



Quality Assurance Code of Practice

Degree Scheme Review

This document is primarily intended for:

Heads of Departments/ Schools/ Head of Learning Partnerships Office; Directors of Studies; Directors of Teaching

Assistant Registrars in the Faculty/School (or equivalent)

Chairs and members of review groups/panels (or equivalent)

Queries:

First point of contact –

Assistant Registrars (Faculty/School) or equivalents

Technical specialist - Academic Registry

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Preface: Arrangements during Curriculum Transformation

1. In order to enable the transformation of curricula and approaches to assessment, during this period activity and resource will focus foremost on transformational change, rather than on routine activity. Programme review and development activity will therefore predominantly take place in the context of the Curriculum Transformation programme.
2. Where deemed necessary or appropriate (for example, because of accrediting body requirements), a programme review may be arranged on an *ad hoc* basis. Collaborative and professional doctoral programmes will continue to undertake periodic programme review.
3. A periodic programme review as identified in para. 5 may take the form of the Degree Scheme Review process set out below. The need for any such *ad hoc* reviews, and the process to be followed, will be agreed with Associate Deans (Learning & Teaching)/ Head of Teaching & Learning in the School, in consultation with the Centre for Learning & Teaching and Academic Registry.

4. Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC) maintains oversight of programme review and development activity, receiving reports as appropriate on progress and outcomes (see also section 5 below).
5. These arrangements will be reviewed for the 2022-23 academic year.

Process for Degree Scheme Review

1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 These procedures apply to those taught programmes of study and professional doctorates leading to an award of the University of Bath **for which the need for this form of review has been identified, as set out in the Preface to QA13 above**. This includes programmes involving collaborative provision ([QA20](#)), but excludes validated arrangements.
- 1.2 A Degree Scheme Review (DSR) is a developmental periodic review of a programme of study (or set of cognate programmes), undertaken with the aim of enhancing the programme while providing a robust mechanism by which the University can assure itself of and record the quality of the programme. Curriculum reviews should normally be undertaken within a DSR.
- 1.3 Programmes should be evaluated separately. Where programmes are variants of each other this might be undertaken through one Programme Evaluation Document (PED). Where cognate programmes, which are not variants of each other, are reviewed together a separate PED should be produced for each programme and the panel minutes should demonstrate that each programme has been considered separately. Departments should receive clarification on what constitutes a variant.
- 1.4 The DSR process is a key component of the University's mechanisms for monitoring and review of its programmes. It draws upon the related processes of external examining ([QA12](#)), annual monitoring of units and programmes ([QA51](#)), input from Staff/Student Liaison Committees ([QA48](#)), as well as the views of professional or regulatory accrediting bodies ([QA8](#)).

2. Preparing for Degree Scheme Review

- 2.1 A DSR may be of a single programme of study, or, upon ULTQC's approval of a request from the Faculty/School Learning Teaching and Quality Committee, of a small cognate group of programmes. All programmes should however be evaluated independently within the single DSR.
- 2.2 The aim of the DSR is to bring together a variety of perspectives on the quality management of the programme, including student views, and academic views internal and external to the expertise in the Department/School/partner institution.
- 2.3 Where a programme is delivered jointly or includes units from more than one Department, all Departments should be involved with the DSR including preparation and follow-up, in proportion to their input.
- 2.4 Where a group of programmes is reviewed together, the DSR will differentiate the evidence between programmes where appropriate, to support the final evaluation of **each** programme in the group.
- 2.5 Where a programme is delivered by more than one partner, the DSR will evaluate and differentiate the evidence presented as to the quality and standards demonstrated by each partner institution in delivering the programme(s). This will enable focussed attention on appropriate action required following the DSR.
- 2.6 The Head of Department/School/Learning Partnerships Office (LPO) is responsible for making sure that resources are made available to ensure that a DSR is undertaken in accordance with the schedule established by ULTQC and the expectations set out in this document.
- 2.7 Where a programme is jointly delivered or where ownership is transferred during the period in which the DSR is being undertaken, responsibility for ensuring adequate resources, input and coordination for timely completion through to the progress report stage lies jointly with both Heads of Department/School/LPO.
- 2.8 The Assistant Registrar in the Faculty/School is the first port of call for queries regarding the process and documentation. They are also responsible, with the support of Academic Registry and the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT) as required, for briefing the author(s) of the Programme Evaluation Document (PED), the Chair of and the Secretary to the Review Panel on their roles and responsibilities, the purpose of DSRs and the production of a PED.

Panel membership

- 2.9 In consultation with the Director of Teaching and Director of Studies (Taught Provision), the Assistant Registrar in the Faculty/School will establish the Review Panel. As a minimum, the Panel constitution will be as follows:
 - Chair (see below)
 - one academic member of staff not associated with the programme from another Faculty/School
 - *at least* one student member from within the home Department/School/partner college
 - *at least* one member external to the University who is familiar with UK academic standards in relation to the programme, but not current External Examiners or those who have served in this capacity within the last 5 years.
- 2.10 Members of staff from the department of the programme being reviewed are not allowed to

be members of the Panel. Guidance for members of Review Panels ([Form 1](#)) and also specifically for student members ([Form 3](#)) is available on the Academic Registry web pages.

- 2.11 The **Chair** is an academic member of staff not associated with the programme from another Department/School, being a current or recent member of a Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee or a Head of Department or, for the review of programmes overseen by the LPO, normally a HE Coordinator from a partner institution. The Chair is responsible for:
- agreeing the format of the Review event
 - ensuring all processes and procedures pertaining to the DSR are followed and potential conflicts of interest by Panel members are recorded
 - confirming that the department action plan meets the expectations of the Panel.

External panel members

- 2.12 The external member(s) of the Panel should be approved by the Chair of the relevant Board of Studies. In determining approval of suitable nominees, the following points for the assurance of independence and objectivity should be taken into account:
- the principles for the appointment of External Examiners (see [QA12](#))
 - the detail of the proposed external member(s) CV(s), which should include a section detailing any previous or current association with the University
 - while existing External Examiners may provide valuable advice when reviewing programmes and preparing the PED, for the purposes of impartiality at the panel meeting, other independent external contributors should be made available to comment on the current state of a programme.

Good Practice

While bearing in mind the need to maintain a Review Panel of a manageable size, it is worth considering how the following might be appropriate members of Review Panels for particular programmes:

- academic or professional service staff with expertise in a particular area of provision relevant to the programme being reviewed e.g. e-learning (for reviews of distance learning programmes)
- representatives from partner institutions involved in collaborative provision of a programme as 'internal' members of the Panel
- representatives of employers and/or relevant professional bodies to serve as 'external' members; such people do not need necessarily to be 'familiar with UK academic standards' provided there is at least one 'external' on the Panel who meets this criterion;
- inviting the relevant (SSLC) student Academic Representative(s) to be a student member
- inviting more than one student member, in order to ensure that the interests of the full range of the student body (eg part-time students, mature students, distance learners, international students, students with a disability) are represented
- involving a recent graduate of the programme who has progressed on to further study within the University may be a useful way of capturing the student experience of the programme.

Documentation

- 2.13 From the combination of the paperwork made available to the Review Panel (either in hard copy or electronically) and the meetings which comprise the DSR event, it should be possible for the Review Panel to take into account the following:
- staff opinions (including those of servicing Departments/the School or collaborative partners)
 - student opinions representative of the diverse student body
 - External Examiners' views
 - the opinion of recent employers of students graduating from the programme of study
 - the opinion of placement providers
 - views expressed by professional and regulatory bodies as a result of an accreditation process, where applicable
 - the opinions of graduates
 - adherence to quality standards
 - adherence to overarching University policies and other regulatory systems such as NFAAR and congruence with the University [Education Strategy](#).
- 2.14 To support this, the Director of Studies will ensure a **Programme Evaluation Document (PED)** with supporting evidence is prepared, which will draw upon wide-ranging consultation within the Department(s) concerned with the programme(s)/School/partner institution. The aim of the PED (c. fifteen pages in length, although this may vary according to the complexity of the programme(s) being reviewed), is to provide the Review Panel with **a reflective and self-evaluative**, as opposed to descriptive, analysis of the programme. It may be helpful to think in terms of developing a SWOT analysis - identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the programme.
- 2.15 Where a group of cognate programmes is being reviewed, a separate PED should normally be produced for each programme. Where programmes are variants of each other this might be undertaken through one PED.
- 2.16 **A PED template with associated guidance (Form 2)** supports academic staff in producing a PED. It is expected that a PED will cover the following areas:
- programme(s) details (name(s), award(s), mode(s) of study)
 - educational aims and context
 - learning outcomes
 - curriculum and assessment - the review of the curriculum is central to the DSR process
 - learning opportunities: including learning and teaching strategies, student support and progression, learning resources, study year abroad/student exchange opportunities
 - key issues and areas of good practice relating to placements
 - quality and standards, including compliance with the QAA subject benchmark statement (where available), the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, programme level descriptors and the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
- 2.17 The PED should be supported by an **evidence base**. This should, where possible, draw upon existing data, and avoid unnecessary duplication. The evidence base will usually include:
- Programme Specifications
 - previous annual monitoring reports
 - trend analysis of statistical data on progression and assessment
 - destination data
 - a copy of the relevant QAA subject benchmark statement (if appropriate)
 - a copy of the relevant QAA level descriptor

- reports from professional or regulatory accrediting bodies
- External Examiners' reports
- student survey data, including National Student Survey (NSS)/United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKES)/Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) where relevant
- feedback from students representative of the diversity of the student body
- feedback from employer engagement, particularly in relation to placements
- any prior review reports
- unit descriptions (where appropriate)
- information made available to students, such as programme handbooks.

2.18 The aim is to provide evidence sufficient to illustrate the points made in the PED and to provide the Review Panel with a rounded view of the programme from a variety of perspectives. Within faculties, the Department Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee will normally sign off each final PED on behalf of the Department responsible, before its presentation to a DSR Panel.

Good Practice

One Department invited a group of current students for a focus group meeting to gather informal but insightful feedback on broader aspects of their programme and its future development.

Several Departments put all their collated data in a restricted area of the website for access by staff and panel members, which was considered effective and efficient.

The proceedings of bodies with representation from employers and professional bodies, such as Industrial Advisory Boards, can be a useful source of additional input for the PED and the evidence base.

Event preparation

- 2.19 The format of the DSR event will be arranged in consultation between the Secretary, the Chair and the Department/School. 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 mins)
 - a meeting of the DSR Panel with the Director of Studies and other members of the programme team to explore the issues raised by the PED (up to 2 hours)
 - a private meeting of the DSR Panel to determine summative outcomes (30 minutes)
 - initial feedback of summative outcomes to Director of Studies and programme team (15 minutes).
- 2.20 Where feasible, an opportunity should also be provided for the DSR Panel to meet with a group of current students and/or alumni.
- 2.21 It is expected that the external member(s) will attend the DSR event. Where this is not possible then, subject to the approval of the Chair of the Panel, a written submission to the Panel may be received instead.
- 2.22 The details of the format of the event, the PED and evidence base should be made available to members of the Review Panel at least 3 weeks in advance of the date of the meeting of the Panel.

3. The review event

- 3.1 The Review Panel will take a developmental and strategic view of the whole programme or group of programmes. It will consider the cumulative impact of changes to the programme since the last review (or since the programme's approval). The Review will concentrate upon the development of the programme over the period since the previous DSR rather than its historical evolution, and will consider its potential future enhancement.
- 3.2 The agenda for the Panel's principal meeting with the Director of Studies and programme team should normally focus on those areas of particular concern to Panel members arising from their consideration of the PED and evidence base, and in relation to the identification of good practice. Therefore the agenda may cover any combination of aspects of the following:
- educational aims and context
 - learning outcomes
 - curriculum and assessment (the review of the curriculum is central to the DSR process)
 - learning opportunities
 - quality and standards.

Outcomes

- 3.3 In the course of the DSR, the Review Panel will:
- a) reach a summative judgement as to whether EACH programme should continue, be amended or be withdrawn
and (where a judgement is reached that the programme should continue in an amended or un-amended form)
 - b) record explicitly in the minutes its satisfaction that the programme continues to be aligned to the appropriate level in the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and remains appropriately engaged with any relevant [subject benchmark statements](#)
 - c) determine a proposed action list
 - d) identify areas of good practice that should be shared more widely.
- 3.4 Where a group of cognate programmes has been reviewed together, the Review Panel will reach a summative judgement in respect of **each** programme in the group.

4. Reporting and follow-up

- 4.1 **The official record** of the DSR comprises the PED and the minutes of the DSR Event. The minutes include the summative judgement, the proposed action list and the identified areas of good practice. Where cognate programmes are reviewed together the minutes should demonstrate that each programme has been considered separately. A DSR minute [template](#) is available.
- 4.2 The official record of the DSR must be presented to the Department Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (or equivalent) prior to consideration by the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.
- 4.3 The Director of Studies will ensure that an action plan is produced in response to the action list with a timeline and clearly attributed responsibilities (approved by the Head of Department/ School/LPO) prior to its consideration at Faculty/School level. A [template for the action plan \(Form 4\)](#) is available. Prior to submission to Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee the Chair of the Panel should be invited to comment on the action plan and confirm that it meets the Panel's expectations.

- 4.4 The Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee, and subsequently the Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee (CPAC) in the case of the School, will receive a copy of the PED, the minutes of the DSR Event 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/LPO issues that may require action
 - determining how good practice identified through the DSR process should be shared across the Faculty/School/LPO and partner colleges identifying any issues for referral to ULTQC
 - identifying any instances of good practice to highlight to ULTQC.

In the case of the School of Management, CPAC will also receive the minutes of the School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee relating to the DSR.

- 4.5 Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees, and CPAC in the case of the School, have the discretion to customise action plan monitoring mechanisms to the particular outcomes of each DSR. For example, where a DSR has been very successful with a limited action list, the Committee may take the view that an update within the next Programme Annual Monitoring Report will suffice. Alternatively, in other instances, the Committee may wish to receive a six monthly (or earlier) progress report. The Committee should request further updates until it is satisfied that all actions have been completed.
- 4.6 A representative for the programme, usually the author of the PED, will be invited to attend the Faculty/School meeting at which the report is being considered, in order to receive feedback and offer clarification where required.
- 4.7 The Director of Studies is responsible for ensuring that:
- there is compliance in progressing and monitoring the action plan in line with the mechanism determined by the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee/ CPAC
 - feedback is provided to students and other key stakeholders on the enhancements to the programme that are occurring as a result of their input.

5. Monitoring and review

- 5.1 The Assistant Registrar in the Faculty/School will provide a copy of the PED, minutes of the DSR Panel event and the action plan to Academic Registry, together with the relevant minute of the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.
- 5.2 ULTQC is responsible to Senate for the oversight and monitoring of quality assurance of DSR mechanisms and will consider reports on DSR produced by Academic Registry, to include as appropriate:
- a list of all programmes reviewed
 - confirmation that departmental responses to action lists have been approved
 - identification of any issues/common themes/good practice of institutional significance
 - analysis of compliance with University periodic review process requirements as set out in this Code of Practice
 - evaluation of the effectiveness of the DSR process
 - recommendations for further action.
- 5.3 The official record of each DSR will be made available to the Committee alongside the overview report.

Statement Details	
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Antecedents:	<p><i>Education, Quality and Standards Committee</i></p> <p>15/03/2022 Draft Minute 180</p>
	<p><i>University Learning Teaching and Quality Committee</i></p> <p>13/07/2011 Minute 120 27/09/2011 Minute 160 10 July 2012 Minute 279 9 July 2013 Minute 428 8 July 2014 Minute 552 7 July 2015 Minute 669 5 July 2016 Minute 807 18 Jan 2018 Minute 1002 16 July 2019 Minute 1197 14 Nov 2019</p>
	<p><i>Quality Assurance Committee</i></p> <p>13/07/2010 Minute 1098(4) 03/07/2009 Minute 976(3) 01/07/2008 Minute 8578) 02/07/2007 Minute 742(2) 24/04/2006 Minute 604(1) 08/11/2004 Minute 492 15/10/2003 Minute 411 06/09/2002 Minute 318</p>
	<p><i>Academic Studies Committee</i></p> <p>21/07/1994 18/05/1993 Minute 125 (i)</p>
	<p><i>Senate</i></p> <p>Minutes 8262, 9153(b), 9570(b) and 13357</p>
Related Documentation:	<p>External: QAA UK Quality Code</p> <p>Internal QA51 Annual Monitoring of Units and Programmes QA48 Student Engagement with Quality Assurance and Enhancement</p>
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