



Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

Information for Subject/School Staff

Background

The University has for many years had a system of periodic review of subjects, formerly known as Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA). This is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the quality of the provision delivered by Subject/Schools¹. University restructuring in 2010 has provided greater scope for adopting an approach to review that involves a further combining of related subjects within schools where appropriate. The reviews concentrate on teaching, learning and assessment and quality enhancement and assurance matters. Management, research, and resource issues are considered as they relate to these areas. The reviews are conducted on a six-year cycle.

The Review Process

The review is carried out by a Panel made up of a Vice Principal or the Clerk of Senate (who is the Convener), an external subject specialist², a Senate Assessor on the University Court³, an academic from a cognate School, normally within the same College, a representative from the Learning and Teaching Centre, a student representative from outwith the School, normally from another College and an administrator from the Senate Office who is the secretary to the Panel.

To familiarise themselves with a Subject's activities in advance of the visit, Panel members receive a Self Evaluation Report (SER), which the Subject/School prepares, plus supporting background documentation. Subject/Schools are encouraged to consult with students on the SER, perhaps at a staff: student liaison committee meeting or via Moodle, with a view to seeking feedback on whether or not it is a fair reflection of the subject(s)

The Panel visits and meets with representative groups of students on taught programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) and with groups of staff in the Subject(s) under review. The length of the visit and the number of meetings will depend on the scope of the Subject(s) but most visits are held across two days.

After the visit, the Review Panel produces a report which highlights the strengths and achievements of the Subject(s)/School and includes a number of recommendations for changes which should be made - or at least considered - aimed at strengthening provision and thereby further enhancing the teaching provision. Some of these

¹ QAA podcasts on quality assurance available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/what-is-quality/pages/default.aspx

² The external subject specialist will normally be from another Higher Education institution in the UK. In some cases there may be more than one external subject specialist on the Panel, this will depend upon on the size of the Subject(s) and/or on the range of its provision.

³ Senate is the supreme academic authority in the University. A Senate Assessor is a member of Senate, elected by the Senate to represent it on the University Court, the governing body of the University.

recommendations will be for action by the Subject/School; others will be for action by other bodies within the University such as the College, the Library, Estates and Buildings or Human Resources. A draft of the report is sent to the Subject/School for checking for accuracy before it is finalised and considered by the Academic Standards Committee.

The Academic Standards Committee then endorses the report, or asks for it to be amended, and requests that the Subject/School and other bodies named address the recommendations. They are asked to report back one year later on the action taken, or on the reasons for not taking action. Once the report has been endorsed by the Academic Standards Committee, the Head of Subject(s) is asked to distribute it to all who met the Review Panel during the visit: staff and students.

The review process is intended to be positive and constructive, supporting Subject(s) in the enhancement of their provision; it is not punitive.

Meetings with Subject and School Staff

The meetings with Subject/School staff are central to the review process. The Panel will be looking for a balanced view of the Subject(s) from meetings, and hope that those they meet will tell them about the strengths and achievements of the Subject(s)/School and why it is a good place to work and study in, as well as about areas that could be improved or enhanced.

The Head of Subject(s) will receive advance notice of topics that the Panel wishes to explore during the course of the review. These topics will have been identified from the SER and from supporting documentation.

The Panel will hold a meeting with academic staff and others who have pivotal roles in teaching and supporting students or staff (without the Head of Subject/School). This may include: Course or Programme or Year Co-ordinators; the Head of Learning and Teaching; members of the School Learning and Teaching Committee or equivalent; the Examinations Officer; the School Disabilities Co-ordinator; the School Quality Officer; individuals with responsibility for schools liaison, student recruitment, internationalisation and careers advice; secretarial, technical and administrative staff who have specific responsibilities in support of teaching, learning and assessment; and up to three additional members of academic staff involved with teaching who might not otherwise meet with the Review Panel or to achieve a more representative gender balance.

The Panel will also meet with new lecturers/teachers and with teaching assistants (tutors, lab demonstrators), in part to establish the support and preparation for their roles.

The meetings with staff are normally held after meetings with students in order to allow students' views to be discussed with staff. Panels will not formally review students' work or observe teaching.

The Review Panel is grateful to staff for taking part and hopes that once the process has been completed all agree that it has proved useful.

More information, including the Guidelines for Subjects and Schools, can be found on the Senate Office website at:

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/gea/approvalmonitoringandreview/periodicsubjectreview/

**Senate Office
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