

Periodic Programme Review Guidance for Panel Members

Introduction

Periodic Programme Review normally takes place every six years and provides for confirmation at programme level of the continued validity and relevance of the curriculum and the effectiveness of annual monitoring and review process. As part of the review process, the panel that you are a member of (normally 6 individuals and consisting of internal university staff, a student member and an external subject specialist) receives documentation and has the opportunity to discuss the programme(s) with relevant stakeholders. Based upon the evidence received, the panel will confirm (or otherwise) the continued validity and relevance of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the annual monitoring and review processes. The panel's findings, including the identification of key strengths and any conditions or recommendations for further development and/or consideration, will be communicated in a report that is considered at Faculty level by Faculty Executive Committee and at University level by the Quality Assurance Committee.

Under **Areas for Scrutiny** on page 4, the following guidance sets out a number of areas that the panel might wish to explore. These are offered with a view to providing a basis for systematic judgement and to support consistency of practice but are not intended to be wholly comprehensive or overly-prescriptive.

Panel Members' Role

As panel member your role is three-fold and will consist of (1) initial review documentation and comment submission, (2) participation in panel discussions, student and staff meetings during the review event and (3) consideration of and comment on the final review report.

Your role begins when you receive the documentation before the event. You are required to scrutinise the documentation and provide a paper on your findings of initial strengths and comments on areas for further investigation at the review. See **Areas for Scrutiny** on page 4. These comments should be sent to the Administrator who sent you the documentation. All panel members' comments will be sent to the Chair in advance who will then summarise them to inform the discussion at the review.

During the first panel meeting at the review, the Chair will present the summarised comments for discussion and the panel will agree the direction for discussion with the Course Team, which all the panel will participate in.

The panel's findings and outcomes will be presented in a draft report which the panel will have the opportunity to comment on. Once confirmed by the panel it will be submitted to Faculty Executive and Quality Assurance Committee.

Additional information for the Chair

Evidence provision. Has the evidence been submitted in time, within three weeks, to allow the panel to give it due attention in advance and submit their comments to inform the first panel meeting at the event? If the evidence is submitted late, the organising officer (usually the Faculty Validation Officer (FVO) will discuss the timing of the event with the Chair.

Whilst it is advisable to allow some leeway to ensure the event runs as planned, if the delay means available time for panel scrutiny is reduced to a week, email discussion should take place with the panel to ensure it remains possible for them to meet their commitment to the event, in particular, for the Subject External Assessor.

Additional Evidence The written evidence submitted for the event, when triangulated with discussions in the student and staff meetings, will normally provide sufficient evidence to allow the panel to reach decisions on the outcomes. On occasion, a panel member may request further evidence and if they wish to do this they should submit the request to the Chair via the organiser of the event, usually the FVO.

In deciding whether to request the further evidence, the following considerations should be made:

- With discussion at the student and staff and meetings, is there likely to be sufficient evidence, without the need for the additional request?
- Is the evidence requested likely to provide the information sought?
- Is the evidence likely to be easy to produce?
- Is the question the evidence is aimed to answer, legitimate and appropriate for the review?
- Has the request been submitted in time for the Course Team to be able to provide it?

Summary of Panel Comments To facilitate an efficient first panel meeting at the event, it is advisable for the Chair to draw panel members' submitted comments together into key themes and areas of interest. This should include potential strengths and areas requiring further discussion which may or may not result in a condition or recommendation. It is advisable for the Chair to include their own items from their scrutiny of the documentation.

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- Is the evidence requested likely to provide the information sought?
- Is the evidence likely to be easy to produce?
- Is the question the evidence is aimed to answer, legitimate and appropriate for the review?
- Has the request been submitted in time for the provision's team to be able to provide it?

Further evidence during the event If an issue arises during the event that has the potential to lead to a 'no' outcome and could be clarified by an existing, readily available, piece of written evidence, this could legitimately be requested or offered and, if essential, the Chair can agree a short adjournment.

If further evidence could be provided in this circumstance but is not immediately available, the Chair is, exceptionally, permitted to 'defer' the event, or a part of the event. The follow up deferred process should be determined by the panel at their final meeting of the day to decide on draft outcomes and key points and will take the form of:

- Chair's action, or
- Reconvened internal panel with External Assessor correspondence

Additional information for External Assessors

Unit Descriptors

- In your opinion do they appear appropriate for the Award and Title of the relevant programme(s)?
- Do the learning outcomes appear to be in line with the relevant level descriptors in the FHEQ?
- Are relevant Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and/or Occupational Standards reflected appropriately?

Review Outcomes

The panel will produce a succinct report giving Yes/No outcomes on:

- Continued validity and relevance of the curriculum
- Effective Annual Monitoring and Review Processes

The first outcome can take the form of 'yes/no' for **all** programmes considered at the event, or 'yes' for some provision and 'no' for other provision. The second outcome can be 'yes/no' overall but must be 'no' if any provision receives a 'no' for any part of the provision.

In the event of a 'no' outcome on 'continued validity and relevance of the curriculum' either for any or all of the programmes considered at the review the Chair must inform the Deputy Academic Registrar (Quality and Partnerships) immediately the event is completed. Feedback should be given to the Head of Department that this is the panel's decision and that a senior member of QMD, together with the Chair of the review event, will meet with senior Faculty/Department colleagues to discuss the 'next steps'. This meeting will be organised by QMD. The Head of Department can read the further steps that will be required in paragraphs 3.27 of the [PMR Operational Handbook](#).

Remember that where any or all programmes are given a 'no' for this outcome, the outcome for 'effective Annual Monitoring and Review Processes' must be 'no'.

In the event of a 'no' outcome on 'effective Annual Monitoring and Review Processes' as a result of a 'no' outcome on 'continued validity and relevance of the curriculum' the actions will be as above. In the event of a 'no' for this outcome due to another aspect of provision, including not meeting the equal opportunities policies, the Chair of the event will inform the Deputy Academic Registrar (Quality and Partnerships) immediately the event is completed, and provide a draft of the conditions specified. The Head of Department should be informed of the outcome to the event and referred to paragraph 3.27 of the [PMR Operational Handbook](#).

Where to start?

You may find it useful to begin by reading the [Programme Monitoring and Review \(PMR\) Policy](#) and its associated [Operational Handbook](#) as these will provide information and help you to focus upon the purpose of periodic review, its place in the university's monitoring and review process and, particularly, the relationship of periodic review to annual review and the different scope of these two processes. It will also be useful for External Assessors to read the [Curriculum Framework Document 2012](#) and [Policy on Maximum Assessment Loads](#)

Documentation

You should receive the documentation within three weeks of the event to ensure you have sufficient time to engage and scrutinise the evidence. The FVO should inform you if there is any delay and the reason for the delay. The documentation consists of:

- Agenda for the day, which includes the list of panel members
- Periodic Review Commentary
- Previous programme review report and action plan (*or approval report if this is the first review*)
- Programme Specification Documents (*with Learning Outcomes Map, Assessment Map and course structure report*)
- External Examiner Reports or AD(A) Summary (*previous 2 years*)
- Head of Department Annual Report (*most recent including the Data ASQER report*)
- Course Leader Annual Report (*most recent including the Data ASQER report*)
- Associate Dean (Students) Commentary
- Collaborative Partner Academic Contact Annual Report (*if franchised programmes included*)
- Professional/Statutory/Regulatory Body (PSRB) Reports/Action Plans (*if applicable*)
- List of Memoranda of Agreement (Articulation) (*if applicable*)
- External Subject Assessor only: set of Unit Descriptors

If there is any documentation missing without explanation, or if, exceptionally you believe it necessary to have additional information to that listed above, please contact the Faculty Validation Officer (FVO).

Scene-setting

The Periodic Review Commentary has been written by the academic department specifically for the review to set the context of those programmes that are in scope. As such, this should be a useful starting point to quickly gain an understanding of the background to the programmes overall design and development and how this has been informed by relevant factors such as changing market demand, student needs, staff changes, new initiatives, alignment with research profile, developments in the subject discipline, employers' needs, national or international developments and changing professional expectations. It will also detail strengths and issues raised by the External Examiners and through annual monitoring and may well alert you to areas that you would like to investigate further.

AREAS FOR SCRUTINY

PROGRAMME AIMS, STRUCTURE AND OUTCOMES

Programme Specification Document (PSD)

Each programme (and sometimes, each subject area) is described by a PSD that should give a clear description of the aims of the programme, its relationship to external references such as subject benchmark statements and professional requirements, what outcomes students who successfully complete the programme will achieve and how they will learn to achieve these outcomes. The document also details how the programme is delivered and assessed and the unit structure of the programme. It contains maps showing the relationship of assessment and of individual learning outcomes to the unit structure and comments upon how employment skills are addressed. This should inform your decisions concerning the continued validity and relevance of the curriculum.

You might particularly want to identify whether:

- the aims and learning outcomes are well defined and understandable and are in line with the relevant level descriptors in the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications;
- the programmes meet the aspirations and demands of stakeholders such as students, employers and professional statutory regulatory bodies (PSRBs);
- the outcomes are attained at the right level and there is appropriate progression of level;
- the outcomes are appropriate in terms of the students' knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, subject specific and practical/professional skills, personal development, and key and employability skills and an appropriate mix of these;
- there is the right balance between breadth and depth of study;
- there is appropriate division between core and option units and appropriate flexibility in the course structure;
- subject and interdisciplinary developments, including advances in research and scholarship, are reflected in the curriculum;
- the admissions requirements are appropriate both to the target intake and to the curriculum and outcomes of the programmes. If relevant, do the programmes accommodate and support the needs of students who enter with diverse qualifications?
- the programmes are delivered in the most appropriate mode/s, meeting the needs of all students;
- the programmes are appealing and likely to engage students;
- the programmes are adequately resourced
- all areas of the Curriculum Framework are met (or any 'exceptions' have the required approval)

LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

Programme specification documents (PSDs).

- Is there an appropriate assessment strategy including, for example, approval, assignment management etc?
- Are the assessment strategies clearly described and capable of providing evidence of achievement of the learning outcomes?
- Is the overall assessment load appropriate?
- Is there an appropriate range of unseen formal examinations and coursework without undue emphasis on unseen formal examinations?

- Is there clear formative assessment and feedback to students on both formative and summative coursework and exams?
- Are the assessment criteria and marking schemes demonstrate that appropriate judgements can be made about threshold and other levels of achievement?
- Are the teaching and learning strategies clearly described?
- Is there an appropriate mix of activities, e.g., lectures/tutorials/practicals/laboratory/clinical/field work etc?
- Do the teaching, learning and assessment strategies make use of the VLE and any innovative or good practice aspects?
- Are all areas of the Curriculum Framework are met including: Personal Tutor framework; Personal Development Planning; Graduate academic and, employability and career management skills (or any 'exceptions' have the required approval)

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Student recruitment, progression and achievement data

You will be supplied with a data summary of students who enter the programmes, withdrawals, achievement and progression (including progression once they have exited the programmes). It would be useful to consider these in relation to the intentions of the programmes. In particular:

- Has the student profile changed over time and, if so, have there been changes to the programmes to meet changing needs?
- Are progression and achievement data consistent with national expectations and those of the university and faculty?
- Do they suggest particular issues that need to be addressed?
- Do they evidence effectiveness of changes that have been introduced?

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW REPORTS AND NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY DATA

You will receive either External Examiner reports in full or a summary of the last two years' key areas of comment relating to the programmes that are within scope. The External Examiner reports and the ASQER Reports from Course Leaders and Heads of Departments are key documents in the annual monitoring and review process as are (for some programmes) reports from PSRBs. These documents, together with the NSS data, should help in interrogating the fitness of purpose of the programmes.

These documents, together with the Associate Dean (Students) Commentary will also help you to address whether annual monitoring and review processes have been effective. Some of the questions that you might want to ask yourself in considering the effectiveness of monitoring and review processes are:

- Do the reports adequately reflect the programmes strengths?
- Do they adequately identify issues that, from evidence that you gather during the review process, appear to be of importance to the programmes under review?
- Do they provide a good assessment of the curricula's continued validity and relevance?
- Is there evidence that they promote the maintenance of strengths and help address problems?
- Do they have a positive impact on academic quality and the maintenance of standards?
- Is there full and proactive engagement with course development and the evaluation of quality and standards?

- Are external comments, such as those contained in the External Examiner summary or reports and professional body reports, fully and promptly addressed?
- Is there appropriate response to the 'student voice'?

MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENT (ARTICULATION)

Periodic Review Commentary, HoD/Course Leader ASQERs

Where this provision is associated with Memoranda of Agreement (Articulation), confirm that all learning outcomes are mapped accordingly and there is an appropriate strategy to assess them; student performance and experience at the partner institution/s is reviewed and that the partnership/s between institutions are working appropriately.

Lines of enquiry for Student Meeting

The following are core question areas which should be supplemented by any particular areas which have arisen from scrutiny of the evidence as appropriate. Students should be given the opportunity to raise points not covered by the reviewers' questions.

1. How did you find out more about us prior to enrolling? Open Days? Web?
2. How did you find the Induction? (check all years)
3. Is the course what you expected it to be?
4. Are you aware of progression in the course you are doing – is it getting more challenging as you move through the levels?
5. How does the fieldwork/placement complement the curriculum? Are the arrangements well managed? (where relevant)
6. Do health & safety issues form part of the curriculum? (where relevant)
7. Do you know who to go to if you need help? With academic work? With other matters?
8. Do you have a personal tutor? Do you meet with him/her regularly? At scheduled times? (check all years)
9. How do you find the teaching methods? Appropriate (to level and subject matter?) Is there variety?
10. In assessment, are you clear about what you have to do? Are you given the calendar for assessment submission dates at the start of the semester?
11. Is there an appropriate amount and type of assessment?
12. Do you receive marking criteria explaining how you can achieve the best grades?
13. How is feedback on your work given to you? (coursework and exams? Feedback sheets? Generic comments? Web?)
14. How helpful do you find the feedback given to you?
15. What sort of timescales are there for you receiving marked work back?
16. Do you have formative assessment/feedback?
17. Are rooms/equipment appropriate?
18. Are library facilities appropriate? Sufficient study space/opening hours/ Books and journals? Electronic books, journals/Guidance? (eg leaflets and web-based) /Are staff helpful?
19. Is the IT appropriate?/Guidance/staff supportive?
20. How are your views sought? - Induction feedback? Unit/course feedback? SSCC/Boards of Studies?
21. Is there feedback to you on issues you have raised?
22. Are you aware of any changes that have come about from your comments?
23. Are you able to access your Programme Specification, External Examiner reports and Student Feedback information via Moodle?
24. If you could improve one thing, what would it be?
25. What would you single out to praise about the course, or studying at Portsmouth?