

Departmental Periodic Review: Principles and Process

Key principles and scope

1. Periodic Review is a key process in the University's quality assurance and enhancement management framework. It is one of the principal means by which the University assures itself of the current and future health of its taught degree courses. The process focuses on the management of academic standards and quality at academic department level against a set of University expectations.
2. The Periodic Review process identifies and assesses actual and potential risks to quality, standards and the future sustainability of courses by confirming that
 - the academic standards of the course under review are set and maintained at the appropriate level
 - courses remain current, relevant and valid in the light of student demand, developing knowledge in the discipline and practice in its applications
 - appropriate opportunities and support for learning are being made available to students
 - there is a well-managed and deliberate approach to quality enhancement and continuous improvement
3. The process provides confidence in how academic quality and standards is being managed at Departmental level, and identifies areas for development and enhancement as well as good practice for dissemination. Periodic Review therefore makes a significant contribution to University objectives for providing an outstanding educational experience for all students.
4. All **Schools, including the Research School**, will be subject to Periodic Review. The unit for review will be the academic Department or sub-unit of a **School**.
5. The scope of review will include all levels of taught provision, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, within a Department. It will normally be based on a six yearly cycle although on occasion there may be a need for more frequent or early review should key indicators suggest this to be necessary.
6. Periodic Review enables departments to take a holistic and strategic view of a complete portfolio of courses with critical advice from a panel of internal peers and external subject experts. **Courses remain in continuing approval subject to satisfactory annual evaluation, and it is expected that courses will continuously develop in response to feedback and evaluation. An outcome from the Review may include a requirement to re-approve a course within a certain time period in order to guarantee standards or the quality of the student learning experience. Exceptionally, an outcome may be a recommendation for suspension or closure of a course.**
7. Periodic Review includes the review of how a Department manages the oversight of collaborative provision although courses delivered under a collaborative arrangement will be reviewed as part of the Partnership Periodic Review process every six years. **The Partnership Periodic Review process will be the mechanism by which continuing approval of current partnership provision is confirmed or in some cases recommended for re-approval or exceptionally, suspension or closure.**

8. The Periodic Review process has been informed by the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). It is also referenced against the revised operating model for quality assessment in England being developed by HEFCE/ OfS and the standards set out in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

Aims

9. The purpose of Periodic Review is to review and evaluate the management of academic standards and quality across the taught provision of a department, whilst also supporting continuous improvement in the student academic experience and in student outcomes.
10. Whilst the quality assurance and enhancement framework at the University is designed to ensure that the processes of course approval, annual evaluation and periodic review complement one another, each process has its specific aims. Those for Periodic Review are to
 - critically review how a Department discharges its responsibilities for maintaining and enhancing quality and standards and for managing risk in accordance with University procedures and any PSRB requirements, and as set out in the University expectations
 - evaluate and confirm whether the suite of courses under consideration for a given Department meet the threshold academic standards required by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
 - evaluate and confirm whether the quality of learning opportunities for students on all courses under consideration for a given Department meet the expectations required by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
 - consider how the Departmental development strategy aligns with University and School priorities and agendas
 - identify and share good practice across the University
 - consider student outcomes and trends in student recruitment, retention, achievement and progression to employment, satisfaction and engagement, across the whole of the Department's portfolio
 - address, in an holistic way, any issues concerning curricula, teaching, learning and assessment.

University Expectations and Review outcomes

11. Review panels are required to make a Judgement against each of the following **University Expectations** that are mapped to the strategic goals of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy.

UE1	LTSG 2+4	There are sustainable markets for the Department's courses, they recruit suitably qualified students from diverse backgrounds, and retention is strong.
UE2	LTSG 2	Courses are well designed, meeting the University's design principles, ensuring threshold standards are secure and allowing students to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes and any external requirements.
UE3	LTSG1, 2 + 5	Teaching and learning strategies are well designed, informed by institutional policies relating to inclusive practice and research-inspired teaching and result in strong student engagement, satisfaction and effective challenge.

UE4	LTSG 1	There is effective use of technology enhanced learning, including use of the VLE, implementation of electronic management of assessment and a strategic approach to developing staff and student digital capabilities.
UE5	LTSG 5	There are effective arrangements for academic support, including for personal academic tutoring, induction, supporting student module choice and monitoring student engagement/attendance.
UE6	LTSG 1	Sufficient and appropriate resources, such as staff and learning resources, are available to underpin the curriculum and permit all students to achieve learning outcomes.
UE7	LTSG 2	Assessment outcomes for all students are strong (or issues are being addressed) and underpinned by effective assessment, feedback, standardisation and moderation processes.
UE8	LTSG 3	Graduate employment outcomes are strong and underpinned by clear approaches at course level to developing student employability and the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance.
UE9	LTSG 3	Courses have well managed work-based learning or placement opportunities and there is good take up of opportunities which provide excellent learning for students.
UE10	LTSG 1	There is a clear commitment to staff professional development and recognition through achievement of HEA Fellowship, and engagement with University teaching development schemes and other professional development opportunities.
UE11	LTSG ALL	Management of risk and quality assurance processes, including module and annual evaluation processes are effective and there is planned continuous improvement and enhancement.
UE12	LTSG 4	Students are genuinely involved in quality management and enhancement, courses are responsive to student feedback and work in partnership with Course Representatives.
UE13	LTSG 2	Published information, including programme and module specifications, course handbooks and module outlines are fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.
UE14	LTSG ALL	Students have a high degree of satisfaction with their courses and measures of student engagement are strong.
UE15	LTSG ALL	The management of collaborative partnerships and courses is effective with appropriate attention to risk.

Judgements

12. The review panel arrives at a judgement about each of the Expectations based on the evidence provided and the discussions that take place during the review event itself.
13. One of four judgements is possible in relation to each Expectation:
 - **Commended:** the Department meets the University Expectation and has a number of examples of good practice that merit further dissemination
 - **Meets Expectations:** the Department meets the University Expectation
 - **Requires improvement to meet the Expectation:** the Department does not currently meet the Expectation
 - **Pending:** a decision will be deferred until further information has been provided or action taken, within a timescale specified by the Review Panel.
13. On the basis of its deliberations and judgements against the expectations, the Review Panel will reach a rounded conclusion of confidence/limited confidence in relation to the Department's management of standards and quality, as to whether
 - academic standards are reliable and meet UK requirements
 - the quality of the student academic experience meets University and UK requirements
14. Where the conclusion is of limited confidence, the expectation is that the Panel will make clear the action that must be taken to ensure the reliability of academic standards and/or the action to ensure the quality of the student experience meets UK requirements. Such action may relate to specific courses/provision or to some overall aspect of the management of the Department. In certain circumstances it may be justified for the Panel to recommend that a course be suspended pending a review or re-approval before the next student intake.
15. Where the review identifies a Department requires improvement to meet a significant number of expectations, as confirmed by ASQEC, there will be a further Review meeting in one year's time to consider progress.
16. In addition to a Judgement, the Review Panel will agree **actions/recommendations, commendations and affirmations** as part of each report.
17. **Actions** are matters to be addressed to secure improvements; **recommendations** are to enable enhancements. The Review Panel will indicate the time period within which each action should be completed or addressed.
18. **Commendations** describe practice the Panel has identified which is considered exemplary, and/or innovative.
19. **Affirmations** acknowledge developments already in place or planned to address previously identified issues.
20. A Department that requires improvement to meet a significant number of University Expectations will have a further Periodic Review in one, two or three years, as recommended by the Review Panel and confirmed by ASQEC, and depending on the nature of the concern.
21. Where there are serious concerns regarding a particular course or subject area, or where a department fails to take the necessary action linked to a 'Pending' decision, ASQEC may recommend recruitment to the course be suspended.

Review Panel

22. AQU will consult with the Director of Quality and Educational Development to determine the balance and number of Panel members depending on the size of the event. The Panel normally comprises:
- The Chair, a senior member of University staff with quality management experience
 - Senior staff member from the reviewing School but from a different Department
 - Senior staff member from another School, usually a Head of Department
 - Student member
 - Between two and four external academic panel members
 - Academic Quality Officer
 - Other post holder (e.g.: international, employer rep etc.)
23. Panel Chairs and student panel members will receive training and development and are generally assigned to Periodic Reviews based on their interest and availability. However, in assembling panels the AQU strives to ensure a balance between different Schools and that there is no close association between any panel member and the Department under review. See [A brief guide for student panellist](#) and [The role of the Chair](#)
24. External panel members are nominated by Departments and are normally senior academic departmental managers with relevant subject expertise from other higher education institutions. The number of external academic panel members depends on the size and complexity of the Periodic Review. See [A brief guide for External Panel Members](#)
25. In addition, taking into account the nature of the Department under review, it may be appropriate to include additional panel members with relevant expertise, e.g. an employer representative, or a panel member with partnership or international expertise.

Documentation

26. Documentation will be sent to the Panel electronically at least 3 weeks ahead of the first panel meeting. The Head of School or nominee must provide signed confirmation that they have checked and approved the Evaluation and Development Document (EDD) and Review documentation as fit for circulation to the Review Panel before sending to the designated AQU Officer. The timing of the Periodic Review and development of the EDD should take into account the University quality cycle; to avoid clashes with the University AER returns. See [List of Documentation Required for the Review](#)
27. The Head of Department in association with School and Departmental colleagues produces an [Evaluation and Development Document \(EDD\)](#) - which is an evaluative review of Departmental performance against key metrics and against the objectives of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy. The EDD also includes a Departmental Development Plan.
28. AQU produces a Briefing Paper for the Periodic Review.
29. In addition to the Briefing Paper and the EDD, panel members will have access to all current Programme Specifications and Module Specifications, and to the last Course Annual Evaluation Reports. The sampling and allocation of documentation to be considered by the panel will be led by AQU. This is done to avoid duplication and to ensure a broad and appropriate sample is achieved.

30. In advance of the first panel meeting all panel members will be requested to complete a template based on an initial review of the documentation provided, and to return it to the AQU Officer responsible for the Periodic Review at least a week before the first panel meeting. See [Panel Member Feedback Template/ External Panel Member Feedback Template](#). At the first Panel meeting, the Panel will identify any additional documentation or information it requires based on its reading of the documentation.

Process

31. Each Periodic Review is planned individually in consultation with the relevant **School**, and normally takes place during the Autumn Semester (September - January). AQU will initiate contact six months ahead of the Review to begin planning. Periodic Review is a phased and iterative process involving the Department, the **School** and the Periodic Review Panel in evaluative activity over a 12-month period. See [Periodic Review Timescales](#)

School Review and Updating of Documentation

32. In Semester Two of the academic year preceding a Periodic Review, the **School** will carry out a comprehensive review of the course related documentation for the courses within the Department that will have a Periodic Review in the following semester. This is to ensure that all documentation is current and meets University and external requirements and good practice. This is the documentation that will be available to students for the academic year in which the Periodic Review takes place.
33. The **School** will ensure the completeness, accuracy and currency of information, and consistency between different documents, the use of current templates and alignment with University guidance/requirements. The **School** will also ensure that the presentation and content of the documentation is fit for purpose and meets professional standards for publication. The Department should upload the documentation to the Periodic Review OneDrive folder three weeks before the First Review meeting.
34. The review and updating of documentation should be seen as a key element of Periodic Review. The **School Quality Co-ordinator** and the Head of the Academic Department undergoing Periodic Review will take the lead in planning and implementing the Review, supported by the **School Quality Administrator**. The AQU Officer for the School will work with the School to provide advice and guidance.

First Review meeting

35. Six weeks before the Second Review meeting the panel meets for the first time and, from their preliminary reading of the documentation:
- agrees 'lines of enquiry' (based on the University expectations) and may assign them to individual panel members for detailed reading in advance of the Second Review Event.
 - discusses the documents received and identifies any additional information that needs to be provided
 - holds meetings with student and employer/stakeholder representatives (see below)
 - sets an indicative agenda for the second review day
 - reaches some preliminary judgements against the University Expectations.
36. External Panel members are encouraged to attend the First Review meeting but are not required to, and can participate either remotely, or via advance correspondence. External Panel Members will be asked to complete a template particularly commenting on the Departmental course portfolio and student outcomes, including the currency and sustainability of courses, academic standards and quality of the student learning experience. See [External Panel Member Feedback Template](#)

37. An employer/stakeholder meeting is part of the first panel meeting. The number and range of participants will be agreed in advance between the **School** and AQU. **The School is responsible for selecting and contacting employers/stakeholders and making arrangements for their attendance.** Employers/stakeholders receive advance notice of the meeting's purpose and agenda. Notes are taken by the AQU Officer. See [A brief guide for Employers and Stakeholders](#)
38. A student/graduate group meeting is also convened as part of the initial panel meeting. This should include student academic representatives. The size and constitution of the student/graduate group is negotiated between AQU and the Department under review and takes into account the breadth and complexity of its provision and the available modes of delivery. It would be normal for a maximum of 10 students, with representation from each course, with varying years of study. Previous students could be considered if they have recently graduated. If they have graduated two or more years ago they may be better represented within the employer/stakeholder meeting. **The School is responsible for selecting and contacting students/graduates and making arrangements for their attendance.** Students receive advance notification of the meeting's purpose and agenda. Notes are taken by the AQU Officer. See [A brief guide for students.](#)
39. Notes of the Panel Meeting and of the employer/stakeholder meeting and the student meeting will be collated by the AQU Officer and distributed to the Panel within two weeks. Notes of the employer/stakeholder and student meetings will also be circulated to the Head of Department and **School Quality Co-ordinator.**

Provision of additional documentation

40. The Review Panel will agree at its first Panel meeting a sample of course-related documentation and/or other documentation it wishes to review in order to test the effectiveness of the Department's arrangements for managing academic quality including the quality of information available to prospective and current students. The list of requested documentation will be provided to the Department by the AQU Officer as soon as possible after the first panel meeting.
41. The Department should upload the requested documents to the Periodic Review OneDrive folder two weeks before the Second Review meeting.

Pre-Review meeting

42. Approximately one week (five working days) before the Second Review meeting a Pre-Review meeting is held between the Panel Chair, AQU Officer, Head of the Department under review and **School Quality Co-ordinator or College Director**, the purpose of which is to confirm the indicative agenda and attendance for the Second Review meeting and indicate key lines of enquiry notified by Panel members.

The Second Review meeting

43. The Second Review meeting is normally conducted over one full working day beginning with a private Panel meeting to confirm the agenda, followed by discussions with members of the department/area under review. Panel Chairs and AQU Officers have particular responsibility for managing these discussions, ensuring that the agenda is explored fully and that all participants have had the opportunity to contribute. Discussions are conducted in the spirit of academic peer review and are collegial, but rigorous.
44. The Panel meets with members of the **School** Senior Management Team, including the

Head of School, the Head of the Department under review, the Quality and Learning and Teaching Leads, **and College Director**, plus any other relevant post-holders (e.g. Head of Collaborative Programmes). The Head of Department will be asked to lead a tour of specialist resources/facilities if this is deemed appropriate.

45. The Panel also meets with key members of the Department under review, including the Head of Academic Department, course leaders for major courses and/or courses identified by the Panel, the relevant Academic Liaison Librarian, and any other post-holders identified by the Department or the Panel (e.g. Link Tutor).
46. Following all meetings, the Panel will agree its judgements against the University Expectations and its overall conclusions regarding standards and quality. The Panel will also identify any actions/recommendations, commendations or affirmations. Subject to the agreement of the Panel, the Head of Department and **Quality Co-ordinator** are permitted to be in attendance for **the final part of this session to receive the outcomes of** the Periodic Review Event.
47. The AQU Officer will produce a Chair's approved draft of the Periodic Review Judgements and conclusions for all members within five working days of the Second Review meeting.

The Periodic Review Report and Follow up

48. Following the Second Periodic Review meeting, the AQU Officer drafts a report for the Academic Standards & Quality Enhancement Committee, based on a standard template. The draft report is produced and approved by the chair within ten working days of the Second Review meeting. See [Periodic Review Report Template](#)
49. A Chair's Approved Draft is circulated to the rest of the panel for verification and to the department which is invited to comment on factual accuracy, within ten working days.
50. The Department provides a written response to the Panel's Actions within fifteen working days of receipt of the final version of the Periodic Review Report. This should be appended to the Review report. Once finalised, the report is received at the next available meeting of ASQEC.
51. In considering, the Periodic Review Report ASQEC determines how progress in meeting any actions will be monitored. This may be delegated to the **College Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee**, require approval from the Periodic Review Chair or other senior University officer, or require regular reporting to ASQEC. In any case, one year after the Periodic Review, the September ASQEC meeting will request/receive a progress update.

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Revision History

Date	Version	Reason for Change	Effective from	Author
Nov 2017	1.1	Amendments following consultation	November 2017	J Zandbeek
Jun 2018	1.2	Amendments following feedback after first year of implementation, ASQEC 17/55	July 2018	J Zandbeek; N Rawlings
Nov 2019	1.3	Minor typos and updates following School structure changes	November 2019	T Nahajski

