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ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
13 March 2019   Agenda Item 10

ANNUAL REPORT (2017/18): CONTINUOUS ASSURANCE FOR ENHANCEMENT
CYCLE (CAEC)

COVER SHEET

To consider the annual report.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
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Ulster University

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

12 March 2019

CONTINUOUS ASSURANCE FOR ENHANCEMENT CYCLE (CAEC) ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017/18

Background

At its meeting on 6 June 2018 ASQEC approved the replacement of existing annual monitoring arrangements with a new, highly targeted process, the Continuous Assurance For Enhancement Cycle (CAEC).

At programme level, the programme management system, based on the principle that course teams should review data as and when it became available to them and take appropriate action at local level to enhance the student experience, escalating issues up through normal processes where required, remained unchanged. However, it was recognised that the arrangements in place for University overview were too generic in nature and not sufficiently agile to support timely interventions for enhancement. In addition, from 2017/18, Faculties have been required to report on 5&50 targets as defined in the Balanced Score Card through an annual accountability exercise and there was some risk of duplication of monitoring.

5&50 sets academic excellence as a priority with a focus on teaching excellence and the student experience. In this context, a number of weaknesses in monitoring arrangements were identified including:
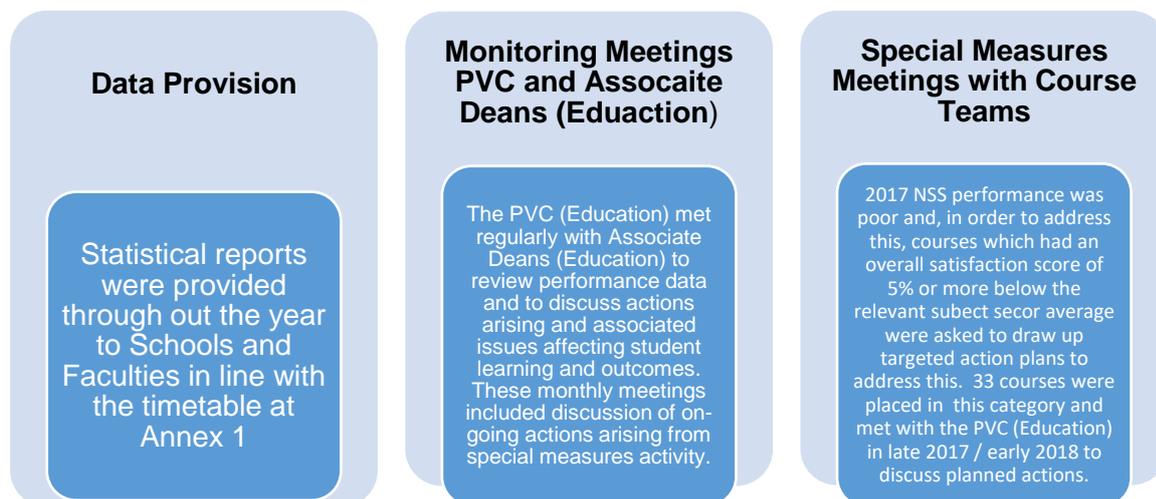
- limited evidence of enhancement resulting from the existing annual monitoring process;
- lack of embedding of good practice across programmes;
- persistent issues, in particular in relation to student retention and risks in relation to NSS performance.

These issues are addressed in the design of CAEC which:

- has a clearer focus on areas of risk at course level;
- seeks to enable deliberate, targeted and supported enhancement activity with measurable outcomes;
- recognises and rewards areas of excellence;
- is designed to provide more robust assurances in the Annual Accountability report to Council/DfENI;
- does not overlap with the Faculty Accountability Process.

CAEC Activities in 2017/18

Although the CAEC process is being fully rolled out for the first time in the current academic year a number of aspects were introduced in 2017/18 to support a more directed enhancement agenda. These are set out in the table below:

Data Provision	Monitoring Meetings PVC and Assocaite Deans (Eduaction)	Special Measures Meetings with Course Teams
Statistical reports were provided through out the year to Schools and Faculties in line with the timetable at Annex 1	The PVC (Education) met regularly with Associate Deans (Education) to review performance data and to discuss actions arising and associated issues affecting student learning and outcomes. These monthly meetings included discussion of on-going actions arising from special measures activity.	2017 NSS performance was poor and, in order to address this, courses which had an overall satisfaction score of 5% or more below the relevant subect secor average were asked to draw up targeted action plans to address this. 33 courses were placed in this category and met with the PVC (Education) in late 2017 / early 2018 to discuss planned actions.

The success of the approach adopted is evidenced by the fact that, of the 33 courses placed in special measures in 2017, 21 of the 25 for which NSS results were received in 2018 (ie which had at least 10 responses) showed significant improvement in results and only four received lower results. No information was received for the remaining eight courses as they did not meet the response rate threshold. Eight closing courses were placed in special measures in 2017 and all of these for which 2018 results are available improved their overall satisfaction (six of eight). Only 14 courses were identified for inclusion in special measures as a result of 2018 NSS outcomes.

A further benefit of the combination of activity identified above was that it allowed for course teams, Schools and Faculties to identify institutional inhibitors to success and, in some cases, the PVC (Education) was enabled to direct resources from the Learning and Teaching Strategy Fund to address these issues. Other policy related matters identified were escalated through appropriate committees or to SLT for resolution.
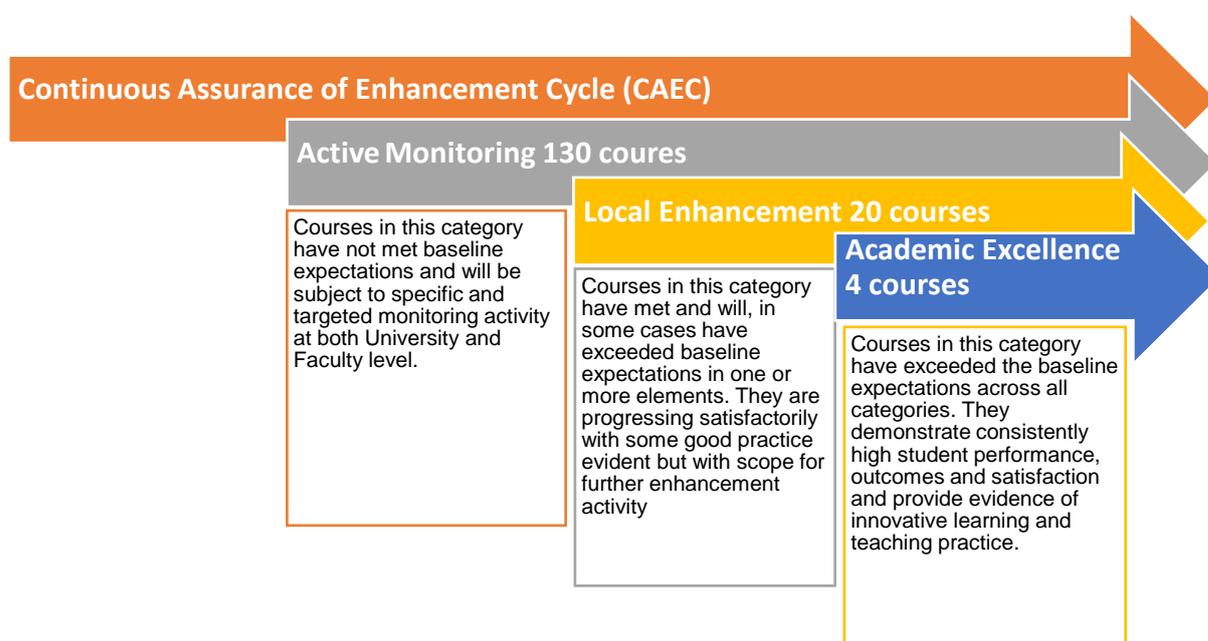
Annex 2 summarises the key groups of actions adopted during 2017/18 by those courses showing the most significant improvement in their NSS scores (+10% or more) in the 2018 survey. As can be seen actions focused on enhanced information provision to students, greater clarity around assessment arrangements and good course organisation and management.

The processes described above have been continued in 2018/19 and, in the case of Special Measures have been extended to cover retention and first sit progression. The PVC (Education) has met with a total of 69 courses which now have on-going action plans which detail over 800 planned actions, in the main to address concerns with retention and first sit progression.

Special measures has been retitled 'supportive measures' but the format of meetings between course teams and the PVC (Education) supported by action plans and monitored through Faculty arrangements, will be unchanged.

Categorisation of Full time Undergraduate Courses Based on 2017/18 Data

Categorisation of courses on a three point scale is an element in the Continuous Assurance for Enhancement Cycle (CAEC). This element is focused on the reward of those teams whose courses have performed at a consistently excellent level across an agreed range of metrics, further confirmed by external examiner or PSRB reports. One hundred and fifty four continuing full time undergraduate courses had sufficient enrolments in 2017/18 to generate reliable data (in general 15+ students) and these courses were considered against the agreed metrics and awarded a rating of 'active monitoring', 'local enhancement' or academic 'excellence' as set out below.

Continuous Assurance of Enhancement Cycle (CAEC)

Active Monitoring 130 coures

Courses in this category have not met baseline expectations and will be subject to specific and targeted monitoring activity at both University and Faculty level.

Local Enhancement 20 courses

Courses in this category have met and will, in some cases have exceeded baseline expectations in one or more elements. They are progressing satisfactorily with some good practice evident but with scope for further enhancement activity

Academic Excellence 4 courses

Courses in this category have exceeded the baseline expectations across all categories. They demonstrate consistently high student performance, outcomes and satisfaction and provide evidence of innovative learning and teaching practice.

The four courses identified as demonstrating academic excellence were:

BDes Hons Animation

BSc Hons Consumer Management and Food Innovation

BSc Hons Environmental Science

BSc Hons Geography

Full categorisation results and associated data have been provided to Associate Deans (Education) for discussion at School and Faculty level. Those courses in the 'academic excellence' category have been awarded a total of £32K from the Learning and Teaching Strategy Fund to be used as determined by the course teams in question.

The categorisation process will be repeated in respect of the 2018/19 year and consideration will be given as to how to recognise excellence in part time, DL and postgraduate courses for which more restricted data is available.

ANNEX 1: Calendar of Data Availability

Month	Data available
September	• First sit undergraduate course-level data for out-going academic year (4 years' data) (available mid-July) • First sit Semester 2 & 1/2 Module data by School and programme (available mid-July) • NSS results (available August) • PTES results (available late July)
October	• Module Feedback Survey Semester 3 module results available through survey webpage to all staff (available September)
November	• Resit Semesters 1, 2 & 1/2 Module data by School and Programme (available early October) • Year-end undergraduate course-level data for previous academic year (4 years' data) (available mid-October) • First sit Semester 3, 1/3, 2/3 & full-term Module data by School and Programme (available late October)
December	• Year-end postgraduate course-level data for previous academic year (4 years' data) (available mid-November) • Faculty/School summary data (UG&PG course level data for previous academic year only) (available mid-late November)
January	N/A
February	• NSS response rates published weekly
March	• Module Feedback Survey Semester 1 module results available through survey webpage to all staff • NSS response rates published weekly
April	• NSS response rates published weekly • Retention data, including HESA benchmark information
May	• PTES response rate reports
June	• PTES response rate reports (to mid-June) • Module Feedback Survey Semester 2 module results available to through survey webpage for all staff

Key Actions Adopted by Courses with 10%+ Improvement in 2017 NSS

Induction and Returning Students

Extended induction arrangements for first year students

Induction session for returning students with session for final year students focused on transition from level 5 to 6, final year projects and assessment expectations

Student Representation and Feedback

Early election of course representatives to ensure students have route to raise concerns and introduction of representatives to class

First SSCC scheduled early in semester 1

Use of student focus groups to identify concerns and communication of resolutions through course support area on Blackboard

Assessment and feedback

Share mark profile of modules with students to allow individual benchmarking

Opportunities for formative feedback to be maximised

Induction to include information on scheduling of assessments and feedback, including information on on-line feedback with examples

Better provision of information to students on assessment requirements

Arrangements for sampling and second marking clarified with staff and agreed early in semester

Review of scheduling of assessments to ensure better balance across semester and assessment schedule to be provided to students

Staff reminded of requirement for timely feedback on assessments and any unavoidable delays to be advised to students

Staff team meetings to be used to emphasise guidelines on assessment

Module co-ordinators to hold sessions outlining course work requirements and marking criteria

Improved information on Blackboard on marking criteria including samples of previous assignment titles and briefs and other coursework resources

Information provision and Studies Advice

All students to be advised of full module team (teaching and support) and associated roles

Targeted studies advice session for returning students in year 3

Encourage students to set up their own study groups

More emphasis on studies advice sessions and early meetings with students arranged

Course team to meet to discuss common issues raised at Studies Advice Sessions

Introduction of year tutors and enhanced tutor continuity between years where practicable

Focus on better time management skills for students

Enhanced course support area on Blackboard and use of Blackboard for SSCC information

Closed Facebook group set up to enhance communication with students on course

Students encouraged to engage with the Career Development centre

Extra-Curricular Activities

Support (including financial) for establishment of Student Subject Society

Re-introduction of student formal or other social event in semester 1

Student learning extended and enhanced through voluntary, fun, project-based activities out with core course curriculum

Staff Information / Development

Early registration of part time staff on RAD system to ensure access to Blackboard

In-year module amendments permitted only if convincing rationale provided

Out of Office notifications to be consistently used by staff

Better visibility of staff availability on office doors allowing students to identify suitable meeting times

All Graduate Demonstrators to complete Graduate Demonstrator induction to ensure expectations of role fully understood

Course team to meet with CHERP and identify development opportunities

Monthly meeting to be held for all School staff

Appointment of School Academic Lead for Education

Staff teams to be clear on lecture and seminar schedules and timescale for provision of module materials to students

CAEC COURSE CATEGORISATION

In all cases the information used will be the most recent complete data set available.

Metric/Target	Requires ACTIVE MONITORING	Responsibility for LOCAL ENHANCEMENT	Demonstrates ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
Retention of first year students. University benchmark set by HESA and subject to annual review.	2% or more worse than the Faculty target. Courses in this category will be subject to special measures reporting. <table><tr><td colspan="2">Faculty Retention Target</td></tr><tr><td>AHSS</td><td>7.25%</td></tr><tr><td>CEBE</td><td>10.5%</td></tr><tr><td>LHS</td><td>6.5%</td></tr><tr><td>UUBS</td><td>6.5%</td></tr><tr><td>University overall</td><td>7.5%</td></tr></table>	Faculty target + or - <2%	2% or more better than Faculty target
NSS. University benchmark set by HEFCE and subject to annual review. **5&50 KPI – consistently in top 10 institutions for student satisfaction**	Worse than sector average for overall satisfaction in subject. Courses in this category will be monitored through special measures reporting.	At or above subject sector average in overall satisfaction.	Better than the sector average in all elements of the survey.
NSS TEF Data	Worse than sector subject average by >2% in any of the three TEF categories	< 2% below sector subject average in all TEF categories	>2% better than the sector subject average in all TEF categories
Student Engagement as measured by NSS Student Voice	Worse than University average by >2% in Student Voice element	<2% below University average in Student Voice	5% or more better than University average in Student Voice
First sit data (all years)	A first sit pass rate of less than 70% (excluding students on leave of absence). This data is available at the end of each semester. ADs (Education) to review.	A first sit pass rate of between 70% and 85%	A first sit pass rate of 85% or more
Classification data	Less than 60% of graduating students achieve 1st or 2.1 awards. ADs (Education) to review	60 – 70% of students achieve 1st or 2.1 awards	More than 70% of students achieve 1st or 2.1 awards and

Metric/Target	Requires ACTIVE MONITORING	Responsibility for LOCAL ENHANCEMENT	Demonstrates ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
			External Examiner does not highlight concerns regarding marking
External Examiner / PSRB reports	Significant concerns identified which require urgent remediation. ADs (Education) to review	Satisfactory reports with minor recommendations only	Report identifies consistent high or above sector practice or outcomes
Ongoing engagement with curriculum development as evidenced through CA3 activity, Revalidation participation / report	Approval refused or granted with conditions*. ADs (Education) to review	Approval secured with no conditions*	Approval secured with no conditions* and evidence of innovative learning and teaching practice.

*with the exception of the Annex on documentation corrections.