

## Partner Periodic Review (PPR): Principles and Process

### 1.0 Section 1: Key principles and aims of partnership periodic review

- 1.1 Partnerships are normally approved for a period of six years, and operate under the terms of a Partnership Agreement. Prior to the expiry of a Partnership Agreement, the University will review the partnership arrangement, revisit the due diligence, and fully appraise the management of the student experience and the courses that are delivered through the partnership.
- 1.2 Partnership Periodic Review (PPR) aims to explore and to provide assurance that a partnership is operating in accordance with the terms of the Partnership Agreement and is an arrangement to be recommended for continuation.
- 1.3 Reviews as outlined in this process apply to any partner institution, in the UK or overseas, that is responsible for all or part of the delivery of a course leading to the award of credit of the University of Worcester.
- 1.4 The University maintains a commitment to open and discursive peer review, that is consultative, self-critical and genuinely collaborative, including, external independent academic input and where relevant, representation from industry, commerce or the professions.
- 1.5 The objectives of PPR are to:
  - 1.5.1 revisit the due diligence related to the partner
  - 1.5.2 ensure the Office for Students regulatory requirements are appropriately managed either directly by the partner or indirectly through the University, as appropriate
  - 1.5.3 evaluate the viability of the partnership and the strategic and operational arrangements for achieving the aims of the partnership
  - 1.5.4 appraise the effectiveness of the management of the partnership
  - 1.5.5 provide an opportunity to reflect at institutional and course team level on the experience of collaboration
- 1.6 With respect to courses, PPR does not involve consideration of restructuring of provision (course re-approval/major change of courses) but seeks to achieve the following:
  - 1.6.1 to confirm the academic standards of awards are maintained
  - 1.6.2 to evaluate the quality of learning opportunities for students
  - 1.6.3 to ensure the effectiveness of the management of quality assurance and approach to quality enhancement
  - 1.6.4 to ensure that course documentation is current, accurate and fit for purpose
- 1.7 On establishing that the partnership is operating effectively and that

academic standards and quality are secure, the intended outcome of PPR is to re-affirm the partnership, and courses within the partnership, normally for a further period of six years, subject to engagement with the terms of any action plan, as appropriate. An outcome from the review may include a requirement to reapprove a course within a certain time period, in order to guarantee standards or the quality of the student learning experience.

- 1.8 The University also recognises that the processes of review are not limited to the event itself and that decisions pertaining to the development of the partnership and/or the courses should be included in the lead-up and aftermath of review.
- 1.9 The process has been designed to inform, and in turn be informed by, existing processes of review and engagement at the University and in the wider sector:
  - 1.9.1 The University and School's management of collaborative courses are reviewed under the Periodic Review process conducted at Academic Department level
  - 1.9.2 Collaborative courses are always included in annual evaluation processes which are reviewed by the School with which they are affiliated. These processes will provide evidence for the review as appropriate.
  - 1.9.3 External reports (eg QAA, OfSTED, Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies) in relation to the partner will form a further source of evidence for the review, where available.

## **2.0 Section 2: Criteria for the PPR**

- 2.1 The Panel will wish to satisfy themselves that:
  - 2.1.1 due diligence enquiries have been completed and do not identify any matters of high risk
  - 2.1.2 there are appropriate and secure arrangements in place with regard to University /Partner responsibilities in relation to OfS regulatory requirements
  - 2.1.3 there is continued commitment on the part of the partner organisation to the partnership and to meeting the terms of the partnership agreement
  - 2.1.4 the strategic and operational arrangements for the partnership continue to be fit for purpose
  - 2.1.5 the quality management of the courses is effective in delivering high quality education to students and has a clear commitment to quality enhancement
  - 2.1.6 issues of course demand, recruitment, admissions and career/employment opportunities for students are satisfactorily addressed
  - 2.1.7 for validated provision, the structure, content and outcomes of the courses are appropriate and valid and take into account the

- appropriate elements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (including FHEQ, FDQB, Subject Benchmarks) and any PSRB or other relevant external benchmarks, as well as University of Worcester (UW) frameworks and policies
- 2.1.8 student outcomes (retention, attainment, employment outcomes, and academic standards are satisfactory
  - 2.1.9 staff and learning resources, including arrangements for staff development are appropriate for the delivery of the courses
  - 2.1.10 the course(s) meet the requirements of relevant UW policies and regulations
  - 2.1.11 arrangements for University oversight of provision, including Link Tutor arrangements and consideration of student and other stakeholder feedback, are appropriate
  - 2.1.12 in cases involving significant elements of work-based learning: the arrangements for the management and organisation of the work placement, and of the student experience are clear, and satisfactory mechanisms have been put in place to support both students and the mentors in the work place. The completion of a Work-Based Learning/Placement Audit Record is required documentation for periodic reviews
  - 2.1.13 course documentation, including programme specifications, module specifications and course handbooks are current, accurate and fit for purpose
  - 2.1.14 information for prospective students is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy

### **3.0 Section 3: Stages of PPR**

- Stage 1: Review scheduling
- Stage 2: Preliminary Meeting
- Stage 3: Review of documentation and nomination of external panel members and advisors
- Stage 4: Due diligence review and audit of information
- Stage 5: Preparation of EDD
- Stage 6: Submission of documentation
- Stage 7: Distribution of documents to panel members and external panel members
- Stage 8: Pre-meeting
- Stage 9: the Review meeting
- Stage 10: Outcomes of the Review
- Stage 11: Post Partnership Periodic Review event

### **3.1 Stage 1: Review scheduling**

- 3.1.1 The Academic Quality Unit (AQU) co-ordinates the cycle of partnership periodic reviews. AQU determines the exact nature, scope and programme for the review in discussions with the Director of Quality and Educational Development, the relevant School and partner organisation.

- 3.1.2 The approximate date of review will be agreed with the partner, usually 12-18 months in advance of the review
- 3.1.3 The Director of Quality and Educational Development will appoint the partnership periodic review Chair.
- 3.1.4 AQU will consult with the Director of Quality and Educational Development to determine the balance and number of Panel members depending on the nature of the partnership and the associated course(s).
- 3.1.5 The Panel normally comprises:
  - 3.1.5.1 Senior member of the University (Chair)
  - 3.1.5.2 Head of Collaborative Programmes (for UK Partnerships)
  - 3.1.5.3 Head/Deputy Head of Academic Quality
  - 3.1.5.4 Senior member of staff from another School with experience of collaborative provision
  - 3.1.5.5 External academic with experience of partnerships
  - 3.1.5.6 Other (ie: international, employer rep etc)
- 3.1.6 This list is not intended to be prescriptive and the University may choose to field additional members of staff where this is appropriate.
- 3.1.7 In addition to the above, depending on the nature of the partnership and its provision, there could be external advisers with appropriate subject/course expertise who either form part of the panel or participate by correspondence. This would normally be for validated provision and where the University does not have subject expertise.
- 3.1.8 In the case of a small partnership, the role of subject advisor and external panel member with experience of collaborative provision may be combined.
- 3.1.9 An AQU Officer will be identified to act as the event officer to the review. In some cases, the Head/Deputy Head of Academic Quality will act as both a panel member and event officer.

## **3.2 Stage 2: Preliminary Meeting**

- 3.2.1 The Academic Quality Unit (AQU) will hold a briefing meeting with the Partner, usually 9-12 months before the review in order to clarify the process and to discuss the format and production of the documentation; and potential arrangements for meetings. Any variations will be agreed with the Director of Quality and Educational Development.
- 3.2.2 The HE manager (or equivalent) and the course leader(s) from the partner organisation should meet with the relevant School Quality Co-ordinator(s), the Deputy Head of Academic Quality and the AQU Officer co-ordinating the review, to plan and discuss the requirements and arrangements for the review.
- 3.2.3 This meeting may be conducted remotely for overseas partners.

### **3.3 Stage 3: Review of documentation and nomination of external panel members and advisors**

- 3.3.1 In Semester 2 of the academic year preceding a periodic review, the partner should carry out a comprehensive review of the course related documentation for all the courses within the partnership. 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.
- 3.3.2 The partner 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 partner will also ensure that the presentation and content of the documentation is fit for purpose and meets professional standards for publication.
- 3.3.3 The review and updating of documentation should be seen as a key element of the review.
- 3.3.4 Once the timetable for partnership periodic review has been agreed, the Head of School (or nominee), in consultation with the partner organisation, should forward to the AQU the name(s) and contact details of potential external Panel member(s), ([link to External Panel member form](#)) and information on the suitability of the individuals (normally a CV).

### **3.4 Stage 4: Due diligence review and audit of information**

- 3.4.1 The review process is centred on a due diligence report, including reference to meeting Office for Students regulatory requirements.
- 3.4.2 An audit of the Partner's publicly available information about the partnership and courses will be prepared by AQU.
- 3.4.3 A completed due diligence enquiry form and supporting evidence, including copies of relevant policies and procedures is returned to AQU 2 months ahead of the review. The returned documentation reviewed by the Deputy Head of Academic Quality.
- 3.4.4 The Deputy Head of Academic Quality will complete a short due diligence report on the following areas:
  - 3.4.4.1 an evaluation of the current and anticipated risks involved in the partnership
  - 3.4.4.2 information on how the partner organisation is funded and its ongoing financial stability
  - 3.4.4.3 the bodies to which the institution is answerable in terms of quality assurance and permission to operate
  - 3.4.4.4 the national, legal and regulatory context of the partner reports from external quality assurance agencies and UK partner institutions, where available
  - 3.4.4.5 professional or statutory body accreditations and their implications for the institution, if relevant
  - 3.4.4.6 continued compatibility of institutional mission, strategy and policy

- 3.4.4.7 with the University of Worcester
  - 3.4.4.7 evidence and themes from course AER(s), external examiner reports and link tutor reports
  - 3.4.4.8 how Office for Students (OfS) regulatory requirements are met
  - 3.4.4.9 a policy and documentary checklist to confirm the operation of relevant of University and partner policies and procedures
- 3.4.5 The due diligence report and the audit of information report will form part of the documentation of the review.

### **3.5 Stage 5: Preparation of EDD**

- 3.5.1 The Partner organisation should prepare the Evaluation and Development Document (EDD), in line with the guidance provided, and return it 6 weeks ahead of the PPR, to be reviewed by the Head of School (or nominee) and the Deputy Head of Academic Quality. In agreement with the AQU Officer, the Partner organisation should ensure relevant documentation is collated and provided electronically. The documentation required is in Annex 2.
- 3.5.2 The EDD prepared by the partner organisation should review the working of the partnership against the terms of the partnership agreement, and draw on the operation of the course(s) under review. It should include a short critical evaluation of each course, identifying strengths, weaknesses, innovations and planned developments for quality enhancement.
- 3.5.3 Guidance on the production of the partner Evaluation and Development Document is available separately [here](#).

### **3.6 Stage 6: Submission of documentation**

- 3.6.1 The documentation noted in Annex 2 will be submitted at least 4 weeks before the proposed date of review.
- 3.6.2 Documentation must be submitted for circulation in electronic copy. Partners will be encouraged, where possible, to upload documentation directly to the University OneDrive folder for the review. Alternatively, documents may be emailed to the AQU Officer for upload.

### **3.7 Stage 7: Distribution of documents to panel members and external panel members**

- 3.7.1 It is the School's responsibility to confirm that the review documentation is appropriate for the event. In all circumstances, the purpose is to satisfy the Head of School that a thorough review of the subject and associated courses has taken place, and that documentation is appropriate for formal peer review. The final review documentation submitted to AQU will be accompanied by confirmation (e-mail or letter) from the Head of School (or nominee) that the documentation is appropriate for dissemination.
- 3.7.2 Review documentation will be made available to panel members via the University OneDrive for the review, or by email if panel members are not able to access the site.

- 3.7.3 AQU will co-ordinate the collation of documentation and send this to the review panel 3 weeks before the review.
- 3.7.4 The panel will be asked to review the documentation and submit comments or queries, normally 5 working days in advance of the review meeting.

### **3.8 Stage 8: Pre-meeting**

- 3.8.1 A pre-meeting involving the Chair of the review, the Deputy Head of Academic Quality, and AQU Officer will be held to confirm:
  - 3.8.1.1 agenda and timing of review
  - 3.8.1.2 confirm participants required
  - 3.8.1.3 any further documentation required
- 3.8.2 The AQU officer will collate the responses, and will use them to agree a final agenda with the Chair. The Chair will also identify which panel members will lead on each area of discussion at the PPR.
- 3.8.3 The PPR agenda will be circulated to all participants following the pre-meeting.

### **3.9 Stage 9: the Review meeting**

- 3.9.1 The periodic review event is normally conducted over one full working day beginning with a private panel meeting to confirm the agenda, followed by discussions with the partner, students and employers/stakeholders. 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.
- 3.9.2 The number and range of employer/stakeholder participants will be agreed in advance between the partner and AQU. Employers/stakeholders will receive advance notice of the meeting's purpose and agenda.
- 3.9.3 A student/graduate group meeting should include student academic representatives. The size and constitution of the student/graduate group is negotiated between AQU and the partner, taking 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 graduated less than two years ago. If they have graduated two or more year ago they may be better represented within the employer/stakeholder meeting. Students receive advance notification of the meeting's purpose and agenda.
- 3.9.4 The Panel meets with members of the partner Senior Management Team and any other relevant post-holders. The partner will be asked to lead a tour of specialist resources/facilities if this is deemed appropriate.

- 3.9.5 The Panel also meets with Course Leaders and any key members of the course teams together with any other relevant post-holders identified by the partner.
- 3.9.6 Following all meetings, the Panel will agree its outcomes and its overall conclusions regarding standards and quality. The Panel will also identify any actions/recommendations, or commendations.

### **3.10 Stage 10: Outcomes of the Review**

- 3.10.1 The primary outcome of the partnership periodic review process is the reapproval of the partnership and the associated course(s) for up to six further years.
- 3.10.2 This reapproval is based upon the Panel's confidence that the partnership is operating in accordance with the terms of the partnership agreement, and the management of the course(s) are deemed to be robust, academic standards are maintained and the student experience is deemed to be at least satisfactory.
- 3.10.3 The outcome of the review could be reapproval (for a set period), reapproval with recommendations and/or reapproval with actions. Actions will relate to the criteria laid out in section 2 and must be met to the satisfaction of the Chair of the Panel by a deadline agreed during the event.
- 3.10.4 The Panel will comment upon and/or endorse the development plan as set out in the EDD, and may make additional recommendations.
- 3.10.5 The Panel will also have the opportunity to identify any areas of good practice in relation to the partnership and its course(s). These will be aspects of the provision and its management considered to be worthy of dissemination across the University.
- 3.10.6 PPR reports will therefore make formal recommendations to Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) on the following:
  - 3.10.1.1 extension of the partnership for a further period of up to six years
  - 3.10.1.2 the level of confidence in the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities provided, stating a period of reapproval of the course(s) not exceeding six years
  - 3.10.1.3 as applicable, any conditions upon which reapproval is predicated
  - 3.10.1.4 as applicable, any recommendations that would enhance the quality of the student learning experience and/or partnership working
  - 3.10.1.5 as applicable, any aspects of good practice worthy of dissemination across the University

### **3.11 Stage 11: Post Partnership Periodic Review event**

- 3.11.1 Following Review, 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 Review



- 3.11.2 A Chair's approved draft is circulated to the rest of the panel for verification and to the partner, who is invited to comment on factual accuracy, within ten working days.
- 3.11.3 The completed action plan, agreed by the Chair of the PPR event, will be circulated to members of the Panel and other relevant stakeholders and the course leader(s) who participated in the event, including the Head of School(s) and the Head of the partner organisation, for information.
- 3.11.4 The partner provides a written response to the panel's actions within fifteen working days of receipt of the final version of the Review report; the action plan is appended to the review report.
- 3.11.5 Once finalised, the report is received at the next available meeting of Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC).
- 3.11.6 In considering the Report ASQEC determines how progress in meeting any actions will be monitored. This may be delegated to the College LTQE Sub-Committee or require regular reporting to Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC). In any case, one year after the Review Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC) will receive a progress update.

#### **4.0 Section 4: Evaluation of the process**

- 4.1 The Partnership Periodic Review process is evaluated through the use of questionnaires supplied to the Panel and Team following the event. These cover the management of the process, the level of transparency and clarity of outcomes and the extent to which the process has encouraged reflective evaluation by participants, and a clear plan for the future has been determined. The outcomes are considered by the Head of Academic Quality alongside other informal feedback. As appropriate, a paper summarising the effectiveness and success of the process is produced for Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC).

#### **5.0 Section 5: Costs and charges**

- 5.1 The University will make a charge for review of delivering partners, as stated in the partnership agreement. These costs are normally met by the partner institution concerned.
- 5.2 The charge and source of funding for the review activity will be confirmed after the preliminary meeting.

#### **6.0 Section 6: Roles and responsibilities**

- 6.1 The Partner:
  - 6.1.1 The PPR event normally takes place at the partner organisation and thus the partner is responsible for liaising with the AQU Officer to make the arrangements.
  - 6.1.2 The partner organisation is responsible for making arrangements for relevant staff, students and employer/mentor representatives to attend the event to meet with the Panel.

- 6.1.3 Senior staff of the partner organisation are responsible for ensuring (in liaison with relevant colleagues of both organisations) that any actions are addressed by the specified deadline, and that responses to recommendations in the collated action plan are taken forward.
  - 6.1.4 The course leader(s) from the partner organisation should ensure that arrangements are made for students, employers, mentors, and/or graduates to attend as required and that the Information and Learning Services representative is involved from the onset.
  - 6.1.5 The Course Leader(s) (or equivalent) will be asked to lead a tour of resources/facilities if this is deemed necessary.
- 6.2 The University of Worcester:
- 6.2.1 The Head of School(s) is responsible for ensuring that outcomes of the review are acted upon and that an appropriate progress report and update of actions is made available to the Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC) one year after the event
  - 6.2.2 The Head of Collaborative Programmes is responsible for ensuring actions, relating to the development of the partnership and/or matters that are outside of the control of the School(s) or the partner organisation are effectively addressed, working with relevant colleagues in the University as appropriate.
- 6.3 The University of Worcester committee structure
- 6.3.1 Academic Board has formal responsibility for the standards, quality and enhancement of academic provision within the University. Academic Board is responsible for approving and reapproving academic partnerships.
  - 6.3.2 Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) is responsible, on behalf of Academic Board, for all aspects of quality assurance and enhancement to assure the quality and standards of the University's academic awards.  
  
ASQEC receives and confirms the periodic review reports from CAPSC on behalf of Academic Board. ASQEC makes recommendations to Academic Board regarding reapproving academic provision.
  - 6.3.3 Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC) advises Academic Board, through ASQEC, on matters relating to the University's academic partnerships and collaborative provision.  
  
Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC) receives and considers the reports of partnership periodic reviews and makes recommendations to ASQEC regarding the renewal of the partnership agreement. CAPSC receives a progress update one year after the Review.

**ANNEX 1: Timetable for partner periodic review**

<b>Time before review</b>	<b>Activity</b>
12-18 months before expiry of partnership agreement	AQU to confirm approximate date of review
9-12 months before the review	Preliminary meeting
2 months before the review	Due diligence documentation returned to AQU
6 weeks before the review	EDD is completed and is reviewed by the Head of School and the Deputy Head of Academic Quality
4 weeks before the review	Panel documentation completed and uploaded to OneDrive
1 week before the review	Panel comments returned to AQU
Before the review	Pre-meeting
<b>Review</b>	
2 weeks after review	Report of review circulated to panel and other participants to check for factual accuracy
One month after review & ongoing after the review	Action plan agreed and developed Report and action plan submitted to relevant committee, as determined by ASQEC
<b>Renewal of Partnership agreement</b>	
One year after review	Reports to Collaborative Academic Provision Sub Committee (CAPSC) on progress with completion of actions

## **ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTATION TO BE SENT TO THE PANEL**

Copies of the following documentation should be provided to AQU for dissemination to Panel members at least three weeks before the event. These should be accompanied by confirmation (e-mail or letter) from the Head of School (or nominee) that the documentation is appropriate for dissemination:

- a) Evaluation and Development Document
- b) current Programme Specifications
- c) statistical digest (prepared by Data Management Unit).
- d) The AQU produced due diligence report and the audit of information, along with the associated documentation
- e) annual evaluation reports (last 3 years)
- f) external examiner reports (1 year)
- g) record of student feedback (1 year)
- h) Course Management Committee minutes (1 year)
- i) link tutor reports (last 3 years)
- j) partnership approval report or last review report

In relation to the course(s):

- a. current Course Handbook/s
- b. module specifications, for validated provision
- c. overview of changes made to the awards under review since approval or last review
- d. ILS statement on resources
- e. current handbooks/guides for work-based learning, placements, mentors, etc as appropriate
- f. a sample of module outlines for the current academic year
- g. completed [work based and placement learning audit record](#) (where relevant, AQU to advise)
- h. reports from any PSRBs or other external quality reports
- i. in the case of flexible and distributed learning (e.g. delivery predominantly 'at a distance'/via online learning technologies) a document indicating how the course meets the UW [Quality standards for Flexible and Distributed Learning](#) is required

**ANNEX: Programme for the PPR event**

Each PPR event is negotiated individually, but will typically comprise a series of meetings in which the Panel explores aspects of the operation of the partnership and course(s) in line with the EDDs and the criteria for PPR.

The following will normally be included:

- a. A very short initial private meeting in which the Chair (15-20 minutes)
- b. Partner to give short presentation (15 minutes)
- c. a tour of any dedicated subject resources and associated facilities (where appropriate) (30-45 minutes)
- d. a meeting with students to assess the student experience of the courses in operation (30-60 minutes, depending on the number of courses and size of provision)
- e. a meeting with employers/mentors or graduates (30-60 minutes, depending on the number of courses and size of provision)
- f. meeting with Senior Managers, including individual(s) responsible for HE in the partner organisation, and relevant UW staff.
- g. meeting with the course leader(s) and key partner team members
- h. a final meeting of the Panel to reach conclusions
- i. formal feedback on the outcomes of the PPR.