

# **GUIDELINES FOR PERIODIC THEMATIC REVIEW AND REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

## **Introduction**

It is an expectation of the Scottish Funding Council that all universities review all aspects of provision on a schedule of no more than six years. The following guidelines provide a flexible framework for the review of discrete service areas, as well as thematic review, for example relating to a particular support function or student population. In some cases, a review can include academic and professional service areas. However, the primary mechanism for review of academic programmes remains the five yearly internal subject review process, full details of which are available here: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/resources-for-validation-and-review/>

## **Review schedule**

The Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement maintains a register of the ways in which professional services are reviewed. The register also includes information on thematic review. Different approaches are in place to maintain and enhance the quality of services and their contribution to the student experience. The validity of a particular approach takes account of a range of factors, including size and scope of the service, and the extent to which the service is subject to external scrutiny. The timescale for review is influenced by internal and external factors, including changes to the context within which the service is operating. Within this flexible framework, all provision is reviewed on a maximum six yearly basis.

### **1 Aims of review**

The main aims of the periodic review are to:

- Provide staff of the professional service or thematic area with an opportunity to reflect on its operation, successes and challenges, since the most recent review;
- Evaluate the extent to which provision meets the needs of identified stakeholders, including staff and students;
- Evaluate engagement with stakeholders to monitor and improve the quality of provision;
- Evaluate the extent to which activities of the professional service or thematic area are aligned with institutional strategic objectives, including those relating to the enhancement of learning and teaching;
- Identify areas for enhancement, taking account of budget implications, and monitor action taken in response;
- Identify examples of good practice for commendation and dissemination.

It is intended that the process should be positive and constructive, facilitating high quality debate. Staff from the professional service area should have the opportunity to participate in the review process through preparation for the review meeting, participation in discussions with the review panel or both.

Note that it is not within the remit of the panel to set conditions for the area under review. However, there is an expectation that the staff from the area under consideration will respond appropriately to the findings of the review.

## **2 The review process**

The process for review will be as set out below. There will be some scope for flexibility to accommodate the different types of service area and their provision.

### **2.1 Overview**

The Deputy Principal and University Secretary, acting on behalf of Senate will have oversight of the programme of review and will confirm annually to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement those services and/or areas to be reviewed. The Deputy Principal and University Secretary may take advice from the Student Experience Committee, and/or other University Committees to determine the programme of review for the academic session.

The review process comprises the following key elements

- Submission of reflective document by the area under review;
- Review meeting comprising discussions with staff of the area under consideration, principal service users, including staff, students and external stakeholders, as appropriate
- Written report and recommendations submitted to the Student Experience Committee and/or other relevant senior committee(s), as appropriate
- Implementation of actions as appropriate

### **2.2 Timescale**

Once notified of the date of the review event, staff of the area under consideration will start on the preparation of the documentation. This is expected to commence approximately three months before the review event. Where a discrete professional service is under review, it is usually relatively straightforward to identify which staff member(s) should be responsible for preparation of the document. This can prove more challenging for a thematic review, which spans several areas. In such cases, guidance may be sought from the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

Documents for the review panel must be submitted to the staff of the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement four weeks before the confirmed review meeting date.

Members of the review panel will be invited to submit initial feedback, usually no later than one week before the meeting. This will be provided to the head of professional service, or other contact person, as appropriate, for thematic review, to support the team with their preparations for the review meeting.

A confirmed report of the review outcome will be available four weeks after the review meeting, and a report will be submitted to the next scheduled meeting of the Student Experience Committee, and/or other senior committee(s), as appropriate. A date for a response to the review outcomes will be advised in the report. In the case of professional services review, it is expected that the service will report on progress as part of the strategic/operational planning process.

## **2.3 Documentation**

The reflective document will typically address the following as a minimum (with some flexibility depending on the scope of the review):

### **Introduction and overview**

- The overall function of the professional service or thematic area;
- The full range of activities subsumed within its areas of responsibility;
- The position of the area within the University's structure;
- The development of the area since the most recent review (where applicable).

### **Service area evaluation and action plan**

- A clear statement on the mission, vision and objectives of the area;
- Information about how these are agreed and reviewed;
- An evaluation the area's performance against each of its key objectives;
- A statement on the impact of the area's activities on the University's quality culture in particular, and its strategic objectives more broadly;
- A statement on staff learning and development plans, and the manner in which staff are supported to enable them to achieve performance objectives (this is more applicable to professional services than thematic review).
- Future development plans

### **Conclusion**

A summary of key points the area would wish to highlight to the panel, including:

- Aspects of provision that are working particularly well and might usefully be shared with others;
- Aspects of provision that are evolving and subject to further development.

### **Appendices**

- The summary report of the most recent review of the area (where available);
- The most recent strategic or operational plan for the area (where available separately);
- External accreditation reports or other measures of esteem (where applicable);
- A summary of any recent feedback from students and other stakeholders, for example, feedback gathered through the institutional student survey or external review (ELIR) or internally gathered customer data;
- Details of staffing establishment;
- Diagram of organisational structure.

## **2.4 Review panel meeting**

The review panel meetings will normally be scheduled for a full day with the follow outline structure:

Private meeting of panel (to agree key themes for discussion with staff of the area under consideration)

Meeting with staff of the area under consideration

Meeting(s) with service users as appropriate (typically academic staff and students)

Private meeting of panel (to agree recommended actions and commendations)

Feedback to staff of the area under consideration

The review secretary will be appointed by the University Secretary, and will be responsible for making all necessary arrangements for the meeting.

## **2.5 Review report**

A *summary* review report detailing key actions recommended by the panel and aspects of good practice identified through the process will be prepared within 48 hours of the review meeting. This will be circulated for approval to all members of the panel. Once agreed by the review panel, the head of the professional service, or other identified person in the case of thematic review will be invited to comment on any factual inaccuracies after which the *summary* report will be confirmed.

A full review report recording the discussion leading up to the summary conclusion will be prepared within four weeks of the meeting and circulated for approval to members of the review panel. Once agreed by the review panel, the head of the professional service, or other identified person in the case of thematic review will be invited to comment on any factual inaccuracies after which the report will be confirmed.

## **2.6 Committee consideration of the report**

The review report will be considered by the Student Experience Committee (and/or other relevant senior committee(s), as agreed with the Deputy Principal and University Secretary) at the earliest opportunity after the review meeting. Committee members will consider the recommended actions and ways in which the area might be supported to further enhance the quality of provision, and in particular its impact on the student experience. The Committee will also note any examples of good practice recorded in the report and consider how best these might be shared with colleagues across the University.

## **2.7 Response to the review**

Staff of the area under consideration will be invited to provide a response to the recommendations of the panel, highlighting any actions taken or planned in response to recommendations. Students, and where appropriate, other stakeholders should be involved in drafting the response. This will be considered by the Student Experience Committee (and/or other relevant senior committee(s), as agreed with the Deputy Principal and University Secretary).

### **3 Review panel membership**

The composition of the review panel will normally be:

#### **Convener**

Head of a University professional service area or academic staff member with prior experience of convening validation or review

#### **Internal panel members**

One member of academic staff

One member of professional services staff  
One student panellist, usually to be drawn from the SU pool of student reviewers

#### **External panel members**

One external panel member from another University or other relevant background in the same area of expertise that is being reviewed.

#### **Secretary**

A member of staff from the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement

Nominations for panel members will be approved by the Deputy Principal and the University Secretary.

Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement  
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