

Combined Partnership and Periodic Review: Principles and Process

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For an overview of the combined partnership and periodic review process please see the flowchart.

Section 1: Key principles and aims of combined partnership and periodic review

1. The purpose of the combined partnership and periodic review (PPR) process is based upon the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, [chapter B8 Programme monitoring and review](#), and [chapter B10 Management of collaborative arrangements](#). It is a University requirement that all partnerships and all courses are reviewed on a six year cycle. The process of [partnership review](#) and the [periodic review](#) of courses have distinct objectives, and so are normally carried out as separate processes. However, in order to eliminate unnecessary burden, where partner organisations offer small scale course provision approved by the University, the processes of partnership and periodic review are normally combined. In principle, where a partnership is focused on limited provision it should be involved in only one review event in any six year cycle, although on occasion there may be a need for more frequent or early review. In exceptional circumstances, reviews may be postponed by up to one year.
2. Combined partnership and periodic review (PPR) seeks to achieve the aims of periodic review as well as providing assurance that the partnership is operating in accordance with the terms of the Partnership Agreement and to confirm that the responsibilities of all parties are being met. The main aims of PPR are therefore:
 - To evaluate and confirm that programmes under consideration meet the threshold academic standards required by Part A of the QAA's UK Quality Code.
 - To evaluate and confirm that the collaborative arrangements provide the quality of learning opportunities for students that meet the expectations required of Part B of the UK Quality Code.
 - To ensure that collaborative arrangements support continued effective management of quality assurance and enhancement for the programmes under consideration
 - To evaluate and confirm the continued viability of the partnership and the programmes and to review and update due diligence enquiries
 - To consider how the programme's strategy and design and the aims and direction of the partnership align with University, Institute and Partner priorities and agendas .

- To support reflective evaluation of programmes and partnership and assist in the production of an enhancement plan
 - To share good practice across the partnership
 - To meet any additional external expectations or requirements
 - To provide assurance that information relating to the partnership is current and accurate.
 - To evaluate any non-course related partnership activities (eg joint research, widening participation etc) and to explore potential partnership development
3. The Academic Quality Unit (AQU) co-ordinates the cycle of partnership and periodic reviews and ensures, as part of the course approval process, that new collaborative courses are either aligned with the appropriate periodic review group or are reviewed through PPR. AQU determines the exact nature, scope and programme for the review in discussion with the relevant Institute and partner organisation staff and the Review Chair.
 4. The University maintains a commitment to open and discursive peer review focussed on academic perspectives from elsewhere in the sector, that is consultative, self critical and genuinely collaborative, involving members of industry, commerce and the professions in order to support employability. This assists the University in ensuring that awards are comparable in standard to those elsewhere in Higher Education, and is a valuable method of benefiting from the expertise and experience of others. It also facilitates enhancement and a shared understanding of the collaboration and its future development.
 5. The University recognises that the processes of review are not limited to the event itself and that decisions pertaining to the development of the partnership and/or the award should be included in the lead-up and aftermath of review. In particular, the process is designed to encourage reflection and innovation, to utilise external networks, and to take the opportunity to discuss means of enhancing the quality of provision. The PPR process will also be informed by the outcomes of annual quality review meetings held with the host University Institute. The format of these meetings is outlined in section 4 of the [Annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review Process](#).

Outcomes of Combined Partnership and Periodic Review

6. The primary outcome of the PPR is reapproval of the provision and partnership under consideration for up to six further years. This reapproval is based upon the Review Panel's confidence that the partnership is operating in accordance with the terms of the partnership agreement, the management of the provision is deemed to be robust, academic standards are appropriate and the student experience is deemed to be at least satisfactory. The outcome will therefore be reapproval of course and partnership (for a set period), reapproval with recommendations and/or reapproval with conditions. Conditions will relate to the criteria laid out in section 2 and must be met to the satisfaction of the Chair of the Panel by a deadline agreed during the event. Conditions, and action taken to address them, are reported to the Audit and Review Committee (ARC) on behalf of ASQEC. The Panel are also encouraged to identify areas of good practice worthy of dissemination across the Partnership. Progress with actions will be reviewed through the annual quality review meetings held with the host University Institute.

7. The Panel will comment upon and/or endorse the Enhancement Plan annexed to the Evaluation and Development Document (EDD), and may make additional recommendations. Recommendations relating to individual courses, will feed into the relevant Course Enhancement Plan. The Partner and Institute must provide a written response to the conditions and recommendations by completing the action plan template provided by AQU. This will then be sent to the Chair of the Panel and to ARC for confirmation that conditions have been met and recommendations have been responded to appropriately.
8. PPR reports will therefore make formal recommendations to ARC, acting on behalf of ASQEC, on the following:
 - The level of confidence in the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities,
 - Judgements on whether the partnership is operating in accordance with the terms of the partnership agreement,
 - Judgements on whether the management of the course is robust, and the student experience is at least satisfactory,
 - A period of reapproval of partnership and provision not exceeding six years
 - Continuing alignment with the University's and Partner's priorities
 - As applicable, any conditions upon which reapproval is predicated
 - As applicable, any recommendations that would enhance the quality of the student learning experience.
 - As applicable, any aspects of good practice worthy of dissemination across the University.

Section 2: Roles and responsibilities:

The Partner Organisation

- 9 A review lead from the partner organisation (the HE manager (or equivalent) or the course leader) should meet with the relevant Institute Quality Committee Chair (IQC) and the AQU Officer co-ordinating the review, to plan and discuss the requirements and arrangements for the review.
- 10 The Partner organisation, in liaison with the University Institute, should prepare the Evaluation and Development Document (EDD), in line with the guidance provided, and in good time for it to be reviewed by the Institute, and in agreement with the AQU Officer, ensure relevant additional documentation is collated and provided electronically.
- 11 The Partner will provide a completed due diligence enquiry form and supporting evidence including copies of relevant policies and procedures.
- 12 The PPR event normally takes place at the partner organisation and thus the partner is responsible for liaising with the AQU Officer to make the arrangements.
- 13 The Partner, working with the Institute should forward to AQU the names and contact details of potential external Panel members (see EPM nomination form) and information on the suitability of the individuals (normally a hyperlink to their staff pages or an electronic CV).
- 14 The course leader from the partner organisation should ensure that arrangements are made for students/employer/mentors/graduates to attend as required and that the Information and

- Learning Services (ILS) representative is involved from the onset. The Course Leader (or equivalent) will be asked to lead a tour of resources/facilities if this is deemed necessary.
- 15 Senior staff of the partner organisation are responsible for ensuring (in liaison with relevant colleagues of both organisations) that any conditions are addressed by the specified deadline, and that responses to recommendations in the collated action plan are taken forward.

The Institute

- 16 The Head of Institute (or nominee) should provide AQU with the review documentation in good time for distribution to the Panel. It is within the Institute's discretion to determine the most appropriate means of ascertaining that review documentation is appropriate for the event. In all circumstances, the purpose is to satisfy the Head of Institute that a thorough review of the programmes has taken place, and that documentation is appropriate for formal peer review. The final review documentation submitted to AQU will be accompanied by confirmation (e-mail or letter) from the Head of Institute (or nominee) that the documentation is appropriate for dissemination.
- 17 The Head of Institute, normally via the IQC, should ensure that outcomes of the review are acted upon and that an appropriate progress report and update of actions is made available to the Audit and Review Committee (ARC) one year after the event.

The Head of Collaborative Programmes

- 18 Responsibility for ensuring actions, relating to the development of the partnership and/or matters that are outside of the control of the Institute or partner organisation, are effectively addressed lies with the Head of Collaborative Programmes, working with relevant colleagues in the University as appropriate.

Academic Quality Unit (Collaborative)

- 19 AQU will arrange a preliminary meeting to confirm process and timescales for the PPR event.
- 20 AQU will coordinate the preparations for the PPR in liaison with a key contact identified at the partner. AQU will make available the review documentation via blackboard, attend the event, advise on policy and process, minute outcomes and prepare final reports for approval.
- 21 AQU will prepare a report on partner due diligence enquires and the accuracy of public information relating to the partnership and provision.
- 22 AQU will request a report on learning resources (ILS report) to be prepared by the University's Information and Learning Services

The Chair of the PPR Event

- 23 An effective Chair need not be expert in the area under consideration; it is more important that he/she has a broad grasp of quality issues, an understanding of collaborative arrangements, has the respect and trust of the Panel, and has well-developed interpersonal and communication skills. Normally, a Chair will:
- Invite the Course Leader to make an opening statement
 - clarify the purpose of the meeting and the role of the Panel members
 - ensure that all Panel members are given the opportunity, and where necessary encouraged, to contribute fully to the debate

- encourage a genuine and productive dialogue between the Panel and the Team, avoiding confrontation where at all possible
- keep to the schedule as far as possible, but be willing to take radical restructuring decisions if necessary in order to ensure that all important aspects are covered
- ensure that comments made by external advisers by correspondence are included in the discussions
- sum up from time to time and articulate decisions as these are reached
- ensure that proper decisions are reached that are within the Panel's remit and are fair and reasonable
- articulate feedback on the event, including the decision regarding reapproval, conditions and/or recommendations, and areas of good practice to the team in plain and intelligible language, and ensure that the time-scale for meeting conditions are reasonable and are stated. It is advised that the PPR report template is used as an aide memoire for this purpose.

Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC)

- 24 Academic Board has formal responsibility for the oversight of the quality of academic provision and for the standards of courses. It delegates responsibility for this to ASQEC and reports of combined partnership and periodic reviews and subsequent responses are initially considered by ARC on behalf of ASQEC. They are also presented to the Externally Provided Programmes sub Committee (EPPSC) for information.
- 25 All final PPR reports are sent to the Secretary of ARC, who places the report and the Institute's initial response (in the form of an Enhancement Plan) on the ARC agenda. A progress report and update of actions from periodic reviews is requested by the Committee one year later. This is also presented to EPPSC for information.

Section 3: Explanation of the process

Criteria for the PPR:

- 26 The Panel will wish to satisfy themselves that:
- The management of University approved programmes through the partnership provides an environment conducive to delivering high quality inclusive education to students and has a clear commitment to quality enhancement;
 - The partnership and provision remain viable and opportunities for development of the partnership have been explored. The team have satisfactorily addressed issues of course demand, recruitment, admissions and career/employment opportunities for students;
 - The terms of the partnership agreement continue to be met and there is continued alignment of the aims and direction of the partnership over time;
 - Staff and learning resources are appropriate for the delivery of the course;
 - The structure, content and outcomes of the courses are appropriate and valid and take into account the appropriate elements of the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (including FHEQ, FDQB, Subject Benchmarks) and any PSRB or other relevant external benchmarks, as well as UW frameworks and policies;

- The course(s) will produce students with the appropriate subject knowledge and skills, and general transferable and key skills at the appropriate standards for the level of the award;
- The principles and mechanisms of learning and teaching and assessment are appropriate and likely to be effective in relation to the intended learning outcomes;
- The course(s) meet the requirements of UW policies and regulations;
- Arrangements for oversight of provision, particularly consideration of student and other stakeholder feedback, are appropriate;
- In cases involving significant elements of work-based learning: the arrangements for the management and organisation of the work placement, and of the student experience are clear, and satisfactory mechanisms have been put in place to support both students and the mentors in the work place. The completion of a [WBL/Placement Audit Record](#) is required documentation for PPRs and should be discussed during the review.
- Partner staff are provided with and make use of appropriate opportunities to conduct research and scholarly activity, develop themselves in other ways, and involve themselves in relevant external activities, all of which have an impact on teaching and learning;
- Intended learning outcomes are being obtained by students, standards are being achieved and the programme specification is being delivered;
- The programme(s) remain current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline, practice in its application and developments in teaching and learning;
- Public information relating to the partnership and course is accurate.

The Evaluation and Development Document:

- 27 The process is centred around an Evaluation and Development Document (EDD) which in turn enables the Review Panel to lead discussions related to the above criteria.
- 28 The EDD prepared by the partner organisation, in liaison with the University Institute, should draw on the operation of programme and the partnership. It should critically evaluate the programme and partnership performance, identifying strengths, weaknesses, innovations and planned developments for quality enhancement.
- 29 As a rule, the EDD should normally be no more than 10 pages in length and take account of the [guidance on writing the EDD for PPR](#) available on the AQU webpages. The EDD will refer to the outcomes of annual quality review meetings held with the host University Institute. The format of these meetings is outlined in section 4 of the [Annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review Process](#)

The Periodic Review Panel

- 30 AQU will consult with the Chair of ASQEC to determine the balance and number of Panel members depending on the size of the event. The Panel normally comprises:
- a Review Chair (normally a senior member of the University);
 - a Student Representative from another UW course;
 - a member of another institution with specific subject knowledge preferably in the context of partnership working. Approval by the Head of Institute (or nominee) and the Chair of ASQEC will be required;
 - a member of staff from a different Institute with experience of partnership working (for example a link tutor)
 - Deputy Head of Academic Quality (Collaborative)
- 31 In the case of all courses with a substantive work-based or work-related dimension, an employer representative should be included on the panel. This will typically apply to all Higher Nationals and Foundation Degrees, and may apply to other courses with a substantial placement element.
- 32 Where professional bodies are involved, AQU will endeavour to combine processes with the professional body to minimise the burden of having two separate events. Where necessary AQU will discuss this with relevant staff and arrange for the professional body's involvement on the Panel.

Documentation to be sent to the Panel

- 33 The completed due diligence form and evidence should be sent to AQU at least six weeks before the PPR.
- 34 The following documentation should be provided to AQU for dispatch to Panel members at least three weeks before the event. They should be accompanied by email confirmation from the Head of Institute (or nominee) that the documentation is appropriate for dissemination:
- Evaluation and Development Document
 - Current Programme Specification
- 35 The following documentation should also be made available :
- Current Course and Partnership agreements
 - The Partnership and course approval report or report of the last PPR with response
 - Current Course Handbook/s (including Module Specifications)¹
 - Statistical digest (prepared by Data Management Unit)
 - Overview of changes made to the awards under review since approval or last review
 - ILS statement on resources
 - Current handbooks/guides for work-based learning, placements, mentors, etc. as appropriate
 - A sample of (approx. 5 or 6) module outlines for the current academic year
 - Completed [work based and placement learning audit record](#) (where relevant, AQU to advise)

¹ This should comprise information available to students at the point of Review, rather than development of documentation applying to potential iterations of provision. Handbooks, programme and module specifications should be checked for accuracy to ensure they are the latest versions, including any recently approved module amendments or programme modifications.

- Reports from any PSRBs or other external quality reports.
- Relevant course and/or Institute policies and procedures (Learning and Teaching Action Plan, moderation policy and procedures, etc.)
- In the case of flexible and distributed learning (e.g. delivery predominantly 'at a distance'/via online learning technologies) a document indicating how the course meets the [UW Quality standards for FDL](#) is required.
- NSS results and student comments
- Staff CVs.

Relating to activity over the previous three years,

- Annual Evaluation reports with all relevant annexes which will include minutes of annual quality meetings between the partner and the Institute
- External Examiner reports

36 Whilst the full set of documentation is available to all Panel members, the briefing statement prepared by AQU will allocate key documents to individual Panel members in order to manage the workload. Panel members are permitted to request additional documents where such are deemed necessary to the robust operation of the process.

Programme for the Combined Periodic and Partnership Review event

37 Each Review event is negotiated individually, but will typically comprise a series of meetings in which the Panel explores aspects of the operation of the partnership and programmes in line with the EDD and the criteria for Review. The following will normally be included:

- The Course Leader from the partner organisation will be invited to present a brief opening contextual statement.
- An initial private meeting in which the Chair, with the help of the Panel members, identifies key issues for discussion and draws up an agenda;
- A tour of resources and associated facilities.
- A meeting with students and graduates to assess the student experience of the programme in operation and of the partnership.

Course team members are not present at this meeting, which will be held early in the event where possible. The meeting will focus both on the content and management of course under review, and the general student experience. Outcomes from this meeting will normally assist determination of the agenda for the meeting with the course team. The course team make arrangements with students to attend this meeting; normally between 8 and 10 students are expected to be present. It is important that a range of students from all levels of the course and each course attend. Where this is not possible, for example with courses taught at different sites, efforts will be made to meet with students prior to the event, a report of which will be circulated to the Panel and/or the course team as appropriate.

- A meeting with employers/mentors or other stakeholders

The course team makes arrangements with employers/mentors/stakeholders to attend this meeting.

- A meeting with Managers responsible for the provision. This may include IQC Chair, Head of Centre, Head of Collaborative Programmes and Manager(s) responsible for the course from the partner institution.

The panel meet with senior managers to discuss the management of the provision and the partnership and to discuss issues related to the EDD and issues raised by students. Strategic development of the partnership may also be discussed at this meeting.

- Meeting with the Course Leader at the Partner, key team members including an ILS representative from the Partner and the Link Tutor.

The Panel normally hold one meeting with the course team to discuss the operation of the course, considering issues related to the EDD and the criteria for review. They may also discuss issues raised by students at the student meeting.

- A final meeting of the Panel to reach conclusions as outlined in paragraph 8 above. The Panel are also encouraged to identify areas of good practice worthy of dissemination across the University.
- A feedback session on the outcomes of PPR.

Evaluation of the process

38. The Combined Partnership and Periodic Review process is evaluated through the use of questionnaires supplied to the Panel and team electronically following the event. These cover the management of the process, the level of transparency and clarity of outcomes and the extent to which the process has encouraged reflective evaluation by participants and a clear plan for the future has been determined. The outcomes are considered by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement alongside other informal feedback. As appropriate, a paper summarising the effectiveness and success of the process is produced for the Audit and Review Committee.

Date	Version	Reason for Change	Effective from	Author
Jan 13	1.0	Introduction of new process	Jan 13	DQED
Sept 13	1.1			DQED
Sept 15	1.2	Amendments throughout process due to alignment with changes to partnership review process, periodic review process and to provide streamlining.	Sept 15	Deputy Head Academic Quality (Collaborative)