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Part 8

Periodic Academic Review

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1   Scope of Academic Review

1.1   Academic Review is a systematic evaluation of the operation of an academic grouping within UEL. It involves a self-critical evaluation of performance by the grouping concerned followed by a review by a panel comprising members drawn from across UEL including a student and external subject specialists drawn from other higher education institutions and from business and/or the professions.

1.2   Academic review may be at School level, or, in the case of a large School, cover an academically coherent grouping of subject areas or programme areas. An Academic Review will cover all taught programmes (undergraduate, postgraduate, post-experience, professional doctorate, distance learning) offered within the designated academic grouping as it is recognised that the overall management of the range of programmes offered is crucial to the quality of the provision. Once throughout the six-year cycle, a school's research degrees provision will be considered as part of an academic review.

1.3   The Learning and Teaching Quality Committee agrees the Academic Review schedule six years in advance, following consultation with the relevant Deans of Schools. There is a typical review rate of four Academic Reviews conducted in each academic year. However, this may fluctuate as a result of other considerations.

1.4   Each academic grouping is subject to Academic Review at least once every six years. However, the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee reserves the right to conduct an Academic Review at any time.

1.5   An Academic Review **cannot** be used to approve new programmes. The purpose of the review and structure of the review event is not designed to deal with such proposals. There are separate procedures for the approval of new programmes.

2   Purpose of Academic Review

2.1   Academic Review evaluates programmes offered by a School/discipline area and confirms that they continue to meet UEL's Quality Criteria and engage with relevant national benchmarks, frameworks and codes of practice.

2.2 Academic Review helps the School and the institution to assure the quality of the total student experience. Academic Review aims to review all aspects of the student experience and capture those which are outside the immediate confines of the programme which have an impact on the quality of that experience.

2.3 Academic Review helps the School and the institution to evaluate the extent to which the School/discipline area has been successful in achieving its stated aims and objectives within the overall context of the UEL vision.

3 Preparing for Academic Review

3.1 The Dean of School and the Quality Manager (Validation and Review) establish a series of regular meetings with relevant staff from the academic grouping to be reviewed in order to co-ordinate preparation for the Academic Review.

3.2 The first meeting will determine the approximate timing of the review and discuss the requirements for external representation on the review panel.

3.3 The Quality Manager (Validation and Review) provides advice and guidance throughout the process.

3.4 The school quality committee is responsible for co-ordinating a School's preparations for Academic Review.

4 Documentation

4.1 Central to the Academic Review process is the Self-Evaluation Document (SED). The document fulfils two functions:

4.1.1 To provide a frank and critical appraisal of the academic grouping under review by evaluating performance and changes since the last review, the quality of the learning opportunities offered to students and the standards achieved by students;

4.1.2 To identify perceived strengths and areas for development by referring to appropriate evidence, to indicate actions being undertaken to address such areas for development and to comment on the success, to date, of such actions.

4.2 The Self-Evaluation Document is structured as follows:

- Overall aims of the academic provision under review;

- evaluation of the academic provision under review - learning outcomes;

- evaluation of the academic provision under review - curricula and assessment;

- evaluation of the academic provision under review - quality of the student experience;

- evaluation of the academic provision under review - maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality.

4.3   Further guidance notes on the writing the Self-Evaluation Document are available from Quality Assurance and Enhancement and are provided to the academic grouping under review at the beginning of their preparation period.

4.4   Programme Specifications for all programmes included in the review process should be made available to the panel in advance of the review either as an appendix to the Self-Evaluation Document or in electronic format.

4.5   Student Handbooks for all programmes included in the review process should be made available to the panel in advance of the review either as an appendix to the Self-Evaluation Document or in electronic format.

5   Panel Membership and Selection

5.1   The size of an Academic Review panel depends on the size of the provision to be reviewed. Normally, it will consist of seven people.

5.2   A member of staff with significant experience in quality assurance, and who is independent of the academic grouping under review, is appointed as Chair of the panel (usually a member of the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee).

5.3   There will normally be three external subject specialists on a panel. One of these members should be a representative from an employer or professional accrediting body.

5.4   In order to involve the widest possible range of staff from across the institution and improve overall engagement and understanding, each review team will also include two members of UEL staff, one of whom who has not previously been involved in an Academic Review (as a reviewer). No panel member may be closely associated with the academic grouping under review.

5.5   A current UEL student or a sabbatical officer from the Students Union will normally form part of the panel. The student selected for each review will not be a student on one of the programmes under review, but may be from another School or another subject area within the School.

5.6   Early in the process, the Dean of School (or designated co-ordinator) nominates appropriate external subject advisers to take part in the review. The external subject advisers must be from different institutions. The

suitability of the external nominees is determined by the chair of the event. The following criteria are taken into account:

5.6.1 The depth of subject knowledge.

5.6.2 The relevance of subject knowledge.

5.6.3 Prior experience of teaching on programmes at the same level or above.

5.6.4 Impartiality (the nominee should not have any formal links with the School offering the programme during the last five years as a former member of staff or the last three years as an external examiner).

5.6.5 Professional expertise.

5.6.6 Prior experience as a QAA reviewer or auditor.

5.7 It is unlikely that any single nominee will meet all the requirements. In making judgments about the suitability of the proposed external subject advisers the chair takes into account the overall balance of expertise presented by the external advisers. The chair may reject a nominee or require the Dean of School (or designated co-ordinator) to propose additional external subject advisers in order to ensure the balance of the panel.

5.8 The membership of the review panel is agreed with the academic grouping under review.

6 Agenda for Academic Review

6.1 Academic Review is conducted over a period of two days.

6.2 An Academic Review panel reports on the following areas:

6.2.1 Evidence of academic standards: the match between aims and objectives and learning outcomes, evidence of achievement of learning outcomes, the match between student achievement and UEL's regulations on the standards of awards, accuracy and delivery of programme specifications, accuracy of student handbooks, currency and validity of programmes in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline and practice in its application, and the research environment (where the review includes research degrees provision).

6.2.2 Quality of the student experience, teaching and learning (including the use of Moodle), student support, guidance from admission to completion, staff development (including peer review), and learning resources.

6.2.3 Activities to ensure and enhance standards and quality: use of external examiners, second and anonymous marking, student and employer

feedback mechanisms, effective monitoring of performance, use made of external reference points such as Subject Benchmark Statements and other professional and regulatory body requirements, local procedures for the approval of new programmes, implementation and effectiveness of the Review & Enhancement Process, and school based procedures for monitoring progress of postgraduate research students (where the review includes research degrees provision) .

6.3 Although all panel members contribute to the discussion and decision making on all of the above areas, each panel member will focus on one of the above areas and provides a written response which will be used to help prepare the final report.

6.4 The further documentation listed below must be made available to the panel during the review:

- Review & Enhancement Process reports (including appendices) and action plans for the three previous years. This should include the School Overview report as well as the relevant subject area and programme reports;

- annual school postgraduate research reports to Research Degrees Subcommittee for the three previous years (where the review includes research degrees provision) and for one year only (where the review does not include research degrees provision);

- external examiners' reports and responses for the three previous years;

- minutes of school committees for the three previous years (including; quality; school board (or equivalent); learning and teaching; research degrees; knowledge exchange; and portfolio development committees);

- evidence of the school's engagement in the observation of learning and teaching;

- academic staffing list, staff CV's and profile (giving main teaching/research interests and administrative responsibilities);

- module folders for all modules under review (see separate guidance on contents); these will include module guides (paper or electronic) and examples of students' work including: examination papers/scripts, course work, project/lab reports, project reports and dissertations;

- PGR induction programmes and evidence of postgraduate research skills development planning (where the review includes research degrees provision);

- examples of supervision records for both PGR and taught programmes (where the review includes research degrees provision);

- examples of PGR annual reviews for the three previous years (where the review includes research degrees provision);

- data and student feedback (derived from the National Student Survey) published on the Unistats website;

- UEL Student Satisfaction Surveys;

- UEL Postgraduate Research Student Surveys and national Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys (where the review includes research degrees provision);

- report and action plan from the previous periodic review process;

- minutes of employer liaison boards (where they exist);

- any other documentation referenced in the Self-Evaluation Document.

The panel will also have access to supporting material available on Moodle for all modules under review.

6.5   Additional documentation may be requested by the review team to assist them with their deliberations. Such documentation might include:

- A staff development statement (covering both subject development and pedagogical development and including a research profile and details of other staff development activities e.g. provision for staff induction);

- list of research/consultancy publications (following the classification used for the research excellence framework);

- reports by professional bodies (where appropriate);

- student intake and progression data covering the last three intakes;

- a description of student support/welfare services, plus any recent analysis of student use, subject to normal constraints of confidentiality in respect of counselling and similar activities;

- marking and feedback sheets and assessment criteria.

6.6   The programme for the review is agreed during the preparation period. Variations to the standard programme to reflect the character of the academic grouping under review are acceptable provided that all areas described in paragraph 6.2 are adequately covered.

6.7   Where more than one academic grouping is being considered during one Academic Review, it may be necessary to provide feedback which discriminates between the different groupings. Occasionally this may mean

holding separate meetings for different groupings. Agreement on how this will be managed is established during the preparation period.

6.8 The programme includes at least one meeting with existing students, former students and, where appropriate, and those involved in placement or work-based learning.

6.9 The programme includes meetings with staff to discuss the various aspects on which the panel reports.

7 Arrangements for Academic Review

7.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement is responsible for:

- Convening the Academic Review panel;

- sending out documentation to panel members;

- making arrangements for overnight accommodation for external members;

- room bookings;

- catering arrangements;

- servicing the meeting.

7.2 The Dean of School (or designated co-ordinator) is responsible for:

- Providing the agreed documentation for circulation in advance by the deadline;

- arranging for the attendance at relevant parts of the event of relevant school and service staff;

- arranging for the attendance of any agreed external people, such as former students, employers or representatives of collaborating institutions;

- arranging for the attendance of current students.

8 Outcomes of Academic Review

8.1 In reaching its judgement, the panel has regard to the UEL Manual of General Regulations & Policies, the Quality Criteria, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

8.2   The conclusions of the review represent the views of the panel as a whole. The panel may set conditions and make recommendations. Where conditions are set, the panel should specify the deadline by which these should be met.

8.3   For Academic Review to serve its purpose, it is essential that feedback be provided quickly and in sufficient detail to enable improvements to be made at an appropriate pace. Oral feedback will be provided to the academic grouping at the end of the review, followed by a full written report.

8.4   The written report highlights the strengths of the provision and identifies proposed improvements which can be fully considered and acted upon at School and institutional level.

8.5   The Academic Review panel will normally confirm that the programmes under review merit continued approval.

8.6   If the review panel has fundamental concerns about the quality of provision it may decide that a second review meeting should be held. If, by the date of the second meeting, there has been inadequate improvement, the panel has the right to recommend to Academic Board that a programme, or series of programmes, within the scope of the review, cease to recruit until the relevant improvements have been made. It will be for the review panel to determine how much time the School/discipline area under review is given to make the required improvements.

9   The Report of the Academic Review

9.1   Following the review, a draft report is produced by Quality Assurance and Enhancement and will be circulated to the Dean of School and other key members of the provision under review for comment concerning factual accuracy. The report is also circulated to members of the Academic Review panel for comment. The confirmed report is then produced and circulated to the School and to members of the panel.

9.2   Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will consider the report of the review on behalf of Academic Board. The School is required to produce an action plan based on the recommendations of the review process. Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will consider action plans at subsequent meetings until all agreed actions are completed.

10   Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) Reviews

10.1   Where desirable and practicable, reaccreditation by a professional body may take place at the same time as the review is conducted. Agreement on how this will be managed is established during the preparation period.

10.2   Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will consider the report of the review. Where recommendations are made, the School is required to produce

an action plan. Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will consider action plans at subsequent meetings until all agreed actions are completed.

Manuals, Forms and Guidance notes relevant to Part 8

https://uelac.sharepoint.com/LearningandTeaching/Pages/forms-and-guidance-notes.aspx

- Frequently asked questions - Academic Review
- Guidance Notes for Panel Members
- Guidance Notes for production of Self Evaluation Document
- Documentation for base room
- Module Folder Contents List
- Event Programme
- Guidance Notes on Academic Review Statistics
- Panel Member Pro-Forma 1 – Evidence of Academic Standards
- Panel Member Pro-Forma 2 – Quality of the Student Experience
- Panel Member Pro-Forma 3 – Activities to ensure and enhance standards and quality