### AU-LTC-20-4036-B

**EVALUATION OF MODULES AND TAUGHT PROGRAMMES**

Policy Summary

This Policy, approved by the University’s Learning and Teaching Committee, sets out the University’s approach to the evaluation of modules and taught programmes as a part of the University’s quality assurance and enhancement processes.

The policy adopts a Continual Monitoring and Enhancement (CME) approach and applies to all taught provision. This includes Undergraduate Programmes, Postgraduate Taught programmes, Degree Apprenticeships and Collaborative Provision where an award of Aston credit is made.

# Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

There are related policies for the Periodic (six-yearly) review of taught programmes: AU- LTC-17-1357-B; for the Annual and Periodic Review of research degrees: AU-GSMC-17- 0823-A and AU-GSMC-17-0576-A, and for the review of student-facing professional services: AU-LTC-18-1599-C. (to be updated when revised policy approved)

# Version Control

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| **Ref No** | **Version** | **Responsible Officer** | **Approved by** | **Approval Date** | **Effective Date** |
| AU-LTC-20-4036 | **B** | Yvonne Henderson Director of Academic Quality | University Learning and Teaching Committee | 15th October 2021 | 1st November 2021 |

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1. Definitions
   1. An **Assessment** is the measurement of a student’s performance in a module. This may comprise a number of elements, including written papers, oral tests, essays, continuously assessed work, laboratory or field studies or reports, or other forms of evaluation.
   2. **Associate Dean Education** for the purpose of the evaluation policy means the Dean (or Deans) responsible for the quality and standards and viability of undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.
   3. **Collaborative Provision** for the purposes of this policy document means all student learning opportunities which lead or contribute to the award of academic credit that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organisations other than the degree-awarding body. Collaborative Provision can cover a number of different arrangements with partners, including:
      * Joint awards
      * Double and multiple awards
      * Dual awards
      * Franchised or validated provision
      * Articulation agreements
   4. **Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)**

The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications set out the different Levels of higher education qualifications and the requirements for each of these. There is one framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and a separate one for Scotland. Information about Aston University qualifications and how they match the FHEQ are set out in the Aston University Credit and Qualifications Framework and General Regulations.

* 1. **Periodic Review** is the University’s review of each taught programme normally on a six-yearly schedule. The review is by a Panel that includes students and external representatives.
  2. A **Programme** means a set of modules organised into a series of Stages leading to a formal qualification offered by the University (e.g. the BSc in Chemistry), as set out in an approved Programme Specification.
  3. A **Programme Committee** can either be a committee responsible for a distinct programme or that has oversight of a number of programmes: a template is available for the Terms of Reference of Programme Committees
  4. **The UK Quality Code for Higher Education** is used to assure the standards and quality of UK higher education. There is a separate section of Advice and Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation.

# Introduction

* 1. The evaluation of modules and taught programmes is a key part of the University’s

quality assurance processes, and part of a cycle of continuous enhancement.

* 1. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education requires that *‘All higher education providers are involved in course monitoring and review processes as these enable providers to consider how learning opportunities for students may be improved.’*
  2. Reflecting the Expectations of the UK Quality Code, the purposes of programme and module evaluation are to ensure that:
     + the academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the national qualifications framework
     + the value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards
     + students have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers
     + when working in partnership with other organisations, the University has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are secure irrespective of where or how programmes are delivered or who delivers them.
  3. The University also uses programme and module evaluation to:
     + confirm that the portfolio of programmes aligns with University strategic priorities
     + consider the currency and validity of programmes
     + identify any problems that need to be resolved
     + highlight where improvements are possible and enable good practice to be identified and shared.
  4. Drawing on a range of internal and external datasets Continual Monitoring and Enhancement will support programme teams to reflect on and evaluate programmes against key metrics. Continual Monitoring and Enhancement will:
     + Facilitate opportunities for action planning and effective monitoring and review to ensure that appropriate and timely measures are taken to improve academic standards (where required) and to enhance the quality of learning opportunities for students.
     + Facilitate opportunities to ensure programme teams, Associate Deans, College Senior Management Committees, External Examiners and other key stakeholders are fully engaged in the process.
     + Appropriately engage students in the monitoring and enhancement of their programmes.
     + Facilitate the timely identification of areas for enhancement, which require action at programme, College and University level.
     + Inform internal and external reviews of the University’s taught provision.
     + Assure the University of the rigor and effectiveness of the mechanisms in place to monitor and enhance the quality and standards of its taught programmes.
  5. Continual Monitoring and Enhancement draws on a range of internal and external data, to evaluate programmes against key metrics. It is through the action plans generated in response to this evaluation that the University assures itself, and other stakeholders, that quality and standards are being managed, issues are being resolved and good practice is shared
  6. Modules and programmes may be improved through a range of both formal and informal mechanisms, many implemented during the course of an academic year. The Continual Monitoring and Enhancement approach should not detract from this, or stifle innovation. However, changes to some of the information in a Module or Programme Specification can only take place following formal College and/or University approval, with student agreement, and at certain times of the academic year. More information is available on the Quality Team Programme Approval and Update web page.
  7. Evaluation may lead to the redesign or withdrawal of a module or programme. In this area the processes link with the University’s guidelines for Programme Approval, Modification and Withdrawal.

# Process

## Programme Level Review

* + 1. Programme Level Reviews take place at a minimum of four points throughout the academic year, aligned to release of key datasets.
    2. Programme Teams will review relevant programme level datasets at each review point against the agreed performance thresholds outlined in Table 1:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Measure | Minimum Performance Threshold | Point at which programme is considered to be significantly below minimum Performance Threshold |
| Overall module student satisfaction (MEQ) | 4.0 or above. | ≤ 3.0 |
| Recruitment data | Programme meets target for recruitment as set by College.  *(NB: Target may be changed within year to account for wider College recruitment strategy).* | Programme recruitment is below target set by College. |
| Retention data | 97% continuation from 1st to 2nd year and appropriate progression from all other stages.  All student groups progress equally regardless of characteristics or route of entry onto the programme.  *(NB: There is no numerical performance threshold beyond progression from 1st to 2nd year to align with University KPI’s. Programme teams should, however take a holistic view of progression across all stages of the programme).* | ≤ 92% continuation from 1st to 2nd year and/or below expected progression from all other stages.  Evidence of disparity in progression between groups of students with different characteristics or entry route onto the programme |
| Award (Attainment) data | % of students awarded 1st or 2:1 is aligned to sector average  All student groups demonstrate equal levels of attainment regardless of characteristics or route of entry onto the programme | % of students awarded 1st or 2:1 is ≥ 5% above or  below to sector average  Evidence of disparity in attainment between groups of students with different characteristics or entry route onto the programme. |
| NSS  (Undergraduate) | At least 2% above sector average for:  ‘Assessment and Feedback’.  ‘The Teaching on my Course’.  ‘Overall Satisfaction’. | ≥ 2% below sector average for:  Assessment and Feedback’.  ‘The Teaching on my Course’.  ‘Overall Satisfaction’. |
| PTES (Postgraduate) | Upper Quartile for ‘Satisfaction with my Course’ | Below Upper Quartile for ‘Satisfaction with my Course’ |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Graduate Outcomes (Undergraduate) | Top Quartile for sector | Below Top Quartile for sector |
| Collaboration / Accreditation / PSRB conditions (where applicable) | Collaborative programme is being delivered in accordance with contract.  Programme is meeting conditions of accreditation or PSRB Requirements. This may include for example SSR, Recruitment or placement availability. | Collaborative programme is not being delivered in accordance with contract.  Programme is not meeting all conditions of accreditation or PSRB Requirements. |
| Table 1: Performance Thresholds | | |

* + 1. At each review point, the Programme Director will generate an Enhancement and Development Action Plan (Appendix 1) that is **proportionate to the outcome** of the review against the performance thresholds as shown in Table 2 below:

|  |  |
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| Outcome | Example Response |
| **Meets or exceeds performance threshold** *(as outlined in Table 1)* | Identification of good practice  Identification of actions to further enhance, which may include resources/support required at College or University level. |
| **Close to performance threshold** *(Programme falls between level required to meet or exceed performance threshold and level indicating programme is significantly below performance threshold)* | Identification of actions to enhance programme to meet performance threshold  Identification of review mechanisms Identification of resources or support needed to achieve performance threshold |
| **Significantly below performance threshold** *(as outlined in Table 1)* | A detailed action plan detailing short and long-term actions required to improve performance.  Identification of review mechanisms Identification of resources or support needed to improve performance |

Table 2

## College Level Review

* + 1. It will be the responsibility of the Associate Dean (Education) to ensure that all programmes undertake Continual Monitoring and Enhancement as outlined in this policy.
    2. It will be the responsibility of the Associate Dean (Education) to review and approve Enhancement and Development Action Plans following each review point. The Associate Dean (Education) may nominate an alternate to review specific suites of programmes (for example a Subject Lead, Head of Department or Head of School).
    3. The Associate Dean (Education) or nominee should report to the College and University Learning and Teaching Committees all Enhancement and Development Action Plans generated in response to a programme falling significantly below performance threshold. This is to ensure that there is sufficient support made available at both College and University level to enable implementation of agreed actions.
    4. Monitoring oversight of implementation of Enhancement and Development Action Plans falls under the remit of College Learning and Teaching Committee. Reporting can be by exception, reporting only where there is significant deviation from the original action plan
    5. Following each review point, the Associate Dean (Education) or nominee, should summarise to College Learning and Teaching Committee the overarching strengths and any identified good practice, areas for development and enhancement and associated timelines. College Level reports will focus upon the College’s academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning

## University Level Review

* + 1. The University Learning and Teaching Committee will have responsibility for:
       - reviewing all Enhancement and Development Action Plans generated in response to a programme falling significantly below a performance threshold or a programme being referred by the Associate Dean (Education) where there is significant deviation from the original action plan. This is to ensure that there is sufficient support at both College and University level to enable implementation of agreed actions.
       - identifying institutional wide themes for further development and areas of good practice for wider dissemination.

# Timeline and Associated Datasets

* 1. A summary of the timeline and datasets is outlined in Table 3 below:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Review Point | Timing | Datasets for review |
| Programme Level Review Point 1 | October | NSS PTES  Module Evaluations TP3 modules (if appropriate) |
| College Level Review Point 1 | November | Review of action plans from Programme Level Review Point 1 as outlined in 3.2 above |
| University Level Review point 1 | December | All Programme Enhancement and Development Plans from review point 1 as outlined in 3.3 above |
| Programme Level Review Point 2 | November | Recruitment data  Retention data  Award (Attainment) data |
| College Level Review Point 2 | January | Review of action plans from Programme Level Review Point 2 as outlined in 3.2 above |
| University Level Review point 2 | February | All Programme Enhancement and Development Plans from review point 2 as outlined in 3.3 above |
| Programme Level Review Point 3 | January | Module Evaluations TP1 modules |
| Programme Level Review Point 4 | June | Module Evaluations TP2 modules Graduate Outcomes data |
| College Level Review Point 3 | July | Review of action plans from Programme Level Review Point 3 & 4 as outlined in 3.2 above |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| College Level Review Point 3 | October (Early) | Programme Level Review Point 3 Action Plans as outlined in 3.2 above |
| University Level Review Point 3 | October (end) | All Programme Enhancement and Development Plans as outlined in 3.3 above |
| Programme Level Review Point 5  . | Minimum of 1 review per year.  Timing can vary to enable alignment with PSRB accreditation event or Periodic Review if appropriate |  |

Table 3

4.2 Between Programme Level Review Points

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| --- | --- |
| 4.2.1 | In between each stage of the programme monitoring process Programme Directors will be able to update programme Enhancement and Development Action Plans on an ongoing basis so that they can be utilised as a point of reference to provide timely information on the progress to achieve each identified enhancement |
| 4.2.2 | Programme Enhancement and Development Action plans will be utilised by programme teams and Colleges as a resource to monitor the completion of actions arising out of the Continual Monitoring and Enhancement process. As and when actions are completed they should be marked as complete on the Enhancement and Development Action Plan. |

1. Programmes with Non-Standard Delivery Patterns

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| --- | --- |
| 5.1 | Due to the alignment of the Continual Monitoring and Enhancement process to the University’s assessment periods, the process outlined will not be suitable for programmes which do not fit the standard delivery model of September starts or run to a standard academic year. |
| 5.2 | Programmes, which follow a non-standard delivery pattern will still be required to engage with the Continual Monitoring and Enhancement process as outlined in this policy, however the timing of their engagement with each stage of the process is determined by the date delivery commences. |
| 5.3 | Each Associate Dean (Education) will be required to supply their College Quality Officer with a list of which programmes, within their College, that follow a non- standard delivery pattern. Following discussion with the Programme Director, this list should also confirm at which points in the academic cycle these programmes will engage with each stage of the process. |
| 5.4 | Degree Apprenticeship Programmes will be required to undertake Continual Monitoring and Enhancement activities as outlined in this policy. Depending upon the nature of the delivery Degree Apprenticeship Programmes will either align to the standard or non-standard process. |

1. Collaborative Provision

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| --- | --- |
| 6.1 | All Collaborative Programmes must have a specific Development and Enhancement Action Plan |
| 6.2 | Where a collaborative arrangement results in students entering a programme through different routes (e.g. a franchise of articulation agreement) the review must include an evaluation of parity of experience and outcome for each different cohort. |

Appendix 1 Enhancement and Development Action Plan Template

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Names of Programmes included in Review | Collaborative Provision (Y/N) | Review Point (1/2/3) | Academic Year of Review: | Date of initial review: | Date of update: |
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Summary of student input into review and development of action plan:

Areas of Good Practice to highlight:

Appendix 1 Enhancement and Development Action Plan Template

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | | | | | Progress Status | |
| Complete | |
| In progress and on track to complete within identified timeline | |
| Not started / in progress but unlikely to complete within identified timeline | |
| Ref. | Performance Threshold | Agreed action | Timeline for Completion | | | Named Responsibility | (To be completed as part of progress update) | |
| Actions Taken / Further Action Required | Progress Status |
| 1 | *e.g. Continuation from Year 1 to Year 2 is 94% (KPI 97%). Action required to increase this for the 2022 academic year* | *e.g. Undertake a review of Assessment Strategy and supporting information for students* | *October 2021* | *Assessment Lead supported by Programme Team* | | | *e.g. Review completed* |  |
|  |  | *e.g. Obtain feedback from Student representatives* | *November 2021* | | *Programme Director* | | *e.g. Complete* |  |
|  |  | *e.g. Agree actions based on information obtained* | *November 2021* | | *Programme Directo* | | *e.g. Action plan in development* |  |
| 2 |  |  |  | |  | |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  | |  | |  |  |
| *(Please add additional rows as necessary)* | | | | | | | | |