

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

PERIODIC REVIEW

(including review procedure for partner provision)

PURPOSE OF PERIODIC REVIEW

Academic quality is defined in the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction* as follows:

“Academic quality is concerned with how well the learning opportunities made available to students enable them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning resources are provided for them. In order to achieve a higher education award, students participate in the learning opportunities made available to them by their provider. A provider should be capable of guaranteeing the quality of the opportunities it provides, but it cannot guarantee how any particular student will experience those opportunities. By ensuring that its policies, structures and processes for the management of learning opportunities are implemented effectively, a provider also ensures the effectiveness of its outcomes.”

Periodic Review is one of the means by which the University discharges its responsibilities for academic standards and quality by scrutinising:

- the coherence and relevance of its portfolio of taught programmes
- academic standards and student achievement
- the quality of student learning opportunities
- opportunities for strategic/deliberate enhancement.

The procedure of Periodic Review therefore focuses on:

Academic Standards:

- To confirm that the academic standards in the subjects under review are set and maintained at the appropriate level.
- To confirm that programmes remain current, relevant and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application.

Student Learning Opportunities:

- To confirm that appropriate opportunities and support for learning are being made available to students.

Learning and Teaching Provision:

- To identify innovation and good practice and opportunities for further enhancement.

And, where there is a partnership arrangement:

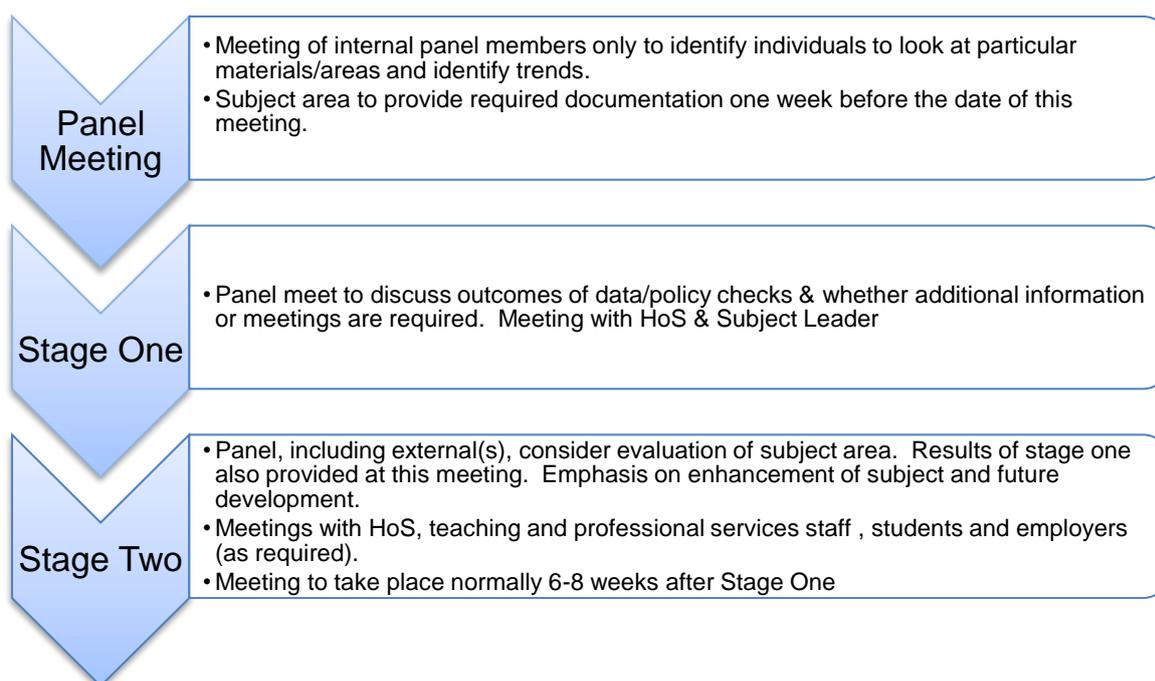
Business Arrangements:

- To confirm that the business arrangements of the partnership have been reviewed and agreed by both institutions.

PROCEDURE:

Preliminary meeting between Central Quality Office and Subject representatives to explain procedure and set deadlines.- usually during summer term of previous academic year

(NB Where partner provision is being reviewed, Partner Performance Evaluation will be carried out at least 3 months prior to the initial Panel meeting – see Periodic Review of Partner Provision (Taught Programmes), below)



During the following academic year a follow-up meeting will be scheduled to discuss the action taken on recommendations made at the review.

Central Quality Office will arrange a **preliminary meeting**, usually during the summer term of the previous academic year, to outline the procedure, confirm the dates for the event, agree the deadline for the approval of external advisers (usually not less than three months before the event) and consider a draft programme. This meeting will involve the School/subject area

representative, the Faculty Senior Administrator (Quality) and normally the appropriate Associate Dean in addition to the Central Quality Office representative.

Each Periodic Review event will normally take place over a total of three (not necessarily consecutive or whole) days but this will be discussed and determined at the preliminary meeting and will be dependent on the scale of the review. The review will include **3 separate stages**.

The **Panel meeting** will involve internal panel members only and will focus on identifying roles of panel members during the review and the particular data or University policies they are to consider and feedback on.

The **Stage one** meeting involves internal panel representatives carrying out a review within the Faculty concerned on how general University policies such as Equality and Diversity, are being applied within the Faculty as a whole but particularly within the School and subject area under review. This stage will involve a meeting with the Head of School and subject lead with discussion based on information provided in advance and the outcomes of the data and policy checks. At this stage the Panel may also indicate specific areas to be addressed within the SED and followed up at stage two. The decision may also be taken to include additional meetings at stage two if areas of concern relating to the student experience and/or achievement have been raised. The report of the stage one meeting will be provided to the full panel involved in the second stage.

Stage two will comprise meetings of the Panel with the programme/subject team, students, professional service staff and the Head of School (or School management group).

Input from employers and graduates of the subject under review will normally be in the form of completed questionnaires as supplied by Central Quality Office unless there are particular reasons identified earlier in the process for including meetings with them, eg, professional body requirement. The meetings will concentrate on Teaching and Learning priorities within the University as well as curriculum design, learning outcomes, the student experience and resources.

Subjects scheduled for Periodic Review will be given the opportunity to identify their preferred time slot. Allocation will be on a 'first come, first served' basis and the dates will be confirmed to the subject group by Central Quality Office.

The outcome of the review will be a report (prepared by the Central Quality Office representative and approved by the panel) and an action plan (prepared by the subject team and approved by the Dean of Faculty).

During the **following academic year**, a **further meeting** will take place between chair of the panel and the HoS/subject lead to establish progress

made with the action plan and to update the plan as required. Following this all actions should be monitored through the Annual Review/APM procedure.

SCOPE

All Schools/subject areas will be subject to review. The definition of a subject area is a matter for each Faculty/AP to determine. It is expected that a periodic review will normally be based on a School, but a Faculty may propose an alternative structure, taking into account e.g. professional/statutory body requirements or modular schemes. JACS codes should also be used as a way of defining disciplines for review.

The University requires that all programmes in a Faculty are incorporated in a periodic review once in every six year period¹. The University's Central Quality Office will draw up a six year rolling programme of Periodic Review, in consultation with Associate Deans (Teaching & Learning), which will be submitted to the University Teaching, Learning & Quality Committee/Academic Development & Partnerships Committee for approval.

A Periodic Review will be coordinated by University Central Quality Office.

Periodic review will consider, inter alia

- The context within which the subject area operates in relation to the Faculty and the University, including its response to relevant University strategies and policies
- The quality of the student experience, taking into account Teaching and Learning strategies, student support, and learning resources, and student feedback
- Outcomes and academic standards. This will involve review of student achievement; taking into account curriculum design and assessment; programme specifications and subject benchmark(s) and relevant qualifications descriptors; and professional/statutory body requirements and external examiners' comments. It will also explore the extent to which there is a shared understanding of outcomes
- The continuing currency and validity of provision in the light of developing knowledge/research and enterprise in the discipline, practice in its application, and developments in Teaching and Learning, recruitment and progression/completion, and employability.

¹ This does not prevent interim Faculty-based reviews, organised locally, taking place within the 6 year cycle. The University cycle will continue irrespective of any interim review

- Aspects of the programmes which are particularly innovative or represent good practice², and mechanisms by which standards and the quality of the student learning experience in the subject/s are enhanced.
- Plans for future development
- Recommendations for action in relation to addressing issues identified and to further enhancement
- To consider the match between teaching needs and areas of staff expertise

REVIEW PANEL

A Periodic Review panel will be chaired by a suitable appointee of the Teaching, Learning & Quality Committee from outside the Faculty, and will include in membership:

- one other member from the home Faculty, (normally a senior member of staff approved by the Dean and Chair)
- appropriate number of external advisers
- a Senior member of staff drawn from a Faculty not otherwise represented on the Panel (approved by the Chair)
- Central Quality Office representative
- (for UK Partner Programmes) partner Head of HE/Quality Assurance Manager
- Student member/s as appropriate³

The Chair may also co-opt up to 2 additional members from within or outside of the University. The panel membership will reflect the size and complexity of the area under review.

External advisers should be in place at least three months before the event.

The member of the Central Quality Office team will advise the Panel on University quality assurance arrangements and academic regulations; facilitate requests for documentation and act as Secretary to the Panel.

² See QAA's definition. 'A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the following judgement areas: the provider's assurance of its academic standards, the quality and/or enhancement of the learning opportunities it provides for students, and the quality of the information it produces about its higher education provision' [HER A Handbook for providers, June 2015, Annex 1:Definition of key terms]

³ Added in 2013-14 in line with new practice.

For UK Partner Programmes, the Chair will be a representative from another faculty with related subject areas, and the 'home' faculty will be Academic Partnerships.

DOCUMENTATION

The SED and the programme specifications for all programmes in the scope of the review will be sent to the Panel members together with statistical indicators and the University website address (www.plymouth.ac.uk) for University course information and student information.

Background documentation will need to be made available in advance of the meetings on CD and/or a private community on the staff portal. This will include inter alia

Programme Information (to be supplied by School/Faculty)

1. Programme Specifications
2. Student Handbook/s for all programmes in the scope of the review
Publicity material used for the current academic year's intake (collaborative arrangements)
3. External Examiners' reports for the period under review plus summary of responses
 - Annual Programme monitoring/Annual Review outcomes e.g. action plans, minutes of programme committees, faculty scrutiny outcomes for period under review
 - Data for programmes and modules within the subject area for the period under review (CI data for AR/APM – summarised if possible to show trends)
 - Student feedback – a sample from all sources regularly used, for the previous two years plus response from School
 - Short staff CVs for key staff involved in the delivery of the programmes

School level documentation (to be supplied by School/Faculty)

- Reports from professional, statutory or accrediting bodies
- School Professional Development Plan

Faculty Level documentation (to be supplied by Faculty)

- Faculty/School Plan – future plans/developments
- Faculty Teaching and Learning Strategy
- Outcomes from any internal faculty reviews of the provision during the review period, including programme modifications
- Minutes of the Faculty Teaching, Learning & Quality Committee

Key University-level documentation available on the Periodic Review page on the extranet includes:

To be completely revised for 2019-2020

- University Strategy 2020
- University Teaching, Learning and the Student Experience Strategy 2013-2020
- Assessment Policy
- University Quality Assurance Handbook

2018-2019
version

PERIODIC REVIEW OF PARTNER PROVISION

PROCEDURE

The periodic review of partner provision will, as far as possible, mirror that of university provision. However, the procedure focuses more on the partnership aspect **and the review will take place at the partner**. The review procedure is also preceded by a risk assessment, known as partner performance evaluation (PPE).

The QAA Code requires regular, periodic risk assessment and due diligence checks to be carried out so as to enable the University to have an up to date picture of each partner's on-going suitability to offer an appropriate student experience.

In order to address this responsibility, a regular partner performance evaluation **(PPE)** will be carried out, normally in the same year as institutional periodic review. The timing of the PPE may be varied if it is deemed necessary by the University.

The quantitative and qualitative information used to enable the University to assess the on-going suitability of a partner will include the following:

- Institutional Action Plan/HE strategy
- Financial status of partner
- An appraisal of the financial health of the partnership from the University's perspective
- Information drawn from the Academic Partnerships risk register
- Recent changes in partner management structure, physical resources (e.g. new campus)
- Compliance/engagement with the terms of the Academic Collaboration Agreement
- Outcome of reviews by external bodies (e.g. OFSTED), as appropriate, which may give an indication of general health of the institution
- Number of appeals and complaints notified to University from partner institution students
- Student survey outcomes
- Issues raised by external examiners relating to management/resourcing at an institutional level
- Issues identified via Joint Boards of Study
- Issues raised via APM/AR/PR or via Programme Committees in Faculties
- Recent site report

The Head of UK Partnerships/**Associate Dean - International** should liaise with Central Quality Office at an early stage to confirm the timing of the business review which should be completed at least 3 months prior to the anticipated time of the start of the main review. Should the outcome of the business review indicate that the main review should be delayed (eg, in order to permit further investigation by Academic Partnerships), then the Central Quality Office must be notified immediately.

Periodic Subject Review

The principles of Periodic Review within the University of Plymouth must be followed. In alignment with the Academic Partnerships Strategic Plan – the periodic subject review should be organised on the basis of clusters of subjects/programmes. All subjects/programmes approved by the University within the Institution under review must be included. For larger Partner Institutions this may involve a maximum of five clusters. For smaller Partner Institutions (with two or three programmes only) one periodic subject review event (with parallel meetings) might be proposed. The Partner Institution, Academic Partnerships/faculty and Central Quality Office will agree how the clusters (of periodic reviews) will be scheduled but it is anticipated that where there is more than one cluster to be reviewed, meetings will be scheduled over a period of between 4-6 months. The main document to be considered will be a SED (Self Evaluation Document) prepared by the programme teams/department.

MEMBERSHIP OF REVIEW PANELS

The membership of the Review Panels will be in accordance with the membership as set out on page 5 of the Periodic Subject Review process but for Partner Institutions will normally include the Vice Principal with responsibility for HE or equivalent.

OUTCOMES OF REVIEW

Following the meeting a report will be produced by the Central Quality Office representative focussing on the criteria identified in Section 1. The outcome of the meeting will be reported to the University's Teaching, Learning & Quality Committee and Academic Development & Partnerships Committee.

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS SENIOR MANAGEMENT EVALUATION

Following completion of the periodic review an additional meeting will be called to consider the outcomes of the review along with the business aspects of the partnership including the renewal of the ACA and finance schedules. This meeting will be attended by senior management within Academic Partnerships and the partner and will be chaired by the Director of Academic Partnerships.

ACTION PLAN PROGRESS MEETING

A separate meeting will take place during the academic year following the review to consider whether the outcomes from the periodic review(s) have been satisfactorily completed by the Partner Institution.

Documentation for this meeting will include:

- Action plan from Periodic Review(s)
- A report from the Partner Institution reflecting on the outcomes of the review(s) and detailing actions taken following the review(s).

Panel membership will normally include:

- 2-3 representatives from the Periodic Review(s) [normally the Chairs of the meetings]
- Representative from Central Quality Office

The Panel will meet with:

- 2-3 representatives from the Institution who were present at the review(s) [normally to include at least 1 senior manager]
- Representatives from Academic Partnerships [normally the Dean or a representative and Faculty Partnership Manager]