

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 the University of Suffolk Learning Network. 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 Departmental Academic Committees (and equivalent academic committees within the Learning Network), 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, and the agreement of actions to address associated issues
 - the regular monitoring of identified actions to ensure that they are completed in an appropriate and timely manner.
- 1.3 The RiME process draws on the expectations of the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), and in particular Chapter B8 on programme monitoring and review and, in relation to the Learning Network, Chapter B10 on managing higher education provision with others. 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 the Learning Network, at institutional level (as outlined in the procedure for the institutional review of University of Suffolk Learning Network Colleges).
- 1.4 This procedure provides an overview of RiME processes at course, department, partner college 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 are 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).

Module questionnaires

- 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 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 MIT 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 will 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 will be summarised rather than reported in full, capturing common themes and those issues that were raised by more than one student. This report will be provided to the module leader and course leader, and shared with the student cohort through the module area on the virtual 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 virtual learning environment.

Module evaluation

- 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 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, pertinent feedback from the external examiner and student feedback. As well as through the module questionnaire, student feedback could be received informally in-class, through tutorials 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. As the forms will be made available to students, the information should be presented in an accessible manner. The module evaluation form template is available on the [quality monitoring and enhancement](#) pages on the University website.
- 2.10 Module evaluation forms should be shared with course committees to enable common themes 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 The module evaluation form should also be shared with students who recently completed the module and with the next cohort of students taking the module via the module area on the virtual learning environment. Copies of the module evaluation form should be lodged in the module file. It is also 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.
- 3.3 As outlined in the Management of Courses Policy, each course has a course committee which includes all the course team, the local manager with overall responsibility for the course (as Chair), elected student representatives (see the Student Representation Code of Practice) and other relevant stakeholder representatives (for example employer or industry representatives). The role of the course committee is to support and encourage the course team in their duties and consider feedback, performance and achievement measures, course team plans and proposed developments.
- 3.4 There will normally be three course committee meetings each academic year: in the autumn (usually around November), in the spring (usually February / March) and in the summer (after the Assessment Board). Course committee agenda templates are maintained by Academic Services.
- 3.5 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 virtual learning environment, in a timely manner. They should also be sent to the Validation and Exams team for inclusion in the course files on MySuffolk.

Considering course performance data

- 3.6 The use of evidence that indicates the effectiveness of course provision is central to RiME processes. The course committee should consider the following course data, and this should form the basis for discussion, identification and monitoring of actions:
 - Student recruitment data
 - Induction survey data
 - Student profile data
 - Module results
 - Module questionnaire summaries
 - Module evaluation forms
 - Attrition data
 - National Student Survey (NSS) results
 - University of Suffolk student survey results

- External examiner reports
- Final retention and achievement data
- Degree classification profiles
- Graduate destination data (DLHE)

3.7 Each course committee meeting is expected to consider specific sets of data as follows:

- i) Autumn course committee: data relating to the closure of the previous academic year (final retention and achievement data, degree classification profiles, NSS results, outstanding module evaluations and external examiner's reports) and data relating to the beginning of the current academic year (for example the induction survey and student recruitment and attrition data)
- ii) Spring course committee: a review of the first semester's module delivery (including module results, module feedback and module evaluations), student profile data and student attrition data
- iii) Summer course committee: module results, module feedback, module evaluations, internal student survey results, attrition data and graduate destination data.

3.8 Course data fact sheets which provide student representatives with an explanation of selected data reports are available on the [quality monitoring and enhancement](#) pages on the University website.

3.9 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.

4. The RiME process at Department / Learning Network partner college level

4.1 Departments and Learning Network partner colleges are expected to monitor their academic provision to ensure that academic standards are maintained and that students are offered a high quality learning experience, in line with relevant institutional key performance indicators (KPIs). This monitoring activity should be a significant element of Departmental Academic Committee (or partner college 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 department and college strategies, KPIs and operational factors including:

- course planning and development
- learning, teaching and assessment strategies (at course, department and institutional level)
- learning resource provision and usage
- student recruitment, retention, achievement and graduate destinations

- staffing and staff development
- quality assurance and monitoring
- opportunities for enhancement.

4.3 The Departmental Academic Committee (or partner college equivalent) should consider relevant data reports, as summarised below, to inform their monitoring and evaluation:

- Student recruitment data
- Induction survey data
- Student profile data
- Attrition data
- National Student Survey (NSS) results
- University of Suffolk student survey results
- Common themes arising within external examiner reports
- Final retention and achievement data
- Degree classification profiles
- Graduate destination data (DLHE)

4.4 In addition to ongoing committee monitoring, each academic department and partner college 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 department / college management, representatives from all course teams, student representatives, a representative from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team, a representative from Academic Partnerships for college events, and relevant external stakeholders. It can also be helpful to invite a 'critical friend' from another academic department or partner college (for example a senior academic from another academic department or another college HE Manager) to provide peer support and offer an outside perspective.

4.5 Prior to the event, Heads of Department or Heads of Higher Education in partner colleges should ensure all course committee meetings have been appropriately recorded. The following should be circulated to participants in advance of the event:

- details of the timing, venue and invited participants
- previous year's action plan with reports on progress
- the requirement for Course Leaders to prepare, for verbal reporting, a brief summary of their course RiME activities (this should outline key strengths and note key action points, citing the evidence source for each)
- membership of any task groups for the event.

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 department or partner college over the past year, and consideration of relevant strategies, development plans and performance in relation to agreed KPIs
- a review of progress in relation to the previous year's action plan

- 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 department, college or university as a focus)
- an opportunity for members to explore issues and identify actions to be included in the department or partner college action plan.

4.7 The discussions and outcomes of the RiME event should feed into an annual department or partner college RiME report and action plan, which should be submitted to the relevant Faculty Board (or Partnership Quality Enhancement Group for the Learning Network) and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team by mid-November. The report should include consideration of the following:

- key developments in the department or college 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 KPIs
- an update on progress with the previous year's action plan
- key findings and resulting actions from any risk alerts issued during the year (see below)
- issues noted by course committees as outside their control
- innovations and good practice worthy of dissemination
- key resource developments through the year
- significant research and scholarly activity
- staff development activity and plans
- a current action plan.

4.8 A RiME report template (including data relevant to each department and partner college) is made available each year.

4.9 Relevant 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 for the University and the Learning Network 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 key 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 key performance indicator data, operational information or feedback appears to indicate a specific risk to the continued quality of an aspect of

provision. In such situations, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team will issue risk alerts to require the teams involved (usually course teams but occasionally particular departments or partner colleges) 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 risk alert audit process is intended to be supportive and constructive. Where a course team, department or partner college believes it would be helpful, they can request the issue of a risk alert in support of their own exploration of issues or situations.
- 5.4 The audit team will normally consist of the Head of Department or college Head of Higher Education (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.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 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 department or partner college RiME report. Department or college level actions should be added to the department or partner college RiME action plan.
- 5.7 Tracking of the issue of risk alerts and the completion of risk alert audits will be undertaken by the Quality Committee. The Quality Committee reserves the right to bring forward the course re-approval process or, for the Learning Network, 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.

6. The University of Suffolk annual academic report

- 6.1 Departmental and partner college RiME reports (along with RiME reports from relevant professional services teams) feed into the University's annual academic report, which is presented to Senate in the spring term following the academic year under review. 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. This is kept under regular review by the Quality Committee throughout the academic year.