

Code of Practice: Monitoring and Evaluation of Programmes and Modules

Academic Governance Approval

Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)

Academic Sponsor

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Professional Services Owner

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Aims

- 1.1.1 The Code of Practice covers the Royal Agricultural University's approach to continuous monitoring and evaluation of its programmes and modules. It confirms the criteria used to monitor, evaluation processes, and timescales to be adhered to.
- 1.1.2 The University monitors its academic provision through analysis of performance data when it becomes available during the academic year. The data that is collected is used to form a picture of the health of its academic provision and enables it to analyse the performance of its provision over time. Monitoring processes include student surveys (Student Voice Policy), External Examiner Reports (Code of Practice E), Module Leader Reports (MLR), Annual Programme Monitoring Reports (APMR), and programme periodic reviews at the end of each programme validation period (Code of Practice G).
- 1.1.3 The monitoring process provides the University's Governing Council with the information it needs to underpin the required assurances to the Office for Students (OfS) (Condition E).
- 1.1.4 Where applicable, annual monitoring reports from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) are taken into account for programme validation, monitoring and review processes.

1.2 Scope

- 1.2.1 Regular monitoring of the University's programme offer is intrinsic to the quality management and enhancement culture at the University. The monitoring process reviews past performance and feedback on programmes that allows the University to consider evidence to confirm academic standards of its awards, evaluate student learning opportunities, identify and disseminate good practice, strengthen accountability, identify and mitigate risks; and promote discussion and debate about module and programme performance.
- 1.2.2 This Code of Practice applies to the following awards from the Royal Agricultural University taught at its campuses in Cirencester and Swindon, as well as its Joint Institute for Advanced Agritechology at Qingdao Agricultural University (RAU at QAU) Joint Institute; franchised and validated provision taught at providers in the UK and international:
- Level 4 Certificates
 - Level 5 Diplomas
 - Level 6 Honours
 - Level 7 Masters
 - Level 8 Doctoral
- 1.2.3 In the event of a programme being delivered at an academic partner institution, the subject area in which the partnership sits, will lead and work with the partner/s to ensure that the partner institution adheres to complete the monitoring and evaluation

processes as set out in this Code of Practice. This includes franchised and validated provision.

- 1.2.4 One aspect of the monitoring processes, Module Leader Reports, remains suspended until the end of semester 1 (2024/25) as a new process is being developed and approved, with a view of enabling online completion of the process.
- 1.2.5 This Code of Practice covers Module Leader Reports (MLR) and Annual Programme Monitoring Reports (APMR).

1.3 Regulations relevant to this Code of Practice

1.3.1 The following conditions of registration set by the Office for Students are relevant:

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- B1** The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high- quality academic experience which includes but is not limited to ensuring that each course:
- a) is up-to-date;
 - b) provides educational challenge;
 - c) is coherent;
 - d) is effectively delivered; and
 - e) as appropriate to the subject matter of the course, requires students to develop relevant skills.
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- B2** The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure students receive resources and support to ensure a high-quality academic experience for those students, and those students succeed in and beyond higher education; and that effective engagement which each cohort of students takes place.
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- B4** The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards. The provider must ensure that
- a) students are assessed effectively;
 - b) each assessment is valid and reliable;
 - c) academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible;
 - d) academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a way which appropriately reflects the level and content of the course;
 - e) relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.
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- B5** The provider must deliver courses that meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications at Level 4 or higher. The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):
- a) and standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards;
 - b) awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.
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- 1.3.2 The Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes and the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance: Monitoring and Evaluation \(Nov 2018\)](#)

1.4 Responsibilities

- 1.4.1 Academic Board is responsible for confirming that the University's named awards and their curricula are appropriate, dynamic and challenging and that the quality and standards of provision is appropriate to the level of award offered. It devolves responsibility for approval of programmes to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).
- 1.4.2 AQSC is responsible for ensuring programmes meet high-quality design principles, qualification frameworks, and that all programmes meet the relevant OfS Conditions of Registration. AQSC has responsibility for the approval and re-approval of programmes and modules of the University, with subsequent recommendation to Academic Board for final sign off.
- 1.4.3 Academic Quality is responsible for organising and managing monitoring processes, liaising with academic colleagues and Learning Technology as appropriate. Academic Quality is responsible for the provision of up-to-date guidance and templates.
- 1.4.4 Programme Leaders are responsible for producing annual monitoring reports including enhancement and action plans for each programme they hold responsibility for in their subject area.
- 1.4.5 Module Leaders are responsible for the ongoing monitoring of their module(s) and liaison with Programme Leaders to ensure enhancement activities benefit the programme(s) modules contribute to.

1.5 Further Guidance

- 1.5.1 For further guidance on this section please contact the Academic Quality team by emailing quality@rau.ac.uk or your contact your allocated Academic Quality Officer for your subject area.
- 1.5.2 For queries involving UK and international partnerships, please contact both the Academic Quality team and the Academic Quality Officer (Partnerships) by emailing collaborative.provision@rau.ac.uk
- 1.5.3 The 'Annual Programme Monitoring - Programme Leader Guidance' should be read in conjunction with this Code of Practice.

2. Key Principles

2.1 Module Leader Reports (MLR) are ongoing and continue throughout the year following delivery. Reports reflect on:

- Student experience
- Student performance
- Student attendance and engagement
- Feedback from Mid-module and End-module (from September 2024)
- Responses to module surveys
- Industry engagement
- Areas of good practice
- Areas identified and planned for enhancement activities

2.1.1 The Module Leader reports themselves are not the process but an important outcome of the monitoring process that leads to evaluation, review and enhancement activities. Outcomes should be discussed with relevant Programme Leader(s) and module teams, and amendments fed into the programme delivery as a whole.

2.2 Annual Programme Monitoring Reports (APMR) is an ongoing process with different activities taking place throughout the year. The report itself is not the process; rather it is an important outcome of the evaluation and review process. It is the vehicle of an evaluation of the health of the programme as a whole, at a given moment in time. However, it is not a self-contained annual exercise, rather a continual process which keeps the effectiveness of the programmes and subject areas under permanent review.

2.2.1 Programme teams should discuss and progress their programme enhancement and action plan with students and representatives at programme team meetings and student:staff liaison meetings throughout the academic year.

2.2.2 Monitoring and evaluation processes should be owned by programme teams collectively, through staff meetings and student:staff liaison meetings; thus developing the notion that quality assurance is done by staff, rather than to, or for, them.

2.2.3 The process supports engagement with students, External Examiners, professional services staff and academic staff across subject areas, particularly on programmes that benefit from a range of shared modules.

2.2.4 Effective Programme monitoring and evaluation draws on, and benefits from, a variety of sources of information about the operation and performance of the programme that sit within its structure. This includes feedback from students (ISSS, NSS, mid and end module evaluations, student:staff liaison meetings, etc) and analysis of key indicators in the context of Programme, subject area, and the University.

3. APMR Process

3.1. Annual Programme Monitoring takes place following the summer examination boards

and is a review of the previous academic year. The process is supported by Academic Quality who will work with Academic Registry to pre-populate the monitoring template with the data set prior to making it available to the Programme Leaders.

- 3.2 Academic Quality will collate the data sets for each programme that leads to a University award and prepare the template for completion by Programme Leaders.
- 3.3 The data set includes information pertaining to student recruitment, retention and withdrawal, module results, award outcomes, continuation and completion measured against [OfS numerical threshold values](#), survey results and External Examiner feedback.
- 3.4 Programme Leaders are asked to evaluate aspects of their programme(s), focusing on outcomes as indicators of the effectiveness and impact of the programme(s) while:
 - evaluating the academic health of the programme(s);
 - identifying issues that may require specific attention and/or support;
 - identifying matters relating to quality and standards for the Subject Area or University to address;
 - ensuring there is a detailed and appropriate response to external examiners comments;
 - agreeing a set of actions/priorities for the programme(s) to enhance the quality and student experience over the next academic year in the form of an Enhancement and Action Plan [*Annual Programme Monitoring Report - Appendix 1*].
- 3.5 For programmes delivered at collaborative partners, the partner should complete a monitoring report for each programme they deliver and submit these to quality@rau.ac.uk by the deadline.
- 3.6 Reporting deadlines for Undergraduate and Postgraduate reports are set annually by Academic Quality.

4. Scrutiny of APM Reports

- 4.1 The Deans of Subject are responsible for ensuring programme monitoring reports are completed in their subject areas. Deans may wish to set up programme monitoring meetings with programme teams to discuss data and report outcomes.
- 4.2 Deans have oversight of Annual Programme Monitoring Reports produced by Collaborative Partners, and these should be taken into account when considering programme enhancement action and/or changes.
- 4.3 Academic Quality will ensure that reports are completed for each programme and ensure that the overall focus and coherence of each programme has been maintained since the last monitoring report
- 4.4 Deans are responsible for consideration Annual Programme Monitoring Reports in detail, assuring themselves that all areas have been completed and the action and enhancement plans are specific for the purpose of enhancing the quality of programmes. Deans are responsible for:
- assuring themselves that the quality of action and enhancement plans are appropriate;
 - ensuring that good practice is identified and shared across the subject area(s)
 - ensuring that External Examiner comments are taking into account;
 - ensuring that student feedback from surveys and/or programme committees is taken into account;
 - principles issues arising, including issues to be addressed at University level, are considered.
- 4.5 The Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), on behalf of Academic Board, ensures that appropriate arrangements are in place for the monitoring of University awards and programmes. AQSC receives a summary of Annual Programme Monitoring Reports and action and enhancement plans in relation to quality assurance and standards, and keeps the effectiveness of these processes under review. AQSC together with Academic Board monitor key data across the institution.
- 4.6 All Undergraduate and Postgraduate Annual Programme Monitoring Reports will be considered by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) in the autumn/spring, with ongoing monitoring of the action and enhancement plan the responsibility of Deans of Subject and Programme Leaders.
- 4.7 Annual Programme Monitoring Reports produced by Collaborative Partners will be presented by the Deans or Academic Link Tutors at AQSC. Updates to partner action plans will be monitored through partnership operational meetings, the minutes of which will be shared with Deans by Academic Quality.

5. Use of Action and Enhancement Plans

- 5.1 Action and Enhancement plans should consolidate the actions arising from each area of the Annual Programme Monitoring Report. Actions should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) and monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the year through programme meetings.
- 5.2 Action planning provides the opportunity for reflection and for a joint approach to improvements and quality enhancements. Though the monitoring report is completed by the Programme Leader, action planning provides the opportunity across the programme team to bring together ideas and best practice from subject experts.
- 5.3 Outstanding actions from the previous action and enhancement plan are to be carried over into the new plan for the forthcoming academic year.

6. Timelines

- 6.1 Academic Quality will confirm the final dates for completion each year, however all staff members should adhere to the following timelines:

Early summer	Academic Quality starts preparing APMR templates for each programme of study
End of August	Academic Quality sends out prepopulated APMR templates to Programme Leaders for completion
October each year	Programme Leaders complete and return FdSc / UG APMR templates
December AQSC	Considers an APMR summary report prepared by Academic Quality
January each year	Programme Leaders complete and return FdSc / UG APMR templates
March AQSC	Considers an APMR summary report prepared by Academic Quality

7. Annual Monitoring of Postgraduate Research Degrees *(draft)*

- 7.1 The Annual Monitoring of Research Degrees provides the Graduate School (title tbc) with the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of its research degree provision. It allows for consideration of ways to enhance their research degree offering and provides an effective mechanism for identifying areas of both opportunity and potential risk.
- 7.2 Modules delivered as part of research degrees undergo monitoring via the Module Leader Report (refers 1.4.5 and 2.1).
- 7.3 The Annual Monitoring process enables the University to:
- ensure its research degree provision is in good health;
 - ensure its research degree programmes are achieving appropriate standard against national and international criteria;
 - ensure students progress as planned;
 - ensure the enhancement of quality is being pursued and achieved;
 - engage in critical discourse about this provision within an open and supportive process;
 - record positive aspects to establish good practice;
 - identify aspects for improvement;
 - establish achievable and manageable Action Plans to enhance the quality of the research degree provision.
- 7.4 The objective of the Annual Monitoring process is to:
- reflect on the previous academic year;
 - engage in action planning for the next academic year;
 - ensure the quality of the postgraduate research provision is maintained and improved with appropriate actions;
 - identify areas for improvement and enhancement;
 - direct resources and support to areas requiring improvement;
- 7.5 Themes to be captured by the Annual Monitoring Report include but are not limited to (template to be developed and approved):
- Applications, recruitment and admissions
 - Supervision arrangements
 - Supervisory development activities
 - Student feedback, surveys and opportunities for representation
 - Student support
 - Assessment and examination
 - Submission and completion
 - Research outputs
 - External Examiners
 - Summary of appeals cases
 - Reports from funders and/or professional bodies
 - First destinations

- 7.6 Following analysis of annual monitoring reports, the Graduate School will provide an action and enhancement plan to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Board.
- 7.7 It is expected that the action and enhancement plan is realistic and achievable, and progress in completing actions is regularly monitored. The University action plan will be monitored by the Graduate School and Academic Quality and Standards Committee.