

# Quality & Standards Handbook

## Chapter 4

### Periodic Review

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#### 1. Scope of this chapter

- 1.1 Chapter 4 aims to be an accessible and comprehensive guide to the periodic review of taught programmes leading to Oxford Brookes awards, in particular for:
- staff responsible for the quality management of academic provision;
  - regulatory and professional bodies, and other external quality agencies with an interest in the quality and standards of the University's academic provision.
- 1.2 This chapter sets out the procedures to be followed for the periodic review of home programmes: i.e. programmes of study which are delivered by Brookes staff, either on-campus or by distance learning, and for the periodic review of collaborative arrangements (programmes delivered by 'flying faculty' should be reviewed under the procedures for collaborative provision, as they require a submission to LPAG for permission to renew). The basic process is similar for the periodic review of home and collaborative provision; however, there are some key differences [see section 4 below], and colleagues planning periodic reviews of collaborative arrangements should also refer to Chapter 5 of the Quality & Standards Handbook.
- 1.3 The periodic review process complements the University's annual programme review exercise, which is described in Chapter 3 of the Quality & Standards Handbook, reflecting the sector expectation articulated in the UK Quality Code (and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance) that higher education institutions should periodically undertake a broader review of the continuing validity and relevance of the programmes they offer. It is expected that detailed modifications to existing provision to ensure programmes remain up to date will be made on an on-going basis, as part of the normal annual review cycle, rather than through the periodic review process, enabling periodic review panels to focus on the broader issues relating to the quality, and enhancement, of learning and teaching.
- 1.4 Periodic review is not a mechanism for the full re-validation of programmes, which should be dealt with through the process described in Quality & Standards Handbook chapter 2, on Programme design and approval. However, the self-evaluation document should include some reflection on whether any of the programmes within the scope of the review will require re-validation in the near future, to assist with future scheduling of programme approval activity in the Faculties.
- 1.5 If any of the programmes in the Subject group under review are in the process of being closed, the periodic review panel should ensure that appropriate action is being taken by the School/Department to protect the interests of the remaining students while they complete their studies. The programme closure process is set out in section 5 of chapter 2 of the Quality & Standards Handbook.

## **2. Principles and overview of the periodic review process**

- 2.1** The Brookes periodic review process is undertaken to provide assurance to the Academic Board, and relevant external audiences, that the quality and standards of the programmes under review meet the expectations of the discipline, sector and profession, and are delivered and managed with their students' interests at heart (i.e. promoting high standards, adopting a strong pedagogic approach to teaching and learning; and offering value for money).
- 2.2** The periodic review process is designed to enable the University to demonstrate that it meets national and international expectations with respect to the monitoring and review of the quality and standards of its provision, as well as those of the professional bodies involved in accrediting the University's programmes. Equally, the process aims to provide an effective mechanism for ensuring that the University's strategic objectives relating to the enhancement of the learning experience are being appropriately implemented at Subject level. In line with these aims, periodic review provides an opportunity for staff to take a holistic view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on programmes within a Subject cluster (or collaborative partnership), and to take action to enhance the provision, in partnership with their students.
- 2.3** The principles of *independence, externality, evidence* and *enhancement*, as set out in chapter 2 (Programme design and approval) of the Quality & Standards Handbook, also apply to periodic review. The principles underpinning the periodic review procedure flow from these earlier principles, in that it aims to:
- i. promote reflection by Subject teams on the quality of the learning experience they provide for their students, as indicated by student satisfaction and student outcomes measures, and on the quality of teaching across the provision;
  - ii. identify good practice for sharing more widely, either within the Faculty or across the University;
  - iii. encourage Subject teams to look forward and identify potential risks that may affect the academic quality and standards of the provision in the near future (in the context of current School/Department strategic objectives, and likely changes in the discipline/professional environment) and identify the support, or changes to provision, that may be required to address these risks;
  - iv. engage staff: by providing a mechanism for an open, constructive dialogue between panels and Subject teams; and encouraging a sense of shared responsibility for identifying good practice and addressing areas for development, through the involvement of internal and external academic peers in the process;
  - v. engage students and focus on the student experience: by holding panel meetings with current students (and, if wished, recent alumni) from the programmes under review, and including a student as a full member of all periodic review panels;
  - vi. draw on stakeholder perspectives: by taking into account the outcomes of professional body reviews, and encouraging Subject teams to seek feedback from a wide range of stakeholders (students, employers, service users, placement providers, etc) to inform the evaluation phase of the review process.
- 2.4** Periodic review of on-campus provision is carried out at a maximum interval of six years for home provision, with a five-year cycle for collaborative provision (in line with the standards contract length). In general, a programme should only be involved in one periodic review per cycle, but there may be occasions where a review is brought forward (for example, when a programme moves into a new Subject group). No programme should run for longer than six years without a review. Since a significant proportion of the University's programmes of study lead to professional accreditation, the University is also accountable to a range of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and periodic review may, where appropriate, be aligned with periodic professional body reviews, with the inclusion of PSRB representatives on review panels.
- 2.5** The outcome of a periodic review exercise will be the production of a report from the review panel to the Quality & Learning Infrastructure Committee - to provide assurance to the University of the quality and standards of the provision under review - and the development of an action plan for enhancement by the Subject team, in response to the recommendations of the review panel. The enhancement plan is monitored by Subject Committees, and by Faculty AESC/QLICs, through the annual review process.

2.6 The periodic review process is evaluated annually, through the analysis of review reports contained in the Annual Quality Review prepared by the Head of APQO for consideration by QLIC and through feedback from panel members and chairs via post-event evaluation surveys. Training will also be provided by the APQO throughout the year for panel chairs, members and secretaries, and other colleagues with an interest in the programme approval process.

### 3. Review process

3.1 Periodic review should be regarded as a holistic process, rather than focusing only on the panel event. The activities described below are intended to promote the engagement of the Programme/Subject team with a wide range of stakeholders and advisers throughout the preparatory phase of reflection and review, providing a firm foundation for the formal discussions with the review panel. The process culminates in the development of an action plan for the enhancement of the student experience, which in turn forms a framework for the further development of teaching and learning on the Programme/s through the next six-year cycle. It is key to the success of the periodic review exercise that the Subject development team is fully engaged with the reflective process, and that there is an effective engagement between the Subject team and the review panel, who will be asked to review a draft of the SED and provide formative feedback in advance of the event. This dialogue is intended to promote transparency and a culture of collegiality between Subject teams and review panels, in which all players share responsibility for the continuous enhancement of the learning experience at Oxford Brookes.

3.2 Periodic reviews may be undertaken by Programme cluster, Subject group, Department or School, depending on the size and nature of the provision concerned. The schedule of periodic reviews is coordinated by the APQO. It is reviewed annually, and the overall scope and timing of periodic reviews for the following year agreed through consultation between the APQO, the Faculty Quality Team and the Heads of Department/School involved. The schedule of relevant professional body accreditation reviews will also be a consideration in planning for periodic review, in order to enable Subject teams to draw on the outcomes of PSRB reviews in developing the SED for periodic review.

#### 3.3 Preparation phase - agreeing timescales; establishing the PDT and Panel; consulting stakeholders; producing, and seeking formative feedback on, the SED

3.3.1 The date of a periodic review, and the associated deadlines for submission of documentation (see guidance note G4.3 for a suggested timeline), will be agreed between the relevant Subject Coordinator/s or Programme Lead/s, the Faculty ADSE or PL (Quality Assurance) and the link Quality Assurance Officer at the start of the academic year during which the review is to take place. The duration of the event should also be agreed at this time, according to the agreed scope of the review – review events should not normally last more than one full day, but additional time may be required for large Subject groups, or for events incorporating professional body review.

3.3.2 The discussions and activities among programme teams in the period leading up to the event at which the formal meetings with the periodic review panel will take place are key to the success of the review. It is during this phase that the Subject Coordinator or Programme Lead will establish a programme development team (PDT), made up of members of the delivery teams for the programmes under review, and such advisers as they feel necessary, to enable them to carry out a full and frank review of the quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the provision, and to develop a Self-Evaluation Document that will provide a strong narrative for discussion with the review panel. The production of the SED is the primary focus for the PDT, but it is also a forum for keeping track of the practical preparations for the review panel meetings; and the PDT may be asked to provide updates on progress to the Associate Dean (Student Experience) from time to time during the preparation phase.

3.3.3 Membership of the PDT may vary, but should typically include a minimum of:

- i. Chair - the relevant Subject Coordinator or Programme Lead (or Liaison Manager, for collaborative provision). If the periodic review covers provision managed by a number of Programme Leads/Subject Coordinators, they should all be members of the PDT, and the Head of Department should nominate a Chair from among this group. The PDT Chair is responsible for coordinating the work of the PDT, ensuring agreed deadlines are met, for liaising with staff, students, partners and other stakeholders, as appropriate, and for proposing external members for the review panel;
- ii. a range of academic staff involved in the delivery of the programmes under review;

- iii. link Quality Assurance Officer, responsible for providing advice on the requirements of the programme approval process, including documentation and regulatory matters, and for approving the membership of the programme approval panel;
- iv. Faculty Quality Officer, Programme Portfolio Manager, or Academic Administration Manager, depending on who will subsequently act as panel secretary, responsible for keeping a record of action points arising from PDT meetings, for proposing internal approval panel members, and for coordinating the circulation of documentation to the panel;
- v. Students and other stakeholders may be invited to join the PDT, as appropriate, and should be consulted on the draft SED through Subject Committees or other relevant forums. Advice should also be sought, as necessary, from Directorates, e.g. the link developer (OCSLD), the link Curriculum & Student Information Manager (Registry), and the Academic Liaison Librarian.
- vi. For reviews of collaborative provision, partner staff must be invited to join the PDT (this may be via Skype/video-conference for international partners).

*NOTE: The PL(Quality Assurance & Validation), or equivalent, and the Associate Dean (Student Experience) may also wish to attend PDT meetings in order to assure themselves that the PDT is adhering to the agreed deadlines and that good progress is being made in the preparation of the SED and associated evidence. They should, as a minimum, be treated as members of the PDT in respect of circulation of documents, agendas and action points, but may choose to maintain an overview of progress via regular updates from the PDT Chair rather than attendance at meetings.*

3.3.4 At this point in the process, the Faculty Quality Officer will liaise with the Link QAO and the Students' Union to convene a panel (see 3.3.5 below). It is the responsibility of the Programme Lead/Subject Coordinator to propose the external panel member/s for approval by the link QAO. Where a periodic review event is being held conjointly with a professional body, it is likely that the PSRB will nominate a representative for the panel. As with conjoint programme approval events, it is important that the panel is constituted so as to include the knowledge and expertise to deal with the potentially complex issues that may arise (this has particular implications for the selection of the panel member from within the Faculty). The membership of the panel must be approved, in advance of documentation being sent out, by the link QAO – names should be submitted via the Faculty Quality Officer using the panel nomination form (T4.1). Details of the external panel member nominee should be submitted on form T4.2, after seeking guidance from the link QAO.

3.3.5 The periodic review panel should be constituted as follows:

- Chair: a suitably senior and experienced member of staff who is independent of the Faculty in which the Subject under review is managed. (Note: the Associate Dean Student Experience of the Faculty under review has the right of attendance)
- Internal panel member from another Department/School within the Faculty;
- Internal panel member from another Faculty;
- At least one external panel member from another UK higher education institution (more than one may be required, depending on the scope of the review);
- External panel member/s representing relevant professional body/ies, if the exercise is being undertaken in partnership with a PSRB (this member is normally nominated by the professional body);
- (Optional) an external panel member representing the profession/industry, if required (e.g. practitioner, for highly professionally-oriented subject areas);
- Student panel member\* (except collaborative provision);
- Link Quality Assurance Officer;
- Secretary: normally the Faculty Quality Administrator (for collaborative arrangements, the link QAO will be the panel secretary).

*\*The student panel member may be currently studying on a programme within the Department/School being reviewed. The job description (G4.2) and an application form (T4.5) for student panel members are available from the APQO website, and training will be provided for successful applicants.*

3.3.6 Once a draft SED has been produced (using the format set out in the APQO guidance note G4.1), it should be circulated to the review panel, via the panel secretary, for formative feedback. The chair and internal members of the review panel will review the SED, bearing in mind the aims of the periodic review process and the key areas for discussion set out in 3.4 below. They will provide

feedback suggesting areas of the SED which would benefit from further evaluation or information prior to the review event. Panel members should also give an indication of the main topics they would like to explore with staff and students at the review meetings – this will assist the panel in agenda-setting on the day of the event, facilitate the Programme/Subject team's preparation for meeting with the panel, and promote the transparency and collegiality of the process.

- 3.3.7 This feedback should be returned to the panel chair and secretary within two weeks (the deadline for responses to be agreed at the time of circulation, but the timescales should ideally allow for the feedback to be returned to the PDT at least one month in advance of the periodic review meeting); they will collate the points raised, ordered under appropriate headings, and return them to the Subject team, via the PDT chair, for discussion and further work on the SED, as necessary. Alternatively, the chair of the review panel may choose to provide feedback to the PDT Chair verbally. Once the SED has been revised and completed to the satisfaction of the PDT, it should be submitted to the ADSE/PLQA for signing off on behalf of the Faculty AESC/QLIC and circulated to the panel (by the panel secretary) together with the supporting evidence (see 3.4 below).

### **3.4 Documentation – SED and supporting evidence**

- 3.4.1 The key document - providing a narrative to draw together the evidence available, and forming the basis for the review - is the Self-Evaluation Document (SED). The narrative in this document should be focused, evidence-based and evaluative, enabling the panel to develop a good understanding of the area under review. It should provide evidence that the team has engaged in a reflective process during the preparation of the SED; and demonstrate the engagement of the Subject team with current developments in teaching, learning and assessment, and their commitment to promoting student learning within the programmes under review. The SED should give an evidence-based account of the strengths of the provision and of the key areas for future development, which will assist the panel in focusing the discussions on key areas and in making their recommendations.
- 3.4.2 The evidence underpinning the SED should also be provided for the panel - it is up to the Subject team to negotiate with the Faculty Quality Team, link QAO and panel Chair with respect to the format for submission of the evidence, but it is recommended that as much of the documentation as possible should be circulated electronically, (for example, in clearly labelled folders on a memory stick or Google or Moodle site, to assist navigation around what may be a substantial amount of information).
- 3.4.3 As a minimum, this evidence should include:
- Self-Evaluation Document (in the format set out in guidance note G4.1, which may be used as a template);
  - Department strategic plan/objectives;
  - Summary of results of any (internal or external) student surveys for the subject under review, including action plans developed in response;
  - Summary staff CVs outlining current teaching and research activities and staff development undertaken;
  - Operations Manual (for collaborative provision);
  - *For each programme included in the scope of the review:*
    - Up to date programme specification;
    - Current programme handbook;
    - Module information (presented on up to date module descriptor templates)
    - Annual programme review reports since the last periodic review;
    - External examiners' reports (including programme team responses) since the last periodic review;
    - PSRB and other external quality reports, if applicable, for review exercises undertaken since the last Brookes periodic review;
    - Programme Committee minutes since the last periodic review, and minutes of any other formal staff-student meetings;
    - The report of the approval or most recent review of the programme/s (especially for collaborative provision).

### **3.5 The review event – panel meetings with staff and students**

- 3.5.1 The Faculty Quality Officer, link QAO and Subject Coordinator/Programme Lead chairing the PDT will finalise the agenda for the review event, and ensure that invitations are sent by the appropriate individual to staff, students and any other stakeholders being asked to meet with the panel on the day/s of the event. The agenda for periodic review events will be agreed with the review panel chair, according to the provision under review, but should normally include:
- i. An initial private meeting of the review panel to agree on the issues to be explored;
  - ii. At least one meeting with teaching staff, to include Programme Leads and Subject Coordinators within the Subject group and a range of module leaders for the provision under review – the Head of Department/School or Programme Lead may wish to give a brief introductory presentation at the start of the first meeting, as agreed in advance with the panel Chair and link QAO;
  - iii. At least one meeting with current students (and, if relevant, graduates) – panels may wish to meet with undergraduate and postgraduate students separately;
  - iv. Private meeting of the review panel to formulate conclusions and agree on recommendations for enhancement of the provision;
  - v. Meeting with key staff to provide feedback.
- 3.5.2 If possible (particularly for events being held abroad to consider the re-approval of international collaborative arrangements), a meeting should be held between the panel Chair, the link QAO and the PDT chair in advance of event, to confirm that the panel is properly constituted, the review documentation is complete, members of the Subject group/programme team are ready to meet with the panel, and, if necessary, identify any additional requirements for the event.
- 3.5.3 Panels should use the key headings in the SED (refer to G4.1: guidance on the format for the SED), guided by the issues highlighted by the Subject/Programme team to construct the areas for discussion with programme teams and students, so as to gain a broad understanding of how the Subject/Programme team ensures they are providing an excellent and inclusive teaching and learning experience enabling high standards of student attainment across all student groups. Key areas for discussion include how the Subject/Programme team:
- i. ensures the continuing appropriateness of the curriculum in order to promote student achievement, meet relevant disciplinary and professional requirements, and contribute to University strategic objectives relating to the quality of teaching and learning.
  - ii. employs effective and appropriate assessment strategies to promote learning, develop students' assessment literacy and provide them with the opportunities to achieve the learning outcomes of the programmes under review.
  - iii. employs a range of teaching and learning strategies which are effective in promoting student learning, enabling students to achieve the Graduate Attributes, and preparing them for employment.
  - iv. uses effective strategies for induction and ongoing academic support so as to facilitate students' progression and completion of their programmes of study.
  - v. effectively deploys learning resources to support student learning on the programmes under review.
  - vi. elicits feedback from students, peers, and other stakeholders, to inform and plan activities to enhance the quality of the student experience.
- 3.5.4 Panels should bear in mind that, while annual review focuses on the details of individual programmes, periodic review should take a broader view of the context within which the programmes are being delivered, i.e. there should be an appropriate focus on the quality management and enhancement of the student learning experience across the Programme/Subject group. In particular, panels should satisfy themselves that appropriate measures are being taken to implement current University enhancement agendas (e.g. inclusive teaching and assessment).

### 3.6 Outcomes of periodic reviews and forward planning

3.6.1 The possible outcomes of the review are:

- i. The panel has full confidence in the management of the academic standards and the quality of the student experience on the provision under review, and endorses the Subject group's plans for enhancement as set out in the SED (section H);
- ii. The panel has confidence in the management of the academic quality and standards of the provision in the Subject under review, but makes recommendations\* for further action to be taken by the Subject/Programme team to enhance the learning experience offered. Recommendations may be categorised as *advisable (medium priority)* or *desirable (low priority)*, according to the importance of the action in maintaining or enhancing the student experience.
- iii. The panel considers that *essential (high priority)* action is required in specific areas in order to protect the academic or professional standards of the provision under review, and sets conditions which must be met before the next cohort of students is enrolled (see also section 3.6.7 below where a panel has serious cause for concern).

\* NOTE: The panel may also make recommendations for action for consideration by the Faculty Executive Group (e.g. where they have concerns about the resourcing, including staffing, or market demand for any of the programmes under review), or by the Quality & Learning Infrastructure Committee.

3.6.2 Conditions for continuing approval should not normally need to be set unless specific action is required to ensure the correct implementation of the University's academic regulations and policies, including - for collaborative arrangements - the provisions of operations manuals and legal agreements. It should be clear to which programmes the conditions apply, and action to meet the conditions must be complete before the enrolment of the next cohort of students.

3.6.3 The panel should also highlight any practice that they consider to be commendable, and worthy of wider dissemination beyond the Subject area under review. The Faculty AESC/QLIC (when it receives the review report) should discuss how this dissemination can be undertaken most effectively.

3.6.4 The Panel Secretary will prepare a report of the event, using the appropriate template (T4.3). Once the report has been agreed by the link QAO and panel chair, and then by all other members of the review panel, it should be circulated to the relevant Department/School/Partner staff and to the Faculty Quality Team (ADSE, PLQA, and Quality Officer). This process should have been completed within one month of the date of the review.

3.6.5 The confirmed report will be submitted to the Quality & Learning Infrastructure Committee, to:

- provide assurance to Academic Board that the review panel was properly constituted and the review exercise properly conducted, including reference to appropriate internal and external reference points;
- agree that appropriate recommendations have been made by the panel, and note progress made by the Subject/Programme team in addressing them;
- agree on the response to any recommendations for institutional action that have been made by the panel;
- note any good practice that has been identified, and consider how it might be more widely disseminated.

3.6.6 The Faculty AESC/QLIC will consider the report and monitor the Subject/Programme team's finalised enhancement plan. The Faculty AESC/QLIC will also consider how any Faculty-level action should be addressed or commendable practice disseminated. Where relevant, the periodic review report should also be considered by the Faculty Executive group. The implementation of the enhancement plan will be monitored through the relevant Subject Committee/s, with a commentary on progress included in the action plans within the annual programme review report/s for the relevant programmes.

3.6.7 If a panel has serious concerns about the academic or professional standards, or quality of delivery, of any of the provision under review, and considers that urgent action is required to protect the student learning experience, they may require suspension of recruitment to individual programmes until the issues have been resolved. The Head of Department and Associate Dean (Student

Experience) should establish a management group to ensure that the issues are addressed as soon as possible, providing progress reports to both the Faculty Executive and Faculty AESC/QLIC. Once the issues have been addressed to the satisfaction of both groups (which may, if considered necessary, involve the closure of specific programmes), a final report on the action taken will be provided for QLIC and the periodic review will then be considered completed.

#### **4. Collaborative provision**

- 4.1** Refer also to chapter 5 (section 8) of the Quality & Standards Handbook for further details of the approval monitoring and review of different types of collaborative provision.
- 4.2** The periodic review of collaborative provision differs from home provision in that collaborative arrangements are reviewed at a maximum interval of five years\*, in line with the standard length of University contracts; and that the process generally involves the review both of partnership/delivery arrangements as set out in the Operations Manual, and of the academic programme performance. Renewal of the contract for a further five year period is dependent on the re-approval of the academic programme/s and of the delivery arrangements.
- \*An extension of one year may be granted in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of LPAG and QLIC, provided that there has been a good track record during the course of the current contract, in respect of both quality assurance requirements and financial agreements. An extension should not be granted for arrangements that are closing.*
- 4.3** Where a programme revalidation is required, the re-design process may be incorporated with the periodic review process if timescales coincide. Where a programme delivered by a number of partner organisations requires full revalidation of the programme, but the renewal of contracts is due at different times, the Faculty responsible for managing the programme should agree, in consultation with the APQO and the partner/s involved, on an appropriate schedule for the approval and implementation of the revised provision.

A periodic review should also be undertaken where a collaborative arrangement is to be discontinued and students will remain on the programme/s beyond the date of expiry of the current contract; in order to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect the academic standards of the provision, and the interests of the remaining students registered for the Brookes award/s, during the period leading up to final closure of the partnership.