Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

Information for Students

Background
The University has for many years had a system of periodic review of Subjects. This is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the quality of the provision delivered by Subjects and Schools\(^1\). The reviews concentrate on teaching, learning and assessment and quality enhancement and assurance matters and can take the form of a review of a single or a combination of related subjects. 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 specialist\(^2\), a Senate Assessor on the University Court\(^3\), an academic from a cognate School, normally within the same College, a representative from the Learning and Teaching Centre, a student representative from outside the School, normally from another College, and an administrator from the Senate Office who is the secretary to the Panel.

To familiarise themselves with the 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. Subjects/Schools are encouraged to consult with students on the SER, perhaps at a staff: student liaison committee meeting, with a view to seeking feedback on whether or not it is a fair reflection of the subject(s) under review.

The Panel visits the Subject/School and meets with representative groups of students on taught programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) and with groups of staff. The length of the visit and the number of meetings may vary 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) under review 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 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.

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\(^1\) QAA podcasts on quality assurance available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/what-is-quality/pages/default.aspx](http://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 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.
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 6 months 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 Senate Office will provide a summary report to the Subject/School, aimed specifically at students, for consideration at staff: student liaison committees. The summary report will be posted on the School/Subject website or Moodle for the wider student body to access.

The review process is intended to be positive and constructive, supporting Subjects/Schools in the enhancement of their provision; it is not punitive.

The views of students studying the Subject(s)
The views of students are central to the review process and we very much hope that you will participate in the review by meeting with the Review Panel. The Panel wants to meet with groups that represent the student body within the Subject(s) and will be looking for a balanced view of the Subject(s) from meetings and other feedback mechanisms. The Panel hope that those they meet will tell them about the strengths and achievements of the Subject/School and why it is a good place to work and study in, as well as areas that could be improved or enhanced.

Detailed below are some of the areas that the Review Panel is likely to explore with you:

- The effectiveness and quality of teaching
- Your opinion of the learning experience
- How you engage with the subject and other University activities
- Your awareness of the aims and intended learning outcomes of programmes and how they match with your expectations
- The quality and usefulness of course documents
- How you find staff in the Subject/School - friendly, approachable, supportive?
- Your opinion of the adequacy of information on assessment (criteria, methods, weightings, coursework deadlines, feedback opportunities, etc)
- The opportunities and mechanisms for providing feedback and how staff respond to the feedback you provide
- Your views on admission and induction procedures
- Your awareness or use of student support services
- Availability and quality of teaching space and learning resources (Library/IT etc)

The Panel will also provide you with an opportunity to raise and discuss other issues.

No members of staff from the Subject(s) are present during the meeting and no comments will be attributed to an individual.

The meetings with students are normally held before meetings with Subject staff in order to allow students’ views to be discussed with staff.

The Senate Office will email a number of students to attend the Review, but students are welcome to volunteer to meet with the Review Panel and we hope that you will be interested in participating. Please contact your Subject/School administrator for further details.

Senate Office, November 2016