

Office of Quality, Standards  
and Partnerships



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LINCOLN**

# QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL

## Periodic Academic Review

SECTION 06

## Introduction

This document summarises the University's processes for programme review. The University's overall approach to Quality Assurance is detailed fully in Quality Assurance Manual Section 01 – *General Principles and Quality Assurance Policy*.

Periodic Academic Review (PAR) is an enhancement focused review of a set of cognate programmes undertaken to evaluate the provision while providing a robust mechanism by which the University can assure itself of the quality of the programmes.

The University has a duty to ensure that its responsibility for standards and quality is discharged effectively through its procedures for the monitoring and review of programmes. The University reviews its provision regularly and has a number of processes in place to achieve this. PAR draws upon these processes - External Examining, Annual Programme Monitoring, annual student surveys, student, employer and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) engagement and feedback - whilst focusing on future strategic direction.

Complementary to the University's Annual Programme Monitoring processes (see Quality Assurance Manual Section 03), and supported by performance rated data to allow a metrically driven, risk-based approach to review, PAR processes are focused on delivering continuous improvement in the student academic experience and academic student outcomes.

The PAR process is an academic activity underpinned by peer review and externality, and informed student involvement. PAR allows Programme Teams to evaluate 'what works' and 'what doesn't', identifying improvements, developments and innovations within their provision that will enhance the student experience, whilst aligned to strategic plans.

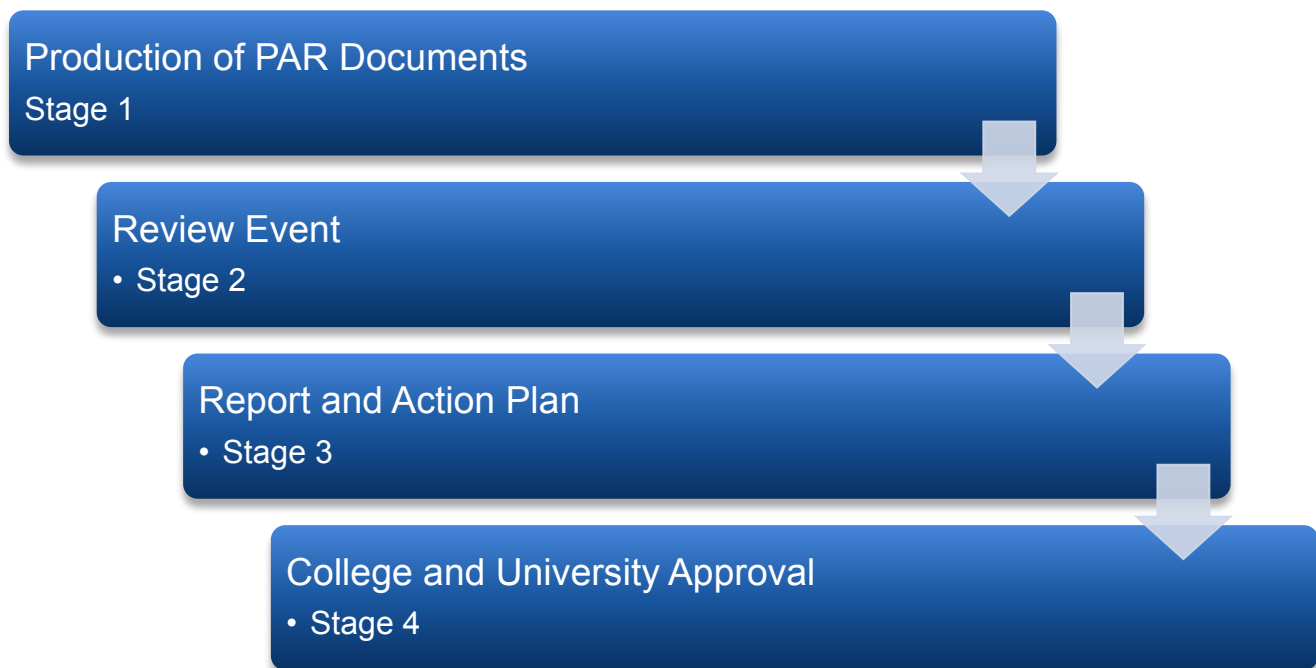
PAR includes all appropriate undergraduate, postgraduate (PGT and PGR) and Short Course provision. Where University provision is approved to be delivered off-campus at Partner institutions, these programmes are also included within the scope of the review, with Partner representatives involved throughout the process.

PAR does not confer continuing validation of all current programmes within the scope of the review, but identifies programmes that are due for revalidation and, where the panel is not satisfied about continuing standards and/or quality of any programme, it may refer any individual programme(s) back to the host School/Department for modification or revalidation. Modifications and revalidations are undertaken individually, outside of the PAR process, as the need arises.

## Periodic Academic Review Stages

The University's Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) is responsible for approving the Periodic Academic Review Schedule for each academic year. Prior to AAC approval, the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Standards will formally write to the associated Head of School/Department to discuss the process. Typically, each academic area will be reviewed every 5/6 years. Reviews will be aligned with PSRB accreditation events wherever possible.

PARs allocated for a particular academic cycle should be completed by the end of that academic year.



Each of the stages must be completed before the next can begin. Advice regarding any stage is available from the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships (OQSP).

During the PAR, the Quality, Standards and Partnerships Officer will undertake the role of 'Expert Reviewer'. This includes the responsibility for ensuring baseline quality assurance standards have been met, as supported by evidence, and providing the associated assurance to panel members.

Underpinned by performance-rated data, the processes illustrated within this Quality Assurance Manual may be varied at the discretion of the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Standards to respond to particular circumstances, and using this risk-based approach to allow flexibility in both scheduling and content of PARs.

## Stage 1 – Production of PAR Documents

### Self Evaluation Document

The Head of School/Department is responsible for leading the Programme Team(s) in the development of the Self Evaluation Document (SED). The purpose of the SED is to provide a reflective and evaluative assessment that sets out the Team's view of their provision. Where Partner institutions also deliver programmes, they should be involved in the development of the SED. College Directors of Academic Quality and College Directors of Education are available to support and advise Programme Teams as they develop their SED, and drafts should be shared accordingly.

The SED should be a critical, evaluative, evidence-based reflection, which forms the basis for a dialogue between the Programme Team and the Review Panel. Based on a standardised template, aligned to the University's Strategic Plan, the Quality, Standards and Partnerships Officer and the Chair will decide if the SED is appropriate for use.

### Student Written Submission

To support the Self Evaluation Document produced by the academic Programme Team(s), student representatives from within the subject area(s) under review are invited to submit a written contribution. This Student Written Submission (SWS) should be completed under the leadership of the senior student representation in the School/Department. This will provide a commentary, with evidence, on the quality of the academic experience and learning opportunities within the subject area(s).

Further guidance on developing the SED and SWS, including the associated report templates, is available from OQSP.

## Evidence Base

The SED must be supported by, and be referenced to, an evidence base, which will primarily draw upon existing data/resources to avoid unnecessary duplication. OQSP will set up a space on Blackboard / Teams for you to populate with your review evidence. For each programme the evidence base should include:

- Definitive Programme and Module Specifications
- Annual Programme Monitoring Reports and Action Plans (covering the previous 3 academic years)
- External Examiner Reports (covering the previous 3 academic years)
- Subject Committee Minutes (covering the previous 3 academic years)
- Link Tutor Reports for collaborative provision, where applicable (covering the previous 3 academic years)
- PSRB Reports, where applicable
- NSS, PTES and PRES data, as appropriate
- Other forms of student feedback, including International Student Surveys, as appropriate
- Example assessment information, including assessment briefs, feedback and Module Evaluation forms
- Student Handbooks
- Employer Engagement Activity, including Work Placement Handbooks
- Research Activity, including publication lists, staff specialisms, External Examiner responsibilities, guest lecturing
- Internationalisation Activity, including Study Abroad Handbooks as appropriate
- Digital Education Plans
- Student Engagement Plans
- Student Written Submission
- Previous PAR report
- Any other documents cited in the SED

The Quality, Standards and Partnerships Officer and the Chair will agree how the evidence will be evaluated, and allocate responsibilities to each panel member to investigate.

Examination of the evidence base should test the statements made within the SED, and issues should be identified for further exploration and verification, to test the quality of the provision and plans for enhancement. Panel members are expected to report on initial findings and identify associated questions prior to the event, therefore enabling focused discussion at the event itself.

## Stage 2 – Review Event

The review event will normally be conducted over one day. Where a PAR contains too many programmes for a one-day event to be meaningful, the event may be extended at the discretion of the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Standards.

Discussion will be based on panel members' evaluation of the SED, SWS, discussion with students and prior exploration of the evidence base. The Quality, Standards and Partnerships Officer will contact the Programme Team and Student Rep(s) to agree timescales for the submission of the SED and evidence base, and the SWS.

A PAR panel will consist of:

A Chair, from outside the School/Department in which the provision resides

An internal member, from outside the School/Department

An internal member, from outside the College

An external member with academic subject expertise, and familiar with UK academic standards in relation to the programme(s)

An external member with industry related subject expertise

A current student, from outside the School/Department under review

Representation from PSRBs, where appropriate

A Quality, Standards and Partnerships Officer

The University recognises the importance of external participation in the PAR process for ensuring programmes are designed, developed and approved in the light of independent advice and for ensuring both transparency of process and confirmation of standards.

OQSP will source all internal panel members. Programme teams will be asked to initially identify potential external academic subject and industry specialists to join the PAR panel. The criteria for appointing external panel members are of a similar consistency and strength to the criteria used for the appointment of External Examiners for the University. These principles are detailed in Quality Assurance Manual 02 *Programme Approval*.

On the day of the review event, as a minimum, time must be allocated for the following activities, to inform the review process:

A private meeting of the PAR panel to discuss findings from examination of the SED, SWS and evidence base. This meeting may be held in advance of the event.

A meeting of the PAR panel with the Programme Team to explore a range of issues. The Programme Team should invite their Academic Subject Librarian, and (if applicable) colleagues from collaborative partner institutions to attend.

A meeting with a sample of students from across the provision (programmes and levels) under review.

A tour of specialist facilities, where appropriate.

A private meeting of the PAR panel to determine outcomes and recommendations.

Feedback of outcomes and recommendations to the Programme Team.

Additional meetings may also be held, as appropriate, and may include meetings with representatives from employers and/or alumni.

Additional guidance on the structure of the event, and panel member roles and responsibilities, can be provided by the Quality, Standards and Partnerships Officer.

## Stage 3 – Report and Action Plan

The PAR panel will take a developmental and strategic view of the whole provision and consider any potential future enhancements. The PAR Report will be an evaluative review of the quality and standards of the programme(s).

The panel will determine a list of recommendations that it wishes to make to the Programme Team. Exceptionally, there may be occasions where it is appropriate to set formal conditions as an outcome of the PAR, that the Programme Team must comply with (for example, where standard University processes or policies are not being followed).

In reaching its conclusions, the PAR panel should be particularly aware of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, the QAA Quality Code, any relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, and any PSRB standards that apply. The report should also summarise the evidence on which the PAR panel has based its judgements.

The report will be distributed to the PAR panel members for comment, and amended in light of any further additions, before approval by the Chair and circulation to the Programme Team for correction of any factual errors.

## Stage 4 – College and University Approval

