



Guidance for Students

Periodic Reviews

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Periodic Reviews

What is a Periodic Review?

A 'periodic review' is when a department reviews its courses to ensure they continue to provide students with a high-quality learning experience. Courses are reviewed every year, but every five years a much more intensive review is undertaken.

Periodic Reviews provide an opportunity for courses to be reviewed by an independent panel to ensure that they continue to provide students with a high-quality learning experience. The process allows departments an opportunity to step back from the day-to-day running of courses and evaluate whether the courses remain fit-for-purpose. Through the Periodic Review process, departments can seek the advice, support and critical review of senior academic colleagues, subject specialists and employer representatives, as well as students. Periodic Reviews are an important quality assurance and enhancement process which is conducted throughout the higher education sector.

Why am I involved?

The University is keen to capture your views on the courses you are undertaking and the facilities for learning and support that are available to you. We value your opinion on your experiences and are keen to ensure that you are able to take an active role in developing and improving the learning opportunities available to you.

Students are involved in two ways at a Periodic Review:

- As a **Panel Member** you are part of the core panel that reviews the provision, including information and feedback presented, contribute to panel discussions, and ultimately contribute to the outcomes of the Review. You attend all the panel meetings and will usually have recently graduated from the course.
- As part of a **Group of Students Meeting the Panel** you will be asked to share your experiences and feedback in a scheduled meeting with the Review Panel as part of the event.

Your involvement is central to the Periodic Review taking place, and we invite you to help us provide assurance in the quality of student experience on the courses under Review.

Periodic Reviews

What happens at a Periodic Review?

A Periodic Review panel is appointed to consider the courses under review. Panel members include a Faculty Dean (Undergraduate / Postgraduate— depending on the level of provision under review), two members of academic staff from outside the department (one from the same Faculty, the other from outside the Faculty), a student, academic staff from another University, and often additional external representatives, such as employers or members of the appropriate professional bodies (e.g., Nursing and Midwifery Council for nursing courses). A member of the Quality and Academic Development team would also attend to be the secretary.

BEFORE THE REVIEW

Approximately three weeks before the event, panel members are sent a pack (online via Box) which contains details on arrangements for the event and information on the courses which has been prepared by the department. This typically contains: a reflective document by the department; External Examiner and Annual Review of Courses reports; programme specifications and modules maps; student handbooks; NSS results and relevant external reference points (such as the Subject Benchmark Statement). This gives panel members a chance to find out more about the departments and its academic provision before the event and to identify any issues or topics that they would like to discuss on the day. Panel members are asked to provide some initial comments on the documentation prior to the initial panel meetings.

DURING THE REVIEW

The Periodic Review would usually take place in two stages approximately 6 weeks apart, depending on the size and nature of the award(s) being reviewed.

- Stage One — includes an initial closed panel meeting, and a meeting with students. Stage One is usually about 3-4 hours and could be held virtually (via zoom) or on campus.
- Stage Two — includes a meeting with the Department, and meetings with any other Professional bodies, as appropriate. The Panel also has a number of closed meetings to discuss their findings and areas for further investigation. Stage Two would usually take about 4-5 hours and could be held virtually (via zoom) or on campus. The Panel may have the opportunity to view the facilities if the meetings take place on campus.

AFTER THE REVIEW

At the end of the meeting in Stage 2, the Panel makes a decision about the quality and future of the courses, and has the opportunity to commend positive aspects of the course and identify areas where there is scope for improvement. These conclusions are recorded in a written report which is circulated to all Panel members for their feedback and, when approved, is submitted to the Faculty Education Committee, AQSC and Education Committee. The department is expected to revise the courses in light of any recommendations by the Panel, and this is monitored by Quality and Academic Development and the Faculty Dean(s) (Undergraduate/Postgraduate).

Student Panel

What is my role as a student panel member?

You are a full and equal member of the Panel, and your views will be valued by other Panel Members. Please participate honestly and constructively; do not be afraid to ask questions, make suggestions and share your experiences and opinions with the Panel and the department.

Although the experience may initially seem daunting, your thoughts and suggestions are incredibly valuable, and the Panel will be keen to make you feel welcome and to hear your views.

Here are some ideas of things that you may wish to consider:

- Is the course meeting your expectations?
- Are the teaching methods appropriate?
- Are timetables and workloads manageable?
- Do you have adequate access to the necessary resources (e.g. labs, computers, library)?
- Do you feel that your course is preparing you well for future employment or study?
- Is information in student handbooks clear and up-to-date?
- Are you clear about how your work is assessed?
- Do you receive useful and timely feedback?
- Do you feel that there is sufficient support (both academic and personal) to help you during your studies?
- Does the department seek your views on your course on a regular basis?
- Do you feel your views are listened to?
- Are there matters that students have previously raised with the department that you feel need to be addressed further?
- What do you like most about your course?
- Is there anything that could be improved?

If the Panel does not ask questions about something that you feel is important, do not be afraid to bring it to the Chair's attention as you have a unique and valuable perspective on the quality of the course. If there is anything that you do not understand, please feel free to ask any member of the Panel for clarification.

Student Panel

Student meetings with the Panel

Periodic Review Panels find it incredibly useful to meet with students to get a real feel for how the courses are operating and how they are viewed by students. Panel members will ask you questions about your experiences, some of which may be similar to the questions listed on the other page.

Meeting the Panel can seem a daunting prospect, however please do not feel intimidated as the Panel are keen to hear your views. Please speak freely and honestly about your experiences as a student, highlighting any aspects of your course that you like and any areas where you think there is room for improvement. Your feedback will be treated with discretion and your views will not be individually attributed to you in either the written report of the event or in verbal feedback to the department.

Why get involved?

Being involved in a Periodic Review allows you to help to improve the department for yourself and your fellow students. You get to have your views listened to and taken seriously, and you will have a real input into decisions that are made that will affect your course.

You will meet new people, gain new skills and therefore enhance your CV. It is an opportunity to put your communication teamwork, time management, negotiation and meeting skills into action.

If at any stage after agreeing to participate you find that you are no longer able to proceed with your involvement in the process, either as a Panel member, or in a meeting with the Panel, please notify Quality and Academic Development (quad@essex.ac.uk) as soon as possible. It is essential for students to be involved in the Periodic Review process.

Without your involvement and feedback, the Review process may be disrupted or halted. Departments at the University work hard to secure student involvement in their Reviews, so notifying us that you are no longer able to participate will enable them to ensure other students can be approached and provide feedback on the student experience.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Get in touch. If you've been approached by your department and asked to be a member of a Periodic Review Panel or to meet with the Panel and would like further information, or for more information in general about quality assurance procedures, Periodic Review and student representation at Essex, please contact Quality and Academic Development via quad@essex.ac.uk.

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