Periodic Review:
Guidance for Students
PERIODIC REVIEW

WHAT IS A PERIODIC REVIEW?
The University must periodically review all of the courses offered at Essex to ensure they continue to provide students with a high quality learning experience. Each course should be reviewed once every five years. How many courses are reviewed at one time will vary across the University, for example some Departments or Schools will review all of their courses at the same time. For other areas, particularly courses that are very specialist or for new courses, a separate review may be provided for these provisions.

WHY DO WE HAVE PERIODIC REVIEWS?
Periodic Reviews provide an opportunity for a group of related 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 Review is 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. You will only be asked to be part of a Periodic Review for a course that you are studying for. 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.
WHAT HAPPENS AT A PERIODIC REVIEW?

A Periodic Review panel is appointed to consider the courses under review. There are typically seven members of a panel, although this number is only approximate and can vary. Panel members include an Executive Dean, the Deputy Dean (Education), academic staff from outside of the department, students, academic staff from other Universities and often additional external representatives, such as employers or members of the appropriate professional bodies (e.g. Nursing and Midwifery Council for nursing courses).

BEFORE THE REVIEW

Approximately two weeks before the event, panel members are sent a pack 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.

DURING THE REVIEW

The structure of Periodic Reviews usually see that they begin around 9:30am and conclude by 4pm. They usually take place at the campus where the department is based. The Panel have the opportunity to view facilities, meet with students and discuss the courses with the department. The Panel also has a number of closed meetings to discuss their findings and areas for further investigation.

AFTER THE REVIEW

At the end of the event, 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 Deputy Dean (Education).
WHAT IS MY ROLE AS A STUDENT PANEL MEMBER?

You are a full and equal member of the Periodic Review 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 their 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.

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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