will normally take place in late June or July, directly following exam boards. This allows schools to discuss any immediate changes to programmes and submit these for approval. For taught postgraduate programmes, this will only cover the taught component.

5.3. The second stage of the review for undergraduate (UG) and taught postgraduate (PGT) provision will necessarily take place at different times (UG by end of September, PGT by end of March the following year).

5.4. Detailed guidance on undertaking the school’s internal review is at Annex A.

6. University-level review of School Education Action Plan (EAP)

6.1. A University-level review meeting, normally with the PVC Education & Students, will be organised for each school. These will usually take place before the end of October. These meetings will agree the educational priorities for the school and what further monitoring is desirable, including the format it will take.

6.2. An initial evaluation of all the EAPs will be undertaken on completion of the University-level review. This will form one of the sources of evidence that contributes to the quality assurance statement presented to the Board of Trustees and submitted to HEFCE by 1st December each year.

6.3. AQPO will evaluate the EAPs at the end of the cycle (April) and produce a summary report for the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee (UAQSC). The report will summarise issues and highlight any institutional level themes arising from actions being taken by schools to enhance the student academic experience and maintain degree standards.

7. Faculty-level review of the School Education Action Plan (EAP)

7.1. Faculty-level review is undertaken by the FQT, on at least a biennial basis. These will usually take place in February - March.

7.2. The FQT may additionally make recommendations for action, if required.
Guidance on schools’ internal review of educational provision

1. Stage One meeting

Timing and format of stage one meeting/s

1.1. A stage one meeting relating to all taught programmes (to include taught components of PGT programmes) should be held shortly after the school final exam board meeting/s in late June or July to review the academic year.

1.2. Multiple review meetings may be held within a school, depending on the composition of the school and the number of individual programmes on offer.

1.3. Attendees of the review meeting/s will typically include:
   - School Education Director or equivalent (e.g. Director of Teaching and Learning)
   - Programme and Unit Directors
   - Senior Tutor
   - Student Administration Manager
   - Student representatives (if possible)

1.4. 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 that contributes to the review meeting.

1.5. 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). See the AQPO website for further guidance on joint honours. The host school may wish to invite a representative from the partner school to attend the review meeting.

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

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

1.8. Section 4 gives a suggested list of discussion items for the stage one review meeting.

Content of stage one review meeting/s

1.9. The stage one review meeting will include consideration of the following:
   - External Examiner feedback (External Examiners are required to present their initial reflections, either verbally or in written form, on the quality and standards of the programmes they examine at the final exam boards, including any immediate recommendations for action);
   - staff reflections on the curricula;
   - exam board outcomes;
   - currently available student metrics/data\(^1\)
   - programme and unit changes since the last review meeting.

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\(^1\) such as information available from the Student Systems & Information Office and any internal school data.
1.10. The stage one meeting must consider how the school, via the delivery of its programmes and management, is meeting education priorities and associated actions in the Education Strategy.

1.11. The school must consider progress against relevant actions in the EAP from the previous year\(^2\).

1.12. The outcomes from the stage one meeting will be captured in the School EAP. This should include any actions the school is taking forward with the faculty, professional services or the University.

1.13. If any urgent changes to units, or in exceptional circumstances programmes, are proposed following the stage one review, schools should seek to implement these in time for the next academic year. The fast-track programme approval process will be applied, with a **deadline of 31st July**.

1.14. One outcome of the review (stage one or stage two) must be confirmation that all programme specifications are up to date and accurate.

2. **Stage Two meeting**

   **Timing and format of stage two review meeting/s**

2.1. A stage two meeting relating to all undergraduate programmes should be held in August or September following receipt of External Examiners reports and NSS scores.

2.2. A stage two meeting relating to the research stage of taught postgraduate programmes should be held in February of the calendar year following the stage one review.

2.3. As for stage one, multiple review meetings may be held within a school, depending on the composition of the school and the number of individual programmes on offer.

2.4. Typically, attendees of the review meeting/s will be the same as, or a sub-set of, stage one, including representatives from any partners.

2.5. Section 4 gives a suggested list of discussion items for the stage one review meeting.

   **Content of stage two review meeting/s**

2.6. The meeting will consider the following:

   - any progress on actions from the stage one meeting;
   - school taught student survey results (NSS and YBS if not covered in stage one);
   - available data on student progression and attainment (this may not be complete at the time of review but schools should appraise what is available);
   - written External Examiners reports and school responses.

2.7. The EAP should be updated following the stage two meeting with any further actions and progress on existing actions.

2.8. The stage two meeting[s] should confirm the three priority action areas for the school over the next year.

3. **Outcomes**

3.1. The agreed actions from the stage one and stage two meetings must be added to the School EAP by **30th September**.

3.2. A report or minute of either meeting is not required; however, it is recommended that any notes of the stage one and two meetings are held by the school to provide context to the recorded actions.

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\(^2\) For 2016/17 this will be the actions from the 2015/16 annual programme review reports.
Annex A

4. Suggested discussion items for stage one meeting

4.1. Review relevant actions in School EAP - how have the outcomes and actions been addressed?

4.2. Which programmes are covered by this review?

4.3. Initial response to verbal feedback from External Examiner(s) – are there any changes required to programmes or units for next academic year.

4.4. Response to External Examiner reports / feedback
   - Review progress on any actions arising from the school’s response to previous years’ report, and identify outstanding issues.
   - Has the External Examiner(s) confirmed that the programme is meeting threshold academic standards?

4.5. Units - check Unit Specification, content, and learning outcomes and assessment
   - Do the assessments enable all the unit aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?
   - Have any inter-disciplinary units (UNIV/FAC units, which are not connected to the programme(s) but where the unit director is a member of the school) been reviewed.
   - Have you made ANY unit changes (Yes/No)?
     **If YES:**
     - Have you revised your Unit Specification(s), via UPMS, to ensure they are up to date and complete?

4.6. Programmes - check Programme Specification, structure, content, and learning outcomes
   - Review any impact of unit changes made on the programme. For joint honours programmes, given any unit changes, is the programme as a whole still appropriately integrated, with learning outcomes distinct from those of each single honours programme?
   - Are programme aims and learning outcomes still met by the mandatory units?
   - Is summative and formative assessment load and methods appropriate across the programme?
   - Is programme content still relevant?
   - Is content and outcomes of year abroad/in industry satisfactory?
   - Is programme specification up to date?
   - Have you made ANY changes to the programme (Yes/No)
     **If YES:**
     - Have any incremental changes had a cumulative effect on the programme? Has the Programme Specification been revised and approved to take account of these changes?

4.7. Student experience and support
   - How has student support provision (including personal tutoring) worked during the year?
   - Discuss the quality of the student experience (e.g. as arising from SSLCs or student survey comments) and any issues arising in relation to joint honours programmes or those delivered through external partnership /collaborative arrangements.
   - Is the student experience on study abroad or work-based placements appropriate to the programme of study?
4.8. Review of student feedback

- What does analysis of the student feedback from unit evaluations and surveys (qualitative and quantitative) show?
- What were the key issues discussed at the SSLCs and what actions were identified? Did the SSLC structure enable issues arising from student feedback to be addressed and dealt with appropriately?
- What action is being taken/will be taken as a result of student feedback?
- Are there mechanisms in place for the school to communicate to students what is being done as a result of their feedback, and are these working?

4.9. Review of staff feedback

- How does staff feedback correlate with student feedback and discussions at the SSLCs?
- Any issues arising related to programmes, units, support, processes?

4.10. Other internal and external review

- Has there been an external review of any/all of the programmes this year e.g. School Review or Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body accreditation visit? Have actions been added to the EAP has there been any progress?
- Have actions from latest FQT report been added to the EAP has there been any progress?

4.11. External partnership programmes/collaborative arrangements

- Is the collaboration with partners in the delivery of the programme(s) working effectively?
- Have any changes been made to the operation of the collaborative arrangement?
- Have any specific issues been identified (e.g. in relation to achieving learning outcomes, the student experience, support and facilities) arising from collaborative components of the programme such as professional/industrial placements, study abroad or partner contributions to teaching and assessment?
- Is the published Partnerships Register accurate and up to date for any external partnership programmes/collaborative arrangements?

4.12. Changes because of this review/update School Education Action Plan

- Have any changes to the programme specification resulted from this review? Has this been recorded in the School EAP? How will this be actioned?
- How will the school disseminate the outcomes and actions of this review – to both staff and students?

4.13. Areas of good practice/enhancement you wish to highlight.

5. Suggested discussion items for stage two meeting

5.1. Review relevant actions in School EAP - how have the outcomes and actions been addressed?

5.2. Which programmes are covered by this review?

5.3. External Examiner reports/feedback

- Are there any additional comments in the written report not mentioned in the verbal report?
- Has school response been sent to External Examiner(s). If not, who will action this?
5.4. Do any comments in the written report from the External Examiner(s) require changes to the programme - how will these be actioned?

5.5. Review of student progress and attainment
   - How is the school responding to any apparent trends in student progress?
   - Are the drop-out and re-assessment rates sufficiently low? Are there any trends for particular programmes or student groups?
   - Are the proportions of degree classifications (for UG programmes) / the proportions of distinctions, merits and passes (for taught PG programmes) what you would expect? Have these changed significantly?

5.6. Review of student feedback
   - What does analysis of any student feedback from surveys (qualitative and quantitative) and not reviewed in stage one, show?
   - What action is being taken/will be taken as a result of student feedback?
   - Are there mechanisms in place for the school to communicate to students what is being done as a result of their feedback, and are these working?

5.7. Changes because of this review/update School Education Action Plan
   - Have any changes to the programme specification resulted from this review? Has this been recorded in the School EAP? How will this be actioned?
   - How will the school disseminate the outcomes and actions of this review – to both staff and students?

5.8. Areas of good practice/enhancement you wish to highlight.