# PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW[[1]](#footnote-1)

## OVERVIEW

### Purpose of process

Periodic Departmental Reviews are a regular and systematic part of the process of quality management across the University. They engage a variety of strategies for assessing progress towards the achievement of aims and purposes, analyse performance in this context, and propose appropriate approaches to enhancement.

All Departments of the University (academic and professional service) undergo Periodic Departmental Reviews once in every six years. The primary aims of the process are to assess the general health of school/centre/departmental work and to identify and share good practice. Periodic Departmental Review Panels operate as a critical ‘friend’, and a supportive but rigorous approach to the exercise is adopted.

The process, in the context of published statements of purpose, is a positive, constructive and systematic examination of:

* what has been achieved, including the impact on students or customers, the maintenance of standards and the currency of practice
* links between practice and outcomes
* opportunities for enhancement
* the continued relevance of the statements of purpose in the context of internal and external constraints.

The calendar of Departmental Reviews is established by the SMT, which periodically considers the timetable for the cycle of Departmental Reviews, the frequency and the order of priority, taking into consideration obligations to external review such as may be found in Education, Health and Finance. The date and time of each Periodic Departmental Review will be agreed by the Chair of the Periodic Departmental Review Panel, in consultation with the Head of School/Centre/Department. Schools/Centres/Departments are normally reviewed within a six-year cycle (for convenience, roughly synchronous with that of the QAA) with the timing determined by the SMT. As all aspects of University provision are reviewed over this period, normally approximately nine Periodic Departmental Reviews are scheduled per year. The SMT may arrange a Periodic Departmental Review out of cycle, where appropriate.

The function of Periodic Departmental Review is to provide a means by which:

* school/centre/departmental and programme groups, and the units responsible for professional services, in collaboration with representative members of the wider University community, review the quality of their provision and their progress towards the achievement of their published statements of purpose, which includes declarations of Mission, Vision, Aims and intended outcomes, as well as Service-Level Statements.
* the University is able to audit the implementation of its policies and strategies for achieving its Strategic Plan, in the context of the work of Academic Schools/Centres and service units.
* in the case of Academic Schools/Centres, the University can assess the general health of the school/centre’s curriculum.

The terms of reference for each Periodic Departmental Review are negotiated between the Faculty and/or the School/Centre/Department concerned and the Review Chair acts on behalf of the SMT on the basis of the process set out in this section. This process is sufficiently flexible to take account of issues that cut across school/centre/departmental boundaries. There is a common approach to all Departmental Reviews of Academic and Professional Service Departments which has scope and guidance for negotiation in content and emphasis.

Periodic Departmental Review is normally informed by:

* A Departmental Evaluative Profile (DEP), prepared by the Head of School/Centre for the review
* Statements of purpose from the University and the school/centre/department
* The University’s Strategic Plan
* The School/Centre/Department’s Plan or Service-Level Statement and/or Service-Level Agreement
* Documentation, as appropriate, previously collated for external scrutiny purposes
* An assessment of performance in relation to the above (including, where appropriate, teaching and research, customer/user satisfaction, critical self-evaluation, and quality management and enhancement)
* Benchmarking with other institutions with similar experience or aspiration (as appropriate)
* Benchmarking with national and international professional body guidelines (as appropriate)
* An evaluation of the management structure and performance
* An evaluation of resources (including staffing, physical resources, IT, library, equipment)
* Monitoring of the effectiveness of collaborative provision (where appropriate)
* Consideration of the user perspective on overall provision (e.g., as appropriate: student support and guidance, student progression and achievement, curriculum organisation; customer feedback)
* (For academic schools/centres) an evaluation of the link between teaching and research.

Responsibilities for Periodic Departmental Review are set out in Figure 1:1.

The proceedings of the Review report are shared with the Academic Board.

Figure 1‑1 Responsibilities in the Periodic Departmental Review Process

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Responsibility** |
| SMT members | Chair Departmental Reviews when requestedOversee the preliminary arrangements made by the Quality and Standards OfficeConsider Periodic Departmental Review Reports to identify and commission action to share good practice across the UniversityEnsure that appropriate action is taken in response to report recommendationsConsider any strategic issues for faculties or central departmentsMonitor the implementation of recommendations by schools/centres/departments |
| Head of School/Centre/Department (academic or professional service) | Responsible for the critical self-evaluation of their school/centre/department relative to their statements of purposeResponsible for the composition of a Departmental Evaluative Profile (DEP) written to a prescribed format for the Periodic Departmental Review Panel, to be submitted to the Quality and Standards Office at least six weeks in advance of the Periodic Departmental ReviewNominate appropriately qualified external advisers to serve on the Periodic Departmental Review PanelShould be available throughout the period of the Periodic Departmental Review, as each Review allows sufficient time to revisit emerging issues with the Head of School/Centre/DepartmentResponsible for the implementation of the Periodic Departmental Review recommendations and/or responding to the outcomes of the Review |
| Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) | Suggests the Chair of each Periodic Departmental Review Panel, normally a Pro-Vice Chancellor or Dean who is not in the line of management to the school/centre/department. |
| Chair of each Departmental Review Panel | Agrees the composition of the PanelDevises the programme for the Periodic Departmental Review, including any visits to the school/centre/department, in consultation with the Head of School/Centre/Department |
| Support Roles | The relevant Faculty Director of Quality (FDQ) or central department quality link person may support the school/centre/department being reviewed |

## THE PANEL

The Periodic Departmental Review normally consists of:

* the Chair who leads the Periodic Departmental Review Panel discussions
* the SMT member or Dean responsible for the school/centre/department
* a University Head of School/Centre from outside the Faculty or the School/Centre/ Department
* two external assessors, approved by the Panel Chair on the advice from the Quality and Standards Office, from a larger number of potential nominations identified by the School/Centre/Department
* a student representative from outside the School/Centre/Department (wherever possible)
* a representative of the Quality and Standards Office (who is also responsible for writing the report).

## THE PREPARATION PROCESS

### Introduction

The Quality and Standards Office is the first point of contact for questions about Departmental Reviews. In addition, the University provides a system whereby Heads of School/Centre/Department preparing for reviews may be ‘mentored’ by a colleague in a similar position who has gone through the review process. In advance of the Review, the Chair and/or representatives of the Quality and Standards Office provide support for those giving evidence to the Periodic Departmental Review to ensure procedural parameters and what is expected within them.

The Periodic Departmental Review Panel calls for evidence well in advance of each Review and invites any staff member or student in the University to provide written input. Copies of such input will be available to all members of the Periodic Departmental Review Panel.

### First preliminary meeting

The Chair of a Periodic Departmental Review Panel is scheduled to meet with Heads of School/Centre/Department undergoing review two months prior to review events. These preliminary meetings take place one month before DEP deadlines. Meetings will last up to an hour and a half. A member of the Quality and Standards Office will be present to provide additional support.

At preliminary meetings, Heads of School/Centre/Department and Panel Chairs will agree:

* the length of review events (up to a maximum of two days)
* stakeholders who will be invited to meet with Review Panels (because of time constraints, it is essential that participants and scope are chosen tactically to maximise the benefit of the exercise)
* the final shape of the DEP and evidence required.

### Department Evaluative Profile

Approximately six weeks prior to a Periodic Departmental Review, schools/centres/departments under review submit their Department Evaluative Profile (DEP) and associated supporting evidence. Guidance on producing the DEP is detailed below.

### Second preliminary meeting

Approximately one week after receipt of the DEP, internal panel members meet to agree lines of enquiry to follow during review events. A standard agenda is used during pre-Review meetings to ensure consistency. Chairs are responsible for ensuring that meetings keep to time.

Panels will agree a maximum of five themes to pursue during reviews.

External Panel members will have the opportunity, through the Quality and Standards Office, to submit any issues or concerns that have arisen from scrutiny of the DEP and supporting evidence. After the meeting has taken place, a member of the Quality and Standards Office will brief external Panel members by e-mail or by telephone.

The DEP is instrumental in guiding the enquiries of Panels. It forms the cornerstone of the University’s Periodic Departmental Review process. Heads of School/Centre/Department may wish to take this into account when formulating the DEP and during discussions with Panel Chairs at the preliminary meeting.

Pre-Review meetings will last for half a day (at a minimum, three hours). When the Pre-Review team has deliberated, Heads of School/Centre/Department (and one colleague) from the school/centre/department under review, will join Panel discussions. This will enable Panels to explain the lines of enquiry to be followed during the Review, to request additional documentation and to ask for clarification of issues raised in the DEP.

## DEPARTMENTAL EVALUATIVE PROFILE, ACADEMIC SCHOOLS/CENTRES

### Introduction

A Departmental Evaluative Profile (DEP) serves as an instrument for school/centre guidance towards review. This document provides guidance for completing a DEP for academic schools/centres. Such guidance includes some key requirements, but is not intended to be narrowly prescriptive. Primarily, it is meant to be an instrument for assisting staff producing a DEP in preparation for Periodic Departmental Review.

A detailed outline of areas for inclusion in the DEP is provided below; however where these matters are considered regularly in Annual Departmental Reviews much of this may be accomplished through a commentary on those reviews.

### The nature and purpose of the Departmental Evaluative Profile

Academic schools/centres already produce annual review reports and school/centre staff participate in University Validation Events for new programme proposals. Staff will also be familiar with school/centre strategic plans, linked to Faculty plans and the University Strategic Plan.

A DEP is somewhat different from the above instruments, though it is certain to draw upon them: a DEP, in essence, is the outcome of a school/centre’s self-reflection. It should be:

* *holistic*, in that the discussion embraces the whole school/centre: its leadership, organisation, strategic and operational management, quality of programme and other delivery, service to students, relationships with other stakeholders (both internal and external), partnership activities and human and physical resource deployment
* *developmental*, in that the school/centre is considering possible and intended future directions just as much as current positions
* *interrogative*, in that the discussion pervasively reveals a school/centre asking questions of itself. It is not part of the purpose of a DEP to present an unconditionally positive picture; constructive reflection is crucial to an effective DEP. It follows from this that a DEP needs to be
* *honestly evaluative*, in that it does not seek to avoid problematic issues: a ‘good’ DEP will acknowledge difficulties but – *and this is crucial* - will also show how the school/centre is addressing them
* *celebratory where appropriate*, in that the discussion readily draws attention to the school/centre’s good practice and successful achievements where there are good grounds for doing so; and
* *evidence-based*, in that value-judgements are supported by appropriate evidence. (NB: details of supporting evidence are best given in appendices, and cross-referred to them in the main text of the DEP. The Quality and Standards Office supplies guidance on what supplementary material to include, and itself provides much of that material.)

### The process of composing a Departmental Evaluative Profile

Given the purpose of the DEP, consultation with school/centre colleagues and with relevant internal and external stakeholders, *including students* is strongly advisable, and it is highly desirable that all members of staff are encouraged to contribute.

Whatever the precise pattern of consultation may be, a DEP in its final form - and to a very large extent - will be claimed as a true reflection of the whole school/centre. For this reason, it is likely that the document will proceed through several drafts. Previous experience of Departmental Reviews suggests that, typically, the signing-off of a DEP in its proposed final form will be the only or main agenda item at a full school/centre meeting.

### Structure of the Departmental Evaluative Profile

It may be the case that, for some members of the Periodic Departmental Review Panel, the DEP will provide their very first contact with a school/centre and its work. It is, therefore, important that the DEP clearly:

* Sets out the working basis of the school/centre
* Provides core facts; and
* Conducts its discussion of the school/centre’s work according to a number of key themes.

As suggested above (e.g. 1.4.2, bullet 2), some of the material in a DEP will be future-oriented, or refer to work-in-progress. Where this is so, it is important that vagueness and/or implausibility about possible developments are avoided.

The Periodic Departmental Review Panel, in light of its reading of the DEP, will identify (normally) up to five lines of enquiry as a framework for the Review event; those lines of enquiry are likely to constitute the Section headings of the Panel’s written Report produced after the event. The Report headings will differ to some extent as between different school/centre’s Reviews. Nevertheless, the DEP’s author(s) are advised to include, as far as possible, the following *bodies of material* in the DEP:

Introduction: Brief description of the school/centre: the Faculty context; staff establishment; student numbers; programmes offered; other main school/centre operations; any recent changes in: internal organisation, school/centre portfolio or relationship with the Faculty or University.

Then anevaluation of those areas set out in Figure 1:2.

Figure 1‑2 Areas to be evaluated in a DEP (Academic Schools/Centres)

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| --- |
| 1. Strategic vision and management

*For example:** Vision and aims
* Strategic options and how these are addressed managerially and consultatively
* Possible future priorities in context of University and Faculty plans.
1. Operational management

*For example:** Internal management structure and operations (executive function)
* Committee structure and operations (deliberative function)
* Operational relationship with Faculty and University central services.
1. Curriculum\*

*For example:** Curriculum design principles in relation to strategic objectives and range and characteristics of student cohorts
* Discipline-specific and generic skills development and, in particular, development of ‘graduate skills’
* Curriculum development: how this is managed and implemented; how is it reflecting judgements about future strategic priorities?
* Relationship of curricula to developments elsewhere in the Faculty and in the University.
1. Learning, teaching and assessment\*

*For example:** Strategic principles underlying learning and teaching, and their differential applications according to type of programme and level of student development
* Ways in which staff research and scholarship inform learning and teaching activities
* (where appropriate) Application of learning, range and appropriateness of assessment strategies, and their relationship with intended learning outcomes
* Quantity and quality of tutorial feedback to students on their work
* How assessment methods and outcomes are judged against external reference points, especially interactions with external examiners
* Inclusiveness of learning, teaching and assessment methods and awareness of diversity issues.
1. Research, Scholarship and Consultancy

*For example:** School/Centre strategies underlying research, scholarship and consultancy activity
* Relationship between activities of individual staff and school/centre’s strategic framework
* Developments in funded research, and how school/centre pursues these – whether alone or in collaboration with other internal agencies (e.g. Faculty, and such bodies as the Research and Enterprise Development Centre [RED]) or external bodies or groups
* How staff are trained and otherwise supported in undertaking research and preparing funding bids (again, include the Faculty and RED dimension as appropriate)
* Developments in consultancy and ‘Third Leg’ activity, especially knowledge transfer: how are these being shaped for the future?
1. Student Recruitment, Attrition, Progression and Achievement\*

*For example:** Analytical presentation (cross-referred to detailed evidence in an Appendix) of relevant data on: recruitment trends, diversity demographics, withdrawals and transfers in/out, completions and non-completions of programmes, levels of performance and first career destinations
* How the above informs school/centre’s planning, development and remedial actions
* Celebration of successes
* Causes for concern, discussed within an explanatory framework
* How school/centre is addressing problematic areas and planning for (further) improvement.
1. Student Guidance and Support\*

*For example:** Induction of students
* Quantity and quality of academic guidance and feedback
* Pastoral guidance and support, including personal tutoring
* Use of Personal Development Profiling or equivalent
* Quality and consistency of school/centre student handbooks
* Other processes of communication between staff (academic and professional service) and students, including electronic channels
* Interaction of school/centre with central Student Services agencies (e.g. Study Support Unit, counselling services, Careers and Student Development)
* Consistency of student guidance and support across the campus network
* Contacts with alumni.
1. Resources and Resource Management

*For example:** The financial performance of the school/centre
* Physical resources: teaching spaces and equipment, and their fitness for purpose
* Other learning resources, including engagement with IT and, in particular, the Virtual Learning Environment (Blackboard)
* Interactions of school/centre with Faculty Learning Technologist, Faculty Liaison Librarian and other relevant Faculty and University learning support agencies (LTE) and staff.
1. Quality Management and Enhancement

*For example:** Processes and procedures for monitoring, evaluation and review of school/centre operations
* Consideration of the student voice and students’ interests in quality management
* Degree to which school/centre maintains a culture of enhancement, innovation and development, and how this is achieved
* Strategies for, and effectiveness of, staff induction, training, development and peer review, including part-time and support staff as well as full-time academic staff
* Relationship of staff development to school/centre’s strategic goals and enhancement of its operations
* Management and enhancement of quality of collaborative and partnership provision
* Co-operation of school/centre with Faculty and University agencies of quality management and enhancement
* Relationships with external stakeholders and reference points
* How school/centre engages with University or external mandatory/statutory requirements (e.g. Health and Safety) and other relevant external reference points; and how it calibrates itself against equivalent provision elsewhere
* The future: sustainability and associated risks.

\* Some of these areas will not be applicable for Research Centres. |

### Further guidance in constructing a Departmental Evaluative Profile

It is important to focus on where/how the school/centre contributes to the overall student experience.

It is recommended that the DEP for academic schools/centres be between 3,000 and 5,000 words in length (not counting Appendices). It is recognised that the upper limit may be approached in cases where a school/centre’s provision is complex or diverse.

The authors of a DEP should employ existing internal documentation, where appropriate, to minimise duplication of effort. For academic schools/centres, relevant examples of such documentation include:

* School/Centre Business plans
* School/Centre and Faculty strategic plans
* Department Annual Reviews
* Programme validation documents
* External examiners’ reports.

The DEP should also make reference, where appropriate, to external documentation relating – directly or indirectly – to aspects of the school/centre’s work. Relevant examples might include material generated by:

* The QAA
* The Ofsted
* Professional accreditation bodies
* Research associations
* Business organisations
* Public sector organisations.

As mentioned in 1.4.4 above, the DEP should link school/centre aims and objectives with those at Faculty and institutional level. For example, each DEP should illustrate how schools/centres support the University’s Strategic Plan.

### Summary

* Adopt a consultative approach to producing a DEP
* Self-evaluation, not mere description, should characterise a DEP. *Value-judgements must be supported by evidence*. Details of evidence should appear in Appendices (see section 1.6)
* A major strand of discussion throughout a DEP should be how a school/centre’s operations affect the student experience
* No DEP should be longer than 5,000 words. Try to keep to 3,000 words where possible
* It is essential to draw upon existing internal documentation in formulating a DEP
* Reference should also be made to appropriate external documentation and reference points
* The DEP should illustrate working links to Faculty and University aims and objectives.

## DEPARTMENTAL EVALUATIVE PROFILE, PROFESSIONAL SERVICE DEPARTMENTS

### Introduction

A Departmental Evaluative Profile (DEP) forms the cornerstone of the University’s Periodic Departmental Review process.

This document provides guidance for completing a DEP for Professional Service Departments. Such guidance includes some key requirements, but is not intended to be narrowly prescriptive. Primarily, it is meant to be an instrument for assisting staff producing a DEP in preparation for Periodic Departmental Review.

A detailed outline of areas for inclusion in the DEP is provided below; however where these matters are considered regularly in Annual Departmental Reviews much of this may be accomplished through a commentary on those reviews.

### The Nature and Purpose of the Departmental Evaluative Profile

Professional Service Departments already routinely produce Service-Level Statements and annual Quality Monitoring Reports, including Annual Departmental Review reports.

A DEP is somewhat different from either of the above instruments, though it is likely to draw upon them: a DEP is, in short, the outcome of a department’s self-reflections. A DEP should be:

* *holistic*, in that the discussion is about the whole department: its leadership, organisation, strategic and operational management, quality of service delivery, relationships with customers and stakeholders (both internal and external), partnership activities and human and physical resource deployment
* *developmental*, in that the department is considering itself both in the context of change and as an agent of self-change; the discussion is thus about possible and intended future directions just as much as current positions
* *interrogative*, in that the discussion pervasively reveals a department asking questions of itself. It is not part of the purpose of a DEP to present an unconditionally positive picture; constructive reflection is crucial to a ‘good’ DEP. It follows from this that a DEP needs to be
* *honestly evaluative*, in that it does not seek to avoid problematic issues: a ‘good’ DEP will acknowledge difficulties but – *and this is crucial* – will also show how the department is addressing them
* *celebratory where appropriate*, in that the discussion readily draws attention to the department’s good practice and successful achievements where there are good grounds for doing so; and
* *evidence-based*, in that value-judgements are supported by appropriate evidence. (NB: details of supporting evidence are best given in appendices, and cross-referred to them in the main text of the DEP. The Quality and Standards Office supplies guidance on what supplementary material to include, and itself provides much of that material.)

### The Process of Composing a Departmental Evaluative Profile

Given a DEP’s nature and purposes, consultation with departmental colleagues is strongly advisable, and department team authoring is encouraged. Subject to the time factor, it is advisable to consult with relevant internal and external stakeholders, (including, where appropriate, students).

Whatever the precise pattern of consultation may be, a DEP in its final form should be owned, as far as possible, by the whole department. For this reason, it is likely that the document will proceed through two or more drafts. Previous experience of Departmental Reviews suggests that, typically, the signing-off of a DEP in its proposed final form will be the only or main agenda item at a full department meeting.

### Structure of the Departmental Evaluative Profile

It may be the case that, for some members of the Periodic Departmental Review Panel, the DEP will provide their very first contact with a department and its work. It is, therefore, important that the DEP clearly:

* establishes the context
* provides core facts
* conducts its discussion of the department’s work according to a number of key themes.

As suggested above, some of the material in a DEP will be future-oriented, or refer to work-in-progress. Where this is so, it is important to avoid vagueness or implausibility about possible developments.

The Periodic Departmental Review Panel will, in light of its reading of the DEP, identify (normally) up to five Lines of Enquiry as a framework for the Review event; those Lines of Enquiry are likely to constitute the section headings of the written Report produced after the event. The Report headings will thus differ to some extent as between different Reviews. Nevertheless, the DEP’s author(s) are advised to include, as far as possible, the following bodies of material in the DEP:

Introduction; Brief description of the department; its place in the University’s management structure; staff establishment; key services; any recent changes in internal organisation, functions or external relationships

Then anevaluation of those areas set out in Figure 1:3

Figure 1‑3 Areas to be evaluated in a DEP (Professional Service Departments)

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| 1. Strategic vision and management

*For example:** Vision and aims
* Procedures and processes of strategic decision-making
* Opportunities, choices and future priorities
* Relationship to University’s strategic aims and objectives
* Customer analyses.
1. Organisational and operational management

*For example:** Internal management structure and operations (executive function)
* Committee structure and operations (deliberative function)
* Operational relationship with University academic schools/centres, Faculties and other central services.
1. Services and their delivery

*For example:** Strengths and weaknesses – how measured (performance indicators)
* Plans for improvement where appropriate
* Equality Impact Assessment of services and their delivery.
1. Staff induction, training and development

*For example:** As experienced by members of staff
* How groupstaff development activity enables different sections of a department (where appropriate) to come together
* Relationship to department’s strategic goals and enhancement of service delivery.
1. Resources

*For example:** The financial performance of the department
* Fitness for purpose and deployment of physical plant and spaces
* Equipment
* Use of ICT.
1. Quality management and enhancement

*For example:** Procedures and processes for evaluation and review of services – in particular, how customer satisfaction is measured
* Dissemination of evaluation and review outcomes
* How whole department is involved in enhancement of quality of operations and services
* How department engages with University or external mandatory/statutory requirements (e.g. Health and Safety) and other relevant external reference points; and how it calibrates itself against equivalent service provision elsewhere
* Equality Impact Assessment of the departmental quality management and enhancement
* The future: sustainability and associated risks.
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### Further guidance in constructing a Departmental Evaluative Profile

It is important to reflect on the department’s relationship with:

* suppliers of information and other services required by the professional service department
* those customers dependent on the professional service department to provide services.

It is also important to focus on who the customers are, and where/how the department relates to the overall student experience.

It is recommended that the DEP for Professional Service Departments be between 3,000 and 5,000 words in length (not counting Appendices). It is recognised that the upper limit may be approached in cases where a department’s services cover disparate areas of operation.

The DEPs for all departments must refer to relevant sections of the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA) *UK Quality Code*. Most sections of the *Code* are more directly associated with academic provision and pastoral support of students. All DEPs, however, must refer to *Chapter B3: Enabling Student Development and Achievement.*

The QAA *UK Quality* Code can be found at the following web link: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code

The authors of a DEP should draw upon existing documentation, where appropriate, to minimise duplication of effort. For Professional Service Departments, relevant examples of such documentation include:

* Service-Level Statements (SLSs)
* Annual Departmental Review
* Impact Assessments
* Reports from other forms of audit (e.g. external audits carried out by external management consultants and external inspection reports such as that carried out for ‘Hospitality Assured’ status).

As mentioned above, the DEP should link operational aims and objectives with those at [Faculty and] institutional level. For example, all DEPs should illustrate how departments support the University’s Strategic Plan.

### Summary

* Adopt a consultative approach to producing a DEP
* Evaluation, not description, should characterise a DEP. Value-judgements must be supported by evidence. Details of evidence should appear in Appendices.
* Bear in mind your suppliers and your customers *–* especially how these affect your services, and how the latter in turn affect the student experience
* No DEP should be longer than 5,000 words. Try to keep to 3,000 words (*excluding* appendices) if possible
* Reference should be made to appropriate external documentation and reference points
* It is advisable to draw upon existing internal documentation (SLSs, etc) in formulating your DEP
* The DEP should illustrate links to University aims and objectives.

## DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

### Provided by the Quality and Standards Office

* The Strategic Plan
* The Annual Report / Information Booklet
* Prospectuses
* Copies of University Internal Policies

### Checklist of required documentation (Academic Schools/Centres)

* Programme-specific student handbooks
* External Examiners’ Reports (for all Programmes for the past three years)
* The School/Centre/Departmental Plan
* Department Annual Review Reports (for the last 5 years)
* The Faculty Plan
* Minutes of School/Centre/Departmental Meetings (for the past three years)
* Minutes of Student-Staff Liaison Meetings (for the past three years)
* Miscellaneous documentation (possibly a school/centre/departmental staff development statement or research statement, for example)

### Checklist of required documentation (Professional Service Departments)

Examples include (documentation for different services varies):

* Service-Level Statement
* Relevant Section from the Risk Assessment Register
* Copies of relevant Policies/Strategies and Equality Impact Assessment of these
* Annual Operating Statement
* Analysis of User Surveys (if available)
* Business Plan (if available)
* Financial Information (if relevant).

## THE REVIEW EVENT

### Introduction

The Periodic Departmental Review event is normally of up to two days’ duration, or 1.5 days for a ‘scaled down’ review where the unit being reviewed is smaller in size and/or scope. The Panel interviews a variety of stakeholders and works as closely as possible to the standard agenda (see 1.9.2).

During review events, Panels meet with various stakeholders including:

* Students / customers (direct recipients of provision or services)
* University staff from inside and outside the school/centre/department under review
* External stakeholders with a vested interest in the work of the school/centre/department, for example, collaborative partners, employers and researchers from the public and private sectors.

The Review process is intended to be developmental. It is as important that Panels identify and praise good practice as it is for Panels to provide guidance on areas that might benefit from improvement, if appropriate.

### Role of Chairs

Chairs manage meetings during review events. It is crucial that Panels adhere to the allocated time set for meetings during an event. Chairs are responsible for ensuring meetings do not overrun.

The opening meeting of Reviews should be used to discuss issues arising from further reading of the DEP and supporting evidence. These meetings should also be used to prioritise the themes and to assign any specific lines of questioning to particular Panel members.

Chairs might find it useful to structure meetings with stakeholders in the following way (an example question follows each point below):

* Establish the line of enquiry (e.g. “We note that the department is committed to the implementation of a Peer Review mechanism”)
* Initiate discussion with open questioning (e.g. “With respect to Peer Review, how is progress being monitored?”)
* Further exploration (“What guidance is provided for reviewers and those being reviewed? How are outcomes recorded?”)
* Initiate a conclusion with closed questioning (e.g. “Is Peer Review available to all members of staff, full- and part-time?”
* Summarise (“Am I correct in understanding the situation, if I describe it as…...”)

This model is sometimes referred to as ‘funnelling’. Chairs might start discussion by establishing the line of enquiry. Panel members then ask the open, exploratory and concluding questions. Chairs summarise by providing a brief synopsis of discussion points. The idea is to start with the general, to ‘funnel’ and then to recap.

This being said, it is important for Panels to remain flexible. Despite the most diligent planning, it is always possible that an unanticipated line of enquiry may emerge during a review event.

To maintain consistency during review events, Chairs should:

* Make introductions
* Briefly explain the process to stakeholders attending the meetings
* Outline the main lines of enquiry
* Ensure that all are involved
* Bring the meeting to a close with thanks.

Chairs should manage the questioning during review meetings and should advise Panel members that questions need to be clear and concise. If someone needs to be stopped in mid answer, because he/she has already provided the necessary information or has gone off on a tangent, the Chair should be polite and helpful but assertive. They must explain the reason for an interruption so that stakeholders do not feel they have been restricted in their response.

Feedback given to departments must be clear. Chairs should cover the key points, but leave fine detail to reports. Retaining a focus on five issues will enable Chairs and Panels to concentrate on the main themes.

### Progress of the Review

The first stakeholder meeting is with the Head of School/Centre/Department under review, and Panels also see the Head of School/Centre/Department near the end of events (but prior to feedback sessions). During meetings with stakeholders, Review Panels will request brief descriptions of the interactions of stakeholders with the School/Centre/Department undergoing review. Although it is likely that working relationships are mentioned in the DEP, it is useful for Panels to obtain primary evidence from the source.

Periodic Departmental Review Panels will seek evidence about school/centre/departmental operations and may ask questions such as:

* How effectively does a school/centre/department communicate with its stakeholders?
* How are stakeholders’ needs assessed? How are they met?
* How do school/centre/departments know whether or not stakeholder needs are met?
* In which areas does the school/centre/department excel?
* Do stakeholders have any input into the process of improvement?
* In which areas might the department develop?

When the subject is an academic school/centre, the review process will pay considerable attention to the delivery of academic programmes. However, Periodic Departmental Review differs from programme reviews in that they also examine features of scholarly, creative and research activity, knowledge transfer and community activities and staff development. Periodic Departmental Reviews are vehicles for evaluating the effectiveness of school/centre/departmental strategic and operational management.

For academic schools/centres, core areas of enquiry are informed by guidance from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The Agency’s mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.

For Professional Service Departments, there may be elements of QAA guidance that are applicable. A most relevant example would be the indicators published through the QAA’s *UK Quality Code* about meeting the needs of students with disabilities. In addition to relevant higher education sector guidance, professional service areas like facilities management or hospitality services might have industry standards against which their services can be measured.

### The student voice

The opinions of students are highly important to the University, and the system of Periodic Departmental Review is one of several mechanisms by which those views can be shared within the institution.

Students meeting Review panels are invited to share their experiences of interaction with the University ranging from contact made prior to starting a course of study through to graduation and securing employment. The University also welcomes feedback about provision and services in advance of Reviews by circulating a University-wide message (reaching all staff and relevant students) inviting comments. This system allows a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to the review process.

### Feedback

On the final day of the Periodic Departmental Review, the staff of the school/centre/department being reviewed receives immediate feedback from the Chair to an agreed brief prepared by the Panel.

## POST-REVIEW ACTIVITY

### The Report

The Chair of the Panel oversees the production of Periodic Departmental Review Reports. The full Periodic Departmental Review Report, to be produced within four to six working weeks, will not contain any additional recommendations to the oral feedback. The first draft of the Report is prepared by the Director of Quality and Standards or Senior Quality Officer, normally within two weeks of the review event. The draft is circulated for comment to the Review Chair and to Panel members. The report is amended in the light of any comments from Panel members and the revised draft is approved by the Chair.

The report is then sent to the Head of School/Centre/Department to provide an opportunity for comment on factual inaccuracies or omissions. Heads of School/Centre/Department have one week to check reports. Chairs consider changes suggested by Heads of School/Centre/Department, relating to factual accuracy and omissions. If clarification of any points contained within Periodic Departmental Review Reports is required, the Chairs will discuss such matters with Heads of School/Centre/Department, with input from Panel members as necessary. Changes to the Periodic Departmental Review Panel’s agreed judgments occur in exceptional circumstances only, and are subject to the agreement of the whole Panel.

Once the Report has been approved, it is distributed to the Vice Chancellor, the Chair of the Education and Student Experience Committee, the Head of School/Centre/Department, each member of the review team, and the Director of Quality and Standards. A copy of the report is submitted to the Academic Board.

The Quality and Standards Office informs the relevant SMT member of recommendations from reports that require consideration at University level.

The school/centre/department then develops an action plan to be reported to the Chair for formative consideration six months following the Review and for formal comment on the achievement of targets after one year.

The member of SMT responsible for the school/centre/department reviewed considers strategic implications and the dissemination of good practice, and the SMT identifies institutional issues. The school/centre/department replies formally to the Chair of the Panel on its responses to the Report.

The Periodic Departmental Review Report informs subsequent school/centre/departmental planning. The SMT delegates to the Panel Chair the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations.

Minutes are not produced of the Periodic Departmental Review event. Handwritten notes are taken by the report writer and Quality and Standards Office administrator. These notes are to support the production of the report only and are destroyed upon approval of the report.

Periodic Departmental Review Reports are used by the respective schools/centres/departments and by the University to inform both operational and strategic management activity.

### Six month follow-up

 Six months after review events, schools/centres/departments will send the Quality and Standards Office a Progress Report on actions against recommendations resulting from the Periodic Departmental Review. These will be forwarded to Chairs and SMT members with oversight of the schools/centres/departments concerned. Progress reports will also be shared with the Academic Board.

### One year follow-up

 At the one-year anniversary of review events, the Quality and Standards Office produces a follow-up report, provided by Heads of School/Centre/Department and agreed by Panel Chairs and relevant SMT members, on progress against recommendations from review reports. This follow-up will be used as part of the Departmental Annual Review in that year.

A review of subsequent actions taken on the Report’s recommendations is sent to the Academic Board on the first anniversary of the Review event. If any other follow-up activity is required after review events, it is the role of Chairs to lead this work, with support from the Quality and Standards Office.

## SAMPLE AGENDA

### Example agenda of a Pre-Review Meeting

Possible timings are suggested in brackets next to agenda items to assist with time management.

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| 1 Schedule for the Review (15 minutes)* Discussion about additional stakeholders (to be invited or to provide written submission)
* Agreement of the final schedule

2 Terms of Reference for the Review (10 minutes)3 Questions Arising from the Departmental Evaluative Profile (DEP) (45 minutes)* Factual points that can be clarified by the relevant Senior Management Team (SMT) member
* Points that need to be raised with the Head of School/Centre/Department

**Comfort Break (10 minutes)**4 Lines of Enquiry (45 minutes)* List of five major themes identified by each Panel member
* Agreement of the five major themes to follow during the review event

5 Review of Evidence (45 minutes)* Discussion of evidence provided in support of the DEP
* Agreement of request and timescale for additional evidence

6 Meeting with Head of School/Centre/Department and One Other (45 minutes) |

### Example Periodic Departmental Review Schedule for Review Events

|  |
| --- |
| **Day One**0915-0930 Introductions over coffee0930-1100 Opening meeting between Panel members1100-1200 Meeting with Head of School/Centre/Department1200-1245 Tour of facilities (Departments, Library, Open Access, service areas, as appropriate)1245-1330 Lunch1330-1430 Meeting with key Department staff (academic/managerial in support areas)1445-1530 Meeting with Department support staff1530-1545 Break1545-1630 Stakeholders 1645-1745 Meeting with students/users of service1800-2000 Panel discussion over dinner**Day Two**0845-0915 Panel discussion over coffee0915-1015 Stakeholders1030-1115 Stakeholders1115-1130 Break1130-1215 Stakeholders1215-1330 Panel Discussion over lunch1330-1400 Emerging issues with Head of School/Centre/Department1400-1500 Panel Discussion for formulation of feedback1530-1600 Feedback session to School/Centre/Department |

1. Periodic Departmental Review is a generic term that applies to Centres, Schools, Departments and Areas. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)