



UNIVERSITY OF  
PORTSMOUTH

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **Annual Monitoring Pilot: 2018/19**

## 1. The scope of the pilot

### 1.1 Which departments are included in the pilot?

Five departments are taking part in the pilot, one from each faculty: Economics and Finance (Faculty of Business and Law); Creative Technologies (Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries); School of Languages and Applied Linguistics (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences); Geography (Faculty of Science); and Computing (Faculty of Technology).

### 1.2 What types of courses are in scope for the pilot?

The pilot covers all home undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision (including MRes provision). Modules, collaborative courses, and postgraduate research degrees are not in scope for the pilot.

### 1.3 Does the pilot include a review of student feedback processes?

Mechanisms for eliciting student feedback are a central feature of the Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice. The pilot pertains only to our annual monitoring policy. The outcomes of student feedback are included within the annual monitoring data that are considered, as they are a key indicator of the quality of our provision and how courses are performing. However, the format of student feedback and the mechanisms by which it is collected are not under review as part of this pilot.

### 1.4 What is the difference between annual monitoring and portfolio review?

Annual monitoring is the University's core quality management process. It provides a systematic, holistic, evidence-based and benchmarked means of reviewing the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of the student experience. Portfolio review provides a more strategic oversight of the University's academic provision, with a key focus on recruitment against target, future market demands and opportunities, coherence and health of portfolio

## 2. Data

### 2.1 How will I access my annual monitoring data?

Data pertaining to the student experience, progression/achievement and outcomes, and to the make-up of the student cohort, will be accessed via the Quality Assessment Dashboards (QuADs). The QuADs have been developed specifically for the pilot and all course leaders involved in the pilot will be able to access their data directly within the dashboard environment.

### 2.2 How will I know when to review the data within the dashboards?

Data are made available at different times throughout the year. The dashboards include an indication of the availability of different data sources, so that you can plan your time accordingly, and we will email all participants in the pilot to confirm once particular data have been published. You should review your data and begin or consolidate any action planning required as soon as possible following data release.

## 2.3 Why is there a delay between data being published by external sources and data being made available in the dashboards?

The dashboards include data from a variety of different internal and external data sources. In order that we can be confident in the quality of the data, and to ensure that all courses are being evaluated equally, a process of data validation is necessary before data are released into the dashboard environment. You may have access to some data prior to them being made available in the dashboards: for example, institution-level NSS data are available under embargo at the end of July, and the full dataset published in early August, but are not available within the dashboards until later in August. This offers an opportunity for you to consider what issues the data may highlight, and begin to action plan where necessary. You may also use the additional time to consider how you will involve students in the action planning process. Once the data are available in the dashboards and RAG ratings have been applied, you will be able to see which quality indicators require a formal action plan as part of the annual monitoring process.

Professional services colleagues across the Department of Student and Academic Administration and Information Services continue to work together to make our validated data available to you as early as possible.

## 2.4 Will I be able to access previous course data?

The dashboards provide three years' worth of data. They retain the history of a course, but in cases where the course has moved from one faculty or department to another, you will need to search by 'course' using the filters built into the Dashboards to ensure that the full history is displayed.

Equally, in instances where a course has changed either name or code, you will need to search for all versions of that name or code to return a full set of data.

## 2.5 What are Quality Indicators?

The University is using an established, common range of activities and outcomes as proxy measurements for quality, or quality indicators. These are:

- **Student satisfaction** quality indicators: NSS data (the teaching on my course, assessment and feedback, academic support, and overall satisfaction), or, if this is not available, the EvaSys Quality Index (overall satisfaction).
- **Progression** quality indicators: First sitting progression by academic stage, end of year progression by academic stage, and withdrawals by academic stage.
- **Achievement** quality indicator: Good degrees (undergraduate courses only).
- **Outcomes** quality indicator: Employment/further study (UK only).

As the University develops its Business Intelligence Dashboards over time, additional Quality Indicators may be added.

## 2.6 Will the process capture TEF data?

The quality indicators selected for the purposes of our annual monitoring process, and the criteria for determining good practice, have been informed by the TEF. The development of a more consistent approach to action planning that is data and evidence driven, together with a more explicit framework for the identification and dissemination of impactful good practice, will stand the University in good stead for future TEF submissions.

## 3. Quality benchmarks

### 3.1 How have the RAG ratings been determined?

Quality benchmarks have been agreed in relation to each quality indicator. These have been informed by taking an average of performance across the University over last three years, and applying a target to which we aspire. Our benchmarks have been designed to be appropriately stretching, in line with the University's ambitions, with a view to ensuring ongoing improvement over time. Where a benchmark is not met, a red flag will be applied. Where it is narrowly met (above the University average) an amber rating applies. Where it is comfortably met (above both the University average and the target agreed) a green rating applies.

The RAG rating is applied to the numerical value for the academic year in question. Whilst three years of data are available in the dashboards, enabling colleagues to consider any trends that are evident over time, no flags will be applied where sharp increases or reductions in values occur year on year. As part of our evaluation of the pilot, we will seek your feedback on whether this is an additional feature that it may be helpful for us to develop.

### 3.2 How do the benchmarks and RAG ratings correspond with TEF outcomes?

There is no explicit match. The University has set its own stretching quality benchmarks, which are intended to drive up quality where performance falls below the internally-agreed benchmark for any given quality indicator. The process also sends a warning signal to course teams, via an amber flag, which indicates that whilst the benchmark has been met, performance is in danger of dropping below the required standard. The University is setting its own expectations regarding performance and internally benchmarking courses against each other. From 2019/20 onwards, benchmarking will be applied against subject groupings also. The TEF, however, benchmarks broader subject groups against institutions with a similar profile. The TEF uses complex algorithms which cannot be reproduced locally. The TEF also uses wider information sets to determine its outcomes, which includes institutional and subject qualitative statements. Additionally, given that the TEF is externally driven and subject to annual change, the University has opted to design a system which is fit both for our own internal processes *and* those of external bodies.

### 3.2 Why are the same benchmarks being applied to all Faculties?

The set-up of the current dashboards only permits a single set of benchmarks to be applied across the board. The focus of the pilot exercise is upon testing our revised philosophy and approach, and for the future we are already planning development work that will enable us to establish more nuanced benchmarks that are more contextually relevant at a subject level. As noted above, from 2019/20 onwards, subject-level benchmarking will be applied.

### 3.3 Why do the benchmarks refer to Stages and not Levels or Years?

Reference to academic stages enables us to accommodate variation of programmes such as full-time, sandwich and integrated Masters, where referring to Levels or Years could be confusing.

## 4. Action planning

### 4.1 How will I know whether I need to complete an action plan?

You should complete an Enhancement and Quality Improvement Plan (EQuIP) for any quality indicators to which a red flag has been applied. If your course carries no red flags, you will still need to review the EQuIP and provide any information relating to actions arising from either Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) activity, or any that have been highlighted by your External Examiner. You should also make sure

### 4.2 What is the expected timeframe for responding to any red flags?

The expectation is that you begin action planning as soon as you have access to data. Whilst there is a single date by which course leaders should complete their EQuIP and pass it to their Head of Department for review, the EQuIP should be considered a live document, to be updated as soon as actions have been identified. No set turnaround times have been identified as part of the annual monitoring policy, largely because each action will vary in its scope and complexity. Additionally, some departments have indicated an intention to support their course leaders in working collaboratively on the completion of EQuIPs as a means of providing peer support during the pilot.

### 4.3 Students will be involved with the co-production of action plans. What access to data will they have?

Course leaders will be able to determine the ways in which students will be involved in the development of action plans, and decisions regarding the extent and nature of their involvement, and the specific data that courses opt to share with them, will be determined locally on an issue-by-issue basis. **However**, it is important to note that **blanket sharing of University data to students or to UPSU is not permissible**. There are data protection rules which govern this area. Only specific data relating to an action which students are collaborating on may be considered relevant to share. If Course Leaders are in any doubt about sharing any data, guidance must be sought from ASQP. As part of the pilot, we encourage departments to be creative in their thinking, and as we evaluate your experiences as the pilot progresses, we will seek your feedback on what has worked well, and what challenges you have dealt with.

### 4.4 How will staff be supported in relation to student co-production of action plans?

Initial guidance on different approaches to student co-production is available, and should be considered a starting point rather than as a prescriptive manual. As noted above, we are keen to hear about your ideas and experiences as the pilot progresses. This will inform the provision of dedicated professional development support for staff via the Department for Curriculum and Quality Enhancement once the new methodology goes live in 2019/20 and beyond.

### 4.5 Will courses that have red flags be 'at risk'?

Courses carrying three or more red flags will be deemed to be a quality risk. Courses identified as a quality risk can expect a greater degree of scrutiny at faculty level, and will be considered at a Faculty Quality Review meeting, to be chaired by the Dean. This reflects the principle that the annual monitoring process

should be proportionate, with effort being targeted where it is most needed. A key purpose of the meeting will be to identify how the faculty management team will support the department in implementing the actions agreed in relation to its portfolio.

#### **4.6 Will the process allow for actions to be escalated?**

Sometimes actions will be identified that have an impact at a level beyond that of the specific course or department, and require a greater degree of authority and oversight. The Enhancement and Quality Improvement Plan encourages colleagues to indicate those aspects of the problem that they can reasonably expect to influence, and be direct in signposting others in the wider University system who may be better placed to take action at a different level. But equally there is a clear expectation that colleagues do not seek to escalate actions inappropriately – take responsibility for what is within your sphere of control and escalate where you need to.

#### **4.7 Staff are involved in developing action plans in relation to NSS, DLHE and unit evaluations. Will this continue?**

Yes. There is no change to this routine activity, the outcomes of which should be captured as part of your annual monitoring EQUIP where any red flags have been applied.

#### **4.8 Will the Boards of Studies, Student Staff Consultative Committees, and Faculty Forums feed in to the pilot?**

In support of the pilot, we are designing revised template agendas for Boards of Studies and Student Staff Consultative Committees to ensure that, as a matter of course, these provide a formal opportunity for feedback on any student-facing issues identified as part of the annual monitoring process, and that they offer further opportunities to embed a culture of co-production.

Other fora such as the Faculty Forums - a meeting of all School Representatives (SSCC Student Chairs) in a Faculty with senior Faculty staff, normally chaired by the Associate Dean (Students) – provide further opportunities to seek student input in relation to specific actions, and colleagues are encouraged to make best use of these dependent on the specific actions they are developing and implementing.

## **5. Evaluation of the pilot**

### **5.1 What is the evaluation strategy for the pilot?**

We have identified different key points throughout the pilot to seek feedback on different participants' experiences. We are also keen to hear from you directly as the pilot progresses about any aspect of the proposed process that you feel is problematic or could be improved. Please also feel free to discuss your ideas with us more generally. An analysis of participant feedback will be considered by the Project Board, and we intend to hold debrief meetings with each participating department towards the end of the pilot. Outcomes from our evaluation activities will inform decisions about any changes to be made to the policy or our approach ahead of launching University-wide in September 2019.