

New model ARTQ.

With the prospect of a much altered QAA process and building on the Deans' Principles I propose a remodelling of the Annual Review of Teaching Quality that satisfies the following properties:

- i) it is oriented around academic issues and not bureaucracy;
- ii) it is rigorous;
- iii) it is based on visits rather than secondary documents;
- iv) it matches better the ITA, which should become a quinquennial event.

It is my experience, following 6 QAA Subject Review visits, one Institutional Audit and a number of private quality assessments made in a consultant capacity, that the most revealing and penetrating parts of a review of provision is obtained NOT through studying the supplied paperwork but through meeting and questioning students, academic staff and support staff of various levels of seniority. I believe that talking to people is much more productive than studying stylised paper work that has more or less degenerated into a routine and discredited exercise. For a number of years the Faculty review meetings are looking at second hand information, we see no evidence of things such as student evaluations, minutes of departmental teaching committees and, although external examiners reports are available to us at these meeting it is rarely possible to give them the attention that they deserve. I know that in some departments the preparation of the ARTQ is a chore that is given to an individual who fills in a personal view, apart from the statistics which are always the subject of quibbles between the department and CICS, and this then receives nominal discussion within the department. This has now become a farce.

I propose the following:

1. Each department receives a visit lasting one half day from a member, herein called the reviewer, of the Faculty Teaching Quality Committee, (FTQC), each year. (Note each reviewer would only review one department each year, reviewing another department the following years and so on.) A reviewer would not review her/his own department.
2. Before the visit the reviewer receives from the department the following EXISTING paperwork: student handbooks and any other available descriptions of the curriculum, minutes of the departmental Teaching Committee, minutes of the departmental Staff-Student committee, external examiners' reports, summaries of the student evaluation results (the raw data would be preferable but may not be acceptable in some cases), copies of any recent accreditation reports; the (one page?) document describing 3 successes and 3 areas for further consideration; any other documents felt appropriate by the department. Together with documents on student achievement, wastage and recruitment supplied by the registry.
3. During the visit the reviewer meets a group of students, a group of young academics, the senior management group of the department and any other group the reviewer requests to see (but sees no teaching activities).
4. The Dean, Deputy Dean and Subdeans also accompany the reviewer on some visits to sample the process - effectively to see that the review is fair and rigorous. Depending on the size of the faculty and the number of faculty officers this might be the case for all visits - whatever the position it should be possible to arrange for a situation whereby, over a couple of years, a faculty officer visits every department, assuming that no faculty officers participates in more than two visits per year.
5. Following the visit the reviewer and the department produce a short agreed document describing the outcome of the visit with a programme for further development. This should not exceed 2 pages.

6. All the review documents are then considered by the FTQC and a faculty report produced for sending up the chain.

For a member of the FTQC the workload will not change much - apart from the half day visit and the two meetings of the FTQC (one to produce the faculty report and the other to assess the results of the previous year's cycle as at present) there are no other meetings. For faculty officers they have the 2 meetings of FTQC as above plus two half day visits accompanying the reviewers, again not much different from the present. The benefits are that the review will be face to face and not obscured by the current ARTQ forms and paperwork. I am certain that this will result in a much clearer understanding of the situation in individual departments since we are dealing with the primary sources and the people actually involved in and receiving the teaching and not a sanitised and highly processed ARTQ departmental report.

For small faculties there may have to be a combined process to allow for sufficient independent scrutiny. I am also not sure how this would work in the Medical faculty.

I believe that we can defend such a procedure as being robust, focused on the issue of the quality of the learning experience, the quality of the curriculum and the concerns of the staff and students.

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