

QUALITY YEAR 2023/24

What are you looking for?

Annual Quality Cycle and What's New	Key Dates and Deadlines for 2023/24	Education Action Plan 2023-24
Annual Checklist for Departments	Curriculum Update and New Timelines for 2023/24	Annual Review of Courses
Accreditation	Course and Module Design	External Examiners (Taught)
Periodic Reviews	Student Module Feedback	Further Information

Got a question? [Further information](#) is available on our [webpages](#). Contact Quality and Academic Development and Course Records on the email address most relevant to your query:

quad@essex.ac.uk (All general queries, including events accreditation and new course/module approvals)

external.examiners@essex.ac.uk (Queries relating to the nomination and appointment of External Examiners)

module.evaluation@essex.ac.uk (Queries relating to module feedback surveys)

crt@essex.ac.uk (All course records queries)

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Review of Education Performance

Initial Data Review meetings will take place from September to early October. These meetings are arranged by the QUAD team.

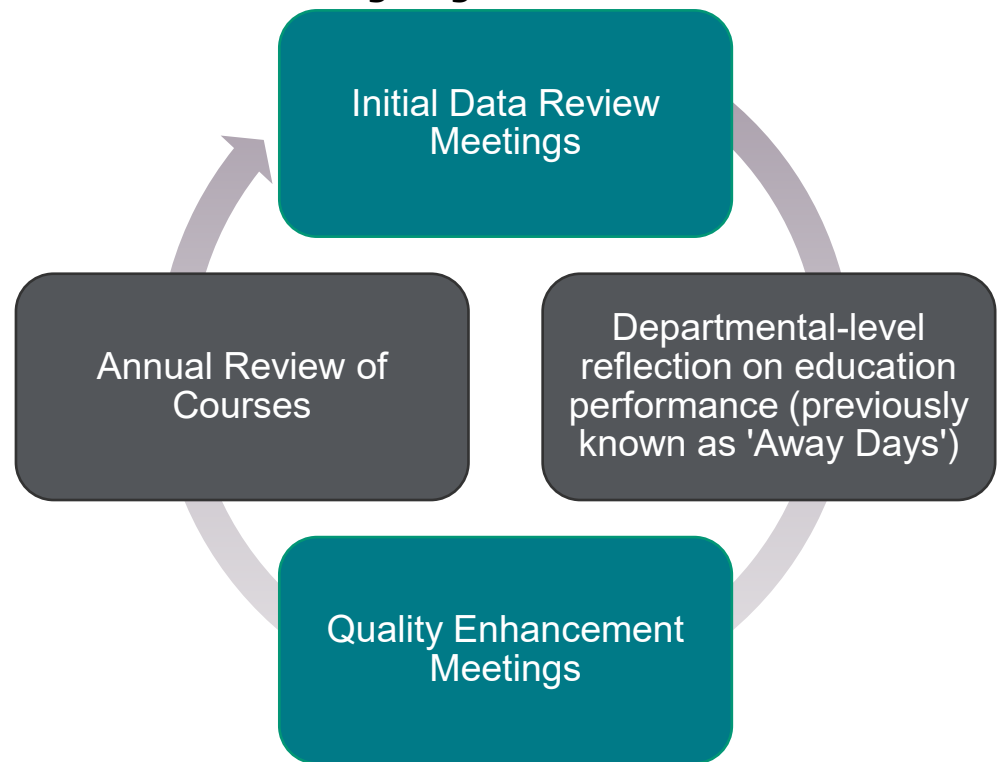
Departmental-level reflection on education performance (previously known as 'away days') should take place early in the autumn term.

Departments have flexibility regarding the arrangements for these, but they must provide a brief note on the process and outcomes via the autumn UG ARC report.

Quality Enhancement meetings will take place again during 2023/24. These will follow Initial Data Review meetings.

Annual Review of Courses (ARC) provides a concise summary of all developmental activity undertaken and planned in relation to a course/group of courses.

Annual Quality Cycle



What's new for 2023/24?

- The University of Essex operates a system to review and update courses and modules annually, called Curriculum Update. In previous years, all changes to the curriculum have been requested and submitted by **1 March**. In response to guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), in academic year 2023/24, there will be changes to the timelines on which this process operates. This will apply to all levels of provision. We hold lots of resources and guidance on our [Moodle](#) site.
- The Annual Review of Courses template (UG/PGT) has been updated and departments are now asked to provide commentary based on data relating to education performance (can be found in the [ARC data packs](#)). Commentary should be evidenced by outcomes which can be seen in data or in wider work conducted by the department/faculty. In 2023-24 **further work will be underway** to review the template and overall ARC reporting process.
- Departments have been required for several years to share confirmations of accreditation with QUAD and to report within their ARC reports on feedback or requirements from PSRBs. This will continue but from 2023/24 the PVCE has introduced **the requirement** that all reports and/or outcomes from PSRB monitoring, reviews or visits are shared directly with QUAD and with the relevant Faculty. Institutional overview report on these will go to Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Following any set of PSRB conditions, recommendations or other outcomes **an action plan** should be shared with QUAD and approved by the Faculty Dean.

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Key Dates and Deadlines for 2023/24

	Review and planning	New courses	Changes to courses and modules	External examiners	Student module feedback
Oct	Dept review activities (reported on in the UG ARC)			Should all be in place at start of academic year Depts review UG reports and respond to External Examiners	
Nov	15 Nov: deadline for submission of UG ARCs Autumn planning meetings	8 Nov: request for Development Stage approval to advertise new courses & autumn term deadline to submit for Final Stage approval	Consider changes to existing courses and modules as part of the review cycle	November/December: Inform/consult with External Examiners (taught) regarding changes to existing courses/modules (see framework)	All module data should be entered to EvaSys and Autumn term surveys ready to run online at an appropriate time at the end of each module
Dec		8 Dec: Final date for Development Stage approval to advertise new courses			
Jan		31 Jan: Spring term deadline to submit new courses for Final Stage approval	Peak period for submitting course and module changes	Depts review PGT reports and respond to External Examiners (taught)	
Feb	31 Jan: deadline for submission of PG ARCs Spring planning meetings	2 Feb: Deadline for new modules to be submitted	16 Feb: Deadline for making changes to modules	February: indicative deadline for nomination of new External Examiners (taught) for 2024/25	
Mar			1 Mar: Final date for course and module changes to be submitted		Departments should begin running online surveys for Spring term modules at an appropriate time at the end of each module
Apr		17 Apr: Final deadline to submit new courses for Final Stage approval	Updates to all course and module information to be made once approved, including dept updates and Course Finder		

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Education Action Plan 2023/24

Focus areas relating to quality assurance and course development in the [Education Action Plan](#)



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Checklist for Departments

Tick when an area has been reviewed and considered for 2023/24

ACTIVITY	EXPECTATIONS FOR DEPARTMENTS	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	
Annual Review of Courses (ARC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students are consulted in the process and ARC reports are shared with SVGs. ▪ Management committees are convened for joint course annual review purposes. ▪ ARC action plans are regularly reviewed. ▪ The ARC is sent to the External Examiner(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are ARC action plans being monitored for impact and outcomes? ▪ Are trends in educational performance data being reviewed and addressed? ▪ How is good practice being highlighted and shared across the University? 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student involvement with quality assurance and enhancement (including Curriculum Update)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students are consulted in curriculum developments and changes to courses and modules are <u>communicated to all affected students and applicants with formal consultation where needed.</u> ▪ All modules offer opportunities for student module feedback and actions identified are implemented. ▪ Actions and issues arising through NSS and UKES are disseminated to staff and students. ▪ A summary of actions taken in response to student feedback is provided online for current and prospective students by the end of the Autumn Term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have there been any challenges over communicating and consulting regarding changes for 2023/24? How have these been managed? ▪ Have the new Curriculum Update notifications to students and applicants generated further feedback to act upon? ▪ How can student feedback and data relating to education performance be used to reflect and enhance courses? 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student Voice groups (SVGs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes of actions identified in SVG minutes are reported at subsequent meetings. ▪ SVG minutes are published to students on the departmental website/Moodle within 10 working days. ▪ SVGs discuss External Examiner reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has engagement with SVGs been monitored? Is there regular communication between your department, the SU and Student Voice team about this? ▪ How are SVGs and actions from them incorporated into other departmental processes and the ARC action plan? 	<input type="checkbox"/>
External expertise and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Departments use external expertise from a range of sources, which could include: External Examiners; other external academic input; Employer Advisory Boards or other employer or industry representatives; Professional, Statutory or Regulatory bodies. ▪ Where relevant, departments maintain links and records relating to their PSRBs and ensure that all requirements are met. Heads of Department and Department Managers should allocate these tasks to a specific member or members of staff in the department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What kinds of external expertise are sought and used for curriculum developments? ▪ Is your department in regular communication with its accrediting bodies, and are there any upcoming reaccreditations due? 	<input type="checkbox"/>

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ACTIVITY	EXPECTATIONS FOR DEPARTMENTS	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	
External Examiners (EEs) (Taught)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EEs are appointed, briefed, and provided with module and course info for the start of the academic year (including year abroad and placement year information) and throughout the year. Guidance is available on the information that must be shared.. ▪ Records of marking, feedback, moderation and second marking are maintained in formats that are shared with EEs. ▪ Issues raised by EEs are discussed and acted upon. ▪ Action taken is reported to EEs, and each EE is sent a response from the department using the report portal. ▪ EEs are informed/consulted prior to changes to existing modules/courses as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have there been challenges or examples of good practice in providing EEs with the information they need? ▪ How have EEs been inducted to the department and new academic year? ▪ Could induction visits to campus and/or meetings with students be helpful to your EEs? ▪ Is feedback from EEs communicated and acted upon effectively? ▪ Are you in regular communication with QUAD regarding allocation of modules to schedules? 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The assessment, marking and feedback strategy in place aligns with the University's Marking and Assessment policies. ▪ Systems are in place to monitor the quality and timeliness of feedback to students. ▪ Assessment to be reviewed in line with Senate decisions relating to – use of exams, alignment to learning outcomes and credit value, and inclusivity, effectiveness, and scalability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there examples of good practice in assessment that could be shared? ▪ Has assessment design been reviewed and is there any learning from this that could be considered in planning for Curriculum Update? 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decisions and key issues from Senate and committees of Senate are disseminated, discussed, and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What methods does your department use to disseminate this information? 	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Curriculum Update and New

Timelines for 2023/24

All courses and modules are updated annually as part of the ongoing cycle of monitoring and review. Decisions are made based on the information we publish and share about our courses and modules. There are key deadlines that departments must meet to ensure both prospective and current students are provided with the information they need to decide which course to apply for and which modules they would like to choose.

The Quality and Academic Development team provide training each year – these sessions are advertised via HR Organiser. Departments are also welcome to contact the team at any time to seek advice (crt@essex.ac.uk or quad@essex.ac.uk).

What's new for 2023/24?

The University of Essex operates a system to review and update courses and modules (all provision) annually, called Curriculum Update. Currently, departments request changes by the deadline of 1 March for implementation (with approval, where necessary) in the following academic year (e.g., changes for academic year 2022/23 were submitted by 1 March 2022). From academic year 2023/24, there will be changes to the timelines on which this process operates. This will apply to all levels of provision.

In **2023/24**, which is a transitional year, the deadline will still be **1 March 2024** for all requests for changes, and changes made and approved will be implemented for academic year 2024/25. All core-CMA information for courses and modules will then be fixed for **two** academic years (2024/25 and 2025/26). The next round of changes to this core-CMA information will be requested in February 2025; changes submitted and approved then will be implemented in academic year 2026/27. There will be no changes to timelines for making and implementing changes to non-core-CMA information. For further information on this, see the guidance.

We hold lots of resources and guidance on our [Moodle site](#).

Ensure more than one member of your department has completed the training for [Curriculum Update](#) and utilise the guidance available.

- [Curriculum Update overview](#)
- [Consultation and justifications](#)
- [Late changes](#)
- [Teaching, learning and assessment](#)
- [Year-round provision guidance](#)
- [Student consultation and notification on course and module changes](#)

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- The Annual Review of Courses (ARC) provides a concise summary of all developmental activity undertaken and planned by a department in relation to a course/group of UG, PGT and PGR courses. All courses should be included in the report as this allows the University to have oversight of themes that are emerging across departments and faculties that need to be acted upon, and to share good practice across the institution. From an external point of view, an effective ARC is a necessity if we are to demonstrate to external auditors the currency, security and validity of our awards.
- ARC reports act as a focus for reflective evaluation of curriculum, delivery, student experience and the achievement of students on all provision. They also need to look forward to the next delivery of the curriculum, building on the experience and evidence of the previous year, and thereby facilitate the active enhancement of quality and standards. ARC reports should report on outcomes of projects and initiatives undertaken by your department, providing commentary based on trends from key performance indicator data to evidence points raised.
- Please note that ARC reports must be approved by your Head of Department before submitting to QUAD (quad@essex.ac.uk). Faculty Deans will be reviewing these reports and providing Faculty Education Committees with an overview at their meetings in autumn for undergraduate (usually late November/early December) and the spring term (usually February). It is therefore essential that reports are submitted by the deadlines below, or ideally earlier where possible.

- **Undergraduate: By noon on Wednesday 15 November 2023**
- **Postgraduate: By noon on Wednesday 31 January 2024**

Data packs provided by Planning and Data Insights should be utilised via the [Planning Information Portal](#) when ARC reports are written.

- [ARC Data Report](#)
- [NSS \(National Student Survey\)](#)
- [UKES \(UK Engagement Survey\)](#)
- [Graduate Outcomes](#)
- [Retention \(Continuation\)](#)
- [Retention \(Withdrawals\)](#)
- [Degree Classification](#)
- [Good degrees](#)
- [Student Numbers](#)
- [Average Tariff](#)

- Information on accreditation is published in programme specifications, in [Course Finder](#), and in the prospectus. It's also collected by the [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\)](#) who [share the information with public authorities](#) who require it to carry out their statutory and/or public functions. The information is also published on [Discover Uni](#), the official website that holds data on undergraduate courses at universities.
- **It's therefore essential for information on links with PSRBs to be clear and accurate.**
- Check HEAR statements and accreditation records on ESIS are up to date and current. Where an application has been made for accreditation, but this has not yet been confirmed, this should be clear in the information prospective and current students are provided with.

- Methods and the frequency of accreditation (of any type) vary. Departments should ensure that clear information is provided on the PSRB requirements for accreditation when asking for approval of new and amended courses.
- Departments should contact the Quality and Academic Development team (QUAD) where there are particular requirements of a [professional, statutory or regulatory body](#) (PSRB) which may affect the format of annual monitoring and reporting.
- **Responsibility for maintaining links with PSRBs and ensuring compliance with the PSRB's requirements rests with the departments.** Departments are responsible for the areas listed below to ensure the information we hold and publish is accurate. Heads of Department and Department Managers should allocate the [tasks and responsibilities](#) (outlined under 'PSRBs') to a specific member or members of staff in the department.

What's new for 2023/24?

- Departments have been required for several years to share confirmations of accreditation with QUAD and to report within their ARC reports on feedback or requirements from PSRBs. This will continue but from 2023/24 the PVCE has introduced the requirement that all reports and/or outcomes from PSRB monitoring, reviews or visits are shared directly with QUAD and with the relevant Faculty. Institutional overview report on these will go to Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
- Following any set of PSRB conditions, recommendations or other outcomes an action plan should be shared with QUAD and approved by the Faculty Dean.

The University has a risk-management approach to the approval of [new degree courses and awards](#). New courses go through a number of stages and committees before the course can be advertised, opened for admissions and delivered for the first time.

It can be useful for those involved in developing the new course to meet at an early stage to talk through timelines and responsibilities - for example representatives from the department's course development team, the Quality and Academic Development Manager or Postgraduate Research Education team and the Executive or Faculty Dean.

Forms for New Courses (Awards):

- [New course approval – concept stage form](#)
- [New course approval – development stage form](#)
- [New course approval – final stage form \(category 1 and 2 courses\)](#)

Forms for New Apprenticeships:

- [New Apprenticeship Concept Stage Approval Form](#)
- [New Apprenticeship Development Stage Form](#)
- [New Apprenticeship Final Stage Form](#)

It is essential that new apprenticeships are mapped to the relevant apprenticeship standard and consideration is given to how learners will develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours throughout the course. Please ensure you liaise with the Apprenticeships Hub regarding all new apprenticeship provision.

Proposals for new modules on existing courses should be submitted in line with deadlines for the annual update of modules and courses. Proposals can be submitted at other times of the year, as long as they are in advance of the final deadline for the annual update. New modules designed as part of a new course proposal should be incorporated into the approval process and documentation for the new course, and should account for deadlines for the course start. We also have guidance for [modular study and credit accumulation](#).

The [module proposal form](#) contains the information needed for approval to be considered and for the module to be published online once approved.

Guidance and templates

- [Programme specification and module map guidance](#)
- [Programme specification template](#)
- [Module map template](#)
- [External expert report](#)
- [New site of delivery approval form](#)
- [Approval and reporting structures](#)
- [Guidelines for introducing and awarding academic prizes](#)
- [Apprenticeships](#)
- [Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies](#)
- [Work-based and placement learning](#)
- [University partnerships](#)
- [Course suspension and discontinuation form](#)

External Examiners (Taught)

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External Examiners are appointed for four consecutive years. In exceptional circumstances, a fifth year may be considered with the permission of the relevant Executive Dean or nominee, in order to provide continuity, or where a programme is ending. Examiners may not be re-appointed as an external examiner for a taught award of the University for another five years. Once nominations have been approved, QUAD send a formal letter of invitation to the External Examiner, specifying the awards and modules to which they have been appointed and asking the examiner to confirm the appointment is accepted and that they are prepared to operate in line with the University's expectations, as described in the [roles and responsibilities](#).

Actions for Departments

- Check that External Examiners are appointed for all courses/modules (reports are available to show where [module](#), [award](#) and [schedule](#) gaps are). Contact QUAD to confirm any gaps and schedule changes for the new year.
- Nominate externals for External Examiner vacancies. The [External Examiner Nomination Portal](#) is used by departmental staff for nominating a new, or replacement, External Examiner, and for making changes to existing appointments.
- Ensure you are sending External Examiners all of the information they need throughout the year as outlined in the [guidance](#) on preparing for the External Examiner role.
- External Examiners in their first year of appointment should be invited by their link department to visit a University of Essex campus at least once within the first academic year. Guidance on fees and expenses (what's covered) is [available](#). Meetings with students (in person or virtually) are optional but reported as helpful in completing their roles by many External Examiners.
- The [External Examiner Report Portal](#) is an online submission system for External Examiner reports. Reports, and Departmental Responses to reports, will be saved within the system and will be accessible to relevant members of departmental and faculty staff to feed into the University of Essex's quality assurance processes.
- Remember that External Examiners with responsibility for dual provision (UG and PGT) should submit two reports, one following their UG deadline and one following the PGT deadline. External Examiners should submit their reports within four weeks of the final exam board at each level of provision, and no later than 31 August (UG) or 31 December (PGT).

Key links:

- [External Examiner nomination](#)
- [External Examiner roles and responsibilities](#)
- [External Examiner nomination criteria](#)
- [Preparation for the External Examiner role](#)
- [Report submission \(University of Essex\)](#)
- [External Examiner fees and expenses](#)
- [Termination of External Examiner contract](#)
- [External Examiners allocated to current programmes \(including unallocated programmes\)](#)
- [External Examiners allocated to current modules \(including unallocated modules\)](#)

- Periodic Reviews evaluate a course or group of related courses to assure the continuing quality of provision in the department. The Periodic Review usually takes place every five years and is the basis for re-approval of the courses with effect from the following academic year. Periodic Reviews apply to all levels of provision (UG, PGT and PGR), though may be undertaken separately for UG and PG provision.
- These events are considered a good opportunity for reflection and enhancement - they enable the department to take a holistic view across programmes and levels (where appropriate), to take stock of the curriculum and developments within the subject, and to evaluate continuing relevance and currency. Periodic Review Panel meetings usually take place across the autumn and spring terms in two stages. During Stage 1, the Panel meets with students and agrees key themes and questions which are sent to the department in preparation for Stage 2. Stage 2 usually takes place approximately 6 weeks after Stage 1 and consists of Panel meetings with the department team and any other groups as appropriate. Following the discussions, the Panel agree the outcome of the Periodic Review.
- During the feedback session with the department, the Chair will announce the outcome of the event and notify the team of any conditions and/or recommendations that should be addressed or considered. Commendations will also be highlighted. A formal report is written by the secretary, and the outcome is reported through the University's Committee structure. Departments are asked to provide a response to the conditions and recommendations approximately 8 weeks after the final Panel meeting and they are also asked to provide information about actions in response to Periodic Review via the Annual Review of Courses process. The department should also provide students with an executive summary of the Periodic Review outcome.

Key documents and guidance are available on the [website](#)

- [Periodic Review Planning and Timeline](#)
- [Guidance for Periodic Review Panel Members](#)
- [Guidance for Students](#)
- [Opportunities for student participation in Periodic Reviews](#)
- [Periodic Review Document List](#)
- [Periodic Review Reflective Document Template](#)
- [Periodic Review Reflective Document Guidance](#)
- [Periodic Review Summary of Quality Assurance Template](#)

Review the schedule of [Periodic Review events](#) to check when your next Periodic Review is due. If your Review is due in the current academic year, you will have been notified and contacted by QUAD over the summer term of the previous academic year.

Student Module Feedback

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- According to the University's Student Module Feedback policy, feedback from students should actively be sought at least twice within a module, only one of which must be formal. Departments are required to issue a survey at the end of the module which is formally recorded, but may also include qualitative means of collecting feedback (for example informal classroom conversations, focus groups and/or online forums). All registered students should have the opportunity to respond to the survey and students should be able to offer feedback at any point during the module.
- Student Module Feedback uses EvaSys as the tool for administering the formal student survey at the end of each module. It is browser-based, and can be accessed from the following link:

essex.evasys.co.uk

- Student Module Feedback results should be discussed at a Departmental meeting to look at themes and trends and to consider any changes that might be appropriate in the light of the survey outcomes. Student Voice Groups (SVGs) should receive summary reports on the Module Feedback results, and the reports should be available to all students following discussion at the SVGs. Heads of Department must ensure that the outcomes of Student Module Feedback are considered as part of Annual Review of Courses (ARC) reports.
- Student Module Feedback should also complement other formal and informal forms of student feedback and representation (e.g. [NSS](#), [UKES](#), [Student Voice Groups](#), [student representatives](#)).
- QUAD have oversight of the Student Module Feedback policy and provide support and guidance for departments in administering surveys via EvaSys.

Please direct your queries regarding EvaSys module.evaluation@essex.ac.uk and we will be very glad to assist with:

- Creating new subunit administrators
- Password resets
- Annual upload of CSV module data
- Advice on bespoke reporting
- Training for new users or refresher training for existing users
- Liaising with the Students' Union and Student Experience team to promote surveys and boost response rates
- Any other queries about EvaSys or the Student Module Feedback policy

Please consult the [EvaSys User Guide](#) for guidance on how to set up and run surveys on EvaSys, and a timeline of surveying activity/reporting over the academic year.

Further Information

Training and guidance available

For specific areas of quality assurance and enhancement activity see the Quality and Academic Development webpages as follows:

- [Course design, approval, and modification](#)
 - The Quality and Academic Development team provide training on the Curriculum Update process each year – these sessions are advertised via HR Organiser. Departments are also welcome to contact the team at any time to seek advice (crt@essex.ac.uk or quad@essex.ac.uk).
 - Further advice and guidance on module and course design [is available from a range of sources and teams across the University](#).
 - [Framework on external engagement for changes to existing courses and modules](#)
 - [Framework on student consultation and notification](#)
- [Quality assurance and enhancement principles and structures](#)
- [Annual Review of Courses](#)
- [External Examiners \(Taught\)](#)
 - This includes detailed guidance on the processes of nomination and on the use of the Report Portal for both departments and External Examiners for taught provision.
- [Student feedback and representation](#)
 - This includes guidance on, and requirements for, running [Student Module Feedback](#).
 - Further guidance on student voice and feedback has been developed by the Student Experience Team; contact studentvoice@essex.ac.uk for more information.
- [Periodic Review](#)

Document review information

Document owner	Quality and Academic Development Team
Document author	Aminah Suhail, Quality and Academic Development Manager
Document last reviewed by	Aminah Suhail, Quality and Academic Development Manager
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