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This guidance document is primarily intended for:

Members and Secretaries of Degree Scheme Review Panels for Degree Scheme Reviews conducted under the process set down in QA13.

**Degree Scheme Review**

**Guidance for**

**Members and Secretaries of Degree Scheme Review Panels**

**+ Minutes Template**

1. **Scope:** The purpose of this guidance document is to support the Degree Scheme Review process. The full procedures, roles and responsibilities are set out in [QA13](https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/qa13-degree-scheme-review/) Degree Scheme Reviews. Particular guidance on the review process and the reporting requirements are set out in sections 4 - 5of QA13.
2. **Purpose of Degree Scheme Review:** A Degree Scheme Review (DSR) is a developmental periodic review of a course of study (or set of cognate courses), undertaken with the aim of enhancing the course while providing a robust mechanism by which the University can assure itself of and record the quality of the course.

The DSR process should be characterised by:

* **a focus on quality enhancement as well as quality assurance:** one function of the DSR is to enable the University to assure itself of the standards of its courses. Alongside this, the other key function is to focus constructively upon curriculum review and the ongoing development and enhancement of the course in light of developments in the discipline, institution, workplace or sector
* **peer review:** DSR requires the bringing together of a variety of academic and professional expertise and perspectives on the course, both internal and external to the discipline, and internal and external to the University
* **the informed student voice**: the University is committed to engagement with students in quality management. Engagement with students should be evident throughout the DSR process, through the inclusion of student academic representatives (SSLC) members on the Review Panel, the inclusion of feedback from students representative of the diverse student body in the evidence base, and the recording of student perspectives in the Course Evaluation Document (CED).

1. **The role of DSR Panel Members**: Thank you for agreeing to be a member of a DSR Panel. Your contribution to the DSR process is highly valued by the University.

Your role as a member of a DSR Panel will include the following:

* to bring your expertise or experience to bear in reviewing the course. You may be contributing from any one of a number of perspectives - as an academic within the discipline with knowledge of practice in other institutions; as a member of a professional accrediting body setting standards within the discipline; as an employer of graduates of the course or provider of work-based learning opportunities; as an academic from outside the discipline but with knowledge of the academic standards and practices applied elsewhere in the University; or as a current/former student on the course
* to read and review critically the Department’s Course Evaluation Document and evidence base
* to attend the meeting(s) of the DSR Panel
* collectively, to reach a judgement on the future of the course and contribute to a developmental analysis of the course.

1. **Reviewing the evidence:** The process of review begins with the Department writing a Course Evaluation Document (CED). The aim of the CED, which should be no more than fifteen pages in length, *is to provide the Review Panel with a reflective and self-evaluative, as opposed to descriptive, analysis of the course.* The CED is supported by a range of evidence that should bring together a variety of different perspectives on the course: staff opinions, student opinions, External Examiners’ opinions, the opinion of recent employers of students graduating from the course, views expressed by professional and regulatory bodies, and the opinion of graduates. *The* CED [and supporting evidence] *should be made available to* members of the Review Panel at least three weeks in advance of the meeting of the Panel.
2. **Meeting of the Panel:** The Panel, including student representative(s), meets to review the CED and the evidence. Normally, as a minimum, the event will include the following elements:

* a private meeting of the DSR Panel to identify key issues arising from the PED (30 minutes)
* a meeting of the DSR Panel with the Director of Teaching, Director of Studies and other members of the course team to explore the issues raised by the CED (up to 2 hours)
* a private meeting of the DSR Panel to determine summative outcomes (30 minutes);
* initial feedback of summative outcomes to the Director of Teaching, Director of Studies and course team (15 minutes).

Where feasible an opportunity will also be provided for the DSR Panel to meet with a group of current students and/or alumni.

The agenda for the Panel’s meeting with the Director of Teaching, Director of Studies and course team will normally focus on those areas of particular concern to Panel members arising from their consideration of the CED and evidence bases, and in relation to the identification of good practice. In terms of identifying areas of particular concern, the questions below can be used as prompts. These questions are not intended as an exhaustive list but are intended only to help prompt your reflections.

**Aims and learning outcomes**

* Are the aims and intended learning outcomes of the degree courses:
  + as stated in the course specifications
  + clear and appropriate
  + fully communicated to students, staff and examiners
  + informed by published [Subject Benchmark Statements](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements) and by the [Sector Recognised Standards](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/) ?
* Do External Examiners verify that students are achieving the aims and learning outcomes?

### **Curricula**

### Is the degree course coherent, and of appropriate breadth and scope?

### Is there evidence that content and design are informed by recent developments in teaching and learning, by up-to date scholarship in the discipline, and by relevant professional or occupational requirements?

### Does the curriculum provide all students with the opportunity to achieve, and to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, practical skills, and transferable skills and to experience an inclusive and supportive learning environment?

**Learning opportunities**

* Are teaching and learning strategies clear?
* How is the quality of teaching and learning maintained and enhanced (through, for example, staff development programmes, peer review and observation, mentoring of new staff and integration of visiting staff)?
* How well do staff draw upon their research, scholarship or professional activity to inform their teaching?
* Is there a variety of teaching methods and student learning opportunities appropriate to the needs of different groups of students including part-time, distance learners, mature students, disabled students and international students?
* Are there effective arrangements for admission and induction, which are generally understood by staff and applicants?
* How effective is the communication of information to students?
* Where relevant, is effective use made of placements and student exchanges?
* Are arrangements to support placements appropriate?
* Is there appropriate academic support for students, including written guidance, which is consistent with the student profile and the overall aims of the degree courses?
* Is the collective expertise of the academic staff suitable for effective delivery of the curricula and for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?
* Are there suitable resources in terms of teaching accommodation, equipment, library stocks and IT facilities, and are these deployed in an effective manner?
* Is there effective liaison between the academic staff and the support services?

**Assessment**

### Are assessment strategies clear?

### Are assessment criteria effectively communicated to students?

### Does the assessment design and process enable students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes?

### Is there a variety of assessment methods and feedback appropriate to the content, learning outcomes and the diverse student body?

### Does assessment promote effective student learning?

* Can it be shown that the feedback to students is adequate and appropriate?

### What is the evidence of student achievement (External examiners’ reports, professional accreditation reports, destination data, degree classifications, progression data etc.)?

### Do External Examiners’ reports verify that the standards achieved by learners meet the minimum expectations for awards, as measured against any relevant [Subject Benchmark Statements](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements) and the various levels of the [Sector Recognised Standards](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/)?

### Are there criteria which enable examiners to distinguish between different categories of achievement?

### Are the appropriate standards being met where a course is also professionally accredited?

### Is student progression appropriate to the stated aims and consistent with the attainment of intended learning outcomes?

### What evidence is there that graduates from the course(s) are well prepared for employment?

**Quality and standards**

* How effective are the Department’s procedures for monitoring and evaluating the course, for identifying risks and maintaining standards?
* Does the Department make appropriate use of management information (statistical data, External Examiners’ reports, student evaluations, student representation, student surveys including the National Student Survey where relevant)?
* How is student evaluation collected and used?
* How effective are the arrangements for reacting to the views of External Examiners and of employers/professional bodies?
* What are the potential risks to the quality of course provision over the next five year period (e.g. trends in demand, competitor courses, changes in professional expectations, funding priorities)?

If the course is subject to accreditation by a professional accrediting body, then additional criteria and questions may be incorporated into the Review process, provided that the core areas specified by the University are covered, and the additional criteria are made clear to the Panel in advance. Degree Scheme Reviews will normally take place one year before accreditation in order that the internal review process may inform preparations for external accreditation.

Please note that the Review process should encompass the whole of the course, including:

* part-time and distance learners;
* the diverse student body;
* placement learning/work-based learning or study abroad (see [QA6](https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/qa6-placement-learning/));
* collaborative provision (see [QA20](https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/qa20-collaborative-provision/)). In particular, the evidence and conclusions relating to the delivery by each partner organisation involved with the course/s under review should be clearly differentiated and evaluated;
* student exchanges (see [QA37](https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/qa37-student-exchange-arrangements/)).

1. **Reaching conclusions and recommendations:** In the course of the DSR, the Panel will collectively:

* reach a summative judgement as to whether **each** course should continue in an amended or unamended form

and, where this is the case

* confirm that the aims and learning outcomes are aligned to the appropriate level of the [Sector Recognised Standards](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/) and informed by published [Subject Benchmark Statements](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements)
* determine a proposed action list
* identify aspects of good practice and innovation that may be used to enhance learning and teaching across the University. These help to demonstrate the quality and standards of the course and its quality management to a range of internal and external audiences, such as students and professional accrediting bodies.

It is worth bearing in mind that the process of DSR is an academic one. It is not within the power of the Review Panel to make direct strategic or financial recommendations. For example, it would not be appropriate for a Review Panel to recommend that a set amount of money be invested in an e-learning tool or a new member of staff. However, it would be appropriate for the Review Panel to identify an opportunity for development or a threat to quality, and invite the Department/University to consider an appropriate response.

7 **Reporting:** The Review Panel’s findings are recorded in the Minutes of the meeting. The Minutes form, with the CED, the official record of the DSR process, serving a variety of purposes for a number of audiences. The official record provides the Department with a basis on which to plan the future development of the course. It also provides the University (through its committee structure) with assurances as to the quality and standards of its own provision and will report good practice for internal dissemination in particular. With these purposes and audiences in mind, the attached Minutes template has been produced. The CED should be regarded as the appendix to the Minutes, being the body of the evaluation on which conclusions and recommendations have been reached.

8 **What happens next:** As a member of a Review Panel, you can be assured that your input is treated seriously by the academic Department and by the University. In response to the action list proposed by the DSR Panel, the academic Department draws up an action plan. The Chair of the Panel will be invited to comment on the action plan and confirm that it meets the Panel’s expectations. The relevant Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee will receive a copy of the official record of the DSR process and the departmental action plan with a view to:

* satisfying itself that due process has taken place
* approving the departmental action plan
* determining how implementation of the action plan will be monitored
* identifying any Faculty/School-level issues that may require action
* determining how good practice identified through the DSR process should be shared across the Faculty/School and with partner organisations where appropriate.

Also, an evaluative annual overview report of all DSRs will be submitted to the University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee, which will include the identification of any issues/common themes/ good practice of institutional significance.

9 **Further Advice:** Your first port of call for advice regarding DSRs is the Assistant Registrar in the Faculty/School (or equivalent). Where necessary, Assistant Registrars may obtain further advice on the procedure for DSRs and related documentation from the Quality Enhancement Officer in the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office.

Academic Registry

September 2023

**Degree Scheme Review**

**Minutes of the Degree Scheme Review Event**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Faculty/School/Partner Organisation** |  |
| **Department** |  |
| **Course being reviewed** |  |
| **Contact Person** |  |
| **Date of Review** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Review Team Members** | |
| Chair |  |
| Secretary |  |
| Academic member of staff from another Faculty/School, partner organisation |  |
| Student member(s) from within home Department – current and alumni, e.g. academic rep, if available (identify year, course, etc) |  |
| External member(s) to the University, familiar with UK academic standards in relation to the course and approved by the Chair of the Board of Studies |  |
| Other members e.g. from professional accrediting bodies, employers, placement providers |  |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **DOCUMENTS MADE AVAILABLE IN ADVANCE TO THE PANEL** | | |
|  | **Documents** | **Location/Link/Paper No.** |
| 1 | Course Evaluation Document |  |
| 2 | Course Specifications (and Unit Descriptions where appropriate) |  |
| 3 | Previous annual monitoring reports including External Examiners’ reports |  |
| 4 | Reports from professional or regulatory bodies |  |
| 5 | Trend analysis of statistical data on progression and assessment outcomes |  |
| 6 | Student Survey data including National Student Survey where relevant |  |
| 7 | Other feedback from students representing the diverse student body including directly relevant SSLC issues |  |
| 8 | Prior review reports |  |
| 9 | Course handbooks and other information made available to students |  |
| 10 | Destination and employment data |  |
| 11 | Feedback from employers including placement providers |  |
| 12 |  |  |
| 13 |  |  |
| 14 |  |  |
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| **KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE COURSE EVALUATION DOCUMENT AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE** | | |
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| **DISCUSSION WITH THE DIRECTOR OF TEACHING, DIRECTOR OF STUDIES AND COURSE TEAM MEMBERS** | | |
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| **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL** | | |
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| **GOOD / INNOVATIVE PRACTICE NOTED** | | |
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| **SUMMATIVE JUDGEMENTS FOR EACH COURSE**  including confirmation that the aims and learning outcomes are aligned to the appropriate level of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework and informed by published Subject Benchmarking Statement(s). | | |
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| **OTHER COMMENTS (e.g. Faculty or Institutional level issues)** | | |
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Date of circulation of Panel Minutes to members attending: ………………………………………..

Minutes approved as a correct record by the Chair ……………………………………………….

Date …………………..

(Chair’s Name) ……………………………………………………………….