NOTE: SECTION CONTENTS ARE CURRENTLY UNDER REVISION DUE TO THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW PROCEDURES.

READERS ARE ASKED TO REFER INSTEAD TO THE NEW PROCEDURES PUBLISHED ON THE ASQ WEBSITE AT:
https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/academic-standards-and-quality/information-and-resources/monitoring-and-review/

MANUAL OF ACADEMIC REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES 2019-20

COURSE EVALUATION & REVIEW

Academic Standards and Quality

MARP 2019-20
# CONTENTS

## COURSE EVALUATION AND REVIEW

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CR 1  OVERVIEW

CR 1.1 The University is committed to an ethos of continuous improvement in all of its activities, including the delivery of academic programmes. Therefore it has adopted a policy of regular and systematic in-depth monitoring and review of its academic provision in order to assure itself of standards and to seek ways of enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities for its students.

CR 1.2 The principal mechanisms are departmental Annual Teaching Review (ATR) and Periodic Quality Review (PQR). While ATR is an internal process, PQR panels involve external experts as well as internal reviewers and a student, to ensure that the provision meets UK quality standards and to facilitate the spread of good practice.

CR 1.3 The ATR and/or PQR processes may lead to proposals for new programme or changes to existing programmes, and where necessary closure of programmes.

CR 1.4 Both the ATR and PQR processes encompass collaborative arrangements.

CR 2  ANNUAL TEACHING REVIEW (ATR)

CR 2.1 PROCESS

CR 2.1.1 Departments must carry out an ATR process for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes following procedures approved by the Senate.

CR 2.1.2 Each department is required to carry out ATRs separately for their undergraduate and postgraduate provision as applicable. The UG ATRs take place between the end of June and the end of September and the PG reviews between the end of September and the end of January. Corresponding academic units in the University’s collaborative teaching partners are also required to carry out ATRs.

CR 2.1.3 The purpose is to ensure that programmes remain current, learning outcomes are being achieved by the students, and appropriate actions are taken as a result of the review.

CR 2.1.4 ATR is a departmental process but it is steered and coordinated by the University via the Faculty Teaching Quality Officers, with input and oversight from the University Dean for Academic Quality and Academic Standards and Quality (ASQ).

CR 2.1.5 There is provision for student input into the preparation of ATRs through the consideration of student feedback, and students are represented at committees which consider and discuss ATRs.

CR 2.1.6 The evidence base for ATR includes:

• quantitative data on student demographics, student achievement and graduate destinations;
CR 2.1.7 Data sets are provided by the Planning Support Unit. The evidence base also includes departmental action plans in response to points raised by External Examiners, student feedback provided through staff/student or departmental committees, departmental data on the promptness of return of assessed coursework and issues raised during the previous year’s ATR process.

CR 2.1.8 Departments use this evidence to reflect upon their teaching provision under the following headings:

(a) programme portfolio attractiveness and appropriateness;
(b) programme quality and standards;
(c) assessment outcomes;
(d) progression, retention and student achievement (including issues relating to equality and diversity);
(e) employability and employment;
(f) student support and guidance;
(g) feedback from students;
(h) external comment/input (external examiners, employers, PSRBs).

CR 2.1.9 Departments are also asked to:

(a) identify effective practice and successful innovations for wider dissemination;
(b) identify any changes that need to be made to degree programmes or modules;
(c) ensure that programme records and module outlines are updated for any programmes and modules revised during the year under review;
(d) comment on the previous year’s action plan and progress achieved, before presenting an action plan for the next academic year which links directly to earlier sections of the document.

CR 2.1.10 In addition departments may be asked to comment on special issues relating to the year under review, for example in response to a change in University policy or procedures.

CR 2.1.11 For each programme where most of the modules involved are delivered by another department (for example, in combined majors and consortial programmes), the lead department takes an overview of the learning experience of students on its programmes, in order to make a holistic assessment. In addition, each department reports on modules it delivers but which contribute to programmes managed elsewhere (for instance collaborative teaching provision).

CR 2.2 REVIEW OUTCOMES

CR 2.2.1 At the end of the ATR process, departments are required to produce a report which includes commentary on the evidence base. The template for departmental ATR reports is available online.
CR 2.2.2  Departmental ATR reports are presented to departmental committees for discussion and approval before being referred to the appropriate Faculty Teaching Committee for discussion. Amongst other things, the Faculty checks progress on the previous year’s action plan and notes areas of good practice. Subsequently the Faculty Associate Dean and the Teaching Quality Support Officer (TQSO) write a summary of all their departmental ATR reports for discussion at the Academic Standards and Quality Committee. Discussion of these reports at institutional level ensures that issues (particularly those with strategic and institution-wide implications) are addressed and areas of good practice are identified. The template for faculty ATR summary reports is available online.

CR 2.2.3  Associate Deans (who are members of ASQC) report back to Faculties on follow-up at institutional level and this is cascaded back to departmental staff and students as appropriate.

CR 2.2.4  The ATR procedure and the report templates are reviewed regularly.

CR 3  PERIODIC QUALITY REVIEW (PQR)

CR 3.1  PROCESS

CR 3.1.1  The University undertakes periodic reviews of departmental provision in accordance with procedures approved by Senate. Departments undergo PQR every four to five years and the process is steered and coordinated by ASQ and informed by centrally provided data, with interpretation, from the Planning Support Unit. Guidance is given to departments in preparation for their review, detailing the precise requirements and arrangements. As detailed in the University’s PQR guidance document, the purpose of the PQR process is to:

(a)  review all programmes and modules offered by the department including provision for postgraduate research students and, where there is a positive outcome, recommend programmes and modules to the Faculties for re-approval;
(b)  review the department’s management of quality assurance and standards (including the quality of information about its provision) and its approach to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

CR 3.1.2  The PQR covers all taught programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) and support for research students. A comparable and equivalent process is carried out at the University’s Regional Teaching Partners (RTPs) and in the major International Teaching Partners (ITPs) as determined by the maturity of the partnership and the stage of development.

CR 3.1.3  The evidence base for PQR includes: previous years’ ATR reports and follow-up reports; outcomes of any PSRB reviews; data on student demographics, student achievement and student destinations; student survey data (NSS, PTES,PRES and any other student survey data); module evaluation analyses and DLHE employment statistics.
CR 3.2 PANEL COMPOSITION AND APPOINTMENT

CR 3.2.1 PQR is conducted by a panel which undertakes a desk-based exercise and then makes in a one-day visit to the department under review. Panels are chaired by a senior academic member of the University, and comprise two external assessors (one of whom is usually a former External Examiner for the department under review), two University academics (one from a department in a cognate subject area and one from a non-cognate area) and one student representative from a department other than the one being reviewed. A member of ASQ acts as review secretary.

CR 3.2.2 One of the external assessors is selected from a shortlist nominated by the department and the other is drawn from the list of recent former External Examiners (someone who has acted within the last five years). ASQ will check to ensure there are no conflicts of interests. As well as being subject experts, external assessors are expected to have knowledge and experience of quality assurance and enhancement issues (for example, involvement in QEA subject reviews or internal institutional reviews, or experience as an external examiner or a member of a professional body). The main role of the external assessors is to provide confirmation that academic standards and the quality of the educational experience offered by the department under review are appropriate and comparable with other UK HE institutions and to provide a national perspective and context for the subject area under review.

CR 3.2.3 Internal reviewers must have a good understanding of teaching and learning and quality assurance processes. Their primary remit is to ensure that standards and quality accords with University expectations and are comparable to corresponding provision elsewhere in the University.

CR 3.2.4 The student representative is nominated by LUSU from amongst those who have undergone LUSU training and have experience of student representation.

CR 3.2.5 The panel members are approved by the University Dean for Academic Quality and, formally appointed by the University through ASQ. Once appointed, they are given guidance, contained in the PQR guidance document, to ensure that they are fully prepared to conduct the review.

CR 3.3 PANEL ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CR 3.3.1 The Review Panel is asked to:

(a) review the continuing validity and relevance of programmes in terms of content and structure, educational aims and associated student learning and achievement;
(b) assess the quality of the student learning experience by evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, the quality of learning opportunities and of academic support and guidance;
(c) review the effectiveness of departmental quality assurance processes.

CR 3.3.2 The lines of inquiry cover the following themes:

(a) the curriculum;
(b) learning and teaching;
CR 3.4 REVIEW OUTCOMES

CR 3.4.1 The desk-based exercise leads to the production of a briefing paper structured around these themes which is sent to the department two weeks before the event. The review event includes meetings with students of the department (undergraduates and postgraduates, taught and research), and with academic and other departmental staff.

CR 3.4.2 There are four substantive judgements available to the Review Panel:

(a) Full Confidence
(b) Qualified Confidence
(c) Limited Confidence
(d) No Confidence

CR 3.4.3 A Full Confidence judgement will be made where the Review Panel is confident in all aspects of departmental provision, and will be reported to Senate at the earliest opportunity.

CR 3.4.4 A Qualified Confidence judgement will be made where there are issues that are of sufficient concern as to require immediate action but are not so serious as to threaten academic standards; in this situation the Review Panel will require a number of actions to be completed within a short time-scale. The Review Secretary will draw an action plan in consultation with the Review Panel and the department, which will include a timetable for completion. The plan will be monitored by the appropriate faculty teaching committees. During this period a provisional judgement of Qualified Confidence will apply, but will not be reported to the Senate. At the appropriate time, the Chair of the Review Panel will be asked to confirm (consulting other members of the panel as appropriate) that the required actions have been completed and the overall judgement confirmed (and reported) as Full Confidence. If the required actions have not been completed by that stage, the overall judgement will be confirmed as Limited Confidence and reported to Senate and the PQR report published.

CR 3.4.5 A Limited Confidence judgement will be made where there are a number of issues and concerns that are thought to be serious enough to threaten academic standards, the resolution of which will be required of the department in accordance with a timescale set by the Review Panel. The Review Panel will decide whether a further physical review meeting is required. This judgement will be reported to Senate and the PQR report, including this judgement, will be published.

CR 3.4.6 A No Confidence judgement will only be made if there are so many issues and concerns that are required to be addressed that the Review Panel considers that academic standards and/or the quality of academic provision are already at risk. This judgement will be reported to Senate and the PQR report, including this judgement, will be published.
Each overall judgement will be accompanied, as appropriate, by a combination of specific judgements: commendations, recommendations and requirements according to the findings of the Review Panel.

(a) **Commendations** relate to features, approaches or processes that are offered for dissemination to the rest of the University as examples of good practice.

(b) **Recommendations** are advisory actions that the department is expected to take during its ongoing process of reflection on learning, teaching and assessment.

(c) **Requirements** are compulsory actions relating to issues that are considered by the Review Panel to undermine the department’s ability to assure the academic standards and quality of its provision and which must be put right within an agreed time-scale.

**CR 3.4.8** Requirements (i.e. compulsory action) are associated with the judgements of Limited Confidence or No Confidence and will be addressed through development of an action plan by ASQ in consultation with the department and the faculty within three months of publication of the review report. The action plan will be monitored by the appropriate Faculty Teaching Committee. A one day review within one year of publication of the report and involving members of the original Review Panel will be convened to consider whether the overall judgement can be changed to Full Confidence.

**CR 3.4.9** If at any point during the review visit the Review Panel considers that there are issues and concerns serious enough to lead to Requirements and a judgement less than Full Confidence, then the chair must ensure that the Head of Department is alerted to these concerns and the department given an opportunity to discuss the specific issues and concerns with the Review Panel, if necessary through an additional meeting with staff.

**CR 3.4.10** The Review Panel will convey the overall judgement to the department at the end of the Review meeting. If the department believes that the review was not conducted in accordance with the published procedures or that there were any serious irregularities then they must notify the Head of ASQ (or nominated alternate if the Head of ASQ was a member of the panel) within 48 hours of the end of the review. The Head of ASQ (or nominated alternate) will then investigate in consultation with the chair of the panel, (and with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) if appropriate), and decide whether action is required.

**CR 3.4.11** On being awarded a judgement of Full Confidence, all existing degree programmes offered by the department under review are deemed to be revalidated. Where a judgement of Full Confidence cannot be awarded then a plan of action and timetable for further review shall be agreed with the department and faculty concerned.

**CR 3.4.12** At the end of the PQR process, once a Full Confidence judgement has been reached, a report detailing the findings of the Panel is drafted by the review secretary for approval by the Panel. The department is given an opportunity to correct factual errors in the draft report before the final report is published. The department is then required to respond formally to the Panel report, normally within one month of publication of the report, and provide this response to ASQ. The departmental response should describe how it plans to meet any recommendations, including an action plan and timescale.
CR 3.4.13 The PQR report and formal departmental response must then be submitted by the ASQC Unit to the next available Faculty Teaching Committees (UG and/or PG) for discussion. It is expected that the Faculty Teaching Committee(s) will consider any implications, both for the individual department or for the faculty as a whole, and also consider how any good practice identified should be disseminated across the faculty. Following discussion at the Faculty Teaching Committee(s), the ASQC will discuss individual departmental PQR reports together with the departmental response and the relevant Faculty Teaching Committee comments. In addition, items with institutional implications should be discussed and any commendations considered for wider dissemination across the institution.

CR 3.4.14 Departmental follow-up actions will be monitored by Faculty Associate Deans and TQSOs and reported to Faculty Teaching Committees and included in subsequent ATR reports.

CR 3.4.15 An annual summary of PQR findings for the previous year is discussed at ASQC and reported to Senate. The summary report should highlight any standards and quality issues, and any good practice, identified in PQRs, and any procedural or process issues identified during the year.

CR 3.4.16 The PQR procedure is reviewed in two ways.

(a) Continuous evaluation takes place at the end of each academic year when participants are asked for comments on the process and a summary is reported to ASQC.

(b) The methodology and timing should be reviewed in the penultimate year of each cycle unless there is need for earlier review in response to internal or external considerations.