



## 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

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### Preface: Arrangements during Curriculum Transformation

1. In order to enable the transformation of curricula and approaches to assessment, activity and resource will focus foremost on transformational change, rather than on routine activity. Course 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 course review may be arranged on an *ad hoc* basis. Collaborative and professional doctoral programmes will continue to undertake periodic course review.
3. A periodic course 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 course 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 2024/25 academic year.

## Process for Degree Scheme Review

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### 1. Purpose and scope

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- 1.1 These procedures apply to those taught courses 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 courses involving collaborative provision ([QA20](#)), but excludes validated arrangements.
- 1.2 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. Curriculum reviews should normally be undertaken within a DSR.
- 1.3 Courses should be evaluated separately. Where courses are variants of each other this might be undertaken through one Course Evaluation Document (CED). Where cognate courses, which are not variants of each other, are reviewed together, a separate CED should be produced for each course and the panel minutes should demonstrate that each course 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 courses. It draws upon the related processes of external examining ([QA12](#)), annual monitoring of units and courses ([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

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- 2.1 A DSR may be of a single course of study, or, upon EQSC's approval of a request from the Faculty/School Learning Teaching and Quality Committee, of a small cognate group of courses. All courses 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 course, including student views, and academic views internal and external to the expertise in the Department/School/partner institution.
- 2.3 Where a course 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 courses is reviewed together, the DSR will differentiate the evidence between courses where appropriate, to support the final evaluation of **each** course in the group.
- 2.5 Where a course 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 course(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 EQSC and the expectations set out in this document.
- 2.7 Where a course 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 Course Evaluation Document (CED), the Chair of and the Secretary to the Review Panel on their roles and responsibilities, the purpose of DSRs and the production of a CED.

### 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 course 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 course, 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 course 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 course 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 courses 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 courses and preparing the CED, 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 course.

#### 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 courses:

- academic or professional service staff with expertise in a particular area of provision relevant to the course being reviewed e.g. e-learning (for reviews of distance learning courses)
- representatives from partner institutions involved in collaborative provision of a course 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 course who has progressed on to further study within the University may be a useful way of capturing the student experience of the course.

## 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 course 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 [Assessment Regulations](#) and congruence with the [University Strategy](#) .
- 2.14 To support this, the Director of Studies will ensure a **Course Evaluation Document (CED)** with supporting evidence is prepared, which will draw upon wide-ranging consultation within the Department(s) concerned with the course(s)/School/partner institution. The aim of the CED (c. fifteen pages in length, although this may vary according to the complexity of the course(s) being reviewed), is to provide the Review Panel with a **reflective and self-evaluative**, as opposed to descriptive, analysis of the course. It may be helpful to think in terms of developing a SWOT analysis - identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the course.
- 2.15 Where a group of cognate courses is being reviewed, a separate CED should normally be produced for each course. Where courses are variants of each other this might be undertaken through one CED.
- 2.16 **A CED template with associated guidance (Form 2)** supports academic staff in producing a CED. It is expected that a CED will cover the following areas:
- course(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, course level descriptors and the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
- 2.17 The CED 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:
- Course 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 [Sector Recognised Standards](#)
  - 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 course handbooks.

2.18 The aim is to provide evidence sufficient to illustrate the points made in the CED and to provide the Review Panel with a rounded view of the course from a variety of perspectives. Within faculties, the Department Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee will normally sign off each final CED 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 course 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 CED 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 CED (30 mins)
  - a meeting of the DSR Panel with the 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 Director of Studies and course 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 CED 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

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- 3.1 The Review Panel will take a developmental and strategic view of the whole course or group of courses. It will consider the cumulative impact of changes to the course since the last review (or since the course's approval). The Review will concentrate upon the development of the course 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 course team should normally focus on those areas of particular concern to Panel members arising from their consideration of the CED 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 course should continue, be amended or be withdrawn  
*and* (where a judgement is reached that the course should continue in an amended or un-amended form)
  - b) record explicitly in the minutes its satisfaction that the course continues to be aligned to the appropriate level in the [Sector-Recognised Standards](#) in England, 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 courses has been reviewed together, the Review Panel will reach a summative judgement in respect of **each** course in the group.

### 4. Reporting and follow-up

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- 4.1 **The official record** of the DSR comprises the CED 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 courses are reviewed together the minutes should demonstrate that each course 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 CED, 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 EQSC
- identifying any instances of good practice to highlight to EQSC.

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 Course 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 course, usually the author of the CED, 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 course that are occurring as a result of their input.

## 5. Monitoring and review

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- 5.1 The Assistant Registrar in the Faculty/School will provide a copy of the CED, 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 EQSC 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 courses 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.



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8 July 2014		Minute 552	
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<i>Quality Assurance Committee</i>	13/07/2010	Minute 1098(4)	
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<b>Related Documentation:</b>	<b>External:</b> <a href="#">QAA UK Quality Code</a>  <b>Internal</b> <a href="#">QA51</a> Annual Monitoring of Units and Courses <a href="#">QA48</a> Student Engagement with Quality Assurance and Enhancement		
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