University Quality Team: Policy

University of BRISTOL

Summary			
This policy governs the operation of the University Quality Team in providing assurance to the University with regard to the quality and standards of its education provision and the student academic experience.			
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All programmes of study.			
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University Quality Team: Policy

1. The University Quality Team (UQT) provides assurance to the University by scrutinising the quality and standards of education provision and student academic experience, contributing to and overseeing improvement via the Education Action Planning process and surfacing examples of educational excellence at undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research levels across the institution.

Underpinning principles

2. The UQT tests the quality and standards of the University's education provision and actively contributes to and monitors the planning and delivery of associated actions for improvement. It also has a forward-looking role in supporting programmes in their reaccreditation where applicable.

3. The testing of the quality and standards of education provision by way of review will be undertaken each year arranged by faculty such that all provision is reviewed at least every two years.

4. Alongside the cyclical arrangements of review, additional UQT reviews of the quality and standards of a school's education provision may be undertaken and support provided 'out-of-cycle' as identified based upon an annual risk analysis.

5. The Education Action Plans of schools that are not subject to a UQT review in an academic year will be reviewed for internal purposes to identify good practice and establish where support might be offered to assist in the completion of actions in the Plan.

6. The focus of activity by the UQT is on outcome rather than process. The outcomes are to:
   - Provide objective evidence of the quality and standards of education provision and the student academic experience across the University;
   - Ensure a critical self-reflective approach with a focus on continual improvement, incorporating recommendations made by the UQT, is applied and reflected in Education Action Plans.
   - Ensure that institutional and faculty-level issues and themes to support improvement plans are identified and resolved.
   - Identify common issues and provide focussed support and facilitate enhancement activities to address those issues.
   - Facilitate the recognition and sharing of good practice.

7. Review activities are conducted and reported upon in a timely way and informed by live insights from students and staff.

8. Reviews are grouped by cognate programmes within subject disciplines. Inter-disciplinary and joint honour programmes are reviewed as a single programme rather than component parts. Research postgraduate provision is reviewed separately from taught provision. The

taught component of research postgraduate provision may be included as part of the PGR review or the taught programme review, as advised by the relevant School and Faculty.

9. Programmes that are subject to PSRB accreditation will be subject to the normal review process conducted by the UQT; however, the professional standards set by the body will constitute one of the key measures by which the quality and standards of the programme is judged and any recent accreditation report will constitute the main form of evidence by which the UQT determines quality and standards.

10. The UQT Panels will primarily engage with role holders who have overall responsibility for delivering programmes when undertaking review activity: the School Education Director and Programme Director in taught programmes, and faculty-level PGR Directors (or equivalent) for PGR programmes.

11. The quality and standards by which provision and the continued improvement of the student experience are judged is defined by:
    - the OfS B conditions for registration
    - subject benchmark statements;
    - relevant professional standards;
    - University strategy, regulations and policies;
    - the University's specific priorities and themes.

12. The student voice is an integral part of the review process: a student perspective will be provided by student quality reviewers on each UQT Panel; and each review will take account of feedback from students as to their academic experience (e.g. from student surveys and School Academic Representation Forums), with live insight derived from student representatives on the programmes that are under review.

Membership and Panels

13. The UQT is subdivided into individual panels to review a designated group of cognate programmes. The UQT contains a balanced membership of appointed academic reviewers (who will chair review panels), appointed student quality reviewers and designated quality reviewers from AQPO staff.

14. Academic and student members of the UQT are representatives of the University and not aligned to a discipline, although it is expected that there will be a reasonable coverage of disciplines and levels of study across the membership.

Responsibilities of UQT

15. The UQT provides assurance on the quality and standards of the University's provision and student academic experience principally by:

    - Ensuring that issues identified through quality mechanisms are being addressed and that actions are logged in Education Action Plans (EAPs);
    - Positively contributing to relevant EAPs by steering plans to resolve any issues and ensuring the actions are appropriate, and, where necessary, requiring action in response to a recommendation;
    - Overseeing the delivery of improvement plans by proactively monitoring progress in fulfilling actions in the EAPs and identifying any barriers;
    - Testing the impact of actions in the EAPs with students;

- Producing a report on the result of each review activity;
- Producing overview reports to the University Academic Quality Committee.

16. The UQT will refer any identified examples of good or innovative practice to the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching, relevant Faculty and the SED Network for sharing as appropriate.

Review methodology

Stage 1: Education Action Plan check

17. The first iteration of each Education Action Plan will be checked for completion at the start of the quality review cycle.

Stage 2: Review visit

18. An initial desk-based review of the quality and standards of education provision across a group of programmes is undertaken whereby a panel reviews the relevant EAP/s against a variety of evidence sources.

19. To support the desk-based review[1], 'live' insight is gathered through engagement with students (e.g. course reps) and relevant faculty, school, department and programme representatives. This engagement may include a request for clarification on any queries that arise following the UQT panel's review of the evidence.

20. The UQT may also be directed by the University Education Committee and/or University Academic Quality Committee or University Research Committee and/or the University PGR Committee to investigate a specific quality and standards matter or evaluate whether satisfactory progress has been made in response to a specific action.

Reporting

21. At the end of the review process the UQT panel produces a short report that sets out the results of its review activities, including any commendations and/or recommendations for action, and identifying any enhancement activities to support the school in meeting its priorities. Recommendations may be attributed to the programme, centre / school, faculty or a university-level professional services division, post-holder or committee.

22. As an outcome from a review, where the review panel determines that it would be appropriate and helpful, the academic reviewer and quality reviewer from AQPO will have a follow-up meeting with the relevant education lead/s to discuss progress towards the recommendations arising from the review and priorities within the EAP.

23. Any urgent recommendations that arise from review activities will be raised and reported immediately such that they are addressed in a timely way.

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[1] EAPs are live documents that reflect changing priorities and actions within the year. Some of the forms of evidence considered by UQT will be static and relate to the previous year and some issues may even have been resolved before the UQT review activities take place. It is therefore the role of the UQT to evaluate where issues have already been resolved, using EAPs as an audit trail to confirm completion, or identify any gaps in actions or progress in EAPs based on the live and static evidence.

24. Finalised reports are formally submitted to the faculty, school or department under review, as appropriate, copied to relevant school and faculty representatives and to the University Academic Quality Committee.

Stage 3: Follow-up and enhancement activities

All schools

25. The EAP of each School will be checked later in the cycle to ensure that the Plan is being updated with progress in a timely manner.

Schools/departments that received a review visit

26. The academic reviewer and AQPO reviewer of the Review Panel may follow-up and work with the relevant education lead on progress towards the recommendations arising from the review visit and priorities within the EAP. A summary of the key points and outcomes from the follow-up meeting is added to the review report.

27. The Chair of the Review Panel in consultation with the relevant education lead may also designate further bespoke support and enhancement activities to aid the school in fulfilling the priorities and actions within its EAP.