

# University of Suffolk

## PROCEDURE FOR RISK-BASED MONITORING AND ENHANCEMENT

### 1. Introduction

---

- 1.1 The University of Suffolk adopts a risk-based approach to ongoing monitoring of the quality and academic standard of provision within the University and its partner institutions. This is known as Risk-Based Monitoring and Enhancement (RiME). In adopting a risk-based approach, the University aims to ensure an emphasis on continuous monitoring of course provision, feeding up to School Academic Committees (and equivalent committees within partner institutions), and then on to the Quality Committee and, ultimately, to Senate. The University of Suffolk Senate retains ultimate responsibility for the quality and academic standard of all courses offered by the University and its partner institutions, with responsibility for monitoring activity delegated to the Quality Committee.
- 1.2 The overall approach encompassed in RiME is for relevant teams and committees to take a risk-based view of their provision, whilst also identifying good practice and opportunities for enhancement. This results in:
- the identification and consideration of aspects of good practice worthy of dissemination
  - the identification of data and feedback indicating that provision is not fully meeting student, University or national expectations (including the needs and expectations of students from specific groups, including those with protected characteristics), and the agreement of actions to address associated issues including mechanisms to evaluate and evidence impact
  - the regular monitoring of identified actions to ensure that they are completed in an appropriate and timely manner and have a demonstrable impact.
- 1.3 The RiME processes draws on the expectations, practices, advice and guidance within the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). Ongoing RiME activity and outputs feed into periodic review at course level (as outlined in the procedure for the re-approval of existing courses) and, for partner institutions, at institutional level (as outlined in the procedure for institutional review of partner institutions).
- 1.4 The RiME processes play an essential role in supporting the University's monitoring and evaluation activities associated with its Access and Participation Plan, and in facilitating the production of Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework submissions at both subject and institutional level. For both of these areas of work, it is important that we are able to demonstrate the impact of any planned activities and enhancements, and the RiME processes should be employed in such a manner to provide clear evidence of impact wherever possible.

- 1.5 This procedure provides an overview of RiME processes at course, school, partner and institutional level, with more detailed guides and templates available on the [quality monitoring and enhancement](#) pages on the University website. Advice and guidance on any aspect of RiME can be obtained from the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement team.

## **2. Quality monitoring at module level**

---

- 2.1 All modules should be evaluated by the module team every time they are delivered, informed by students' feedback normally collected through the University's module questionnaire (either online or paper-based).

### *Use of module questionnaires for gathering student feedback*

- 2.2 Course committees are responsible for agreeing how and when module feedback will be collected from students. In particular, at the first meeting of the academic year the course committee should determine:
- i) How the questionnaire will be deployed: this will normally be either through the University's online survey tool (or equivalent within partner institutions) or through paper-based collection. Committees will need to balance typical response rates (usually much lower through online collection) with the higher processing workload and earlier deployment dates associated with paper-based collection.
  - ii) When students will be asked to complete the questionnaires: the committee should seek to encourage high response rates (paper-based collection should be done when all students are expected to be present), whilst enabling students to comment on as much of the module as possible (including final assessment and feedback). When committees choose to use online questionnaire delivery, they will need to determine dates during which students are able to complete questionnaires for each module. These dates should be reported to the Planning and Management Information team as early as possible, preferably by the end of the sixth teaching week of the academic year.
  - iii) Additional questions: the standard University module questionnaire should normally be used. However, where paper-based collection is used, one or two additional questions exploring areas of particular interest to the course committee may be added.
- 2.3 In accordance with course committee decisions, the course team should publish a schedule for students indicating when they will have an opportunity to provide feedback for each module.
- 2.4 To protect the anonymity of students' feedback, completed paper-based questionnaires should be collected by either the course administrator or by the student representative and passed to the course administrator. The course administrator should complete a standardised report on the feedback, indicating satisfaction ratings for each question and including students' written comments. Where the student cohort is large, students' comments can be summarised rather than reported in full, capturing

common themes and those issues that were raised by more than one student. This report should be provided to the module leader and course leader, and shared with the student cohort through the module area on the online learning environment.

- 2.5 For online questionnaires, results for each module will be provided by email to the module and course leader following the end of each module's survey period. Again, the results should be shared with the student cohort through the module area on the online learning environment.

#### Module evaluation by academic staff

- 2.6 All module teams are expected to be reflective academic practitioners. The module evaluation process prompts module tutors to evaluate the delivery and assessment of each module and arrangements to enable student learning and achievement for students from all backgrounds (for example through tutorial support). Completing module evaluations is an opportunity to record such reflections and to make explicit the findings and resultant planned actions and enhancements.
- 2.7 Module evaluation should consider module achievement rates, student attendance and engagement indicators, and pertinent feedback from the external examiner, students and other stakeholders (for example employers involved in work-based learning modules and/or apprenticeship provision). As well as through the module questionnaire, student feedback could be received informally in-class, through tutorials, through apprenticeship progress review meetings and via student representatives.
- 2.8 Where possible, module teams are encouraged to involve students in the evaluative process, possibly through student representative involvement or through focus groups or other gatherings. This will facilitate deeper understanding of feedback received, and the exploration of proposed improvements or enhancements.
- 2.9 The module evaluation form should be used to record key findings and reflections emerging from the evaluative process under a series of headings (curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and resources). The form provides tables in which good practice and future actions should be recorded. The module evaluation form template is available on the [quality monitoring and enhancement](#) pages on the University website.
- 2.10 Key themes arising from the module evaluation process should be reported to the course committee to enable common issues to be identified, good practice to be replicated or developed, and the completion of proposed actions monitored. To facilitate this monitoring, actions proposed should be added to the course action plan.
- 2.11 It is good practice to draw external examiner's attention to module evaluation forms, providing them with evidence of the course team's developmental processes and allowing them to comment on the effectiveness of planned innovations and enhancements.

### **3. The RiME process at course level**

---

- 3.1 The responsibility for monitoring course provision lies with the course team, who should meet regularly to consider performance indicators and data alongside feedback (both formal and informal) and benchmarks.
- 3.2 A central element of each course team's monitoring activities will be their regular review of module provision through the consideration of student feedback and the module evaluation process. This work should be done with reference to the course's definitive record and current module specifications, and reported to the course committee.
- 3.3 As outlined in the Management of Academic Provision Framework, each course has a course committee which includes the course leader and members of the course team, the local manager with overall responsibility for the course (as Chair), elected student representatives (see the Student Representation Framework) and other relevant stakeholder representatives (for example employer or industry representatives). The role of the course committee is to provide a forum for collating and responding to student feedback, reporting and consulting on course quality assurance and enhancement activities, and monitoring the course team's progress on maintenance and enhancement activity.
- 3.4 There will normally be two course committee meetings each academic year at around the midpoint of each semester. However, where courses employ non-semester delivery models (such as term-based or trimester) a meeting will be scheduled at the midpoint of each teaching period. Course committee agenda templates are maintained by Registry Services.
- 3.5 Along with the annual RiME course summary (see paragraph 3.6), the minutes of course committee meetings and associated course action plans form an overall record of the course's quality monitoring and enhancement activities, and therefore should be sufficiently detailed to capture all key discussions and decisions. Minutes and action plans should be completed and shared with committee members, and with all students enrolled on the course via the online learning environment, in a timely manner. The RiME summary and course committee minutes and action plans should also be sent to the Validation and Exams team for inclusion in the course files on MySuffolk.
- 3.6 At the end of each academic year, the Course Leader should prepare a brief summary employing a centrally provided template (500 – 1000 words) of their course development and RiME activities during the year, outlining key reporting data, course strengths and noting key action points (citing the evidence source for each). This should be used to inform the drafting of the school or partner RiME report, should be considered at the annual RiME event (see section 4 below), and be shared with the first course committee meeting of the following academic year. For higher apprenticeship provision at Level 5, an annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is also required for Ofsted reporting purposes (see Appendix A on apprenticeship provision for more information).

### Considering course performance data

- 3.7 The use of evidence that indicates the effectiveness of course provision is central to RiME processes. The course team should consider the following course data (including intersectional data where available), and this should form the basis for discussion, identification and monitoring of actions as reported to the course committee:
- Module results
  - Student engagement data (where available)
  - Withdrawal data
  - National Student Survey (NSS) results
  - University of Suffolk student survey (UoSSS) results (or equivalent within partner institutions)
  - External examiner reports
  - Degree classification profiles
  - Graduate destination data (Graduate Outcomes survey)
- 3.8 For apprenticeship provision, relevant additional course data should be considered, including Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) learner and employer satisfaction survey results; apprentices' completion of End Point Assessment; and data relating to compliance with relevant ESFA funding rules (for example on completion of tripartite progress reviews; completion of Level 2 English and Maths where this is not a condition of entry; and monitoring data relating to the 20% off-the-job training requirement). Further information on specific requirements for monitoring apprenticeship provision is provided in Appendix A.
- 3.9 Course data fact sheets which provide student representatives with an explanation of the data considered at course committees are available on the [quality monitoring and enhancement](#) pages on the University website.
- 3.10 Course committee minutes and the course action plan should clearly record discussions relating to course performance data, including identified issues and associated action planning and performance indicators.

### Partner institution course level annual monitoring reports (AMRs)

- 3.11 At the end of each academic year, partner institutions<sup>1</sup> are expected to complete annual monitoring reports (AMRs) for each course offered through the partnership arrangement (or cognate group of courses where agreed by the University's Quality

---

<sup>1</sup> This is not a requirement for regional partner colleges (East Coast College, Suffolk New College and West Suffolk College) whose provision is treated in the same way as University academic schools for RiME purposes. For partners delivering school-centred initial teacher training, annual reports produced for external bodies (such as Ofsted) can be used as an alternative to AMRs by agreement with the Quality team.

team). Drawing on course level RiME processes, the reports should be a reflective account of the year under review, including commentary on:

- the course team's response to feedback from students, external examiners and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. employers)
- performance data (for example relating to student recruitment, retention, progression, achievement and graduate destinations) and associated enhancement activity
- the continuing relevance of the curriculum and any plans for enhancement
- the effectiveness of the course team's approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- whether facilities and learning resources continue to facilitate effective course delivery and student learning
- professional development activity undertaken by the course team during the year under review and priorities for future developmental activity
- the effectiveness of partnership working with the University
- key strengths and aspects of good practice
- progress with the previous year's action plan
- the action plan for the forthcoming academic year.

3.12 The AMR should be submitted to the University's Partnerships team by the agreed deadline (via [partnerships@uos.ac.uk](mailto:partnerships@uos.ac.uk)). The Partnerships team will forward the report to the relevant University link academic adviser for review and comment. A copy of the completed AMR should be submitted to the relevant Partnership Management Group (or equivalent) for consideration, with the group reporting to the Quality Committee on any pertinent issues.

#### **4. The RiME process at School / partner institution level**

---

4.1 Academic schools and partner institutions are expected to monitor their academic provision to ensure that academic standards are maintained and that students from all backgrounds are offered a high quality learning experience, in line with external regulatory requirements and relevant institutional priorities and performance indicators. This monitoring activity should be a significant element of School Academic Committee (or partnership equivalent) meeting agendas, in accordance with published meeting planners and template agendas, enabling pertinent issues and trends to be reported and considered. The committees should receive regular reports from course teams and support them in their maintenance and enhancement activities.

4.2 Monitoring activities should maintain oversight of school or partnership strategic priorities, performance indicators and operational factors including:

- course planning and development

- learning, teaching and assessment strategies (at course, school and institutional level)
- learning resource provision and usage
- student recruitment, retention, progression, achievement and graduate destinations, including consideration of data for specific student groups in order to ensure that students from all backgrounds are supported to access, succeed in and progress from higher education
- staffing and staff development
- quality assurance and monitoring
- opportunities for enhancement.

4.3 The School Academic Committee (or partnership equivalent) should consider relevant data reports (including intersectional data where available), as summarised below, to inform their monitoring and evaluation:

- Student recruitment data
- Induction survey data
- Student profile data
- Withdrawal data
- National Student Survey (NSS) results
- University of Suffolk internal student survey (ISS) results (or partner equivalent)
- Common themes arising within external examiner reports
- Degree classification profiles
- Graduate destination data (DLHE / Graduate Outcomes survey)

4.4 In addition to ongoing committee monitoring, each academic school and partner institution<sup>2</sup> is expected to organise an annual RiME event early in the academic year (usually mid-October) to review the previous academic year. This should involve school / partner management, representatives from all course teams, student representatives, a representative from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team, a representative from the Partnerships team for partner events, and relevant external stakeholders. For University academic schools, it can also be helpful to invite a 'critical friend' from another school to provide peer support and offer an outside perspective.

4.5 Prior to the event, Deans of School or equivalent in partner institutions should ensure all course committee meetings have been appropriately recorded, and that course leaders' annual summaries have been produced (see 3.6 above). The following should be circulated to participants in advance of the event:

- details of the timing, venue and invited participants
- the previous year's action plan with reports on progress
- the course leaders' summaries (for partner institutions this can be based on the AMR)
- membership of any task groups for the event.

---

<sup>2</sup> Where partner institution provision is confined to a single course, or group of cognate courses under the oversight of a single course committee, a separate RiME event and RiME report is not required and the course AMR will suffice.

4.6 While there is opportunity for flexibility of approach, the agenda should include:

- an introduction and review of activities
- developments and achievements within the school or partner institution over the past year, and consideration of relevant strategies, development plans and performance in relation to agreed priorities and performance indicators
- a review of progress in relation to the previous year's action plan, with a particular emphasis on demonstrating the impact of initiatives on the student experience
- a brief verbal report from each Course Leader for his/her course for the year under review (including key strengths and action points for the forthcoming year)
- opportunities for peer review of course issues and sharing of good practice (for example through the creation of task groups to discuss common issues or particular aspects that have been chosen by the school, partner or University as a focus)
- an opportunity for members to explore issues and identify actions to be included in the school or partner institution action plan.

4.7 The discussions and outcomes of the RiME event should feed into an annual school or partner RiME report and action plan, which should be submitted to the relevant School Academic Committee or equivalent within partner institutions and to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team by the published deadline. The report should include consideration of the following:

- key developments in the school or partner institution during the previous academic year (i.e. new courses introduced, approved or planned; significant changes to course provision; closure of courses)
- an evaluation of performance in relation to relevant institutional priorities and performance indicators
- an update on progress with the previous year's action plan with evidence of impact on the student experience
- a review of the school or partner's developmental activity associated with learning, teaching and assessment during the year and evidence demonstrating its impact
- a review of the school or partner's student engagement activity through the year
- key findings and resulting actions from any risk-alerts issued during the year (see section 5 below)
- issues noted by course committees as outside their control
- key resource developments through the year
- a review of the school's apprenticeship provision, including compliance with ESFA funding rules and, where relevant for higher apprenticeships, Ofsted requirements (see Appendix A for further information)
- a review of the school's research and scholarly activity
- a report on the school's activity associated with the University's equality and diversity objectives and the University's access and participation plan, and evidence of impact of the activity on the student experience and on student outcomes
- staff development activity and plans
- a current action plan.



- 4.8 A RiME report template including data relevant to each school (and partner institution where data is held by the University) is made available each year.
- 4.9 Relevant University professional service teams may also hold RiME events and produce annual RiME reports in order to reflect on service provision over the previous academic year. For student-facing teams such as Student Services and Learning Services, this provides an opportunity to collectively explore provision, share good practice and agree enhancement activity for the forthcoming academic year.

## **5. The risk-alert process**

---

- 5.1 While the monitoring of course provision is the responsibility of course teams, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team also monitors performance indicators and, where appropriate, ensures that pertinent actions are being put in place. To facilitate this, the University maintains a centrally initiated risk-alert process.
- 5.2 Occasionally particular performance data, operational information or feedback appears to indicate a specific risk to the continued quality and/or standard of an aspect of provision. In such situations, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team will propose the issue of a risk-alert to require the team(s) involved (usually course teams but occasionally particular schools or partner institutions) to explore and report on the issues involved, to form an action plan to address the identified issues, and to present their findings to an audit panel for approval.
- 5.3 The Dean of the School with responsibility for the provision concerned will be consulted on the proposal. Should they indicate that they believe the issues associated with the proposal have already been identified and dealt with, they should provide evidence of this, allowing the Head of Quality Enhancement to make a final judgement on whether the risk-alert should be issued..
- 5.4 The risk-alert audit process is intended to be supportive and constructive. Where a course team, school or partner believes it would be helpful, they can request the issue of a risk-alert in support of their own exploration of issues or situations. Such requests will not require consideration by the risk-alert consultative panel.
- 5.5 The audit team will normally consist of the Dean of School or partner equivalent (as Chair), a member of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team, a critical friend with an understanding of the subject area(s) involved (from outside the course team), and a student representative. The audit team is expected to meet with the relevant team(s) within four weeks of the issue of the risk-alert to explore their evaluation and action planning.
- 5.6 A Risk-alert Audit Report Form should be completed and agreed, evidencing meaningful consideration and action planning. The form should be signed off by the Chair of the audit panel and provided to the Head of Quality Enhancement for review and approval.

- 5.7 Following the audit, agreed actions at course level should be added to the course action plan and monitored by the course team and course committee. A summary should be reported to the next course committee and in the annual school or partner RiME/AMR report. School or partner level actions should be added to the school or partner RiME action plan.
- 5.8 Tracking of the proposal and issue of risk-alerts, and of the completion of risk-alert audits, will be undertaken by the Validations and Exams team and reported to Quality Committee. The Quality Committee reserves the right to bring forward the course re-approval process or, for partner institutions, the institutional review process where significant issues impacting on quality and/or academic standards have not been dealt with adequately through the risk-alert process. In exceptional circumstances where there is a substantial risk, the Quality Committee may recommend to Senate suspension of recruitment to courses or withdrawal of validation. In such circumstances, protection of the interests of students and applicants will be a key consideration, in accordance with the mechanisms outlined in the University's procedure for the suspension or withdrawal of existing courses and/or the relevant Student Protection Plan.

## **6. The University of Suffolk annual academic report**

---

- 6.1 School and partner institution RiME and AMR reports (along with RiME reports from relevant professional services teams) feed into the University's annual academic report to Senate. This annual report summarises key developments, progress, achievements and areas for future enhancement across the University and its partner institutions. The report also sets out and reports progress on an institutional action plan explicitly addressing both quality assurance and quality enhancement agendas. The report feeds into the compliance report on Office for Students (OfS) conditions of registration, which is presented to the University of Suffolk Board on an annual basis.
- 6.2 The institutional action plan is kept under regular review by the Quality Committee throughout the academic year.

## **Supplementary guidance on RiME processes for higher and degree apprenticeship provision**

As outlined in the University's Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework, apprenticeship programmes are subject to the University's standard Risk-Based Monitoring and Enhancement (RiME) processes. This appendix provides information on additional requirements for monitoring and enhancement of the quality and standard of higher and degree apprenticeship programmes, taking into consideration Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules and, where relevant for higher apprenticeships at Level 5, the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF).

Active involvement of employers and apprentices in quality monitoring and enhancement and a commitment to continuous improvement is key.

### **Apprentice engagement in quality enhancement activity**

Mechanisms for gaining feedback from apprentices should be sufficiently flexible to suit the apprenticeship programme delivery model and fit around apprentices' work commitments. In addition to standard University student feedback mechanisms (including module questionnaires, the appointment of student representatives and their participation in course committees, the annual internal student survey and the National Student Survey), additional mechanisms for gathering feedback include:

- apprentice surveys delivered by ESFA/Ofsted
- feedback offered by apprentices via tripartite progress review meetings

### **Employer engagement in quality enhancement activity**

It is vital that apprenticeship programmes reflect employer needs and national and regional skills needs. Mechanisms for gaining feedback from employers to inform and drive quality assurance and enhancement activity include:

- employer surveys delivered by ESFA/Ofsted
- employer representation at course committee meetings
- employer feedback collected during workplace visits or via tripartite progress review meetings
- employer forums.

### **Specific apprenticeship themes to be considered as part of RiME reporting**

A number of specific themes need to be considered as part of apprenticeship quality monitoring activity, reflecting ESFA and Ofsted requirements. These include:

- continued alignment of the apprenticeship programme with the relevant apprenticeship standard and assessment plan, enabling students to achieve the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) for occupational competency

- continued relevance of the programme in terms of current and emerging employer and professional sector priorities and needs
- learner progress / outcomes (and arrangements for monitoring these, including ensuring the effective integration of on and off-the-job learning, ensuring all apprentices have appropriate workplace mentoring and support, and ensuring that appropriate support is in place for apprentices with additional learning needs)
- the extent to which Safeguarding, Prevent and British Values are effectively embedded in programme delivery, and associated levels of staff and apprentice awareness / engagement
- the maintenance of up-to-date and complete evidence packs for individual apprentices, providing verification that relevant processes to support apprentices' learning (such as initial needs assessment, timely delivery of functional skills training, monitoring of the 20% off-the-job learning requirement and regular conduct of tripartite reviews) have been followed
- arrangements for end point assessment (EPA), including the extent to which apprentices are well-prepared to proceed through the gateway to EPA
- staff engagement with professional development opportunities, including completion of all necessary mandatory training (to include training and support for employer staff involved in supporting the apprentice in the workplace).

### **Higher apprenticeship Ofsted reporting requirements**

In addition to standard course and school level RiME processes, for higher apprenticeship provision at Level 5, an annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) should be produced for Ofsted reporting purposes. These are key documents for providing evidence of self-evaluation, driving improvements in the learner experience and measuring impact. The SAR and associated QIP should:

- be evaluative rather than descriptive, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement
- draw on an appropriate range of data and supporting evidence
- address current themes in the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework
- identify actions which have been taken, or are underway, to address any identified issues (including recommendations arising from external inspections, assessments or reviews), and reflect on their impact on learners.

A template for both documents is available from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team, who can provide course teams with support on their completion.