Academic Planning Handbook
2013 / 2014

A guide to Edge Hill University’s academic planning process
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Foreword

Any business in any sector needs a planning process, and universities are no exception. Of course, that planning needs to be sensitive to sector characteristics and needs and in the case of Higher Education there are two special features that need to be accommodated. The first is the yearly rhythm of student intakes and graduations, which naturally resonates with an annual planning cycle. The second is the very high level of dispersed expertise in universities and the consequent sense of personal identity staff tend to find within academic subjects. These need to be recognised and, indeed, their strengths exploited.

The purpose of the academic planning cycle is to provide relevant data and a framework within which the University ‘centre’ (DVCs, PVC Deans etc.) and departments can have an honest and open dialogue where the ideas, expertise and creativity within the department or area can be harnessed to produce a plan that dovetails into a coherent set of University actions for the next year. The aim is empowerment, linked to a corresponding sense of responsibility. The process must recognise on the one hand the centre’s need to understand, and of course take ultimate responsibility for, what happens within the University; and on the other, the fact that subject expertise and income generating activities lie within academic departments.

Edge Hill University’s academic planning process has proved very successful; the quality of the plans has generally been excellent, as has the debate. There is a better understanding of institutional and departmental challenges and a mutual respect for the efforts being made to address them. There is also clear evidence of improved performance on a number of key indicators that is influenced, we hope to some extent, by the clarity that the planning process brings. Perhaps most importantly, there is a greater understanding that ‘the University’ means us all, that we can all share pride in its successes and also share the responsibility of addressing some difficult times ahead. Good ideas are welcome from any person or any part of the University and we hope that the planning process plays a part in unlocking the creativity we will need to survive and prosper over the next five years.

Perhaps the best guide to how we need to conduct the process is encapsulated in the Stockdale Paradox which can be found in the book from Good to Great\(^1\) by Jim Collins: ‘You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND at the same time have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.” Jim Collins

Professor J.W. Bruce
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Edge Hill University

Introduction and rationale

Universities must be competitive and innovative. Set against a continually changing and increasingly harsh national background and a significant rise in student choice and expectations, they face a challenging and uncertain decade. Good quality academic planning is an essential ingredient in providing a coherent response which will ensure a sustainable future for the organisation. Naturally it is important that plans from academic departments and University services are cohesive and understood by the University centre, as is monitoring overall performance. However, any planning process must also recognise that academic departments are where the core student experience is lived out, and where academic expertise resides. The planning process therefore needs to be open and transparent in order to improve dialogue and understanding between the institutional centre (Directorate, Pro Vice-Chancellor Deans of Faculty and Heads of Services) and academic departments and to ensure that Edge Hill University remains successful and dynamic enough to meet the challenges of a volatile environment. Academic planning, therefore:

- Facilitates institutional oversight of departmental activities, including those of service areas;
- Provides Faculties, departments and services with the opportunity to identify key challenges and responses to them (which may include plans for new programmes and initiatives);
- Incentivises performance within departments and unlocks creativity;
- Engages in constructive dialogue, resulting in a shared understanding of the University’s business;
- Provides an institutional steer on certain issues;
- Facilitates the allocation of resources (staffing and physical resources), thus linking the financial, planning and budget processes;
- Ultimately aids in the creation of a more sustainable organisation, enhancing the student experience, the University’s research profile and its overall reputation.

The remainder of this Handbook describes the constituent parts of the academic planning cycle and includes guidance on process and documentation requirements. Further information and advice is also available from:

The Academic Quality & Development Unit (AQDU):

*Head of Academic Quality* – Tony Turjansky, ext. 4375, email anthony.turjansky@edgehill.ac.uk

*Academic Planning Officer* – vacancy, ext. 7885

*Collaborative Provision Manager* – Helen Collinson, ext. 7895, email helen.collinson@edgehill.ac.uk

*Academic Planning Administrator* – Jayne Kelly, ext. 4562, email jayne.kelly@edgehill.ac.uk
Academic Quality & Development Unit website:

- **Academic Planning** [www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/academic-planning/](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/academic-planning/), with links to this Handbook and electronic templates for Applications for Development Consent (ADCs) and associated business cases, and Initial Proposals for Major Programme Modification (IPMs).

- **Annual Monitoring** [www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/annual-monitoring/](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/annual-monitoring/), including link to Chapter 3 of the Quality Management Handbook ‘Annual Monitoring, Periodic Review and Internal Audit’.

- **Validation** [www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/validation/](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/validation/), including links to Chapter 4 of the Quality Management Handbook ‘Programme and Module Approval and Modification’ with associated validation document templates.

- **Collaborative Provision** [www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/collaborativeprovision/](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/collaborativeprovision/), including links to Chapter 5 of the Quality Management Handbook ‘Collaborative Provision’ and associated partner, programme and delivery approval document templates.

**Staffshare Y:/Everyone/Academic Planning** (Edge Hill login required):

This folder will contain additional briefing materials and template forms as advised by the AQDU.
THE ACADEMIC PLANNING CYCLE

Fig 1: ‘The Academic Planning Cycle: An Overview’

(September) Faculty Pre-Planning Meetings

(October) Production of Department Commentaries (by HoDs) and scheduling of Student Focus Group meetings (by AQDU)

(November) DEPARTMENTAL AUTUMN MONITORING MEETINGS

(December) Reports to APC (to inform planning)

(December) Reports to AQSC/LTC (to inform quality monitoring)

(January/February) Production of Department Planning Statements (by HoDs) & Faculty Overview Statements (by PVC Deans)

(February/March) SPRING PLANNING MEETINGS

For academic-related services and academic departments – the latter to include discussion of proposed new programme developments

(April) APC

Receives agreed Applications for Development Consent (ADCs) for consideration and approval

(June) APC

Receives the confirmed Academic Development Plan (including the University Annual Monitoring Report) and draft validation schedule for next year.
FACULTY PRE-PLANNING MEETINGS

These meetings (one per Faculty) are scheduled during September and take the form of an informal discussion between the PVC Dean of Faculty, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Academic Planning Officer. They provide an opportunity for PVC Deans to identify and discuss current internal and external challenges that may impact their plans for future curriculum development or research and reach-out activities, alongside any potential resource implications. Discussions focus upon the following:

- A view of the current financial and planning environment as presented by the University.
- The core strategic priorities of the University.
- The challenges faced by the Faculty, internal and external, and their potential impact on the current academic year’s activity.
- Identification of any major issues or opportunities that may involve investment, divestment or shifting of resources across the Faculty’s departments/areas during the course of the academic year.

Brief notes of Faculty Pre-Planning meetings are produced by the Academic Planning Officer and provide a context for the departmental autumn monitoring meetings which follow (see below).

DEPARTMENTAL AUTUMN MONITORING

Departmental autumn monitoring meetings are scheduled in November for each Faculty Planning and Monitoring Unit (see Fig.2, below) where heads of department/area (HoDs) discuss with a panel of senior academic managers the achievements and challenges of the previous year alongside their plans for future development. This addresses the Expectation of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education that “Higher education providers have in place effective processes for the routine monitoring and periodic review of programmes” and although monitoring and review are functions of quality management, the evaluation of programme performance data and identification of academic risk have clear relevance to academic planning and the autumn monitoring process has been designed to tighten these synergies. Internal and external data, and departmental commentaries on them, form the basis of discussions between the panel and department representatives and inform the development of risk-focused action plans. The ensuing departmental Annual Monitoring Report is considered by the December meeting of the Academic Quality Sub-Committee (on behalf of the Learning and Teaching Committee) for quality management purposes, and by

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2 Normally chaired by the DVC (Academic) and comprising the Dean of Teaching and Learning Development; Head of Academic Quality; an Associate Dean of another Faculty; Academic Planning Officer; and Academic Quality Officer (as secretary) with the PVC Dean who has responsibility for the department also in attendance.

the December meeting of the Academic Planning Committee to inform the next stage of the academic planning cycle. A full description of, and guidance on, departmental autumn monitoring and associated documentation requirements is provided in Chapter 3 of the Quality Management Handbook4.

Departmental autumn monitoring meetings are preceded in October by student focus group meetings in selected areas including those which are due to undergo periodic review during the current year. The schedule of focus group meetings is determined at the start of the planning cycle and a template agenda for meetings is provided5.

Fig 2. ‘Faculty Planning and Monitoring Units (October, 2013)’

| Faculty of Arts and Sciences                      | 1. Biology                 |
|                                                | 2. Business School         |
|                                                | 3. Centre for International Education (International Office) |
|                                                | 4. Computing               |
|                                                | 5. English and History     |
|                                                | 6. Geography               |
|                                                | 7. Law and Criminology     |
|                                                | 8. Media                   |
|                                                | 9. Performing Arts         |
|                                                | 10. Psychology             |
|                                                | 11. Social Sciences        |
|                                                | 12. Sport and Physical Activity |

| Faculty of Education                              | 1. Primary and Early Years Education |
|                                                | 2. Secondary Education           |
|                                                | 3. Post-Compulsory Education and Training |
|                                                | 4. Professional Development     |

| Faculty of Health and Social Care                | 1. Applied Health and Social Care |
|                                                | 2. Continuing Professional Development |
|                                                | 3. Pre-registration Nursing      |
|                                                | 4. Pre-registration Midwifery   |
|                                                | 5. Operating Departmental Practice |
|                                                | 6. Paramedic                   |
|                                                | 7. Social Work                 |
|                                                | 8. Technology-Enhanced Learning (Spring Planning only) |

| Graduate School6                                 | 1. Graduate School Taught Programmes (PgCert Research and PgCert Teaching in Higher Education) |

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4 Available at [http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/annual-monitoring/](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/annual-monitoring/).
5 Available at [http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/periodic-review/](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/periodic-review/).
6 For the purposes of academic planning and monitoring, the Graduate School is both an academic area responsible for the quality assurance of a small number of postgraduate taught programmes and an academic-related service area responsible for the overall experience of postgraduate research degree students.

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SPRING PLANNING

Spring planning meetings are held in February/March and enable HoDs to meet with a senior academic panel\(^7\) to discuss their key challenges and draft budgets and to outline their plans for future development. For academic departments, meetings are scheduled with each Planning and Monitoring Unit illustrated in Fig.2 (above). In addition, spring planning meetings are normally convened with each of the following academic-related support departments:

- Academic Quality and Development Unit
- Academic Registry
- Admissions
- Graduate School
- Learning Services
- Research and Enterprise Support Office
- Centre for International Education (International Office)
- Centre for Learning and Teaching
- Strategic Planning and Policy Unit
- Student Services including Careers

The timing of spring planning meetings is important, coming after the submission of staff Annual Academic Returns\(^8\) but before the conclusion of the University’s annual budget-setting process. Meetings with services are scheduled first so that any emergent pan-institutional issues may be considered during meetings with academic departments.

**Departmental planning statements**

HoDs produce *departmental planning statements* which address both academic/service and financial planning, focusing on a two-year planning period. However, it is important that they also attempt to ‘horizon scan’ for a five-year period with a consideration of long-term reputational and developmental issues. This may include activities that:

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\(^7\) As for autumn monitoring (above). Others who may be in attendance include: the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources); Pro Vice-Chancellor & University Secretary; Director of Finance; Director of Strategic Planning; and Director of Student Services. Where a member of the standard panel is participating in their own planning meeting, an alternate panel member from their area is not required.

\(^7\) It is acknowledged that out-of-cycle applications for development consent will be produced on occasion, for example, in response to external initiatives. These will be submitted directly to Academic Planning Committee for consideration and approval following appropriate Faculty scrutiny.

\(^8\) See [https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/wiki/display/research/Annual+Academic+Return+%28AAR%29](https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/wiki/display/research/Annual+Academic+Return+%28AAR%29) (Edge Hill staff login required).

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- Directly enhance student recruitment and employability.
- Generate additional research output and grant income, enhancing the overall research environment.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange activities and knowledge transfer partnerships with businesses and other organisations.
- Enhance peer engagement and national reputation.

Planning statements will also respond to any specific institutional challenges and priorities identified during the planning cycle by the Academic Managers Group (AMG) and/or Academic Planning Committee.

Separate templates for academic and service planning statements are provided via Staffshare\(^9\) where the summary page of each plan is made available to provide transparency across the University - for this reason, any sensitive or confidential information (for example, personal details of staff) should be omitted from the summary. The summary page may also highlight any pressing concerns that the department wishes the panel especially to consider. In all cases, planning statements will include:

**(Academic departments)**
- A response to any actions agreed at autumn monitoring (AMR action plan).
- Generic analysis of staff Annual Academic Returns\(^{10}\) to produce a brief summary of research and reach-out activities for the department.
- Outline of any requirements for teaching and learning development including technology-enhanced learning, research or other needs\(^{11}\).
- Applications for Development Consent for new programmes, and/or initial proposals for major modifications to existing programmes\(^{12}\).

**(Service departments)**
- Strategic priorities for the year ahead based on evidence of consultation with service users.

**(All departments)**
- Business case form\(^{13}\) for any staffing or capital resource requests.
- A completed Risk Register template\(^{14}\).

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9 At Y:/Everyone/Academic Planning (Edge Hill login required).
10 See [http://tinyurl.com/ehuAAR](http://tinyurl.com/ehuAAR).
11 These foci may also be applicable to service departments that contribute to the delivery of professional development for academic staff.
12 Once validated, most programmes have indefinite approval which is confirmed at the next and subsequent periodic review of their host academic department/area – see Quality Management Handbook Chapters 3 & 4. However, where programmes are required to undergo standalone re-validation (typically, all collaborative programmes and those involving professional body recognition or accreditation, or programmes for which the host Faculty has specifically requested standalone re-validation to enable widespread curriculum changes) a fresh ADC will be required. ADCs are produced using the E-VAL system, and Word templates are provided for Initial Proposals for Major Modification – see [http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/academic-planning/](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/academic-planning/).
13 Template available via Staffshare at Y:/Everyone/Academic Planning (Edge Hill login required).
- A SWOT analysis\textsuperscript{15}.
- Draft budget narrative statement (where departmental information is not currently available this may be drawn from the Faculty’s draft budget).

Supporting evidence to be used in the development of planning statements\textsuperscript{16} may include:

- National Student Survey results (drawing upon reference to the department’s previous year’s NSS plan, where available.
- Programme-level data, namely for applications and enrolment (current year) and module achievement and progression, and programme progression (previous year).
- Research grant income.
- Income and expenditure information (determining the overall percentage contribution\textsuperscript{17} of the department).

\textit{Faculty overview statements}

It is essential that heads of academic departments consult with their PVC Dean of Faculty when drafting planning statements. PVC Deans will then use these to prepare a Faculty overview statement\textsuperscript{18} that focuses upon:

- Prioritising any investment requests, including staff posts.
- Prioritising proposals for academic development.
- Any economies of scale that could be introduced.
- An argued case for Faculty practices which seek to vary from institutional norms.
- Suggested opportunities for inter-Faculty working.
- Best practice(s) that may be commended to other Faculties (for enhancement).

When drafting their planning statements, service heads should consult with the responsible manager in Directorate who will also produce the supporting overview statement for their areas.

\textsuperscript{14} Template available via Staffshare at Y:/Everyone/Academic Planning (Edge Hill login required). Risk registers enable departments and services to review their areas of operation and identify and assess any potential risks that might arise during the next academic year. Actions to control or mitigate the risk, and the probability of the risk occurring should also be identified. These will inform quarterly Faculty risk action plans that feed into the Institutional risk register produced by the Director of Strategic Planning.

\textsuperscript{15} Template available via Staffshare at Y:/Everyone/Academic Planning (Edge Hill login required).

\textsuperscript{16} Not usually applicable to service planning statements with the possible exception of the Graduate School.

\textsuperscript{17} That is, how much more income is over expenditure.

\textsuperscript{18} Which is also received by the May meeting of LTC in lieu of a standalone Faculty AMR – see Quality Management Handbook, \textit{Chapter 3}. 

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Spring planning meetings

The intended outcomes of spring planning meetings are threefold:

(i) Identification of draft proposals for academic development consent (ADC) for the next academic year - The panel may wish to provide additional comment or guidance on ADCs ahead of their submission to the April meeting of the Academic Planning Committee. It is the remit of APC to look for synergies in curriculum development across the University and to make suggestions as to where efficiencies in delivery can be made. The ADC form also asks programme teams to evidence the business case for the proposal.

(ii) Provide clarity on departmental plans for improving the student experience, enhancing the research activities and profile of the department, working with local community, business or other external stakeholders, and improving the reputation of the University.

(iii) Recommend priorities for investment linked to the department/area (which may also be cross-Faculty or institutional developments). The Panel will consider a draft outline of departmental budgets and, in discussions with departments and PVC Deans, make recommendations for investment priorities that will be considered as part of the University’s annual budget challenge process. This will ultimately aid the establishment of a budget for the forthcoming year for individual departments/areas or Faculties. In the case of service departments, proposed changes of priorities or investment should be supported by evidence of user demand.

It is important to note that the planning meeting panel cannot formally approve ADCs and/or any funding decisions in terms of investment. The associated budget challenge process seeks to utilise anticipated resources as effectively as possible, and therefore the outcomes of the planning meetings in relation to investment (staffing and capital requests) are used to support Faculty and service area requests. ADCs must be considered and approved by APC prior to programme development and validation.

A summary of outcomes from spring planning is produced by the Academic Planning Officer for consideration by APC in April, with any aspects relating specifically to learning and teaching or research being referred to the Learning and Teaching Committee and Research Committee respectively. Following completion of the University’s planning and budgetary

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19 While Applications for Development Consent are submitted as part of spring planning it is acknowledged that out-of-cycle applications will also be produced on occasion, e.g. in response to external initiatives. To remain agile, the University recognises the need for these to be received and considered at any meeting of APC (following the appropriate Faculty scrutiny) but in such cases they will generally be agreed without commitment to additional resource.

20 More information on programme approval can be found in Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4 and in ‘Preparing for Programme Approval’, both available at http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/documents/PreparingForProgrammeApproval.pdf.

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processes, an institution-level Academic Development Plan\textsuperscript{21} is drafted by the DVC (Academic)\textsuperscript{22} and received by APC in June.

Additional meetings may occasionally be held at the request of the DVC (Academic) in response to internal and external drivers such as NSS results, internal student survey results and module level data.

\textsuperscript{21} Usually combined with the University Annual Monitoring Report (for LTC).
\textsuperscript{22} Supported by the Academic Planning Officer.
Appendix: Institutional roles for academic planning

The roles of the main participants in the planning process are summarised below.

Head of academic/service department (HoD):
- Generates a commentary in support of autumn monitoring and a departmental planning statement in the spring, outlining priorities and new initiatives including (in the spring) presentation of draft Applications for Development Consent.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Dean of Faculty:
- Assists departments in producing planning statements and attends their meetings as supporter (an Associate Dean may be present in addition or as an alternate).
- Produces a Faculty overview for spring planning that identifies priorities in terms of resource and support allocations across the Faculty as a whole.
- Attends autumn monitoring and spring planning meetings of other Faculties as panel member, advising on the best allocation of resources and facilitating cross-Faculty working groups on shared issues.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic):
- Has strategic oversight of the academic planning process (working in conjunction with the Academic Planning Officer).
- Provides institutional focus for the annual planning cycle, generating agenda items and initiating additional rounds of meetings in response to external or internal datasets where appropriate.

Panel members (for autumn monitoring and spring planning meetings):
- Engage in critical but supportive discussions with HoDs on agenda items including teaching and learning, research and knowledge enterprise, student support, resources etc., bringing a University perspective and helping to improve intra-institutional links and understanding.
- At autumn monitoring meetings, work with academic departments to agree relevant action points (with appropriate actors) for inclusion in the departments’ Annual Monitoring Reports.

Academic Planning Officer (supported by the Academic Planning Administrator):
- Organises the schedule of Faculty pre-planning, autumn monitoring (including student focus groups) and spring planning meetings for the year.
- Works with the Head of Academic Quality (and Academic Quality Officers) to ensure that the academic planning process gives due consideration to the requirements of annual quality monitoring.
• Feeds back main issues arising from autumn monitoring and spring planning meetings to APC via the appropriate summary reports (co-authored with the DVC (Academic)).
• Works with the Strategic Planning and Policy Unit to agree the production of meaningful datasets to support the academic planning cycle.
• Implements an annual review of the planning process, making suggestions for change and improvement in future planning rounds (including guidance notes and templates and updating the Academic Planning Handbook).

**Academic Planning Committee:**
• Reviews and approves Applications for Development Consent for new programmes alongside Initial Proposals for Major Modifications (IPMs) of existing programmes.
• Receives summary reports from autumn monitoring and spring planning.
• Has Institutional oversight over the links between the budgetary and planning processes.
• Receives suggested revisions to the planning process and offers additional comments for change.