

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC BOARD

REPORT SUMMARY

Meeting date:	18 June 2008
Report title:	Chair of ADC's Annual Monitoring Report (Taught Programmes)
Author/to be presented by:	Chair of ADC
The Board's responsibilities/ terms of reference which apply are:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility for general issues relating to the research, scholarship, learning and teaching and courses at the institution , including criteria for the admission of students; the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners; policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students; the content of the curriculum; academic standards and the validation and review of courses; the procedures for the award of qualifications and honorary academic titles; and the procedures for the expulsion of students for academic reasons, such responsibilities shall be subject where appropriate to the requirements of validating and accrediting bodies; • Responsibility for considering the development of the academic and related activities of the University and the resources needed to support them and for advising the Vice-Chancellor and the Board of Governors thereon; 	
Summary of what is being presented or proposed	
<p>The Chair of ADC's AME report to Academic Board has been prepared following the Academic Standards and Quality Sub-committee AME plenary meeting held on 16 April 2008. The report has been prepared in accordance with the agreed AME schedule and was considered by the Academic Development Committee at its meeting on 4 June 2008.</p> <p>The report summarises the outcomes of the Annual Monitoring Exercise, identifies key issues and trends, highlights examples of good practice and makes recommendations for enhancement.</p>	

Other key issues/points	
<i>i</i>	<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>The report summarises the outcomes from the Annual Monitoring Exercise, following the Academic Quality and Standards Sub-committee plenary meeting held on 16 April 2008.</p>
<i>ii</i>	<p><i>Stakeholders/who is affected/summary of any consultation undertaken.</i></p> <p>Whole University and collaborative partners.</p>
<i>iii</i>	<p><i>How does the report relate to the University's Strategic Plan?</i></p> <p>The Annual Monitoring Exercise supports and enables the progression of the core aims of the Strategic Plan.</p>
<i>iv</i>	<p><i>What are the resource implications (including administrative support) of any proposals in the report?</i></p> <p>No additional resource implications at this stage.</p>
<i>v</i>	<p><i>Indicate any consequences relating to equality, accessibility or diversity. Have any proposals in the report been subject to an equality impact assessment?</i></p> <p>No.</p>
<i>vi</i>	<p><i>How will any proposals be implemented, monitored and evaluated (indicate timescale)?</i></p> <p>Will be monitored through Academic Development Committee and its Sub-committees.</p>
Action required	
The Board is asked to receive the report.	

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

THE ACADEMIC BOARD

Chair of Academic Development Committee's Report to the Academic Board on the findings of the 2007/2008 Annual Monitoring Exercise

1. Summary of the outcomes of the Annual Monitoring Exercise

The Annual Monitoring Exercise (AME) had been undertaken thoroughly and the academic standard and quality of University's provision was confirmed.

Faculties had submitted complete and informative documentation using proformas which had been revised from the previous year's exercise, in response to comments arising from the report on the process. Revisions had been made to the proformas with the intention of making the exercise more fit for purpose, and to enable programme teams to align more closely the comments from the external examiners and key performance indicators with their action plans. Faculties had been requested to pay particular attention to the areas of student retention and student success when completing the documentation. Specific questions relating to good practice operating at programme level had been included, but the current system of filtering upward from programme level to a composite Faculty Overview meant that this was less transparent in the documentation available for the plenary.

Documentation submitted by all contributors was of a high standard but it was noted that some Faculties had experienced some difficulties in reaching the earlier deadline imposed this session. This had been compounded by the late availability of PPI data and CASQE would be reviewing the timing of the schedule for 2008/2009.

In response to recommendations from last year's exercise, Central Service providers and the Students' Union were provided with a template for completion aimed at focussing the extent of their reports. The range of Services had also been extended in response to the recommendations and this is likely to expand to include other Central divisions in the future.

Comment on process issues would continue to be located in the annual report of ADC to the Academic Board.

2. Issues highlighted in the Students' Union and central service provider reports.

2.1 Students' Union Report

A number of recommendations were contained within the Annual Report from the MMU Students' Union including the following: building on the emblematic status of the library; provision of more resources to expand the University's widening participation profile; further studies to review and reform the feedback mechanism; a full review of the traditional personal tutor system; and increased focus on pre-enrolment support in particular for international students. Collaboration between the Students' Union and MMU Cheshire at their Open Days was cited as good practice and a significant development in the latter.

The issue of student retention was highlighted in the report with advice that retention was influenced by a number of factors relating to the student experience, including not just academic issues but also issues relating to financial support and student accommodation. Financially, the University could

do more to support its students, in particular those first year students most at risk of withdrawing. The Access to Learning Fund working group should recommence as a matter of urgency to assist in this matter.

The report identified that developments in the course representative system were key to addressing issues relating to the organisation and management of programmes. A verbal report advised that existing arrangements for training for course representatives would be reviewed to strengthen the student voice in this area.

The Students' Union welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the Challenging Assessment initiative co-ordinated by the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

2.2 Student Services Report

The Annual Report from Student Services outlined the range of activities that supported students within the new structure. The Report covered Careers Service, the Learning Support Service, the Registry, and the Counselling Service and within each division gave information on particular themes and enhancements to quality of provision for 2006/2007. Areas for development identified during 2006/2007 formed the final section of the report.

Issues for the Careers Service during 2006/2007 included the development of e-based materials and services for students and increased collaboration with faculties and academic departments in the areas of student employability and enterprise. Learning Support highlighted developments in support for disabled students engaged in placement learning, streamlined procedures for the processing of Personal Learning Plans and support for Local Authority Care Leavers in higher education. The development of Student Information Points (SIPs) and Student Hubs had, in particular, offered an improved consistency of service to students and this was highlighted in the work of the Registry. The Registry had also contributed to the development of the University's academic infrastructure, including new assessment regulations. The Counselling Service had worked in collaboration with the University of Manchester and Therapeutic Services North to enhance the provision for students with complex difficulties through the Personality in Education (PIE) project.

Extended online enrolment, further developments to the SIPs and development of the Agresso assessment model were challenges faced by Student Services.

2.3 Faculty and Campus Student and Academic Services Report

The report on 2006/2007 had been based on the faculty structure operating during that period. In future, following the reconfiguration of administration it would be possible to report in a more thematic manner, as suggested by the template provided for completion.

Arising from 2006/2007 it was acknowledged that there was some lack of consistency in capturing the Student Voice. It was hoped that the proposed project on the Student Voice would address this. Areas of enhancement during this period included the implementation of online enrolment; the rolling out of the QLS student records system; enhanced open days, visit days and award ceremonies across the University. Enhancement of the range and quality of

information for students available online was noted. Other enhancements were identified at faculty level.

The main challenge for the new structure in FCSAS would focus on the development of professional networks based around areas of service provision, and the modernising of processes to make best use of the new structure. This should have a particular impact and enhancement for the student experience at MMU Cheshire.

2.4 Report from the Director of Facilities

The Facilities division forms part of the new wider Services Group and it comprises the Property Management Performance Team (ProMPT) and the Campus and Residential Services Team (CaReS). More co-ordination in the work of the two teams was planned for the future.

The Report identified mechanisms in place to capture the Student Voice and the introduction of the Students' Union/Services Group forum was noted as a successful innovation.

2.5 Learning and Research Services (LRIS) Report

Learning and Research Services (LRIS) was a new structure comprising the Library and ICTS and this was the first time that this group had worked together to produce a composite report. Key objectives had been set across the whole of LRIS and it was planned to provide a more co-ordinated report in future. Additionally initiatives and good practice operating at local levels for example the development of attendance monitoring systems at Science and Engineering and HLSS would be incorporated into University-wide planning and delivery.

2.6 Report from the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CeLT)

The Report from the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CeLT) demonstrated an enhanced relationship with the Students' Union. They had collaborated with the Students' Union in a number of areas, significantly the Challenging Assessment project currently running. The Students' Union had also engaged with the Communities of Practice.

Work had commenced on a new LTA strategy and this was ongoing. Other areas of work included considerable effort relating to e-learning development and implementation of the institutional VLE/MLE. Current systems of evaluation of the MLE project are not currently sufficiently detailed to provide evidence of quality in this area – CeLT would wish to commit to more robust and consistent monitoring and evaluation of this kind of activity.

3. Matters of institutional significance

3.1 Annual Monitoring Exercise: comments on current procedures

3.1.1 The revised template for the composite Faculty Overview and Action Plan was welcomed.

3.1.2 Some concern was expressed that the current system of QAPs being subsumed into QIPs did not allow for individual programme teams to

- adequately identify good practice, or for issues for concern at programme level to be highlighted.
- 3.1.3 Some concern that the scrutiny of programme logs by Head of Department had led to a diminution of the scrutiny previously carried out by FADC (FASC) members. FADC was more removed from the process and less able to confirm the robustness of the scrutiny.
 - 3.1.4 Lack of opportunity in the current proformas to identify issues which had cropped up and been resolved in the same academic session – unresolved problems appear within the Action Plan, resolved ones remain unrecorded currently.
 - 3.1.5 Issues of accuracy of data, and the utility of the current PPIs as an aid to programme management were raised by several faculties, and the late timing of the availability of data was noted as being problematic.
 - 3.1.6 The lack of consistency of engagement with, and analysis of, PPIs was noted in most reports.
 - 3.1.7 A request for explanatory notes to accompany the PPIs.
 - 3.1.8 Clarification of the precise interpretation of what is meant by retention when compiling data.
 - 3.1.9 Some faculties had experienced difficulty in mapping the action plan to the critical success factors within the University's Strategic Plan.
 - 3.1.10 MMU monitoring arrangements placed an additional requirement on collaborative FE colleges – some felt disinclined to engage fully with MMU processes.
 - 3.1.11 Request for institutional advice on scrutiny of non-credit bearing programmes.
 - 3.1.12 Lack of feedback to programme teams was identified by some faculties – the loop needs to be closed.
 - 3.1.13 Lack of feedback to external examiners on the AME was of concern.
 - 3.1.14 Proposal that, in the spirit of openness, QAPs and QIPs be available on faculty websites and that the final AME report to Academic Board be available on the CASQE website.
- 3.2 Estates planning issues relating to learning and teaching particularly at Didsbury, Gaskell and MMU Cheshire Campuses and particularly in the areas of applications and retention
 - 3.3 Concern over the level of support available to support PARM/AME processes within the re-configured administration.
 - 3.4 Periodic review and AME need to continue to be sensitive to external agendas, eg those of OFSTED and the TDA.
 - 3.5 Lack of clarity over procedures for monitoring enterprise activity.
 - 3.6 Concern that introduction of anonymous submission of coursework would create too heavy an administrative workload.
 - 3.7 Concern that Faculty Student Support Officers were being given too great a brief and that there was a danger that their role might be seen, inappropriately, as replacing the role of the personal tutor.
 - 3.8 Variable support levels available for international students.
 - 3.9 Extended Library hours commended.

4. Trends and/or generic themes

- 4.1 Recruitment, retention and progression issues – continued variety in retention rates across Faculties and programmes. A range of measures and projects now in place across the University to look at ways to address these concerns.
- 4.2 Student voice – recognition of the need to develop more robust and consistent mechanisms to capture this.

5. Institutional-level commentary on the findings of external examiners' reports

- 5.1 Overwhelmingly positive affirmation of academic standards of awards and external examining process recorded in overview reports for all Faculties, with systems in place to address specific issues raised in individual reports, monitored effectively at Faculty level
- 5.2 Anonymity of candidates at examination and assessed work level recommended as good practice
- 5.3 Request for clearer guidance on the internal moderating processes in operation.
- 5.4 The importance of consistency of treatment for students with extenuating circumstances affecting performance highlighted.

6. Collaborative Provision

- 6.1 Relationships are strong between MMU and link tutors at partner institutions.
- 6.2 The impact of FE colleges having degree awarding powers was highlighted. MMU needs to strengthen/develop clearer progression routes from collaborative partners.
- 6.3 Some FE colleges had felt disinclined to engage with MMU monitoring processes as they regarded them as an additional requirement over and above their own procedures.

7. Effectiveness of student voice in quality management.

- 7.1 Need to continue to develop engagement in AME with NSS and student evaluation.
- 7.2 Need to articulate student feedback more effectively within the QAP.
- 7.3 Currently some lack of consistency across the University in capturing the Student Voice, but hoped that the proposed Student Voice project group would

address this issue.

- 7.4 Welcomed the involvement of the Students' Union in the Challenging Assessment and other projects running within the University.
- 7.5 Students' Union/Services group cited as good practice in capturing the Student Voice.

8. Key examples of good practice

- 8.1 Recognition of the continued excellent work of Faculty Student Support Officers.
- 8.2 Collaboration between MMU Cheshire and the Students' Union at Visit Days.
- 8.3 Visit Days enhanced by laboratory demonstrations in the Faculty of Science and Engineering.
- 8.4 Focus on the Faculty Student Experience action plan with demonstrable response to students at MMU Business School.
- 8.5 Quality Network now running training events for Faculty Quality Officers and CASQE staff to develop expertise in key areas.
- 8.6 Annual workshops now offered in many faculties for preparation for AME and post AME sessions offered in some faculties.
- 8.7 Regular programme leaders' meetings offered in some faculties and workshops offered to staff on quality processes.
- 8.8 Quality websites now developed for all faculties with hyperlinks to the CASQE website
- 8.9 Electronic storage of programme logs developed in HLSS.
- 8.10 Development of the use of WebCT and blended learning across the University.
- 8.11 Development of WebCT Vista and student submission of assignments and feedback.
- 8.12 Innovative use of podcasting at MMU Business School.
- 8.13 E-assessment for standards of written English at interview for Primary ITT (followed by appropriate guidance where necessary).
- 8.14 Development of well-received non-credit bearing courses for partners in associated industries.

9 In addition to issues raised in AME documentation, the ASQSC Plenary session also discussed a number of other issues relating to quality assurance and enhancement. These included:

- 9.1 Concern over non-attendance at the plenary of several key members of senior administrative staff. (Note: the re-scheduled plenary session had coincided with prior appointments for several staff).
- 9.2 The need to commit to and be serious about the action plans formulated as part of the AME process, and to ensure that these were realistic, with measurable outcomes.
- 9.3 Further consideration to the timing of the AME process to maximise the use of PPIs.
- 9.4 The need for timely and informative feedback to programme teams following the completion of the AME process.
- 9.5 The transparency of the AME process at both institutional level and externally.
- 9.6 Acknowledgement of the fact that AME and strategic planning are distinct and separate processes which do not always fit together comfortably.
- 9.7 The need for interface between reports produced by the faculties and the action plans of the central service providers.
- 9.8 Some concern regarding the workload/remit of the Faculty Student Support Officers and concern that this role was might be perceived in some areas as being seen as a replacement for the personal tutor.
- 9.9 The need for still greater measures to capture the Student Voice.
- 9.10 Continued need to enhance the support for international and exchange students.
- 9.11 Continue to build on good practice aimed at addressing inconsistency in practice in a number of areas relating to the student learning experience across the University.
- 9.12 The need to further embed support for, and adopt a more uniform approach to, PDP.
- 9.13 Continue to enhance and develop training in quality management offered by CASQE to support academic and administrative staff.
- 9.14 The impact, role and responsibilities of subject groups.

10. Recommendations for enhancement

The AME is currently being considered as part of the PARM process review project, one of the projects under way as part of the Student and Academic Services Service Development Programme. The review's recommendations for revisions to AME will include proposals for changes in procedure, reporting requirements and evidence base at programme, faculty and institutional levels, articulated with QAA institutional audit requirements, informed by the QAA Academic Infrastructure, and aligning with PSRB requirements where possible. The principles guiding the review are:

- the need for procedures that are fit for purpose at local and institutional levels;
- an increased emphasis on developmental outcomes;
- an improved focus for the current enhancement-led approach to concentrate on the quality of the student learning experience;
- an improvement in the evidence base, so that a minimum of necessary information is gathered but engaged with effectively;
- the production of frank and focused reports that will act as a 'University health check' and provide a starting point for other internal and external quality engagements.

The following recommendations arising from AME documentation will feed into, and inform, that review.

- 10.1 Reconsider what information is requested from Faculties as part of AME, and whether/how it is used to enhance provision.
- 10.2 Further revision to the QAP, QIP and Faculty Overview proformas to enable more opportunity to highlight good practice operating across programmes.
- 10.3 Review the timing of the AME schedule to enable complete PPI data to be available to programme teams when drafting QAPs.
- 10.4 Improved PPIs – to be available at an earlier opportunity.
- 10.5 Improved guidance on interpretation of PPIs.
- 10.6 Expand the central service areas required to submit annual reports as part of the AME process.
- 10.7 More transparency in the outcomes and recommendations following the AME – to include posting the Faculty Overview Reports on the CASQE website; extending the availability of the Chair of ADC's report; production of a summary list cross-referencing faculty and service provider reports.
- 10.8 Unit report data to be more focused and better fit for purpose.
- 10.9 Reconsideration of the procedures for the scrutiny of programme logs to ensure quality assurance.
- 10.10 Mechanisms to be put in place to enable accreditation of short courses.
- 10.11 Improved guidance on the scrutiny of non-credit bearing programmes.
- 10.12 Clearer guidance to be available relating to procedures for monitoring enterprise activity.
- 10.13 Estate strategy: long term plans are in place but urgent consideration is needed to ensure interim strategies address impact of short and medium term potential disruptions.
- 10.14 Ensure recommendations from the Vice-Chancellor's Retention Task Force and the Employability project group are addressed.
- 10.15 Consider implementation of institution-wide code of practice on student feedback, developed in liaison with MMUSU.
- 10.16 Anonymity of candidates presented to Boards of Examiners to be discussed with Registrar.
- 10.17 Full engagement required with internal and external instruments for the collection, collation, analysis and response to student views.
- 10.18 Student Voice project group to be established and operational with effect from 2008/2009.