

## PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS OF UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS GUIDANCE FOR PANEL MEMBERS

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 All Departments of the University (academic and professional service) undergo a Periodic Departmental Review once every six years. Periodic Departmental Review Panels operate as a critical friend, and a supportive but rigorous approach to the exercise is adopted.
- 1.2 The primary aims of the process are to assess the general health of departmental work in the context of its aims and the University's Strategic Plan, to identify and share good practice, and to make recommendations for further development.

### 2 The Periodic Departmental Review Process

- 2.1 A Periodic Departmental Review Panel includes the following members:
- the Chair (a member of the University's Senior Management Team [SMT] who does not have responsibility for the area under review);
  - the member of the SMT who oversees the work of the department under review;
  - a Head of Department from outside the faculty or service area housing the department under review;
  - two external experts;
  - a student panellist, wherever possible;
  - a representative of the Quality and Standards Office acting as Secretary to the Panel (who drafts the final report).
- 2.2 Chairs of Periodic Departmental Review Panels meet with Heads of Departments (HoDs) undergoing review two months prior to review events. At these preliminary meetings, Chairs and HoDs will:
- agree the length of review events (up to a maximum of two days);
  - identify stakeholders who will be invited to meet with Review Panels (because of time constraints, it is essential that participants are chosen tactically to maximise the benefit of the exercise);
  - contribute to the final shape of Departmental Evaluative Profiles and identify evidence required.
- 2.3 Approximately six weeks prior to Periodic Departmental Reviews, departments under review submit a self-assessment document called a Departmental Evaluative Profile (DEP). This document is used to guide lines of enquiry. Panel members will also receive supporting evidence supplementary to the DEP, usually on the University's Blackboard system.
- 2.4 Approximately one to two weeks after receipt of DEPs, internal Panel members meet to agree the lines of enquiry to follow during review events, to request additional documentation and to ask for clarification of issues raised in the DEP.

- 2.5 External Panel members will be asked to submit (through the Quality and Standards Office) any issues, concerns, or areas for further exploration 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 telephone.
- 2.6 Panels are to agree a **maximum** of five themes to pursue during reviews.
- 2.7 A standard agenda will be used by Chairs and Panels during pre-Review meetings to ensure consistency. Appendix A provides a sample agenda.
- 2.8 At the end of pre-Review meetings, HoDs and one colleague from the 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.

### **3 The Review Event**

- 3.1 Appendix B shows a draft schedule for a two-day event.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2 The opening meeting of reviews will be used to discuss issues arising from further reading of DEPs and supporting evidence. These meetings should also be used to prioritise the main themes and to assign any specific lines of questioning to particular Panel members.
- 3.3 During review events, Panels meet with various stakeholders including:
  - students / customers (direct recipients of provision or services);
  - University staff from inside and outside the department under review;
  - external stakeholders with a vested interest in the work of the department, for example, collaborative partners, employers and researchers from the public and private sectors.
- 3.4 The Panel will use these meetings to further explore the lines of enquiry with a range of groups. The meetings are conducted formally with members of the Panel asking questions to those invited (usually groups of 8-10 people) to gain a fuller picture of how the department operates. Each meeting usually lasts for between 30 and 60 minutes.
- 3.5 In the case of academic departments, the review Panel will confirm that a Department's programmes are being appropriately delivered, reviewed, with external consultation where appropriate, and kept up-to-date.

### **4 Post-Review Activity**

- 4.1 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 a representative of the Quality and Standards Office, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Reviews of Centres/smaller units will usually be condensed to 1.5 days

- 4.2 The report is then sent to the Head of Department to provide an opportunity for comment on factual inaccuracies or omissions. Chairs consider changes suggested by Heads of 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 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.
- 4.3 Periodic Departmental Review Reports are used by the respective departments and by the University to inform both operational and strategic management activity. The reports are viewed through the University's committee structure.

## **5 Summary**

- 5.1 The Review process is intended to be developmental. It is just 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.
- 5.2 The review process involves seven Panel members analysing documentation (DEPs and appropriate supporting evidence), meeting with stakeholders, agreeing recommendations and producing reports of review events.

## **6 Contact Information**

- 6.1 Support for Periodic Departmental Review Panel members is provided by the Quality and Standards Office. Contact information is as follows:
- Kate Barry  
Telephone: 01227 782257  
E-mail: kate.barry@canterbury.ac.uk
  - The web pages for the Quality and Standards Office can be accessed from:

<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-office/periodic-departmental-review/periodic-departmental-review.aspx>

**SAMPLE AGENDA OF A PRE-REVIEW MEETING  
BETWEEN INTERNAL PANEL MEMBERS**

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

- 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 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 Department and One Other (45 minutes)

## EXAMPLE PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW SCHEDULE FOR REVIEW EVENTS (TWO DAYS)

**DAY ONE**

0915-0930	Introductions over coffee
0930-1100	Opening Meeting between Panel Members
1100-1200	Meeting with Head of Department
1200-1245	Tour of Facilities (Departments, Library, Open Access, service areas, as appropriate)
1245-1330	Lunch
1330-1430	Meeting with Key Departmental Staff
1445-1530	Meeting with Departmental Staff
1530-1545	Break
1545-1630	Meeting with Departmental Professional Service Staff
1645-1745	Meeting with Students/Users of Service
1800-2000	Panel Discussion over dinner

**DAY TWO**

0845-0915	Panel discussion over coffee
0915-1015	Meeting with Stakeholders
1030-1115	Meeting with Stakeholders
1115-1130	Break
1130-1215	Meeting with Stakeholders
1215-1330	Panel discussion over Lunch
1330-1400	Emerging issues with Head of Department
1400-1500	Panel discussion for Formulation of Feedback
1530-1600	Feedback session to Department