APPROVAL AND MONITORING

2F.1   PERIODIC REVIEW AND REVALIDATION OF COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMES

I.   Each collaborative partner will normally undertake a review and revalidation of programmes at six-yearly intervals. The exact timing of the review will be agreed between the collaborative partner and the Collaborations Department at the University of Buckingham. Wherever possible, it should be timed so that five sets of annual reviews have been completed since the previous review, when the next review is called. The Periodic Review provides a means for the collaborative partner to review the quality and standards of its academic provision and enables a broader review of the continuing validity and relevance of the programmes offered. The process also provides an opportunity for the collaborative partner to think strategically about the programmes offered and to consider longer-term plans and objectives.

This procedure covers all taught undergraduate and postgraduate modules and programmes, and all research programmes that lead to the award of academic credit and/or contribute to a higher education award at Level 3 or above in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

II.   The Periodic Review procedure is one part of a continuous cycle of engagement by students and staff. Periodic Review is linked to the Annual Monitoring of Programmes, which, together with the Programme Approval Procedure, provides the collaborative partner with robust mechanisms to ensure the quality and standards of its academic provision. This linkage should reduce the burden as much of the evidence to support the five-yearly reviews will already be available from the annual monitoring process. The reports completed during annual programme monitoring will help to support the identification of longer term trends and themes, and the development of strategic planning during the Periodic Review. Annual Monitoring is essentially an internal process undertaken each year by collaborative partners, whereas periodic review and revalidation is an institutional process involving a panel which includes staff from the University of Buckingham and external reviewers.

III.   The process is an opportunity to evaluate the extent to which the learning outcomes of programmes are relevant and are achieved by students. Learning, teaching and assessment strategies are also reviewed, to ensure these are best placed to support the delivery of the relevant learning outcomes. The review and revalidation process should be used to identify strengths and weaknesses with a view to improvement, and ensure that appropriate action is taken to remedy any identified shortcomings, and enhance the student experience.

IV.   The process is intended to be reflective ('looking back'), as well as developmental ('planning ahead'). Periodic review provides an opportunity to consider the extent to which the institution has met the recommendations of the previous periodic and annual reviews, as well as set long-term plans and objectives for the coming years; and identify themes across the institution that are examples of good practice or areas of concern.

V.   Programme directors and the Chair of the Internal Panel are encouraged to be analytical in their reports, by reflecting on the reasons behind the success of initiatives or the challenges faced. Where issues have arisen, or student performance is below expected, action will need to be identified. Where performance and satisfaction are high, reflecting on the reasons for this will help to identify and share good practice across programme areas.

Some questions programmes Directors/Deans may wish to consider during this process may include:

1. Are the learning outcomes still relevant for the topic? Have there been any changes in the discipline, or in the benchmark statements/or industry practice that require these to be amended? If so, how?
2. Do your learning, teaching, and assessment strategies link well with the intended learning outcomes, and are students achieving how they should be?
   a. Are your learning and teaching strategies still relevant for the topic? Are the students achieving well or could changes in this area support students learning better?
   b. Is the way you are assessing the module/programme supporting the achievement of the learning outcomes? Are there more relevant or suitable assessment methods that could be used to support the achievement of those learning outcomes?
3. Are there any particular methods of assessment that have tried recently that you think work particularly well? If so, why? Perhaps you have introduced a method of assessment that you think fits the description 'assessment for learning, not assessment of learning'?
4. Have you perhaps introduced a method of supporting students through their assignments, projects, research or exams that has been well received by students, or has seen a significant improvement in grades? What has been the outcome of this?
5. Are there any particular teaching methods that you have tried recently that you think work particularly well? If so, how and why? Your changes might have helped to boost attendance at lectures and seminars, seen students noticeably more engaged in lectures, or you might have seen an improvement in the student feedback scores.
6. Have you introduced any new initiatives to support students learning?
7. Are you making use of new technology?

The Review Process

Data and information are key parts of periodic review and revalidation. External Examiner reports; feedback from staff, students, alumni and PSRBs or employers; and progression, retention and achievement data are all important sources of information and data that should be reflected on during the process. Where possible data from groups with protected characteristics (e.g. additional learning needs) should be analysed to identify where there may be additional trends or support required.

The panel will, as far as possible, make use of existing documentation (e.g. the Annual Monitoring of Programmes) although the partner institution will be required to provide additional documentation, as indicated below that includes longer-term plans and objectives.

The core set of documentation required for Periodic Review is:

- External Examiner reports and responses
- Student feedback reports and responses, including module feedback and action plans
- Programme and Module specifications
- Module Maps and Assessment Matrices
- Annual Programme and Module Monitoring Reports
- Annual Overview Reports
- Periodic Review Reports
- Statistical data on student Recruitment, Retention, Progression and Performance
- Academic Misconduct Reports
- Programme/Departmental Handbooks
- Special Programme Regulations
- Departmental/Institutional Policies and Procedures
- Subject Benchmark Statements
- Collaborative Agreements
- Visit Reports
- Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements and accreditation reports plus action plans/responses
- SLTC, Board, School Research Committee, Ethics Committee minutes where relevant
- Research Documentation – research environment document, Research Degrees Handbook
- Staff publication lists/CV's
- Student handbooks

The Collaborations Department has responsibility for requesting, collating and storing this information and making it readily available for staff as part of the review.

The process for the review is as follows:

A. Approximately eight months before the date of the review the Collaborations Department will write to the collaborative partner asking them to undertake a review of all programmes and to put forward future plans and objectives for them. (Exact timings will be agreed with the partner).

B. The partner institution will establish an Internal Panel to coordinate the review.

The Internal Panel

The review and revalidation of programmes will normally take place at the collaborative partner's institution. The collaborative partner will identify staff and students to be members of the Internal Panel in accordance with University guidelines. The membership should be as follows:

- Chair
- Programme Director(s)
- The Research Officer
- A junior member of staff
- Student representatives (x 2)
- School Administrator to act as the Secretary

The Internal Panel should consider and agree:

i. The structure and scope of the review, including consideration of the involvement of PSRBs and the aggregation of subject areas for reports.
ii. A timeline for review, including expected external panel date and deadline for receipt of reports
iii. Arrangements for document storage - all reports and documentation should be saved on an accessible drive for all.

Programme Reports (2F.1.1) are written by Programme Directors, and the Overview Report (2F.1.2) is produced by the Chair, all reports are considered by the Internal Panel (2F.1.3 Agenda Template for Internal Panel Meeting).

There should be regular, formally minuted meetings at agreed intervals, with deputies sent for absence, and deadlines set for the receipt of reports.

The Internal Panel Secretary is responsible for collecting the standard set of documentation and any additional items to support the review.

The Internal Panel can provide clarification of factual errors within the External Panel's report.

Meetings of the Internal Panel should be formally minuted, a timeline set and arrangements for document storage made.

Guidance and support may be obtained from the Link Academic Tutor and/or the Link Administrator at the University of Buckingham. It will be the responsibility of the Internal Panel to prepare a self-evaluative analysis for each individual programme (or cognate group of programmes) over the previous five-year period, compiled as a Periodic Programme Review Report.

C. The Periodic Programme Review Report should evaluate the following aspects of each programme:

- the aims of the programme(s);

- alignment with the QAA Framework for HE Qualifications (FHEQ);

- consistency with the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement (where available)

- consistency with the relevant section(s) of the QAA Code of Practice

- the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s) and the extent to which these are being realised;

- programme statistics;

- analysis of statistics (recruitment, retention, admissions criteria, progression and achievement information and results any National Student Survey) for the past five years and the use made of these in internal quality monitoring;

- comments from External Examiners, and actions taken to enhance the programme or assessment process in response to their comments;

- significant changes to the programme (structure, content, teaching, learning, assessment strategies, curriculum development);

- staff and student feedback and the actions taken in response to this;

- comments from external/accreditation bodies (where applicable) and action taken in response to these comments;

- feedback from former students and their employers;

- strengths and good practice associated with the programme;

- changes made in response to the action plan following the previous periodic review

- Future planning and objectives.

D. It will be the responsibility of the Internal Panel to consult the staff teaching on the programmes, as well as current and former student representatives, and scrutinise all relevant documentation relating to the programmes being reviewed and revalidated. The panel will draw upon documentation previously prepared for the Annual Monitoring of Programmes, including Self-Evaluation Documents, Minutes from relevant committees, External Examiners Reports and responses to them, reports from professional and other accreditation bodies (where appropriate) and other relevant documentation (see above).

E. A date is agreed for the meeting of the External Panel.

The External Panel

The review will be conducted by an External panel (2F.1.4 Agenda Template for External Panel Meeting) normally comprising of:

- The Head of Collaborations at Buckingham

- A minimum of 2 External Reviewers

- The Academic Link Tutor from the University of Buckingham

- 1 member of staff not directly involved with the design and running of the programmes, or the production of the Review Reports from the collaborative partner

- The collaborative partner's Dean of the Department involved (or equivalent)*

- 2 students, 1 undergraduate and 1 postgraduate (where applicable)

- 1 Secretary to the Panel (from the Collaborations Department)

This person may provide clarification where this is sought but is otherwise non-participatory as the focus should be on external examination.

F. External Reviewers may be asked to provide a short written report in advance of the External Panel meeting outlining initial comments and areas of interest for the meeting. External Panel members are required to attend the panel meeting for one or two days (dependent on the size and scope of the review), contribute to the discussion of the programme and School reports, speak to staff and students and input into the content and recommendations within the External Panel Report to Senate (2F.1.5).

G. Panel members are fully briefed and sent the review reports and supporting documentation for consideration. They are provided with an agenda for the day and the template for the External Panel report to Senate, and asked to provide a short written report in advance of the meeting outlining their initial comments and areas of interest for the day.

H. The External Panel meeting is held according to the standard agenda for the day. The panel discuss the programme reports and Overview Reports, meet with staff and students from the Partner under review, and agree the draft content of the report and the recommendations.

The Role of Students

The role of students is key in the periodic review process, both through the preparatory work with the programme directors, and also as part of the External Panel meetings. Students are involved in the process in three ways:

i. Students from the Collaborative Partner sit on the Internal Panel, and are consulted by the staff preparing the reports as to whether the content is an accurate reflection of provision within the School.

ii. Students from the Collaborative Partner are asked to meet the External Panel at their meeting over lunch, for an informal discussion about their experiences as a student. So that the review is as constructive as possible, students that meet the panel should give an accurate and honest representation of their time at the Collaborative Partner, which includes both good things, but also areas that the University could improve on. Staff from the Collaborative Partner should not be present at this lunch meeting.

iii. Students from the Collaborative Partner (and from another subject area where possible) sit on the External Panel. It is their role to contribute to the panel discussion where they feel they can – this can be anything from sharing an initiative as a model of good practice, or commending something. While students aren't expected to comment on the technicalities of the academic content of programmes, their input into topics such as student feedback arrangements, career advice, and assessment arrangements are useful.

I. The final report (2F.1.4) will include a recommendation from the External Reviewers as to whether the Collaboration should continue, and whether the Programmes are approved (re-validation), rejected or require some amendment. Template Module/Programme review forms may be used for this purpose.

J. The Collaborations Department draft the report according to the standard template for the External Panel Report to Senate; and circulate to the External Panel for amendment and agreement. The Internal Panel are provided with an opportunity to correct any factual inaccuracies, and the report is submitted to Senate.

K. The Collaborations Department drafts an Action Plan (to the agreed template) in response to the recommendations, and reports this to the Board of Study for approval.

L. The UCC is responsible for monitoring and reporting progress against the Action Plan on an annual basis as part of the Annual Programme and Module Monitoring Procedure.