6. Periodic Review

6.1 Purpose

Periodic Review is a developmental process which tests the effectiveness of a school/institute’s mechanisms for the management of its programmes, ensuring that QMUL’s policies and procedures are operating as intended to safeguard academic standards and to provide a high-quality learning experience for students.

The aims of Periodic Review are:

- to assess the effectiveness of a school or institute’s processes for managing academic quality and standards, and that QMUL’s agreed policies and procedures are operating as intended to assure and enhance the standard of provision;
- to consider how a school/institute is developing and implementing its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and how QMUL’s Statement of Graduate Attributes is reflected in the curriculum;
- to evaluate the currency of a school or institute's programmes in the context of developments in the discipline, and its success in achieving its aims, and to consider its future plans;
- to review all partnership, or partner supported delivery;
- to commend and disseminate good practice;
- to provide public information on the quality and standards of the school/institute.

Periodic Review is a key component of QMUL’s quality framework and therefore needs to be conducted with a degree of formality and objectivity. The intention is to engage in a structured and rigorous evidence-based dialogue in which there are high levels of transparency and a free flow of information. Review will be undertaken by a panel of peers in partnership with the school/institute and in a spirit of openness which encourages the embedding of good practice.

6.2 Scope

This procedure covers the Periodic Review of a school/institute’s provision, including the schedule of reviews, the appointment and role of a panel, the responsibilities of the school/institute under review and the outcomes of a review and their consideration. The procedure covers all QMUL’s taught and research degrees, including collaborative provision.
6.3 Associated documents

Associated documents, including a template for production of the SED, can be found on the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat (ARCS) web site: http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality/periodic-review/index.html

6.4 What is Periodic Review?

Periodic Review is an evaluation of a school or institute’s systems and procedures for managing, maintaining and enhancing academic quality and standards of teaching and learning. It involves a self-evaluation by the school/institute concerned followed by review of the self-evaluation by a panel comprising members of QMUL and external subject specialists from other higher education institutions or from the professions.

Periodic Review aims to identify and validate good practice and may also provide specific recommendations to improve academic quality and standards. These recommendations may be relatively minor or they may be more substantial. However they will always be discussed with the school/institute concerned.

The process of Periodic Review applies to undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and research degree provision in all academic schools, or institutes within QMUL. The process also applies to small-scale collaborative provision offered by the body under review. The majority of collaborative programmes will be considered within the overall provision for a given academic school/institute at QMUL. In recognition of the potential increased levels of risk to academic standards and quality, medium and large-scale collaborative programmes and programmes distinct from other school/institute structures will undergo a discrete programme, or group of programmes, Periodic Review process in line with the cycle of reviews. This does not apply to articulation, year abroad or research degree provision.

A school/institute preparing for Periodic Review will be supported by the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat.

6.5 Schedule and format

The schedule of Periodic Reviews is normally based on a six year cycle which is published by the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat. The schedule is determined by the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) in consultation with faculty Deans for Taught Programmes and heads of schools, or the head of the relevant institute in the School of Medicine and Dentistry, and taking into account visits by professional and statutory bodies where possible.

The Academic Registry and Council Secretariat confirm the date for the Periodic Review, approximately six months in advance, in liaison with the head of school/institute, the Chair of the panel and the External Reviewers.

6.6 Self-Evaluation Document

Approximately six months in advance of a Periodic Review, schools/institutes are given a copy of the framework for a Periodic Review self-evaluation document. The framework for the self-evaluation document is based on guidance from the QAA and is designed so that its completion produces a self-evaluation of a school/institute’s quality and standards. It is the responsibility of the head of school/institute to co-ordinate the completion of the self-
evaluation document. It is recommended that the development of the self-evaluation is progressed via discussion within school/institute meetings or equivalent and that the final document commands independent local ownership.

Six weeks before the Periodic Review, the school/institute should lodge a draft self-evaluation document plus supporting documentation with the panel Secretary. Supporting documentation should consist of:

- External Examiner reports and responses for the past three years;
- a programme specification for each programme of study offered by the school/institute;
- taught programme action plans and any notes of annual programme review meetings for all provision including collaborative;
- collaborative provision agreements where appropriate;
- PSRB accreditation reports where appropriate;
- a report from the placement organiser (where appropriate) reviewing student, employer and external examiner feedback on placements;
- school/institute/programme handbooks for students, translated as necessary;
- a diagrammatic overview of the school/institute's committee structure for managing teaching and learning quality, including any collaborative provision;
- the school/institute's current teaching and learning strategy;
- minutes of school/institute teaching related committees, and Student-Staff Liaison Committees.

Please note that a dedicated SED with supporting documents will be required where collaborative provision is the subject of a separate panel meeting.

A formal meeting will be arranged to discuss the review and SED requirements with appropriate members of the school/institute under review. The purpose of this exercise is to assist schools/institutes in the production of an evaluative document which will provide the panel with the information it requires for a constructive Periodic Review meeting. The Periodic Review itself takes place over a relatively short period of time, and an appropriately structured SED will help make the most of the time available. The review secretary will provide feedback on a draft SED for schools/institutes that would find this helpful.

Once the draft SED has been agreed, full sets of documentation should be submitted electronically. Twelve hard copies of the SED (without appendices) are required. The appendices and the SED should be provided on twelve memory sticks. A paper copy of the SED and a memory stick will be sent to each member of the review panel. The school/institute may opt to submit copies of additional internal documentation, or external material, if it relates to an area identified in the self-evaluation document as a particular strength or weakness. The panel reserves the right to request copies of further
school/institute documents in order to clarify particular areas of interest. However such requests will be kept to a minimum and will relate to existing documents only.

The Academic Registry and Council Secretariat circulate the documentation to the Periodic Review panel together with a copy of the previous Periodic Review report for the school/institute.

6.7 Student Surveys

The Academic Registry and Council Secretariat will discuss with the school/institute under review the availability of information on student opinion about their programmes (in addition to module evaluation), and will consider with the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) whether to conduct an on-line survey for students about the quality of their learning experiences. The school/institute will be expected to email students with a link to the anonymous survey web page. The Academic Registry and Council Secretariat will write a summary of the surveys, including student comments, for the panel to consider.

6.8 Panel composition

A Periodic Review panel will normally comprise:

- a Chair nominated by the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning);
- Vice President (Education), Students’ Union or nominee;
- a member of academic staff from outside of the Faculty/SMD in which the school/institute under review is based;
- Academic Director of the Centre for Academic and Professional Development and/or their nominee;
- Dean for Taught Programmes/Dean for Education, SMD;
- Vice-Principal (Research) or nominee from the Doctoral College;
- two External Reviewers;
- a member of the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat [Secretary].

For Periodic Reviews of institutes within the SMD, the Dean for Education, SMD will act as a panel member. For all other schools, the Dean for Taught Programmes of the Faculty in which the school is based will act as a panel member. If the home school/institute of the Dean for Taught Programmes or SMD equivalent is the school/institute being reviewed then a different Dean for Taught Programmes or equivalent will be asked to serve on the panel.

Reviews are chaired by the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) or their nominee. Approximately six months in advance of the review the head of school/institute will be asked to nominate two subject specialists external to QMUL to join the Periodic Review panel as External Reviewers. In consultation with the Chair, the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat approaches the nominees and, on behalf of QMUL, invites them to participate in the Periodic Review.
Some reviews take place over two days, with a panel meeting on the afternoon of the first
day to consider questions and lines of enquiry for the meetings with staff and students on the
second day. The head of school/institute is asked to nominate a member of staff to be
available to join the Periodic Review panel for its pre-meeting on the morning of the second
day of the review if the panel requires assistance with any factual questions or to co-ordinate
further information the panel may need. This person should have an overview of the
school/institute’s teaching, systems and procedures.

Where partner supported provision is subject to a separate panel meeting, this may require
some adjustments to the panel membership, for example the head of school/institute may
wish to nominate a different member of staff with an overview of the collaborative provision
and QMUL may wish to include an internal panel member with experience of partner
supported provision.

6.8.1 The External Reviewers

An External Reviewer is normally a senior academic who is not a member of QMUL staff.
S/he should have knowledge of the discipline concerned and, where possible, should have
experience of Periodic Review in their own institution or external review by the QAA or
relevant professional body. S/he should not have had any formal links with the
school/institute under review within the previous 5 years.

The External Reviewers play a vital role in assisting the panel to identify key issues to be
explored during the visit to the school/institute and play a full part in the panel’s meetings
with school staff and students, and the identification of conclusions and recommendations.
In particular, External Reviewers are able to identify excellence in provision, they are able
to make comparisons with similar provision at other institutions and comment on the currency
of a school or institute’s programmes in the context of developments in the discipline, and
can offer feedback on the appropriateness of aims and learning outcomes to future career
development. External Reviewers are invited to comment on the report of the Review and
the school/institute’s response to the report. Each External Reviewer is provided with an
outline of their role as a member of an Periodic Review panel and receives a fee from the
College.

6.9 The role of panel members

The role of all panel members is to:

- identify significant themes/issues for discussion;
- construct and manage an agenda for the Periodic Review which enables them to
  explore these themes/issues through dialogue with the school/institute;
- pursue lines of enquiry which allow them to test and verify whether current structures
  and procedures are fit for purpose;
- make evidence-based judgements about the maintenance and enhancement of
  quality and standards.
- Make evidence based judgements about QMUL’s relation with a partner institution
  (where appropriate)
6.10 The Periodic Review

Periodic Review is informed by the QAA’s *Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in England and Northern Ireland: A Handbook for Higher Education Providers* (March 2012). The review method and requirements will be reviewed in the light of the new QAA Higher Education Review Handbook for Providers (June 2013) and the forthcoming publication of the QAA UK Quality Code for HE, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review to be published in autumn 2013). However, Periodic Review is not conducted to a pre-determined template. Lines of inquiry are derived from panel members’ analysis of the specific documentation produced for each Periodic Review. The expectation is that whilst Periodic Reviews will pursue a number of common and generic themes, each Periodic Review will be ‘tailored’ to local circumstances.

A Periodic Review usually takes place in the Colette Bowe Room (formerly the Council Room) in the Queens’ Building on the Mile End Campus, but may also take place at a partner institution, or via video-conferencing facilities. A pre-meeting is arranged, up to one week before the actual Review meeting, between the panel Chair and the panel secretary. The agenda for this meeting includes:

- identification of broad areas for discussion;
- review of issues submitted in advance by the External Reviewers;
- clarification of any issues;
- confirmation of those members of staff who will meet with the Periodic Review panel;
- logistics for the Review.

A briefing meeting with the school/institute under review may also be arranged if the school requests this.

The self-evaluation document acts as the basis for discussions between the panel and the school/institute. The panel meets with nominated academic, administrative, technical and support staff from the school/institute to discuss the self-evaluation document. This series of meetings normally takes place over one day. The panel also meets with students who should normally represent all programmes available within the school/institute. It is the school/institute’s responsibility to arrange for staff and student representatives (undergraduate and postgraduate) to attend these meetings. The panel may opt to run parallel sessions with selected panel members meeting with different groups of staff/students.

An outline agenda is available for guidance, and can be downloaded from [http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality/periodic-review/index.html](http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality/periodic-review/index.html). Specific questions are not prescribed for the panel to ask; instead the panel will base its questions on issues arising from the analysis of the school’s self-evaluation document and student feedback.

Support and advice relating to all aspects of a Periodic Review are available at any stage from the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat.
6.11 Outcome

It is essential that feedback is provided quickly and in sufficient detail to support the school/institute and enable any recommendations for improvement to be implemented. Feedback is provided:

- as a written summary of the main commendations and recommendations within approximately three - five working days after the meeting;

- and a full written report.

The Secretary to the Review will write up the Panel's commendations and recommendations and, after the Chair has reviewed them, they will be sent to the School/institute and to Queen Mary Senior Executive.

The panel's conclusions and recommendations form the basis of a written report of the Periodic Review. The report is drafted by the Secretary to the panel and will, inter alia, include:

- developments since the previous QAA Subject Review/Periodic Review;

- aims and learning outcomes;

- curricula and assessment;

- quality of learning opportunities: teaching and learning, student admission and progression, and learning resources;

- the maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality;

- conclusions: commendable systems or procedures and any areas where further action has been identified as essential or advisable.

The Periodic Review panel agrees the content of the report and it is then sent to the head of school/institute for comments on factual accuracy. The report is finalised once any comments on factual accuracy are agreed by the Chair (and other panel members as necessary).

The school then considers and drafts a response. This response should take the form of a detailed and time bound action plan which gives an initial response to any issues raised and outlines how any recommendations will be addressed. The action plan should be lodged, electronically, with the Secretary to the Review three months after receipt of the final version of the Periodic Review report.

It is recommended that schools/institutes discuss the Periodic Review report and consider the implementation of the action plan within the relevant school or institute committee/s, and with partners as appropriate. School/institutes will also discuss the report and action plan with their Student-Staff Liaison Committee/s and keep students informed about action and progress in relation to issues raised by students in their discussion with the Periodic Review panel. Student concerns raised during a Periodic Review will be monitored by ARCS, in partnership with the Student Unions’ Course Representative Co-ordinator. In addition, the Faculty Dean for Taught Programmes, who meets regularly with student course
representatives, will also receive an update on student matters following each Periodic Review for consideration and discussion with student representatives.

The confirmed Periodic Review report and the action plan will be considered by the Vice-Principal and Executive Dean for the Faculty, Queen Mary Senior Executive and Senate. Any particular issues of concern that require support or monitoring will be the responsibility of the Vice-Principal and Executive Dean for the Faculty, who may convene a group of dedicated staff to support the School under review in taking forward action, while the Senate will take an overview of any institutional issues that might require attention.

After twelve months the school/institute is required to lodge a progress report with the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat. This should include evidence that students have had the opportunity to see and discuss the report, and comment on any areas of concern they may have. The progress report will be considered by Senate, which reserves the right to request further progress reports if it deems necessary. The review report can be published or made available to individuals (both internal and external to the College) on request in accordance with HEFCE guidance.

6.12 Reviewing the process

The process of Periodic Review is subject to regular evaluation and review by the Senate.