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**Annual Course Review Handbook**

**October 2021**

**Annual Course Review**

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**Template forms**

Appendix 1 Report template for Annual Course Review for Taught and ODL courses

Appendix 1 Report template for School level Annual Course Review School

**Abbreviations in this handbook**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ACR | Annual Course Review |
| ADQE | Academic Development and Quality Enhancement |
| CAO | Curriculum and Assessment Officer |
| DTL | Director of Teaching and Learning |
| GOS | Graduate Outcomes Survey (formerly DLHE) |
|  |  |
| ODL | On-line Distance Learning |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency |
| SEC | School Education Committee |
| SSRO | Student Systems and Record Office |
| UEC | University Education Committee |

**Annual Course Review (ACR)**

**Introduction**

1. This handbook describes the Annual Course Review procedures for all taught undergraduate provision and postgraduate taught and on-line distance learning provision. It includes:

* A definition of Annual Course Review (ACR);
* The aims of Annual Course Review
* Responsibilities in the ACR
* The use of evidence in the ACR
* Stages in the process;
* Reporting arrangements.

1. This handbook should be of particular relevance to:

* Directors of Teaching and Learning (DTLs)
* Curriculum and Assessment Officers
* Heads of Department
* Course Convenors
* Module Convenors
* Members of the School Education Committees (SEC)
* Professional Services staff who support teaching and learning
* Academic Developers

**Definitions**

3**.** The Annual Course Review (ACR) process is a key element of the University’s quality assurance and enhancement framework. It provides an opportunity for review, reflection and evaluation of the delivery of courses in achieving their stated aims, and the success of students in attaining the learning outcomes. ACR is based on the use of qualitative and quantitative evidence and is critical to identifying issues, risks and actions for improvement and enhancement. It also provides an opportunity for identifying and celebrating success, promoting best practice and learning from each other.

1. The ACR process applies to all undergraduate taught provision and postgraduate taught and on-line distance learning provision delivered by the University of Sussex. Courses delivered by partner institutions are subject to a separate Annual Monitoring process.
2. Whilst it is recommended that the ACR is completed at **department or subject level**, Schools can choose how they wish to group their provision. Joint degrees should be included in reports from the owning School, with input as appropriate from other Schools involved in the delivery.
3. The outcomes of ACR are reported to the University Education Committee (UEC).

**The Aims of Annual Course Review**

1. The broad aims of ACR are to:

* Identify any problems in the content or delivery of a course and to take timely action to remedy those problems;
* Encourage reflection on student performance and to seek improvements to courses in the light of that reflection;
* Take account of the views of students with regard to the quality of the student experience;
* Ensure that issues raised by external examiners are acted upon;
* Identify and disseminate innovation and good practice and to capture opportunities for enhancement;
* Draw to the attention of the University generic quality issues that can only be considered above the level of individual courses or Schools;
* Contribute to strategic, academic and resource planning;
* Allow the University to fulfil its responsibilities for maintaining the standards of its awards.

**Responsibilities in the ACR process**

1. Senate has overall responsibility for quality and standards. Senate delegates to the University Education Committee the responsibility for the development, maintenance and implementation of the monitoring procedures and any policies related to those procedures.
2. The Board of Study is responsible for the review of all courses in its remit and for producing the course level documentation for the ACR.
3. School Education Committees (SECs) are responsible for the local implementation of those procedures. As part of this responsibility, the SEC will confirm that the process of ACR has been conducted appropriately within the School.
4. Academic Development and Quality Enhancement (ADQE) are responsible for preparing an overview report for the University Education Committee summarising the outcomes of all monitoring activity for the preceding year.

**Use of evidence to support ACR**

1. The ACR process depends on the consideration of a collection of evidence that confirms the effectiveness of the provision. Evidence is collected from a variety of sources but may include:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evidence** | **Detail** | **Source** | **Date avail.** |
| Data | Applications  Enrolments  Progression/Withdrawals  Degree Outcomes  Employment outcomes (GOS) (2017/18)  Appeals 19/20 | Admissions  SSRO  Cognos 10 report[[1]](#footnote-1)  SSRO  [Sussex Direct](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/data-insights/whatourgraduatesdo/graduate-outcomes)  Sussex Direct | October 2021  December 2021  End of Oct 2021  End of Oct 2021  UEC/53/02[[2]](#footnote-2) |
| Feedback from students | Boards of Study  End of Terms Evaluation Questionnaires  Mid-term feedback where gathered  National Student Survey (NSS)  Student Barometer | Schools  Cognos  Schools  Planning  TBC | August 2021 |
| External feedback | UG External Examiner reports  UG EE reports – summary to UEC  PG External Examiner reports  PG EE reports – summary to UEC  Reports from professional bodies (PSRBs)  Feedback from employers and placement providers | ADQE/Schools  ADQE  ADQE/Schools  ADQE  Schools  Schools | September 2021  October 2021  December 2021  January 2022 |
| Internal feedback | The reflections of Sussex staff  Recommendations from validations, accreditations or periodic review (where these have taken place in the year under review)  Peer observations |  |  |

**Stages in the ACR**

1. The following are the key stages in the ACR process:

* Schools to confirm arrangements for ACR;
* On-going collection of evidence, record of issues and action taken (all year activity);
* ADQE circulate report templates and guidance notes for completion;
* ACR reports completed;
* Boards of Study consider the ACR;
* Reports completed and submitted to School (via the CAO);
* Reports considered by the School Education Committee;
* Directors of Teaching and Learning prepare School level summary report of key issues emerging from ACR and SEC discussions
* Summary reports submitted to ADQE
* Preparation by ADQE of an overview report for UEC

**Completing the ACR**

1. The ACR template can be found on the ADQE site:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/enhancement/annualcoursereview>

1. Authors should complete all sections of the ACR template. This includes:

* A list of all the courses considered within the report;
* A reflection on the progress of the actions contained in the previous year’s report;
* A commentary on the performance of the course during the last academic year, drawing on the available data and evidence (see 12 above);
* An analysis of the key themes and issues emerging from student feedback
* The identification of any issues or risks
* The identification of areas of good practice or enhancements
* A summary action plan
* A summary of any planned changes to be implemented as a result of the review
* Any issues or recommendations to the SEC or UEC about issues that should be followed up at either School level or institutional level (e.g. in areas related to academic policy or procedures, regulations or staff development).

1. If the ACR contains actions that involve modifications to either courses or their constituent modules, these will require formal approval by the SEC, in line with the University’s published processes for [curriculum development](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/curriculum/curriculumdevelopment). Teams proposing modifications should be aware that there are strict time limits in which modifications can be made (to ensure compliance with consumer law) that might mean that changes cannot be implemented immediately.

**School Level Oversight**

1. The School level summary report template can be found on the ADQE site:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/enhancement/annualcoursereview>.

1. This report is completed by the DTL and should normally:

* List all the courses considered as part of the ACR, and any reports not received or found to be unsatisfactory;
* Summarise the key findings of the reports considered (for example as they relate to curricular issues, teaching and learning, student achievement, resources etc.);
* Comment on any trends apparent from the data;
* Identify common themes, including issues and risks that may require resolution at the School level
* Comment on the extent to which action plans from the previous year have been met;
* Note any areas of good practice that can be shared;
* Identify recurrent or systemic issues that require notification to other University committees.

1. Upon completion, the School level report from the DTL, together with the minutes of the SEC where the reports were considered, are submitted to ADQE.

**Institutional Oversight**

1. ADQE will prepare a summary report, on the basis of the individual School reports and the minutes of the SEC, that will be submitted to the spring meeting of the UEC. The report should normally:

* Confirm the compliance of each School with the ACR process;
* Summarise the key findings from the reports;
* Comment on any trends apparent from the consideration of the data
* Note any areas of good practice and innovation;
* Identify issues for UEC’s consideration emerging from the reports.

**Office for Students – Conditions of Registration**

1. All providers registered with the Office for Students are subject to ongoing conditions of registration that relate to quality and standards (these are known collectively as the ‘B conditions’. They are:

B1. The provider must deliver well designed courses that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student’s achievement to be reliably assessed.

B2 The provider must support all students, from admission to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

B3 The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers and/or enable further study.

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.

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.

1. The Annual Course Review process is one of the key mechanisms through which the University can draw on evidence to show ongoing compliance of a number of these conditions (specifically B1, B3 and B4) and through consideration via UEC and Senate, provide assurance to Council that these conditions continue to be met.

**Compliance with QAA’s UK Quality Code**

1. Compliance with the Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) will be monitored by UEC from time to time:

*Monitoring and evaluation of higher education is an essential process within providers forming a fundamental part of the academic cycle. It can, and should, look at all aspects of the higher education experience. All higher education providers are involved in course monitoring and review processes as these enable providers to consider how learning for students may be improved.* (QAA Advice and Guidance for Monitoring and Evaluation).

**Appendix 1**

**Annual Course Review template for Taught and On-line Distance Learning courses**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **School:** |  |
| **Department/subject area:** |  |
| **Academic year under consideration:** |  |
| **Courses included in this report:** |  |
| **Author:** |  |
| **ACR approved by:** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** | **How have the actions identified in last year’s Annual Course Review report been taken forward?** |
| *When responding to this question you are asked to consider each of the actions identified in last year’s report identifying for each:*   * *Those actions that are complete – include a short description that reflects the relative progress or success of the action taken* * *Those actions that are incomplete – please identify whether these continue to be ‘live’ actions – if so please ensure that they are included in the new action plan at section 5.* | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **2.** | **Commentary on the performance of the provision during the last academic year** |
| *This section provides an opportunity for critical reflection on the performance of the provision during the academic year that has just concluded. Drawing on the evidence base – both qualitative and quantitative – comment on the performance of the provision under review. You may wish to think about:*   * *What has gone well, and why* * *What has gone less well, and why* * *What particular factors have impacted on the provision, student performance or the student learning experience.*   *See accompanying guidance on issues to consider.*  *Identify any issues or risks that will be addressed in the action plan (see section 5)* | |
| **3.** | **Comment on the effectiveness of methods to engage students as partners in their academic experience.** |
|  | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **4.** | **Areas of good practice** |
| *This section is the opportunity to reflect on those aspects of the delivery of the provision or the student experience that have been particularly positive or successful during the last twelve months. This might be new or innovative practice, things that students have responded to particularly well, or the consequences of actions you have taken to deal with a particular problem or issue that have been particularly effective.*  *It is anticipated that others could learn from or adapt for their own use positive features identified in this section of the report. If you have undertaken formal evaluation of these positive aspects, please include references. However, it is not a requirement that there has been extensive formal evaluation of the things identified in this section. If you do have any evidence of some form of evaluation i.e. peer review or student feedback, whether formal or informal, please cite.* | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5.** | **Action Plan** |
| *This should be a summary of any issues and risks identified elsewhere in the report. It may be helpful to consider presenting these as:*  *Issue or risk*  *Short description*  *What action is to be taken*  *Who will lead on the action*  *Target date for completion* | |

**Commentary on the performance of the provision under review - Guidance**

This section provides an opportunity for the course team to critically reflect on the performance of the course during the academic year that has just concluded.

* What has gone well, and why
* What has gone less well, and why
* What factors have impacted on the course, student performance or the student learning experience

The following is **not** a checklist – but you may wish to consider the following as prompts to guide your thinking:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Student Recruitment** | **Assessment** |
| * The achievement/challenge of meeting recruitment targets * Tariff score for UG provision * Effectiveness of welcome and induction | * Balance and variety of assessment methods used * The reliability of assessing learning outcomes * Turnaround times * The effectiveness of systems for internal moderation * The effectiveness of the arrangements for making sure students receive feedback and feed-forward on summative and formative assessment * The views of external examiners |
| **Learning & Teaching** | **Student outcomes** |
| * The effectiveness of learning and teaching methods * The fitness for purpose of on-line materials * Measures to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive | * Progression rates from year to year * Resit rates * Performance of students in different types of assessment * Proportion of good honours degrees/merits/distinctions awarded * Effectiveness of measures to reduce the attainment gap * Commentary on the most recent GOS (graduate employment) results |
| **Resources** | **Student Survey results** |
| * Change in the resource base for the course (including the departure of key staff and new arrivals) * Staff development issues and priorities * Adequacy of an access to learning resources (teaching accommodation including specialist accommodation, hardware, software, library resources, specialist equipment) * Access to placements (where relevant) * Staff achievements (FHEA/PhD etc,) | * An analysis of the NSS results for 2020 and how they compare with previous years * An indication of whether actions taken in the past have had a bearing on the most recent results |
| **Quality Assurance** | **Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)** |
| * Update on action plans from periodic review where appropriate | * Any new or anticipatory changes from relevant PSRB * Continued compliance with the expectations of PSRBs |

**Appendix 2**

**Annual Course Review School level report template**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Academic session:** |  |
| **Name of School:** |  |
| **Author:** |  |
| **Have the ACR processes for the School been satisfactorily completed?** |  |
| **ACR approved by:** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Effective practice** |
| *Please identify areas of effective practice that have made a demonstrable difference to the performance of students or their experience. Please include their source of origin and an indication of how these will be disseminated further within the School.* |
| **Review of key themes/issues or risks from the previous year’s Annual Course Review summary** |
|  |
| **Risks and Issues** |
| *Please identify any specific risks or issues highlighted in individual ACRs that the School will take action on:* |
| *Please identify any specific risks or issues highlighted in individual ACRs that the University should be aware of:* |
| **Any additional comments or feedback** |
| *Please provide any general comments or feedback from the review of ACRs that is not covered elsewhere.* |

1. Sussex Direct>Admin tab>BIS log on page>Login to Cognos reports>IBM Cognos reports>Public Folders>General Resources>Annual Monitoring [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sussex Direct - University Education Committee meeting 53 – 19 May 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)