

PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS OF UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS BRIEF GUIDANCE FOR STAKEHOLDERS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 All Departments of the University (academic and professional service) undergo Periodic Departmental Reviews once every six years. Periodic Departmental Review Panels operate as a critical friend, and a supportive 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 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 panelist, wherever possible;
 - a representative of the Quality and Standards Office acting as Secretary to the Panel (who drafts the final report).
- 2.2 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 for the review. Panel members also receive supporting evidence supplementary to the DEP.

3 The Review Event

- 3.1 During review events (normally lasting two days), Panels meet with various groups of 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.
- 3.2 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. Meetings usually last for between 30 and 60 minutes.

- 3.3 Questions to be asked by Panels are decided at the initial Panel meeting on day one, so it is not possible to provide a list of questions to participants in advance of the event. However, the majority of questions will be based around the lines of enquiry. The lines of enquiry are circulated to participants shortly before the event to provide an indication of the main areas to be explored.
- 3.4 During meetings with Review Panels, it is helpful for stakeholders to provide brief descriptions of their interactions with departments undergoing review. Although it is likely that working relationships are mentioned in DEPs, it is useful for Panels to obtain primary evidence from the source.
- 3.5 Periodic Departmental Review Panels will seek evidence about departmental operations and may ask questions such as:
- How effectively does a department communicate with its stakeholders?
 - How are stakeholders' needs assessed? How are they met?
 - How do departments know whether or not stakeholder needs are met?
 - In which areas does the department excel?
 - Do stakeholders have any input into the process of improvement?
 - In which areas might the department develop?
- 3.6 The review process, when the subject is an academic department, would pay considerable attention to the delivery of academic programmes. However, periodic departmental reviews differ 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 serve as vehicles for evaluating the effectiveness of departmental strategic and operational management.
- 3.7 For academic departments, core areas of enquiry are informed by guidance from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The Agency's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education. For further information about the QAA and its work, their website is located at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>.
- 3.8 For professional service departments, there may be elements of Quality Assurance Agency guidance that are applicable, for example *Chapter B4 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Enabling student development and achievement*. 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.
- 3.9 At the end of reviews, Panels produce a report, which is used by departments and by the University to inform both operational and strategic management activity. These are shared with the Education and Student Experience Committee and the Academic Board.

4 Summary

- 4.1 The review process is intended to be developmental. The University encourages comments on departmental activity from a wide range of stakeholders. Periodic departmental review events result in reports for use by the institution.

- 4.2 For further information on Periodic Departmental Review, please visit the Quality and Standards Office web pages on <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-office/periodic-departmental-review/periodic-departmental-review.aspx>. Also, please feel free to contact the Quality and Standards Team on kate.barry@canterbury.ac.uk.