



# UCL Academic Manual

## 2015-16

### Chapter 6: Quality Review Framework

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Chapter 6 is UCL's regulatory framework for monitoring standards, the student experience and strategic quality enhancement activities across UCL. It includes the regulations for Annual Student Experience Reviews (ASER), Internal Quality Review (IQR) and External Examining as well as Peer Observation of Teaching, Staff-Student Consultative Committees, Student Representation on UCL Academic Standing Committees and Sub-Committees and Academic Committee Review Panels.

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# 1 Introduction

1. A risk-based, proportionate, outcome-driven quality and review framework is a vital tool for ensuring the security of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities for students. UCL's Quality Review Framework integrates all key processes for monitoring standards, the student experience and strategic quality enhancement activities.



## 1.1.1 External Context

1. University College London (UCL) is responsible for the standard and quality of the awards made in its name and the quality of the programmes that lead to those awards. Responsibility for developing and delivering programmes is delegated to Departments which all aspire to excellence on taught or research programmes. These aspirations require regular monitoring, review and constructive peer dialogue to provide the necessary assurance, both to the University and to external agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) about standards and quality.

## 1.1.2 Purpose of the Framework

1. The Quality Review Framework should provide assurance to UCL of the following:
  - Faculties and Departments have strategic oversight of, and take responsibility for, the academic standards and quality of their programmes, which includes undergraduate, postgraduate taught and graduate research programmes (including professional doctorates).
  - All students are treated fairly, equitably and as individuals.
  - Students have the opportunity to contribute to shaping their learning experience.
  - Students are properly and actively informed at appropriate times of matters relevant to their programmes of study.
  - There is sufficient external involvement in the design, approval and review of the curriculum.
  - Staff are supported to deliver high quality student experiences.
  - Innovation and creativity in the design and delivery of the curriculum is actively supported.

## 1.1.3 Principles Underpinning the Framework

1. The following principles underpin the entire Quality Review Framework:
  - Processes for monitoring quality ought to be proportionate to the risk to the student experience and academic standards.
  - The framework must ensure that the student interest is being served.
  - The framework should respect the academic expertise and administrative professionalism of staff in Departments and faculties.
  - Students should be engaged in all elements of the framework.
  - Processes must be conducted in a consistent and systematic fashion and be underpinned by robust, high quality data.
  - The framework should encourage and promote enhancement and sharing good practice.

## 2 Annual Student Experience Review (ASER)

### 1.2 Purpose of ASER

1. UCL's Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) draws together monitoring activities (data review, External Examiner Reports, student surveys, NSS Action Planning) that are extended throughout the year into an annual 'health check' exercise for undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research (PGR) provision. ASERs provide an opportunity to:
  - Monitor each Department's scrutiny of student datasets and subsequent action plans;
  - Reflect annually on risks and weaknesses, identifying action to be taken forward where necessary;
  - Review processes and engagement with University quality assurance and quality enhancement policies;
  - Discussing departmental and faculty engagement with key strategic education priorities;
  - Providing a formal opportunity for Education Committee and Research Degrees Committee to discuss student experience matters including the programme portfolio and the effectiveness of the response to student feedback;
  - Review academic partnership activity (including student exchanges/study abroad);
  - Review common themes emerging from External Examiner reports;
  - Providing an opportunity to identify good practice worthy of wider dissemination.
2. UCL recognises that the process of reviewing taught and research degree provision is iterative, and that much of this business takes place at different times and through a variety of mechanisms during the monitoring year. Responsibility for reviewing such provision is devolved to Departments and Faculties and, for this procedure to work, it is important that Departments and Faculties are able to identify concerns:
  - a) That apply to a particular programme or discipline (PGR);
  - b) That are common to a number of its programmes or disciplines and to take timely and appropriate action.

## 1.3 Publication and Circulation of ASER Data

1. Each year, Academic Services' Student Data Services Department will prepare datasets for each UCL Department containing information on:
  - Student Profile (Male, Female, Home, EU, Overseas, Ethnicity, WP)
  - Admissions
  - Progression
  - Average Student Achievement
  - Final Classification
  - Submission
  - Referral
  - Completion
2. These datasets will then be analysed by Student Data Services. Each year, the data will be additionally analysed in accordance with an agreed theme, such as the achievement of Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) students or those from non-traditional academic backgrounds.
3. These measures will be used in conjunction with data from a number of other sources: Additional sources will include:
  - External Examiners' Reports
  - External survey results (NSS, PTES, PRES)
  - Feedback from internal surveys (e.g. SEQs)
  - Employability statistics (DHLE)\*
4. Consideration of the analysed datasets will be the task of a Quality Review Sub-Committee of Education Committee. Once these have been considered, reports will be sent to Heads of Department, copied to Faculty Deans and Faculty Tutors. They will be expected to respond to and explain performance in any area highlighted by the analysis conducted by QRSC in an evaluative report and to write a Development and Enhancement Plan [see Annex 6.1.3 ASER Template for reporting templates].
5. There will be three issues of data per academic session and three ASER Development and Enhancement Plans:
  - Undergraduate data sets will be available for information at the end of July (no action need be taken by modules, programmes or Departments at this point) and reports and Development and Enhancement Plan templates circulated to Departments and Faculties by the end of August.
  - Postgraduate data sets will be available at the end of November and reports and Development and Enhancement Plan templates circulated to Departments and Faculties by the end of November.

- \*In 2015-16 there will be a pilot of a combined Doctoral Planning and PGR ASER process. A PGR reporting template and guidance will be issued shortly. This full PGR ASER will be rolled out to Departments UCL-wide in 2016-17. For 2015-16, the Doctoral Planning Process will take place as per last year.
6. See Annex 6.1.1 ASER Main Steps Undergraduate and Annex 6.1.2 ASER Main Steps Taught Postgraduate for more details.

### **DHLE\* Data**

7. UCL acknowledges that time lapses in the production of each cohort of DLHE data means that cohorts will not correlate and cannot be compared (i.e. there will be no direct relationship between the DLHE data produced for evaluation in 2015 and the graduating cohort but Departments are expected nonetheless to evaluate their own performance in the DHLE survey and will have to work with the most recent complete dataset available.

## **1.4 The Role of the Quality Review Sub-Committee**

1. As noted in Section 2.2 Publication and Circulation of ASER Data, consideration of the datasets produced and analysed by Student Data Services will be undertaken by a Quality Review Sub-Committee (QRSC) of Education Committee (EdCom). The QRSC will be responsible for setting themes and identifying institutional risk areas for Departments to consider and respond to. These Reports and Development and Enhancement Plans produced by Departments and approved by Faculties will also be discussed by DTCs and SSCCs before being submitted to the Secretary of the QRSC for discussion by QRSC once completed. This discussion will focus on the Development and Enhancement Plans and the QRSC will be charged with approving them and with checking with Faculties that all actions have been appropriately followed up. It will operate in a similar way to the IQR Panel, with faculty representatives invited to these meetings to discuss the Development and Enhancement Plans.

## **1.5 ASER Evaluative Reports and Development & Enhancement Plans**

1. The QRSC will send the QRSC digest of the ASER dataset to each Department, accompanied by templates for an Evaluative Report and Development and Enhancement Plan (see Annex 6.1.3 ASER Template). This will be copied to Faculties, and will highlight issues raised (i.e. areas where performance has raised concerns or where there is good practice which could be useful for wider dissemination). This must be completed by each Department, discussed by the Departmental Teaching Committee (DTC) and



Departmental Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) and scrutinised and signed off by the Faculty Teaching Committee before being submitted to the Secretary of the Quality Review Sub-Committee of EdCom. See Annex 6.1.1 ASER Main Steps Undergraduate and Annex 6.1.2 ASER Main Steps Taught Postgraduate for timelines.

2. Actions detailed in the Development and Enhancement Plan should be precisely stated, ensuring that they are measurable and achievable. Where more than one person is listed against an action it should be clear who is the lead and is responsible for completion. The Development and Enhancement Plan should include the date on which it was subject to Faculty scrutiny (i.e. at which FTC meeting). The Development and Enhancement Plans will form the basis of discussion at the Quality Review Sub-Panel meeting. FTC minutes must clearly record discussion of the ASERs and any outcomes or actions resulting from this.

## 1.6 ASER and Dissemination of Good Practice

1. An important aim of ASER should be to promote enhancement and to disseminate good practice, not only within the Faculty, but also across UCL. It is therefore important that good practice is considered and recorded for all provision. This will then be referred to the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT) for further development and dissemination.

## 1.7 Publication of ASER Reports

1. ASERs and their associated Evaluative Reports and Development and Enhancement Plans, once approved by the QSRC, should be published on either departmental or faculty intranet sites, for viewing by UCL staff and students. They should also be made available to External Examiners.
2. Before publication, it is requested that colleagues exclude anything from their ASERs that could identify individuals. They are therefore asked not to name course tutors or individual students.

## 1.8 ASER and the National Student Survey

1. The NSS data (for UG students only) is available on or around 12 August each year. It is analysed by the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) and a digest of the data for each Department, will be sent to each Department (only those with UG students) as part of the ASER package of data and information. The NSS Digest will comprise:

- Subject Overview of students satisfied (%)
- Longitudinal Data
- Main NSS Data
- Competitor Institutions' Data
- Student Comments

## 1.9 ASER and Student Evaluation Questionnaires

1. The proforma for Departments to summarise the information arising from consideration of SEQs has been designed to provide a clear overview of the main matters of interest arising from the analyses of the SEQs and any action taken. It can be found at Annex 6.1.4 ASER Departmental SEQ Summary. The SEQ summary should inform the Department's Report and Development and Enhancement Plan.
2. The following points should be considered in completion of the proformas for departmental and faculty consideration of the SEQ data:
  - i. It is advisable that analysis of the SEQs is conducted by Departments and academic units in time for the beginning of the following academic session;
  - ii. The departmental proformas should be submitted, as part of the ASER Development and Enhancement Plan to the DTC and the SSCC and FTC.

## 3 Internal Quality Review (IQR)

### 3.1 Key to Abbreviations

AC	Academic Committee
CALT	Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching
DEOLO	Departmental Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer
DTC	Departmental Teaching Committee
EdCom	Education Committee
ELE	E-Learning Environments
FT	Full-time
FTC	Faculty Teaching Committee
FTE	Full-time equivalent
IQR	Internal Quality Review
IT	Information Technology
LTS	Learning and Teaching Strategy
PSRB	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body
PT	Part-time
QME	Quality Management and Enhancement
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
SES	Self-evaluative Statement
StARs	Student Academic Representatives

### 3.2 Introduction

1. Internal Quality Review is UCL's central academic quality management and enhancement process. IQR is a rolling programme of peer review, in which all academic units of UCL<sup>1</sup> (as well as a small number of interdepartmental degree

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<sup>1</sup> Except where otherwise indicated, 'Department', in the context of these guidelines, means 'the unit of activity being reviewed'; this will in most cases mean an academic department of UCL or an interdepartmental degree programme, although 'Department' in these guidelines also subsumes relevant academic units which are not formally academic Departments established by Council.

programmes) are reviewed on a six-yearly cycle. See Annex 6.2.1: Internal Quality Review Schedule 2013-14 to 2018-2019.

2. An important purpose of IQR is to review a Department's operations in relation to statements of policy and good practice which appear in the UCL Academic Manual. IQR is concerned with reviewing not the academic content of programmes but rather a Department's management of its programmes and their constituent modules, of its learning resources, of its staff development arrangements, and of its students' educational experience. IQR also aspires to be a genuinely developmental process which provides an opportunity for Departments to review and, in partnership with the review team, identify ways of enhancing their existing QME structures and systems.

### 3.3 Summary of IQR

1. Each IQR comprises seven main stages:
  - i) Submission by the Department to the review team of a self-evaluative statement, with a list of supporting documentary evidence (which should, in order to minimise any burden on the Department, be made available electronically e.g. on the Department's website, on a memory stick or CD Rom etc.).
  - ii) Scrutiny of the SES and supporting evidence by the review team.
  - iii) A visit by the review team to the Department, normally lasting one working day when interviews with relevant staff and students of the Department take place.
  - iv) Production of an IQR report.
  - v) Preparation by the Department of a preliminary plan of action to be taken in response to the recommendations contained in the IQR report.
  - vi) A meeting between the review team and the Department at an agreed point after the review (and after the IQR report has been finalised). The main purpose of the meeting is to discuss the Department's preliminary plan of action in response to the findings of the review team as set out in their report [see also Section 3.12 Follow-Up].
  - vii) Subsequent consideration by the Internal Quality Review Panel of (i) the IQR report and (ii) the Department's action plan.
2. Approximately one year after the IQR visit to the Department has taken place, the Head or a nominated representative of the Department will attend the meeting of the IQR Panel which considers the report and action plan; the Head or other representative of the Department will be invited to discuss with the Panel at that meeting the report and the progress which the Department has made in implementing the recommendations. The Head or representative will then be invited to comment on the IQR process itself.

3. Approximately two years after the original IQR visit, the Department will be asked to submit to the Panel a written update on its continued progress in implementing its action plan [see also Section 3.13 IQR Panel/ QRSC].

## 3.4 The Review Team

1. The review team will normally comprise five reviewers and an administrative secretary. Three reviewers will be members of staff of UCL, one will be a student reviewer and one an external reviewer. The members of review teams will be appointed by the Quality Review Sub-Committee of Education Committee.
  - i) At least two of the UCL staff reviewers will be academic members of staff.
  - ii) The external reviewer will be a senior member of staff, either academic or administrative, of another institution of higher education.
  - iii) The student reviewer will be a Student Academic Representative (StAR) nominated by the UCL Union.
2. QRSC will nominate one of the internal reviewers to serve as team leader. The role of the team leader is:
  - i) In advance of the review visit, to provide a first point of contact and advice for the administrative secretary and a point of contact and advice, via the secretary, for other members of the team (including the external reviewer).
  - ii) To chair the review team's planning meeting. In the planning meeting, the team leader will also propose that particular members of the review team take responsibility for shaping the team's agenda in particular areas being explored by the team. The team leader is not, however, expected to be solely responsible for, e.g., reading the SES or other briefing material or asking questions during interviews on the review visit; these are all shared responsibilities of all members of the review team.
  - iii) During the review visit, to introduce other members of the team and explain briefly the purpose of the visit at the start of each interview with staff or students.
  - iv) At the end of the review visit, to make an oral report to the Head of Department<sup>2</sup> summarising the review team's main findings and conclusions [see Section 3.10 Oral and Written Feedback to the Department].
  - v) After the review visit, formally to approve the IQR report once a draft of this has been agreed by all other members of the review team and by the Department reviewed.

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<sup>2</sup> Except where otherwise indicated, Head of Department should be understood as meaning the Head of the academic unit or, where the subject of the IQR is an interdepartmental degree programme, the Programme Co-ordinator.

- vi) To chair a meeting between the review team and the Department at an agreed point after the review (and after the IQR report has been finalised). The main purpose of the meeting is to discuss the Department's preliminary plan of action in response to the findings of the review team as set out in their report.
3. All internal members of the review team, including the administrative secretary, will have received formal briefing in advance of undertaking an IQR [see also Section 3.6 Preliminary Briefing].
4. The external reviewer will undertake:
  - i) To read the SES
  - ii) To attend the planning meeting of the review team prior to the review visit [see Paragraph 3.7.5];
  - iii) To participate fully in interviewing staff and students during the review visit;
  - iv) To make an appropriate contribution to the preparation of the IQR report;
  - v) To attend, if practicable, the follow-up meeting with the Department [see Section 3.12 Follow-Up].
5. Given that IQR is not intended to review programme or curricular content but to explore issues relating to, inter alia, the management of programmes, neither the internal members nor the external member of the review team will normally be specialists in the subject(s) offered by the Department being reviewed. Internal members of the review team should not normally be members of staff from the same Faculty as that of the Department being reviewed.
6. The administrative secretary will normally be a member of staff of Academic Services, Student and Registry Services. The administrative secretary will:
  - i) Liaise with the Department concerned on behalf of the review team in advance of the visit.
  - ii) In consultation with the Department and reviewers agree a date for the review team's visit to the Department and then devise the overall timetable for the conduct of the IQR, including deadlines for, or dates of, the key stages in the process.
  - iii) Receive from the Department its SES in electronic form, (e.g. on the departmental website, on a memory stick or CD Rom etc.) which will either (i) contain within the text of the document links to supporting material which is available on the Department's website or (ii) contain a separate index of links to supporting material.
  - iv) Ensure that for authorised users this electronic departmental information is saved and electronically archived so that handbooks and other items from previous years are still accessible for the IQR team. The websites for each Department must be archived or a Sharepoint site used to store all documentation reviewed for the purposes of maintaining an audit trail.

- v) Discuss and confirm during the departmental briefing, the most efficient means of providing the SES and supporting material with the Department concerned.
- vi) Discuss and confirm with the Department in advance how access to any departmental intranet sites for (i) UCL staff and (ii) external reviewers will be obtained.
- vii) Confirm with individual team members the format in which they wish to receive the SES and supporting material; i.e. in hard or soft copy.
- viii) Read the SES and supporting material and prepare a report for the review team in advance of its planning meeting. The administrative secretary's report will not be a précis of the SES, but an analysis of the SES and supporting material. This analysis will provide the reviewers with an initial indication of the following:
  - a) Those areas where the Department's policies and procedures appear to be fully in accordance with UCL policy and/or good practice as set out in the UCL Academic Manual and which therefore might not be priority areas for discussion with the Department during the review visit (although the review team might still wish to ask questions in these areas when meeting the Department's staff and students in order that the Department might be allowed to demonstrate the quality of its approach. Also, these areas might contain elements of good practice for wider dissemination).
  - b) Those issues which the review team might wish to explore in further detail, either because it is not clear from the SES and supporting material whether departmental policy and/or procedure accords with UCL policy and/or good practice or because the Department itself has raised significant issues which it wishes to discuss with the review team; such issues should be regarded as constituting the 'core' areas to be examined during the IQR.
- i) Provide the review team with a copy of the previous IQR report on the Department and the associated action plan (where these are available). Teams will wish to assure themselves that all actions from the previous review have been implemented. Issues which have resulted in a previous recommendation of any strength, but in particular those which have been graded as 'necessary' and which have not been implemented should be fully re-explored in the current IQR and, if these have not been not fully addressed, automatically given a 'necessary' recommendation [see Section 3.11 The IQR Report].
- ii) Take notes of interviews during the visit and ask questions during interviews).
- iii) Draft for approval by the reviewers and transmission to the Head of Department, etc., a summary of the main findings of the review team [see Section 3.10 Oral and Written Feedback to the Department]; be responsible for drafting [see Section 3.11 The IQR Report] and co-ordinating the production of the IQR report.

## 3.5 Departmental Contact

1. The Head of Department/Programme Co-ordinator may nominate a colleague (either academic or administrative) as a Departmental Contact. The Contact's essential role will then be to co-ordinate preparations within the Department for the review visit on behalf of the Head of Department. This will include practical arrangements for the visit, such as the provision of documentation, the drawing up of the visit timetable etc. The Departmental Contact can also help to ensure that the review team, who will not normally include subject specialists, has an adequate understanding of the particular nature of the Department in advance of the visit to the Department.

## 3.6 Preliminary Briefing

1. At the start of the IQR process each year, Academic Services officers will make arrangements to brief each of the following groups:
  - Heads of Department and/or Departmental Contacts, etc., in the academic units to be reviewed during the coming academic year.
  - New IQR reviewers, including new external reviewers and student reviewers.
  - Administrative secretaries to IQR teams.

## 3.7 The Self-Evaluative Statement

1. The SES offers an important opportunity for the Department to shape the agenda of the review team. The SES should discuss both strengths and weaknesses in the Department's provision.
2. The SES should be completed by the Department according to the format set out at Annex 6.2.2 Guidance on the Composition of the SES. It should be submitted electronically e.g. via a departmental website or on a memory stick or CD Rom to the administrative secretary to the review team, for receipt at least five working weeks before the date of the review team's visit to the Department. Before finalising the SES, the Department may, if it wishes, invite preliminary comments from the team leader on a draft version of the document (to be submitted to the team leader via the administrative secretary).
3. Departments should issue the draft SES to the Departmental Teaching Committee for approval, before the document is submitted to the review team. Departments should also consult staff and students more widely in the process of developing the SES. Departments should ensure that the final version of the SES is received by the DTC and the Departmental Staff-Student Consultative



Committee before the review team's visit to the Department and is made available to all staff and students in the Department.

4. The Department should also send a copy of the SES (including a list of what the supporting material made available to the team comprises) to the Quality Assurance Manager, Academic Services. On receipt of the SES from the Department, the Quality Assurance Manager will copy the SES to: the Dean of Faculty concerned; the Faculty Tutor concerned; the Faculty Graduate Tutor concerned, inviting them to send comments on the SES to the IQR team, via the administrative secretary.
5. The review team will read the SES and all supporting documentation in conjunction with the administrative secretary's report in advance of its planning meeting. At its planning meeting, the review team will agree the core areas that it will wish to explore during the review visit and how the team will organise its scrutiny of the relevant supporting material. The supporting material made available through its web pages by the Department should provide most of the briefing documentation required by the review team. The team may subsequently request from the Department additional briefing material in advance of their visit to the Department but the amount of any additional material requested should be kept to a minimum. (The Department should submit such additional material in the agreed format to the administrative secretary, who will forward it to the other members of the review team).
6. In conducting the IQR, the review team will test the rigour of the SES and the extent to which it presents an accurate picture of the Department's QME processes. The SES will not necessarily dictate the full scope of the review team's enquiries. The team may develop independent lines of enquiry in the light of, e.g., issues raised in the administrative secretary's report or from the reviewers' own scrutiny of documentation made available by the Department.
7. It is an important principle of the SES that it should include a candid and, where appropriate, self-critical account of the Department's mechanisms for assuring, managing and enhancing quality. If the review team finds the SES to be lacking in self-evaluative content, it should record this judgment in the IQR report. It should also be borne in mind, however, that the SES will form an appendix to the resulting IQR report. The SES will thus be seen by UCL colleagues other than members of the review team and will form part of a documentary record which may also be seen by external reviewers in the context of Higher Education Review or other external review such as accreditations by PSRBs. Departments who, with this in mind, feel they need advice on the inclusion in the SES of potentially sensitive material are encouraged to contact the Quality Assurance Manager.
8. The SES is an evidence-based document. The text of the document should therefore substantiate the statements made therein by cross-reference to the supporting evidence contained in documents listed for submission with the SES.
9. The SES will normally consist of four sections (in addition to supporting statistical data and other briefing material). These four sections are expected to

comprise a total of around 12 pages, although there is no formal prescription of page length.

10. The Student Data Services Section of Student and Registry Services will supply Departments with certain categories of statistical data relating to students and applicants by the start of the academic year in which the IQR is to take place (normally by 30 September). A list of this data is at Annex 6.2.3 IQR Data Set. Departments are expected to analyse this data and provide a commentary on any trends or themes which emerge.
11. The other supporting material made available to the review team by the Department through its web pages or via the other methods listed [see 3.7.2 above] should consist of documentation which the Department believes provides relevant evidence of its QME processes. A list of the core documentation which IQR teams normally expect Departments to submit, together with the SES, in advance of their IQR visit is at Annex 6.2.4 IQR Core Documentation.

## 3.8 The IQR Agenda and Visit to the Department

1. The review team is expected to survey a Department's QME operations generally. Within that brief, however, the team (i) should explore issues highlighted by the Department in its SES and (ii) may devise and pursue particular 'audit trails'.
2. The areas explored by the review team should normally be those areas of operation which come under the main section headings of the Academic Manual and issues identified by the departmental SES. IQR is not intended as a vehicle for exploring research performance, although it may explore ways in which the research environment impacts on the PGR student experience. Neither will IQR review teams make explicit recommendations for resources in respect of UCL's teaching estate.
3. The IQR team's visit to the Department should normally last one working day. The visit will not normally exceed one working day, except in the case of particularly large and/or complex provision. It is helpful to build into the timetable for the visit one or more sessions in which the team can reflect on interviews which have already taken place and identify matters which need to be pursued or explored in remaining interviews. Any tour of the Department to be reviewed may be undertaken on a separate occasion, for example, immediately after the planning meeting, in order to save time on the review day.

## 3.9 The Interview Programme

1. The review team will agree with the Department in advance of the visit a detailed timetable of interviews to be conducted on the visit. Please see Annex 6.2.5 IQR Sample Timetable for a sample timetable. This provides an indication

of the types of meetings that the IQR team may wish to hold during the course of the IQR visit.

2. Interviewees should always include (in time order on the visit day):
  - The Dean of Faculty concerned.
  - The Faculty Tutor concerned.
  - The Faculty Graduate Tutor concerned.
  - Students (including both undergraduate and taught graduate students, wherever the Department teaches at both levels, as well as graduate research students).
  - The Head of Department.
  - A range of academic staff including established staff and those more recently appointed.
  - Key administrative and support staff, including the Departmental Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer (DEOLO); Departmental Tutor and Departmental Careers Advisor.
3. Where the subject of a review is an interdepartmental degree programme, those interviewed should normally include the Programme Co-ordinator and the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners.
4. Attendance at each interview session should normally be restricted to those being interviewed within that particular session. Departments should bear in mind the need to provide, as far as possible, a fully representative and balanced sample of staff and students for interview. Please note that it is also considered good practice to meet students in the morning, usually immediately after the meeting with the Head of Department, as this ensures that student views help to set the agenda for the day's enquiries.

### 3.10 Oral and Written Feedback to the Department

1. At the end of the interview programme, the team leader will, on behalf of the review team, make an oral report to the Head of Department concerned, summarising the reviewers' main findings, in terms of both good practice identified and areas which the team feels need to be addressed, either by the Department or by another body or other bodies within UCL. The purpose of this feedback is to ensure that the Department is immediately informed of the main findings of the review. The Head of Department is not expected to comment on the team's findings at this stage.
2. The administrative secretary to the review team will prepare a written summary of the main findings of the team. This summary should be agreed by all members of the review team and should normally be forwarded to the Head of Department for receipt within two working weeks of the end of the review visit. It should be presented as a series of bullet points indicating:

- i) Good practice identified.
- ii) Areas which the team feels need to be addressed.

## 3.11 The IQR Report

1. The administrative secretary will normally have main responsibility for drafting the report in consultation with the team leader and other members of the team as appropriate.
2. The IQR report should normally include (in the following order):
  - i) The composition of the review team for the current IQR.
  - ii) A commentary on the Department's follow-up from the previous IQR.
  - iii) A commentary on the Department's QME operations and summary of any audit trails followed in the current IQR, set out under the main Academic Manual section headings and any other key areas explored by the review team.
  - iv) A list of good practice in QME in the Department (cross-referring to the corresponding preceding section(s) of the IQR report). Review teams should seek out and record good practice where there is clear evidence that it has contributed to outstanding achievement in one or more areas of recruitment, progression, student satisfaction, student achievement and employability.
  - v) A list of recommendations for improvement in the Department's QME operations (cross-referring to the corresponding preceding section(s) of the IQR report) - the list should clearly distinguish improvements as either 'essential' or 'advisable' or 'desirable'. An 'essential' action point will be either (i) dictated by policy as defined in the UCL Academic Manual or (ii) concern an issue which the review team considers sufficiently significant to warrant immediate action by the Department; an 'advisable' action point is dictated by good practice as noted in the Academic Manual. A 'desirable' action point reflects a suggestion for improvement based on the personal views of the review team but which is not (at present) prescribed in the Academic Manual<sup>3</sup>. In the case on 'essential' recommendations, it is expected that explicit timescales should be set for their implementation. These should be appropriate and achievable.

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<sup>3</sup> Before the draft IQR report is referred to the Department concerned, the administrative secretary to the IQR team should submit the list of recommendations included in the team's draft report to the Quality Assurance Manager for confirmation that the proposed grading of recommendations as 'necessary' or 'advisable' or 'desirable' is appropriate. If the team wishes to specify these gradings in the summary written feedback sent to the department at an earlier stage, the administrative secretary should submit the draft summary to the Quality Assurance Manager.

3. The report is a vehicle for the contextualisation of the recommendations and good practice, which also provides a 'snapshot' of the review team's findings on the day. The report should not go into the fine detail of, or attempt to 'sum up', the activity of the provision reviewed in its entirety, which is rightly the job of the SES. Where necessary the reader should be referred to the SES (which forms an Appendix to the report) rather than replicating its contents.
4. When contextualising the recommendations a report should detail specifically why the recommendation is being advised, and how this would, in the team's view, improve departmental performance. A responsible officer must be assigned by role to each recommendation in order to ensure a direct link between the recommendation and the action proposed and to promote accountability to ensure that it is performed. Recommendations should therefore not be made to 'the Faculty' or 'the Department' but to the specific role of a member (or members) of staff. However, this will be done by the Department as part of its action planning, as it is best placed to know who would be most suitable to implement a particular recommendation. A template will be provided for this purpose by the Administrative Secretary to the review. A copy of the template can be found at Annex 6.2.6 IQR Action Plan Template.
5. Where such matters arise in the course of a review, a recommendation to the appropriate faculty- or institution-level committee to consider an aspect of UCL's institutional-level or faculty-level QME processes.
6. IQR reports may refer to resource issues and the concluding lists of good practice and needs for improvement identified by the review team may, e.g. commend the Department's efforts to improve its learning resources or invite the Department to consider the need for such improvement. Resource-related issues may thus be addressed for attention to the Director of the relevant Professional Service, Senior Officer or Chair of the relevant committee.
7. However, IQR reports will not normally include explicit recommendations, either to the Department or to any other body or bodies within UCL, for additional resources.
8. Any recommendations in IQR reports which are to be addressed by another Department or bodies or bodies within UCL, rather than by the Department which is the subject of the review, should be clearly indicated as such in the concluding list of recommendations under the heading 'Matters for attention outside the Department'.
9. Where a sensitive or potentially confidential issue has arisen, the review team should, through the team leader and/or administrative secretary, seek guidance on how to address the issue in the IQR report from the Director of Academic Services.
10. The IQR report should normally include as appendices:
  - The Department's SES (with a list of the items of supporting documentation)
  - A list of the individuals or groups interviewed on the visit
  - A list of items of additional briefing material requested and received.

11. The full draft IQR report should be agreed by all members of the review team and should normally be forwarded to the Head of Department, for receipt within eight working weeks of the end of the review visit, with an invitation to notify any factual corrections needed to the report.
12. The draft report should be circulated to the DTC before corrections are notified to the administrative secretary to the review team. If the report is received by the DTC, the Department's response to the draft report should be received by the administrative secretary no later than 10 days after the date of the DTC meeting. In any event, the Department's response to the draft report should be received by the IQR secretary not more than four weeks after the date on which the draft report is sent to the Department<sup>4</sup>.
13. The review team will consider the Department's comments on the factual accuracy of the draft report and will then decide what changes, if any, to make to the report in the light of these comments. The final version of the report will be submitted by the administrative secretary to the review team to: (i) the Head of Department; (ii) the Quality Assurance Manager.
14. Academic Services will provide new review team secretaries with an IQR report template, which will indicate the main section headings for the report, although this need not be regarded as an inflexible prescription of the structure of the IQR report. (For example, additional section headings may be used to reflect any other areas actually looked at by the review team).

## 3.12 Follow-up

1. Once the final version of the IQR report has been submitted to (i) the Head of Department or Programme Co-ordinator and (ii) the Quality Assurance Manager by the administrative secretary to the review team, the team will, as soon as possible thereafter, arrange a follow-up meeting with the Department. The purpose of this meeting will be to assist the Department in the development of its response to the recommendations of the IQR report. To aid this process, the administrative secretary will have provided the Department with a template for preparing its action plan setting out how it intends to respond to the recommendations contained in the IQR report. The template comprises juxtaposed lists of:
  - i) Recommendations in the IQR report
  - ii) Action taken or planned in respect of each of these recommendations
  - iii) Timescale for implementation of the recommendation
  - iv) The officer responsible.

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<sup>4</sup> Note that if timing of the DTC meeting makes this timeframe impossible, all members of the DTC, including student representatives, should be sent a copy of the draft report by email and their comments invited.

2. The Department will be requested to produce a preliminary action plan, using the template provided, for discussion at the follow-up meeting with the review team. During the follow-up meeting, the administrative secretary will take a note of any modifications to the draft action plan suggested by the review team. After the follow-up meeting, the secretary will write to the Head of Department, with a copy to the Quality Assurance Manager, to confirm the review team's comments on the draft action plan. Once the follow-up meeting has taken place, the review team will have completed its work.
3. Where the IQR report makes recommendations concerning another Department or other Departments, the Quality Assurance Manager will write to the other Head(s) of Department(s) concerned, asking them to submit, by a specified deadline, a similar summary of action taken or planned.
4. Where the report makes recommendations to be addressed by another body or bodies within UCL, the Quality Assurance Manager will write to the officer(s) named by the recommendation, asking them to respond, by a specified deadline, to relevant recommendations.
5. Departments must:
  - i) Ensure that they make the final IQR reports and action plans accessible to students in the Department, e.g. by making these public on departmental intranets
  - ii) Submit the IQR reports and action plans to the relevant DTC for discussion.
6. IQR reports will be sent by the Quality Assurance Manager to the officers of the Faculty concerned, with a note which makes clear the Faculty's particular responsibilities to:
  - i) Submit the IQR reports and action plans to the FTC for discussion
  - ii) Note and disseminate within the Faculty good practice and/or recommendations for improvement identified in the IQR report.

### 3.13 IQR Panel/QRSC

1. Immediately after the follow-up meeting, the Quality Assurance Manager will write to the Heads of Departments concerned, asking them to submit the final summary of action taken or planned by the Department in response to the recommendations of the IQR report for submission to the IQR Panel.
2. On receipt of the action plans, responses and comments requested, the Quality Assurance Manager will refer these for consideration by the IQR Panel, in conjunction with the IQR reports to which they refer.
3. Sustained dialogue between the Department which has been reviewed and those responsible for oversight of the review process is an essential element of IQR. Consequently, approximately one year after the review visit has taken place, the Head or a nominated representative of the Department will attend the

meeting of the IQR Panel which considers the IQR report and action plan. The Head or other representative of the Department will be invited to discuss with the Panel at that meeting the perceived usefulness of the IQR process, the report and recommendations, and the progress made by the Department in implementing the action plan.

4. If, having reviewed the report and action plan and interviewed the Head of Department, the Panel judges that the Department has not made satisfactory progress in implementing the recommendations, the Quality Assurance Manager (as Secretary to the IQR Panel) may request further information or clarification. Only when the Panel is satisfied that the Department has implemented the recommendations will the Quality Assurance Manager obtain the agreement of the Quality Review Sub-Committee that the IQR report, the Department's action plan and any other responses to the report be formally approved.
5. Following Quality Review Sub-Committee approval of responses to an IQR report, the Quality Assurance Manager will confirm approval in writing to the Departments concerned. At this point the Quality Assurance Manager will also write to the review team concerned, notifying it of the outcome of the review and thanking it for its work.

### 3.14 Dissemination of Findings of IQR Reports

1. Following the Quality Review Sub-Committee's approval of responses to all the IQR reports produced in the previous academic year, the Quality Assurance Manager will prepare an annual report on that year's IQR programme for submission to and formal approval by Quality Review Sub-Committee.
2. The IQR Panel will, in the course of its annual discussion of the Summary of Good Practice, refer these to CALT for wider dissemination and implementation.
3. Recommendations concerning research student issues arising from IQR during the previous session are noted in a separate section and these recommendations and any progress noted are then discussed at the autumn meeting of the Research Degrees Committee.



# 4 External Examining

1. External examining provides one of the principal means of maintaining UK academic standards within autonomous higher education providers. External Examining is therefore an important part of UCL's Quality Review Framework (QRF). The following regulations are applicable only to taught programmes of study, including Undergraduate, Initial Teacher Education and Postgraduate.

## 4.1 Criteria for Appointment

1. External Examiners must be appointed for all taught programmes delivered by UCL and academic partner institutions.
2. External Examiners must be from outside UCL and must not be involved in teaching on the programme during their term of office.
3. External Examiners must be competent in assessing students' knowledge and skills at higher education level; expert in the field of study concerned and have appropriate academic and/or professional experience and authority.
4. External Examiners appointed to programmes must meet any specified qualification requirements of the relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.
5. External Examiners are not expected to hold more than the equivalent of two substantive External Examinerships at the same time; this includes their appointment for UCL.
6. Boards of Examiners should avoid appointing an External Examiner to examine a single module without good reason for doing so.
7. A member of the academic staff of a College of the University of London other than UCL, or any other external institution with which UCL has service teaching arrangements, may be appointed as an External Examiner. It is imperative that the Board of Examiners at UCL, on which the appointee will serve, so far as can be anticipated, is examining no students from the appointee's college.
8. Former members of UCL staff must not be appointed as External Examiners before a lapse of at least five years and provided that all students taught by that member of staff have left the programme being examined.
9. External Examiners for taught postgraduate Boards of Examiners who are not eligible to work in the UK must obtain a Tier 5 visa or a Permitted Paid Engagement letter to enter the UK. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Board of Examiners to verify eligibility of External Examiners to work in the UK or arrange the provision of a Tier 5 visa or a Permitted Paid Engagement letter to enter the UK. The guidance set out in Sponsored Researchers and Visiting Academics should be followed.

10. External Examiners for undergraduate programmes must be eligible to work in the UK. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Board of Examiners to verify eligibility to work in the UK.
11. An External Examiner will not be appointed from a department/division in which a member of UCL staff is serving as an Examiner.
12. Only one External Examiner from the same department/division and Faculty of an institution will be appointed to examine the same programme at any one time.
13. An External Examiner may be appointed from the same department/division of an institution only after at least two years have elapsed since the termination of the previous appointment from that department/division.
14. Boards of Examiners should avoid appointing excessive numbers of External Examiners.
15. Exceptions to the foregoing stipulations may on occasion be permitted, for example, in the case of subjects taught only in a very small number of institutions or subjects with an unusually high number of specialisms. These exceptions must be granted by the Chair of Education Committee or their nominee.
16. External Examiners will be asked at the time of appointment, or continuation in appointment, to declare any interest in or connection with any student on the programme for which they are acting as Examiner whether that interest or connection is personal or professional. If such an interest or connection exists, the Examiner in question should not be appointed. The Chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible for managing this process and should notify the Chair of Quality Review Sub-Committee (QRSC) of Education Committee.
17. After serving for a period of four consecutive years, (or five years if an extension to service was approved), an Examiner is not eligible for re-appointment for a period of two further years. The period of service is defined as the period of service as an External Examiner at UCL and not as the period of service as External Examiner to a particular Board of Examiners.

## 4.2 Responsibilities of UCL

1. At the time of nomination UCL should provide the External Examiner with sufficient information to enable him/ her to make an informed decision as to whether or not to accept the appointment.
2. Student and Registry Services issue an appointment email clarifying information on payment, visa requirements and details of UCL's academic regulations.
3. UCL should ascertain whether or not External Examiners have any access requirements or require any reasonable adjustments in order to carry out their duties, as outlined in UCL's [Equal Opportunity Policy](#).

4. UCL will pay expenses promptly on receipt and the fee on receipt of the External Examiner's report.
5. Where resources permit, Departments should take the opportunity to invite new External Examiners to UCL ahead of their first Board of Examiners, to ensure that this meeting is not the first time at which they meet the generality of academic staff.
6. As a minimum, Departments must provide new External Examiners with the following information by the start of the first session of their appointment:
  - i. The name of departmental/divisional board contact (e.g. Examinations Liaison Officer).
  - ii. The date(s) of meetings of Board of Examiners to which the External Examiner is invited (when known).
  - iii. An outline of UCL's examination policies and procedures for Board of Examiners (e.g., point of contact for External Examiner, time allowed for marking, procedures for setting and scrutinising papers).
  - iv. Relevant departmental/divisional booklets such as a Student Handbook or syllabus information.
  - v. Programme specification(s).
  - vi. Module descriptions.
  - vii. The Scheme for the Award and marking scheme for individual modules and components of assessment.
  - viii. The previous External Examiner's final report and the departmental response.

## 4.3 Responsibilities of the External Examiner

1. External Examiners should refer to the UCL regulations UCL regulations in Chapter 4: Section 8: Boards of Examiners, noting in particular:
  - 8.1.3 Voting Rights
  - 8.1.5 Candidate Anonymity
  - 8.8 Procedures When Marks Are Missing
  - 8.9 Procedure When an External Examiner is Unable to Attend
  - 8.10 Procedures to Follow in the Event of An Emergency
2. The primary responsibilities of a Taught Programme External Examiner are to review summative assessment methods prior to students being assessed and to submit an annual report, based upon their professional judgement, about the following aspects of the programme(s) they examine:
  - i) Whether the academic standards set for the programme qualifications are appropriate.

- ii) The extent to which the assessment processes are rigorous, ensure equity of treatment for students and have been fairly conducted within UCL's regulations and guidance.
  - iii) The standards of student performance in the programme, or parts of programmes, which they have been appointed to examine.
  - iv) Where appropriate, the comparability of the standards and student achievements with those in some other higher education institutions in the UK.
  - v) Identify comparable practice.
3. The External Examiner's Report Form requests External Examiners to suggest recommendations based on areas of concern not satisfactorily resolved at the meetings of the Board of Examiners.
  4. The form must be returned to Student and Registry Services **within one month** of the final meeting of the Board of Examiners so that External Examiner's comments can be taken into account for the next academic session. The External Examiners Reporting procedures are set out in Annex 6.3.1 Main Steps: Response to External Examiners' Reports. Payment of the Examiner's fee is authorised when the report is received by Student and Registry Services.
  5. Examiners should consider the totality of the degree in respect of both the syllabus and examination<sup>5</sup>. The major part of their role should be devoted to modules and examinations which are the main determinants of the degree classification.
  6. Departments and Divisions should invite External Examiners to comment on the appropriateness of new or amended methods of assessment.
  7. All forms of assessment and dissertations must be comprehensively moderated internally before being sent to the External Examiner. **An External Examiner must never be asked to mark or moderate any form of assessment or dissertation.**
  8. External Examiners must have sight of a representative sample of a range of assessments that will enable them to make an informed judgement as to whether the internal marking is of an appropriate standard, consistent and fair to all students. Departments/Divisions should make suitable practical arrangements for this task either by sending a sample by post/email or by arranging a suitable time and location in advance of the Board for the Examiner to review a sample.
  9. For oral examinations, External Examiners should receive a representative sample of the recorded oral examinations or all of the recorded assessed work in the case of a minority language. In this context a minority foreign language refers to a language where there is only one qualified member of staff who could teach that language in a given academic session.

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<sup>5</sup> In some cases this will not be possible as Examiners are appointed to examine specific module(s) and not a full programme.

10. External Examiners may be invited to attend oral examinations as observers and must not directly examine students.
11. Examiners must also see the mark sheets for all students for the assessment from which the samples are taken. Final projects and dissertations from programmes should be treated in the same way as other forms of assessment. The Chair may make arrangements for Examiners to review final projects and dissertations when they visit UCL for a Board of Examiners meeting.
12. Examiners should also receive the assessments of borderline students where the External Examiner is examining a whole programme (not just a component).
13. An External Examiner may recommend to the Board of Examiners changes to the marks already arrived at by the Internal Examiners if these appear to them to be inappropriate. Where significant changes are recommended by the External Examiner it is essential for them to see all the assessment for that component of the assessment.
14. At least one External Examiner present at the final Board of Examiners is required to sign a statement that the examination has been conducted according to the general UCL regulations and the specific programme regulations to the best of their knowledge, and that they have agreed to the results.

## 4.4 Nomination and Appointment

### 4.4.1 Process of Nomination

1. The Chair of a Board of Examiners will nominate a new External Examiner for all or part of a taught programme.
2. Nominations for new External Examiners must be conducted before the start of the first academic session so that they can review assessment tasks in good time.
1. In making a nomination, the Chair will take account of the appointment criteria specified in Section 4.1 Criteria for Appointment, including confirmation of approval of the nomination from the relevant Chair of the Faculty Board of Examiners and the Quality Review Sub-Committee.

#### **Further Guidance**

1. In order for Examiners to complete the nomination form on-line External Examiners need access to a restricted area of Portico (UCL's student records system). NB - This is particularly important because Examiners will submit their annual reports to UCL also using an on-line tool constructed for this purpose.
2. Access is gained by sending brief details to [examiners@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:examiners@ucl.ac.uk) providing the following information: Title / Forename / Surname / Title of Board / Email address and Date of Birth (if possible).

3. Student and Registry Services will then set up the nominee of UCL's Services System.
4. Student and Registry Services will send the nominee a link to Portico with information about accessing Portico to enter details of their relevant teaching and examining experience.
5. Upon completion of the on-line form, the nominee will then submit the form to the Chair of the Board by confirming that they wish to proceed (a radio button on the on-line form).
6. The form will then appear in the Chair's (and/or their nominee) 'In-tray' on their home page on Portico. They will also receive an email letting them know that the form has been submitted.
7. Upon checking the details and being content to proceed with the nomination, the form is sent to the Faculty via the in-tray and email process set out in vi, above.
8. The Faculty approver can accept or reject the nomination or send queries back to the Chair of the Board.
9. If content with the nomination, the Faculty can proceed by sending the form to the Chair of QRSC, via the Student and Registry Services via the in-tray and email process set out in 6 above.
10. The Chair of QRSC can accept or reject the nomination or send queries back to the Chair of the Board.
11. If the nomination is accepted the external Examiner is appointed by UCL for a period of 4 years (or less if requested) to be confirmed on an annual basis.
12. Chairs of Boards should consider the travelling distances involved from a proposed External Examiner's place of residence to UCL, practicalities of travel and the likely costs to UCL in expenses, noting that the Student and Registry Services will pay up to a maximum of £400 (for one night), £550 (for two nights) and £700 (for three nights) for taught programme examiner expenses and any additional sums will be charged to the relevant department / division.
13. Departments/divisions should book and pay for External Examiners travel arrangements well in advance to ensure the best rates are achieved. They should also book and pay for any hotel accommodation, submit an interdepartmental transfer to Assessment and Student Records also within the maximum amount of £400 (for one night), £550 (for two nights) and £700 (for three nights) per visit and retain receipts locally.
14. Examiners should claim expenses using the expenses claim form sent to them upon their appointment and with their report.
15. The appointment of overseas examiners should be limited.

#### 4.4.2 Period of Appointment

1. External Examiners may have their four-year term extended for one further academic session only, subject to the approval of the Quality Review Sub-

Committee. Chairs of Boards of Examiners are responsible for requesting extensions for their External Examiners via Student and Registry Services.

2. If an External Examiner will not be nominated for reappointment within the four year appointment period, the Chair of the Board must formally notify the External Examiner concerned and inform the Chair of Quality Review Sub-Committee of the decision via Student and Registry Services with a brief statement of reason.

### 4.4.3 Continuation of Appointment

1. Chairs of Boards of Examiners will confirm that External Examiners are continuing in appointment annually.
2. An Examiner has the right not to seek continuation in appointment at any time during the period in which they are eligible to serve.

#### **Further Guidance**

1. When prompted by the Student and Registry Services, Chairs or their nominated administrators should confirm that a taught programme External Examiner is continuing for another academic session.
2. This task is carried out via the Chair's or nominee's Portico staff homepage.
3. When confirmed, the External Examiner will receive an email, issued by the Student and Registry Services, appointing them for another year.

### 4.4.4 Termination of Appointment

1. UCL reserves the right not to continue the appointment at any time during the period that the Examiner is eligible to serve. External Examiners will be formally notified by the Chair of the Board as outlined in Section 4.4.2 Period of Appointment.

## 4.5 Student Contact with External Examiners

1. UCL is required to provide details' of its External Examiners, for information only, to students, including the name and institution of the External Examiners. For a list of current External Examiners, see Annex 6.3.5 for UG programmes and Annex 6.3.6 for PGT programmes.
2. Students must not make direct contact with External Examiners regarding their individual performance in assessments. Appropriate mechanisms are available to raise these concerns through the procedures set out in Chapter 1, Section 12: Student Complaints Procedure. Externals should inform Student and Registry Services should a student contact them.
3. External Examiners may be given an opportunity to meet students to ascertain their thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of their educational experience at UCL. This is not something that is routinely offered to External

Examiners but can be arranged by the programme / board administrators should the External Examiner wish to meet students.

## 4.6 Entitlements of External Examiners

1. External Examiners are entitled to withhold their approval by signature to decisions of the Board of Examiners under the following circumstances:
  - i) They are in a dispute with those decisions which cannot be resolved at Board of Examiner level.
  - ii) They are not satisfied that the examination procedures have been properly carried out.
  - iii) They perceive serious deficiencies in the examination procedures. In all such exceptional circumstances the matter in question will be referred directly to the UCL Quality Review Sub-Committee.
  - iv) External Examiners have the right to raise matters of serious concern at the highest level of UCL, either with the Chair of Quality Review Sub-Committee or Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs). When all institutional avenues have been exhausted, the External Examiners may contact QAA through its Concerns scheme route.

## 4.7 External Examiner Reports

### 4.7.1 Distribution of Reports and Response to Reports

1. The process for considering External Examiners' reports is set out in the External Examiners' Reporting Process (see Annex 6.3.1 Main Steps: Response to External Examiners' Reports.).
  1. Access to these documents will be provided to students via UCL's student records system, Portico, and should also be discussed at Departmental Student-Staff Consultative Committees.
  2. A flow chart for the External Examiner Reporting process is available at Annex 6.3.2).

### 4.7.2 Annual Student Experience Review (ASER)

1. The Annual Student Experience Review process (see Section 2) is intended to provide an increased level of central data analysis which will flag up statistically significant issues and highlight particularly strong or weak data from a variety of sources. Each Department will respond directly to the issues identified by its own data which will allow for the collation and comparison of meaningful data and reflects a genuinely risk-based approach. The central



analysis will also help to identify cross-institutional trends and variances, particularly in key areas such as WP and BME attainment.

2. External Examiners' Reports will be used in conjunction with quantitative data and additional sources, such as external survey results, feedback from internal surveys and employability statistics, to compile the central datasets that will be considered by Quality Review Sub-Committee. Please refer to Section 2: Annual Student Experience Review for further information.

### 4.7.3 Monitoring of Reports and Responses

1. Academic Services will monitor responses to all reports. A step by step process for monitoring External Examiners' reports and responses to the reports is set out in Annex 6.3.1 Main Steps: Response to External Examiners' Reports. and a flow chart for the External Examiner Reporting process is available at Annex 6.3.2).
2. External Examiners will be asked to make recommendations within their report and grade these as Essential, Advisable or Desirable, which would require timely responses. The definitions for the three categories are as follows:
  - i) **Essential:** Areas of concern which, in your opinion, place academic standards and/or the student learning experience at immediate risk and requires action before the start of the next academic year.
  - ii) **Advisable:** Areas of concern regarding threshold standards which, while currently being met, in your opinion, could be significantly improved.
  - iii) **Desirable:** Areas where, in your opinion, there is potential for enhancement.
3. A designated member of academic staff should be available to respond to External Examiners' recommendations within the specified timeframe. The Chairs of Boards of Examiners must ultimately be responsible for drafting a response if the designated academic has conflicting responsibilities.
4. Academic Services will prepare annual reports on matters of general interest and concern for inclusion in the ASER process, for the Boards of Faculty to consider and for wider dissemination to Quality Review Sub-Committee.
5. A Department's (or partner institution's) annual main meeting of the Board of Examiners for a programme at which an External Examiner is present should include early in its agenda a copy of the report and the Department's response for the previous year.

# 5 Peer Dialogue Scheme

## Enhancing research-based education at UCL

### 5.1 What is the Peer Dialogue Scheme?

The Peer Dialogue scheme is open to all staff who teach and/or support students' learning at UCL. Its aim is to inspire you to develop your teaching and your students' learning, by working closely with colleagues. It enables you either to continue the established UCL tradition of engaging each year in a peer observation of a taught session, or to focus on developing another aspect of practice, such as feedback on assessment or development of resources. Both options invite you to engage in a constructive discussion with colleagues about enhancing student learning and/or the wider student experience in your subject.

Peer Dialogue is not a judgmental process, but an opportunity for creative thinking about developing your educational practice. Departments will keep a brief record of engagement with the scheme, to demonstrate commitment to ongoing, collegial enhancement of academic practice.

### 5.2 What do I need to do?

You have two options, and can choose which to undertake in each academic year. Staff on probation should take advice from their subject leader on which option would be the most helpful.

### 5.3 Option A: Collaborative enhancement of a specific area of practice

Colleagues work in twos, threes or small groups (same subject OR interdisciplinary clusters).

1. Identify an area for development for the academic year; for example, assessment methods; feedback to students; e-learning materials and resources; flipped lectures; inclusive teaching for diverse groups; research-based education. See the UCL Teaching and Learning Portal for more examples: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/>.
2. Support each other by:
  - visiting each other's teaching sessions, and/or

- studying course design: face to face session plans; modules; programmes of study; the design of online learning activities, and/or
  - reviewing a wider area of practice for development.
3. Agree on your approaches to enhancement.
  4. Try out the new approaches and then get together to review them.
  5. Write a very brief account (50-150 words) of what you have done, of how practices have developed and of what impact this has had on student learning and engagement.

## 5.4 Option B: Pair-based Teaching Observation

1. Identify with a colleague one or more aspects of your face-to-face teaching which you would like feedback on. You are encouraged to select a new partner for the Peer Dialogue each academic year, so that you can draw on and contribute to the expertise of diverse colleagues.
2. Plan times to visit each other's teaching sessions.
3. Spend time on preparation before the session. It will be very helpful if you understand the context of each other's teaching and the aim and content of particular session.
4. When observing, make notes on what you will feed back to your colleague and on what you can apply to your own teaching/course design.
5. Engage in a constructive follow-up discussion, exploring how your practice can be mutually enhanced.
6. Write a brief joint report (50-150 words) summarising any changes you plan following the Peer Dialogue, focusing particularly on suggestions of benefit to others in the department.

## 5.5 Peer Dialogue follow up (Options A and B)

You are invited to:

- Present and discuss your account of Peer Dialogue at your appraisal
- Present your enhancement work to your departmental teaching committee
- Share with your departmental teaching committee any generic issues arising, for example suggestions for changes to the use of space or of technology
- Develop a case study for the UCL Teaching and Learning Portal: email [ConnectedCurriculum@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ConnectedCurriculum@ucl.ac.uk) to discuss possibilities
- Lead a UCL Arena exchange seminar, to share your developments with colleagues beyond your Faculty: see

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/arena/events/seminar-proposal-form> or contact [arena@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:arena@ucl.ac.uk).

For further information or guidance on how to engage with the UCL Peer Dialogue scheme, please contact [arena@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:arena@ucl.ac.uk).

# 6 Staff-Student Consultative Committees

## Policy

1. UCL Regulation for Management 12.3 provides as follows: 'In each academic Department<sup>6</sup> there shall be at least one departmental Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC). Each Staff-Student Consultative Committee shall meet at least twice in each academic year. The Head of the Department or equivalent shall ensure that the constitution and the procedures of this Committee are acceptable to the staff and the students of the Department or Faculty<sup>7</sup>. The minutes of each meeting of each such Consultative Committee shall be forwarded to the Secretary of the UCL Student Experience Committee (StEC) (incorporating Joint Staff Student Committee), for receipt on behalf of the StEC.' The minutes should also be forwarded to UCL Union ([stars@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:stars@ucl.ac.uk)).
2. The StEC also requests that Departments/Divisions:
  - i) Ensure that Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) agendas and minutes are produced and circulated to a standard, time-frame (it is recommended that a two week time-frame for production of the minutes from the date of the meeting is a reasonable expectation).
  - ii) Ensure that SSCC agendas include a standing item "matters arising from the minutes", to ensure that feedback on action points raised at previous meetings is reported.
  - iii) Record in the minutes of each meeting of the SSCC the names of those in attendance, giving titles and, for student members, year of study.
  - iv) Record in the minutes any action to be taken and by whom.
  - v) Ensure that the minutes are signed by at least one student member of the SSCC.
  - vi) Ensure that the minutes are displayed within the Department and are available to the students on-line.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Department' here also refers to non-departmental academic units (e.g. Division, School etc.). For inter-departmental degree programmes see Section 6.3 Arrangements for Inter-Departmental Degree Programmes.

<sup>7</sup> It is recommended that the SSCC does not exceed more than twenty student members. Where this is the case, departments should consider creating an additional SSCC, perhaps split by mode of study, programme or level. Distance learning programmes should consider holding the SSCC by conference call or using service providers such as Skype (a timed Moodle forum may also be appropriate). Students on their Year Abroad or on placement away from their department should raise any matters they wish with the student members on the SSCC, or with the SSCC Chair and Secretary and SSCC minutes should also be made available to these students.

- vii) Submit the minutes of the SSCC to Departmental Teaching Committee (DTC) meetings (or equivalent) for consideration and where necessary, further action.
  - viii) Ensure an appropriate level of administrative support from Departments to SSCCs to ensure that they operate to a consistent level and standard<sup>8</sup>.
3. A suggested agenda is available at Annex 6.4.1 SSCC Template Agenda.
  4. A checklist of items to be considered by SSCC is available at Annex 6.4.2 SSCC Agenda Items Checklist.
  5. The StEC submits an annual summary to the UCL Education Committee of the operation of the above arrangements.

## 6.1 Constitution

1. StEC (incorporating JSSC) has agreed the following constitution for SSCCs:
  - Head of Department (or Deputy)/Programme Director/Senior member of academic staff
  - At least one member of staff responsible for undergraduate students
  - At least one member of staff responsible for taught Masters students\*
  - At least one member of staff responsible for research students\*
  - At least one undergraduate student representative from each year of study
  - At least one taught Masters student representative\*
  - At least one graduate research student representative\*
  - At least one part-time student representative, where appropriate
  - One member appointed by UCL Union.

*\* Not required where there is a separate committee for graduate students.*

*NB All students serving on a departmental committee (including SSCCs and DTCs) are known as Student Academic Representatives, or StARs. The number of Student Academic Representatives elected by an academic Department should not exceed the number of student places available on the relevant departmental committees.*

## 6.2 Terms of Reference

1. StEC (incorporating JSSC) has agreed the following terms of reference for SSCCs:

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<sup>8</sup> 'Appropriate' is here defined as not a student taking the minutes but a member of administrative staff'.

- i. To discuss follow-up action resulting from previous SSCC meetings, in particular any matter which was referred to the DTC meeting.
- ii. To make students aware of the Student Academic Representatives (StARs) scheme and the training offered by UCL Union.
- iii. To comment upon the outcome of degree programme and course evaluation questionnaires and any consequent follow-up action [for further guidance see Annex 6.5.1 Guidance on Student Questionnaires and Annex 6.5.2 Student Questionnaire Template].
- iv. To receive notification of any departmental changes with respect to teaching, admissions, and assessment.
- v. To comment upon any significant changes to departmental policy which would have a direct consequence for teaching, admissions, and assessment.
- vi. To comment upon safety within the Department.
- vii. To comment upon physical resources within the Department e.g. computer/library facilities etc.
- viii. To make students aware of the Departmental Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer.
- ix. To receive and consider copies of the annual reports of the Chairs of Boards of Examiners and departmental responses to External Examiner recommendations.
- x. To comment, at least once each session, upon the Personal Tutoring system.
- xi. To comment on feedback to students on their assessed work to: (i) make students aware of the related UCL Service Standards and (ii) identify student related issues for further discussion by the DTC.
- xii. To receive, where possible and as part of the Internal Quality Review process (see Section 3), the Department's Self-evaluative Statement and the Internal Quality Review Report.
- xiii. Each year to receive and discuss the Department's Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) Report and Action Plan (see Section 2).
- xiv. To report to the DTC concerned by submission of minutes of each meeting of the SSCC to the officers of the DTC.

## 6.3 Arrangements for Interdepartmental Degree Programmes

1. Degree programmes that are inter-departmental (with contributions from more than two Departments) are required to have a separate, programme-based, SSCC. UCL's Regulations for Management 12.4 and 12.5 provide as follows:

- *Subject to the provisions of Regulation 12.4 below, there shall be, for each combined studies degree programme operating within UCL and involving more than two Departments of UCL, an SSCC, which shall meet at least twice in each academic year. The academic staff responsible for the co-ordination of such a degree programme shall ensure that the constitution and procedures of this committee are acceptable to the staff and students involved in the degree programme. The minutes of each meeting of each such committee shall be forwarded to the Secretary of the UCL StEC (incorporating JSSC), for receipt on behalf of the UCL StEC.*
  - *Where the academic staff responsible for the co-ordination of a combined studies degree programme operating within UCL and involving more than two Departments of UCL consider that it will not be appropriate for a separate SSCC to operate for the degree programme in question, those staff shall ensure that the views of students following the programme can be expressed instead either through (i) the SSCCs of the Departments concerned, as prescribed in Regulation 12.3, or through (ii) an annual meeting which all students following the programme shall be invited to attend, or through both (i) and (ii).*
2. StEC (incorporating JSSC) has agreed the following constitution and terms of reference for programme based SSCCs.

### 6.3.1 Constitution

- The Programme Co-ordinator
- The Programme Tutor(s)
- At least one student representative from each year of study
- At least one part-time student representative, where appropriate
- One member appointed by UCL Union.

*NB All students serving on a programme committee (including SSCCs and Teaching Committees) are known as Student Academic Representatives, or StARs. The number of Student Academic Representatives elected by a programme should not exceed the number of student places available on the relevant programme's committees.*

### 6.3.2 Terms of Reference

- i. To discuss follow-up action resulting from previous meetings, in particular any matter which was referred to a DTC meeting.
- ii. To make students aware of the Student Academic Representatives (StARs) scheme and the training offered by UCL Union.
- iii. To comment upon the outcome of degree programme and course evaluation questionnaires and any consequent follow-up action.



- iv. To receive notification of any departmental changes with respect to teaching, admissions, and assessment.
- v. To comment upon any significant changes to departmental policy which would have a direct consequence for teaching, admissions, and assessment.
- vi. To comment upon safety within the Department(s).
- vii. To comment upon physical resources within the Department(s) e.g. computer/library facilities etc.
- viii. To make students aware of the Departmental Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer(s).
- ix. To receive and consider copies of the relevant annual reports of the Chairs of Boards of Examiners.
- x. To comment, at least once each session, upon the Personal Tutoring system.
- xi. To comment on feedback to students on their assessed work to: (i) make students aware of the related UCL Service Standards and (ii) identify student related issues for further discussion by the Teaching Committee.
- xii. To receive, where possible and as part of the Internal Quality Review process, the Department's Self-evaluative Statement and the Internal Quality Review Report.
- xiii. Each year to receive and discuss the Department's Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) report and Action Plan.
- xiv. To report to the Teaching Committee concerned by submission of Minutes of each meeting of the SSCC to the officers of the Teaching Committee.

## 6.4 Details of Faculty Practice

### **Faculty Deviations from Regulation for Management 12.3**

#### 6.4.1 Faculty of Laws

1. This Faculty has one SSCC which reports to Faculty Board meetings. Any matters needing further consideration are referred to the Faculty Teaching Committee (FTC).

#### 6.4.2 UCL Institute of Education

1. This Faculty has one SSCC (called a 'Student Experience Committee') which reports to StEC (incorporating JSSC). This arrangement will be kept under review by StEC for the remainder of 2015-16.

# 7 Student Representation on UCL Academic Standing Committees and Sub-Committees

## Policy

1. UCL and UCLU provide many opportunities for students to engage with UCL's policy- and decision-making in all areas of teaching, learning and support. Students can have a say in the way the University is run. There are many opportunities. The page below summarises these.

## 7.1 Representation at Departmental and Faculty Level

### 7.1.1 Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC)

1. Every Department have at least one Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) (see Section 6) which meets at least twice in each academic year. SSCCs provide the opportunity to feedback to lecturers and departmental administrators about issues that have impacted on programmes and modules. These may include good or bad ways in which lectures, tutorials, labs etc. have been delivered which can be addressed by the teaching Department, or they may include university-wide issues such as library or computing facilities, or even noise caused by building works. Departments take these comments very seriously, and the minutes of the SSCC meetings are considered by the UCL Joint Staff-Student Committee (see Section 7.4).

### 7.1.2 Departmental Teaching Committee (DTC)

1. Every Department should hold a Departmental Teaching Committee (DTC) meeting each term, where changes in programmes, modules, teaching and assessment are agreed and monitored. All DTCs should have at least one undergraduate student and one postgraduate student member.

### 7.1.3 Faculty Teaching Committee (FTC)

1. All of UCL's academic Departments belong to a Faculty which provides governance and support to the way in which Departments are managed. All Faculties have a Faculty Teaching Committee (FTC) which meets termly. All FTCs should have at least one undergraduate student and one postgraduate student member.
2. For more information on your SSCC, DTC or FTC, students should contact their undergraduate or postgraduate tutor or the Faculty Office.

## 7.2 Student Academic Representatives (StARs)

1. StARs (Student Academic Representatives) are elected to represent students' views to UCL. StARs sit on various committees at a programme (such as SSCCs), faculty and university level, at which they act as the voice of students, ensuring that UCL takes into account the needs of students in its decision-making processes. The StARS scheme is run by UCLU, and students can be StARs at both a departmental and faculty level. For general enquiries, please contact [stars@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:stars@ucl.ac.uk).

## 7.3 Representation via UCLU

1. The Students' Union, UCLU, is run by students for students. Apart from providing social spaces, support services and extra-curricular activities, UCLU is an important political forum for all students. Students at UCL are automatically members of the Students' Union and have access to all its facilities and support. The Union is run by Student Officers who are elected each year by the membership. Students can speak to one of these officers if they have any issues with which Officers may be able to aid or support them.

## 7.4 Representation on UCL Academic Standing and Sub-Committees

1. Many of UCL's formal committees have student representation. On most of these committees, the student representatives comprise one or more of UCLU's elected Student Sabbatical Officers, who you may speak to if there are issues that you wish to raise at meetings of these committees.
2. The Joint Staff-Student Committee (JSSC) deals with issues relating directly to students. It reviews university-wide issues raised at SSCCs and also looks at the data received from student surveys. Many of the agenda items are raised by students via UCLU. JSSC currently has eight student members, including at least one graduate student and at least one part-time student. These student members are nominated by UCLU. If you are interested in being nominated to serve on JSSC, then please contact Simon To, Representation & Campaigns Manager, UCLU: [simon.to@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:simon.to@ucl.ac.uk).
3. Current student representation on UCL's formal academic committees is as follows:

### **Academic Board**

- UCLU Education & Campaigns Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer (ex officio)
- Thirteen elected, including at least two postgraduate students and one student drawn from each of the UCL faculties

### **Academic Committee**

- UCLU Education & Campaigns Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Welfare & International Officer (ex officio)

### **Education Committee**

- UCLU Education & Campaigns Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Welfare & International Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer (ex officio)
- One taught graduate student, nominated by the UCLU
- One undergraduate student, nominated by the UCLU

### **Joint Staff Student Committee**

- UCLU Education & Campaigns Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Welfare & International Officer (ex officio)
- Nine student members, including at least one medical student and at least one part-time student, nominated by UCLU

### **Library Committee**

- UCLU Education & Campaigns Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer (ex officio)

### **Research Degrees Committee**

- UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer (ex officio)
- One research graduate student, nominated by the UCLU

### **Student Recruitment Admission and Funding Committee**

- UCLU Education & Campaigns Officer, (ex officio)
- UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer (ex officio)

## 7.4.1 Student Representation on UCL Non-Academic and Statutory Committees

### **Council**

- UCLU Education & Campaigns Officer (ex officio)
- UCLU Sustainability, Engagement and Operations Officer (ex officio)

### **Finance Committee**

- UCLU Sustainability, Engagement and Operations Officer (Student Observer)

### **Health and Safety Committee**

- Two Student Observers, nominated by UCLU

### **Equalities and Diversity Committee**

- Two UCLU Sabbatical Officers, nominated by UCLU

### **Honorary Degrees and Fellowships Committee**

- UCLU Education & Campaigns Officer (ex officio)

### **Research Governance Committee**

- UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer (ex officio)

### **Discipline Committee**

- One student, registered at UCL, nominated by UCLU (normally as and when the Committee needs to be convened)

### **Discipline Review Body**

- A registered student of another university institution within the University of London, to be appointed by the Chair in consultation with the Registrar of UCL, as and when the Review Body needs to be convened.

# 8 Academic Committee Review Panel

## 8.1 Policy

1. All UCL academic units are required to operate within, and to deliver their programmes in accordance with, UCL's established academic regulatory and procedural frameworks. UCL has in place a number of quality assurance processes to monitor that this is the case and which are designed to identify and resolve any problems which might arise.
2. However, from time to time there may arise an academic quality assurance-related problem within an academic unit or academic programme, which, due to the urgent or serious nature of the problem, cannot be dealt with, or fully resolved, by applying UCL's standard quality assurance processes. In those exceptional circumstances, the Chair of the Academic Committee may establish an Academic Committee Review Panel to conduct a special investigation of the academic unit/programme concerned. The purpose of the special investigation will be for the Review Panel to ascertain the nature and extent of the problem, and to recommend to the Chair of the Academic Committee on what further action should be taken to resolve the problem.
3. In all such cases, the following procedure is followed.

## 8.2 Procedure

1. Details of any case which might merit investigation by an Academic Committee Review Panel should, in the first instance, be submitted to, and discussed with, the Secretary to the Academic Committee. The Secretary, on behalf of the Chair of Academic Committee, will ascertain whether UCL's standard quality assurance processes have been exhausted or whether the nature of the problem is such that it cannot be addressed within the scope of those standard processes. Once this preliminary discussion has taken place, the Secretary to the Academic Committee will forward the details of the case to the Chair of the Academic Committee, who will decide whether to establish a Review Panel.
2. If the Chair of the Academic Committee decides to establish a Review Panel, it will comprise:
  - Two members of Academic Committee, including at least one Faculty Tutor, who are not members of staff of the Faculty in which the academic unit or programme concerned is based; one of whom will be appointed as Chair of the Review Panel.
  - A senior member of academic or administrative staff, who is not a Faculty Tutor.

3. The meeting(s) of the Review Panel will be attended by an administrative secretary, normally a member of Academic Services staff nominated by the Director of Academic Services, Student and Registry Services, who will take notes of meeting(s) and assist the Review Panel in the preparation of its report. The Review Panel will normally be expected to complete its work within eight working weeks.
4. The Chair of the Academic Committee will inform the academic unit or programme concerned why a Review Panel has been established and that the Review Panel will wish to conduct discussions with relevant staff and/or students.
5. In conducting its review, the Review Panel may request from the academic unit or programme concerned all such documentation and may meet with whichever staff and students as it deems necessary. UCL staff are expected to cooperate fully with the Review Panel at all times.
6. The Review Panel will meet as least once:
  - To consider the relevant documentation
  - To interview appropriate persons
  - To prepare its report.
7. The Review Panel's provisional report will be sent to the Head of Department or other person responsible for the academic unit or programme concerned. That person will be entitled to notify normally within five working days necessary factual corrections to the report but will not be entitled otherwise to take issue with its findings and recommendations (except where the Head of Department or other person concerned claims that these findings and recommendations are based on factual error).
8. The Review Panel's final report and recommendations will be sent, via the Secretary to the Academic Committee, to the Chair of Academic Committee. A copy will be sent to the Head of Department or other person concerned for information. The Chair of Academic Committee will decide what, if any, further action is necessary in the matter.
9. The Chair of the Academic Committee will report to the Academic Committee that a Review has taken place according to the required procedure and may, if he/she thinks it appropriate, report to the Academic Committee further details of the Review.
10. The recommendations of the Review Panel will indicate what follow-up action is expected on the part of the academic unit or programme concerned and within what period. The academic unit or programme concerned will, in consultation with the Review Panel, produce a written plan detailing the follow-up action that it will take in response to the recommendations for approval by the Chair of the Academic Committee.
11. The Chair of the Review Panel will check with the academic unit or programme concerned in due course that such follow-up action has been taken and will advise the Chair of the Academic Committee as necessary.