

The aim of Annual Monitoring is to maintain quality and improve provision through identifying action that can be taken to improve future student experience.

This form should be used to capture a focused and concise reflective summary of annual monitoring activity at school and subject level. Bullet list format is encouraged.

College	Science and Engineering comprising the Schools of Chemistry; Computing Science; Engineering; Geographical and Earth Sciences; Mathematics and Statistics; Physics and Astronomy; Psychology.
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## Reflection

What is working well?

All of the schools reported instances of good practice. Often these are subject specific approaches, which do not necessarily transfer well to other disciplines. In this college report, I have selected some examples from the SAMs which could have wider applicability.

- Computing Science has engaged successfully with LEADS staff (Nathalie Sheridan) to address the issues surrounding year 2 and 3 students who retake the year due to academic failure. Psychology has successfully engaged with the Careers Service to help years 2 and 3 students focus on graduate attributes.
- Computing Science, Maths & Statistics, Psychology all employed a range of peer mentoring schemes successfully; Engineering is considering the introduction of similar.
- Computing Science, Physics & Astronomy, Maths & Statistics report successful use of technology-based teaching and assessment (clickers, electronic upload & marking, podcasting, automated marking) to enhance the student experience. Field trips continue to be held extremely favourably by students in Geography & Earth Science.
- All schools report favourable experiences by both staff and students as a result of course redesign.

What needs work?

- I observe that the School quality officers are much more engaged in the process of annual reporting this year than in previous years and all Schools engage well with the College which is excellent news within the College.
- There is a continuing perception from the School officers that there is a lack of loop-closing at a higher level within the University. This is evidenced by the repeated frustrations about centrally-provided services such as MyCampus, teaching room quality and allocation and timetabling. School quality officers are now requesting feedback from College and University as to how the information they provide is used as well as how the University intends to close the open loops that the School (and College) officers have identified.

What action is being taken forward?

- As College officer, I communicate regularly by email and face-to-face with the School officers to report back to them from College meetings. I copy this report to all School QOs. I plan to investigate the practicalities of a short get-together with all School officers to share practice as several of these officers have suggested that this would be a useful exercise.
- It continues to be difficult for me to determine what, if any, feedback there is from the University. I would say that this problem is exacerbated by the timing of the AM reporting itself. By the time this (undergraduate) form is discussed at Academic Standards Committee, the new academic year is already 2 months old – and open loops from the previous year are never addressed. This lag is considerably worse for the PGT report which is discussed by ASC in the January of the following year. I have raised this issue of lag in timing previously but the status quo remains.

<b>Good Practice</b>	
<p>What practices are innovative?</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Why are we asked if we should “recommend [practices] for wider dissemination”? If practices are reported as being “innovative” should they not, by default, be “recommended for wider dissemination”?</p>	<p>Which of these would you recommend for wider dissemination?</p>
<p>All of the practices previously reported in the “What is working well?” section of “Reflection” can be considered innovative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computing Science has engaged successfully with LEADS staff (Nathalie Sheridan) to address the issues surrounding year 2 and 3 students who retake the year due to academic failure. Psychology has successfully engaged with the Careers Service to help years 2 and 3 students focus on graduate attributes.</li> <li>• Computing Science, Maths &amp; Statistics, Psychology all employed a range of peer mentoring schemes successfully; Engineering is considering the introduction of similar.</li> <li>• Chemistry, Computing Science, Physics &amp; Astronomy, Maths &amp; Statistics report successful use of technology-based teaching and assessment (clickers, electronic upload &amp; marking, podcasting, automated marking) to enhance the student experience. Field trips continue to be held extremely favourably by students in Geography &amp; Earth Science.</li> <li>• All schools report favourable experiences by both staff and students as a result of course redesign.</li> <li>• Chemistry reports that the appointment of a School teaching administrator relieved some of the teaching administration burden and allowed staff to spend more time on research, teaching innovation and student support.</li> </ul>	<p>ALL</p>

<b>Closing Loops</b>	
<p>What progress has been made on actions identified in last annual monitoring cycle?</p>	
Action:	Progress:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality officer in the School of Engineering retired in September 2016 and a replacement should be sought.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new quality officer was appointed in Engineering.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching accommodation inadequate for student numbers and facilities (all Schools).</li> <li>• Costs associated with pull-printing vastly increased due to pull-printing (Physics &amp; Astronomy).</li> <li>• Teaching staff are (and have been) working at absolute capacity for a number of years. Increasing student numbers without new staff appointments has worsened this problem (all Schools).</li> <li>• The University views transnational education as an exciting opportunity but activities at SIT and UESTC impact on staff workload without adequate recognition. Staff morale will suffer and valued staff will leave.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situation was considerably worse in 2016-17; see below.</li> <li>• No reporting of this issue in 2016-17; should be considered closed.</li> <li>• Situation was considerably worse in 2016-17; see below.</li> <li>• No reporting of this issue in 2016-17; should be considered closed.</li> </ul>

**What matters (if any) need to be brought to the College or University's attention?**

College

- School officers request guidance from College on how to effect change at a University level for all the matters arising in the "University" box below here. Within appropriate input at College level, I have drawn up a "triage list" of contacts / routes which I will share with School QOs in the hope that we may seek to address the systemic and repeated problems with MyCampus / timetabling / accommodation / EvaSys / Good Cause & Absence Policies. At the very least, we should be able to improve the record of evidence on these topics.

University

**TEACHING ACCOMMODATION**

- Teaching accommodation is often wholly inadequate for student numbers and facilities (all Schools). Reports include "Lecture venues are too small for the size of classes", "poor air quality", "rooms often too warm (or too cold)", "common to find technical equipment not working or unavailable", "venues are so fully booked that it is difficult to find venues for class tests during teaching periods", "spaces need to be developed to keep up with innovative practices being used", "[lack of] refurbishment of the L1 teaching lab in Gregory building sets a poor tone for subsequent years". THIS IS A REPEAT REQUEST AND IS BEING REPORTED AS CONSIDERABLY WORSE IN 2016-17 THAN PREVIOUS YEARS.

**MYCAMPUS / EVASYS / GOOD CAUSE SYSTEMS**

- MyCampus continues to cause problems; little has changed since its introduction but staff feel that there is little point in continued reporting of problems because there is no institutional willpower to address the situation. Staff report that the micromanagement that MyCampus employs as a result of its coding is the direct cause of the administrative burdens teaching staff have. THIS IS A REPEAT REQUEST.
- EvaSys procedures appear now a largely ineffective means of obtaining feedback on many courses as the crucial information is not routinely available to the staff teaching the courses, it appears more designed to give indications of staff performance to management than enabling improvements to taught courses. It has been noted that the EvaSys policy changed apparently without consultation of relevant staff and this has exacerbated matters. THIS IS A REPEAT REQUEST.
- There is confusion at University/School level as to how students use the Good Cause system, it seems to be frequently inappropriate and perhaps creates an "excuse" culture that then becomes a cause of dissatisfaction when the case "appears" not to be taken into account. THIS IS A REPEAT REQUEST AND IS BEING REPORTED AS CONSIDERABLY WORSE IN 2016-17 THAN PREVIOUS YEARS.
- A general comment in dealing with MyCampus is, "Permission to follow a task through to completion to rectify problems has been splintered such that many people now need to be involved instead of allowing one person to solve the problem quickly." An review of the structure of ALL University support systems and policies in terms of their effectiveness and impact on staff is required in order to lower administration loads.

**TIMETABLING AND ROOM ALLOCATIONS**

- Once again, it would appear that in preparing the room allocations, the previous year's allocations are ignored and a fresh start is made. Why is there is no memory in the system?THIS IS A REPEAT REQUEST
- The examination timetable generates a lack of time between the exams and the deadline for publishing grades, marking can be achieved in this period but the final stages of checking are often so tight that mistakes can be made. The University is urged to put back the latter deadline to allow an extra week for marking; bringing forwards the start of the exams must be avoided as this would both disadvantage students in terms of reducing revision time and create difficulties because of the need to run field classes in the Easter period. THIS IS A NEW REQUEST

**STAFF-STUDENT RATIOS**

- Teaching staff are (and have been) working at absolute capacity for a number of years. Increasing student numbers without new staff appointments has worsened this problem (all Schools). This problem is exacerbated by the administrative burdens placed on staff by inadequate systems (MyCampus / EvaSys) and inappropriate policies (EvaSys / Good Cause Claims). ALL SCHOOLS / THESE ARE A REPEAT REQUESTS.

## Hot Topics

Do you have any comments on the following topics?

1. Did you find the feedback calendars, which were introduced in 2016-17, helpful? Have they prompted any action, particularly with regards to the timeliness of feedback?

Most Schools report having already had some form of internal system for managing feedback and assessment prior to the formal introduction of feedback calendars in 2016-17 so this question generated a rather non-plussed set of responses.

2. How do you work with Graduate Teaching Assistants in assessment, assessment moderation and feedback moderation?

All Schools report relying more and more on GTAs due to staff shortages. Although this relieves staff of some of the teaching burden, it increases the time associated with training GTAs as well as moderating marking done by them. In addition because GTAs are replaced on a rolling basis, this training and moderation load on staff never lessens. New staff appointments are required to relieve this burden as well as to increase staff-student ratios and enhance the student experience.

3. Are there any other topics you wish to comment on?

I would like to highlight here two independent comments that are representative of an overarching theme in the School reports I saw:

- **MATHS & STATS:** “The administrative load on course heads due to an increased number of regulations is growing to an extent that the actual time left for teaching and preparing course material is further diminished. The University is adopting an overly prescriptive and regulated approach on feedback and assessment which stifles academic freedom in teaching and teaching innovation. In the long run this will benefit no one, neither students nor staff.”
- **CHEMISTRY:** “The University continues to add to the administrative workload of the academics primarily responsible for teaching (such creation and enforcement of the Assessment and Feedback Calendar, EVAsys, MyCampus, timetabling, room booking management, Good Cause, Absence Declarations, Disability Provision Organisation, Advising and Pastoral care of increasing numbers of students with mental health issues). This adds to the heavy burden already carried by these member of staff and impacts on their opportunities for research and scholarship; the direct effect of this is the limitation of opportunities for career progression for these particular members of staff as administration and teaching seem not to have less recognition or reward as grant success or research publications. “

As College QO, I wish to note that although these comments came independently from the Schools of Maths & Stats and Chemistry, the themes are replicated in many places in my CAMS report as well as permeating the fuller reports from the Schools themselves –inadequate technologies and inappropriate policies act to increase administrative burdens on all staff. This will be damaging to staff (and, therefore, research output) and, consequently, student morale (and therefore, NSS scores).