INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF INVITED TO MEET VISITING PANELS

BACKGROUND

Internal Teaching Review (ITR) is a key feature of the University’s procedures for safeguarding academic standards and ensuring that the quality of its educational provision is maintained and enhanced. Review of individual Schools are conducted every sixth year. The aims of an Internal Teaching Review are:

- to provide a formal opportunity for a School to reflect on, and critically evaluate, its learning and teaching provision and to benefit from a constructive dialogue with, and commentary by, a Panel of senior academics from outwith the School, an external subject specialist(s) and a student representative;
- to monitor a subject provider’s arrangements for course and programme design, approval, delivery, monitoring and review and to satisfy the University that quality and standards in learning and teaching are being maintained and enhanced, and that any areas of concern in this regard are addressed;
- to highlight any enhancements, innovations and successes in learning and teaching that School’s have implemented, and any plans for future changes, with a view to (where appropriate) wider dissemination within the University.
- to identify any impediments to the development of higher quality learning and teaching provision;
- to discuss the School’s arrangements for training and supervision of its research students
- to re-validate degree programmes for continued delivery.

A Panel is appointed to conduct each Internal Teaching Review. Normally it will consist of a member of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) acting as Convener, two other members of academic staff (drawn from a cadre of trained staff, one from within, and one from outwith, the parent College a minimum of two external subject specialists (ESS) (depending on the range of subjects taught by a School), including where possible, at least one ESS from another Scottish institution, one from an institutional outside Scotland and off whom one should have international expertise, and a student member of the Senate.

The ITR process itself can be summarised as:

- submission of documentation by a School;
- review of the documentation by the ITR Panel;
- Panel Visit to the School to meet staff and students;
- production of a Report, for consideration by the School;
- consideration, by the QAC, of the Head of School’s and Head of College’s response to the Panel’s recommendations;
- consideration, by the QAC, of the Head of School’s progress report on implementation of the recommendations one year after the QAC’s consideration of the Panel’s Report.
**Review Report**

The ITR process is intended to be positive and constructive. The formal outcome of the ITR is a Report. This will highlight aspects of a School’s arrangements that are to be commended, and will also make recommendations to assist a School in further enhancing the quality and standards of its educational provision, drawing attention to any areas of concern and suggesting how these might be addressed. As part of its conclusions, the Report will provide a commentary on four specific aspects as follows:

- Academic standards (ie what is taught, at what level, using what methods of delivery and assessment and with what intended outcomes);
- Quality of learning opportunities (in terms of teaching, learning and educational support practices, opportunities for progression and available resources);
- Quality of support for postgraduate research students;
- The Panel’s level of confidence in the School’s procedures for assuring and enhancing quality and standards.

The Report will also highlight any matters of wider institutional interest, particularly those relating to quality enhancement. The Report will be made available to the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA) Scottish Office for the purposes of institutional review (an external audit of the University’s systems for ensuring that academic standards are upheld and the quality of its educational provision maintained and enhanced).

**PANEL VISITS**

After they have read through the documentation, the review Panel will visit the School to meet with staff and students to gather further information and follow-up points of interest identified. (The Panels will not review students’ work nor will they observe teaching.) Some typical examples of the issues to be addressed during the visit of the Internal Teaching Review Panel are indicated below, to assist those involved in preparing for such a visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals/Group</th>
<th>Types of Issues to be discussed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panel Meeting</td>
<td>• introductions;</td>
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<td>• report from Convener on tour of facilities (if undertaken);</td>
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<td>• summarise timetable for the day and confirm main issues for discussion.</td>
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<td>Head of School and/or Convener(s) of the Teaching Committee(s)</td>
<td>• general discussion of the Self-Evaluation Document, Programme Review Reports and Programme Specifications [who drafted these documents?; did students have an input?; how were they endorsed by the School?; how is the School working with the wider academic infrastructure? i.e. use of the Subject Benchmark Statement; application of the Qualifications Framework for Scotland, including use of qualification and level descriptors; utilisation of the QAA’s Quality Code];</td>
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<td>• how does the School verify and maintain academic standards?;</td>
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<td>• how does the School benchmark itself against national and international good practice?</td>
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<td>• what are the School’s perceived strengths and weaknesses?;</td>
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<td>• specific issues arising from the submission identified by the Panel.</td>
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<td>Staff &amp; others who teach students</td>
<td>• see below</td>
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<td>Students</td>
<td>• see Appendix 3.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel Meeting</td>
<td>• identification of issues, including perceived strengths and weaknesses, for inclusion in the Report;</td>
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<td>• general observations to feedback to Head of School.</td>
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Head of School

- general feedback from Panel;
- timetable for completion of Report.

Further indication of the types of issues to be addressed are in the instructions of the Self-Evaluation Document (SED) template (Appendix 3.8, Annex A), Programme Review Report (PRR) (Appendix 3.8, Annex B) and the Postgraduate Research Student Training and Supervision Report Form (Appendix 3.8, Annex C). It is anticipated that teaching staff will be familiar with the SED, PRR(s) and, if appropriate, the Research Report Form submitted by their School.

PANEL MEETINGS WITH STAFF AND THOSE WHO TEACH STUDENTS

Typical issues to be addressed as part of the Internal Teaching Review are given below. The list follows guidelines provided by QAA and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Because of time constraints, the ITR Panel will not be able to cover all of these issues during its visit, but will normally concentrate on certain points, identified at its preliminary meeting. The following list is therefore for guidance only.

General Issues

- Were staff involved in preparation of the SED, PRRs and Programme Specifications?
- Are staff aware of the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the QAA Quality Code?
- Do staff perceive the Programme Specifications to be useful?
- Do staff perceive the Staff–Student Liaison Committee to be effective?
- How is the ‘feedback loop’ closed to students in relation to changes made to courses and/or programmes as a consequence of students’ comments?
- Are students informed of the reasons why their views had not been acted upon, where appropriate?
- Any issues which staff may wish to discuss with the Panel.

Aims and Learning Outcomes

- Are the overall aims of the subject provision sufficiently clear to allow an assessment as to whether the subject provision achieves its broad purposes?
- Are the intended learning outcomes of each programme adequately described?
- Do the intended learning outcomes for each programme relate to external reference points including relevant subject benchmark statements, the SCQF and any professional body requirements?
- Do the intended learning outcomes for each programme relate to the stated overall aims of the provision?
- How can staff demonstrate the intended learning outcomes are appropriate to the aims?
- How do staff ensure that curriculum content enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes?
- How do staff ensure that the design and organisation of the curriculum is effective in promoting student learning and achievement of the intended learning outcomes?
- How are the intended outcomes of a programme, and of its constituent parts, communicated to staff, students and external examiners?
- How do staff ensure that students know what is expected of them?

Curricula and Assessment

- What are the School procedures for course and programme design, approval and review?
- How are courses integrated (both within and between levels of study)?
• Are the School definitions of levels of intended learning outcomes clearly understood and applied?
• Does the design and content of the curricula encourage achievement of the intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, subject specific skills (including practical/professional skills), transferable skills, progression to employment and/or further study, and personal development?
• How does the curricula take forward issues of inclusivity, and the different learning needs of students from a wide variety of education backgrounds?
• What is the evidence that curricular content and design is informed by recent developments in techniques of learning and teaching, by current national and international research and scholarship, and by any changes in relevant occupational or professional requirements?
• Does the assessment process enable learners to demonstrate achievement of the intended outcomes?
• What are the criteria that enable internal and external examiners to distinguish between different levels of achievement? Are there School CAS descriptors for different types of assessment at each level of study?
• Do staff have full confidence in the security and integrity of assessment procedures?
• Does the assessment strategy have an adequate formative function in developing student abilities?
• What evidence is there that the standards achieved by learners meet the minimum expectations for the award, as measured against relevant subject benchmarks and the SCQF?
Quality of Learning Opportunities

Learning and Teaching

- How effective is teaching in relation to curriculum content and programme aims?
- How effectively do staff draw upon their research, scholarship or professional activity to inform their teaching?
- How good are the materials provided to support learning?
- Is there effective engagement with and participation by students?
- Is the quality of teaching maintained and enhanced through effective staff development, peer review of teaching, integration of part-time and visiting staff, effective team teaching and induction and mentoring of new staff [including those non-academic staff and research students who teach and/or supervise students]?
- Are student workloads appropriate for the intended learning outcomes of courses and programmes?

Student Progression and Support

- Are there effective arrangements for admission and induction that are generally understood by staff and applicants?
- Is there an appropriate overall strategy for academic support, including written guidance, which is consistent with the student profile and the overall aims of the provision (including reference to the roles of Advisers of Studies and Disability Co-ordinators; any special arrangements for students; awareness of the University’s services to which students may be referred as necessary)?
- How effectively is learning facilitated by academic guidance, feedback and supervision arrangements?
- In what way(s) does the School call upon the services of the University Support Service agencies to promote and enhance student learning?
- Are the arrangements for academic tutorial support clear, and are they generally understood by staff and students?

Learning Resources and their deployment

- Is the collective expertise of the academic staff suitable and available for effective delivery of the curricula; for the overall teaching, learning and assessment strategy; for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?
- Are appropriate staff development opportunities available?
- Is appropriate technical and administrative support available?
- Is there an overall strategy for the deployment of learning resources?
- How effectively is learning facilitated in terms of the provision of resources?
- Is suitable learning and teaching accommodation available?
- Are the subject book and periodical stocks appropriate and accessible?
- Are suitable equipment and appropriate IT facilities available to learners?

Maintenance and Enhancement of Quality and Standards

- How do staff review and seek to enhance standards?
- How effective is the School’s evaluation and use of quantitative data and qualitative feedback in a strategy of enhancement and continuous improvement? For example:
  (a) Data: is there a critical analysis of the management information published by Registry?
  (b) Feedback: are views obtained from students; staff; external examiners; employers; PSBs (where applicable) and acted upon?
(c) Reports: have issues raised in previous external or internal subject reviews been acted upon?

- What is the extent and type of interaction of the external members of the Programme Advisory Boards (PABs) or equivalent Employer Liaison Group with the School (where appropriate)?
- Does the PAB have input in course and programme design and review (where appropriate)?