UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

QUALITY REVIEW FRAMEWORK

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Introduction

All activities that take place as part of the Quality Review Framework ought to be developmental and based on dialogue between peers. Audits, reviews and engagements should be forward looking, taking the opportunity to learn from the past and take full account of the current state of affairs to ensure that academic standards are sound and that students are supported to achieve the educational aims of their programmes.

External Expectations

The University of Exeter is responsible for the standard and quality of the awards made in its name and the quality of the programmes that lead to those awards. Responsibility for developing and delivering programmes is delegated to the Colleges which all aspire to excellence on taught or research programmes. Such aspirations require regular monitoring, review and constructive peer dialogue to provide the necessary assurance about standards and quality.

Purposes of the system

The Quality Review Framework should provide assurance to the Boards of the Faculties and Senate of the following:
- Colleges have strategic oversight of, and take responsibility for, the academic standards and quality of their programmes, which includes undergraduate, postgraduate taught and graduate research programmes (including professional doctorates).
- All students are treated fairly, equitably and as individuals.
- Students have the opportunity to contribute to shaping their learning experience.
- Students are properly and actively informed at appropriate times of matters relevant to their programmes of study.
- There is sufficient external involvement in the design, approval and review of the curriculum.
- Staff are supported to deliver high quality student experiences.
- Innovation and creativity in the design and delivery of the curriculum is actively supported.

Principles that underpin the system

It is important that a clear set of principles underpins the design and delivery of a new system:
- Systems for monitoring quality ought to be proportionate to the risk to the student experience.
- The framework should respect the academic expertise and administrative professionalism of Colleges.
- Students should be engaged in all elements of the review systems.
- The framework must ensure that the student interest is being served.
- The framework should encourage and promote enhancement and sharing good practice.

Key Features

We have a responsibility to monitor, review and report on the management of standards and quality on a periodic basis. The systems described in this handbook

provide opportunities to monitor review and report on the standards and quality of awards granted by the University of Exeter.

1   **Enhanced Annual Student Experience Review**

For implementation for the academic year 2016/17

1.1   Introduction

The Enhanced Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) draws together and streamlines many monitoring activities (External Examiner Reports, Accelerate, Annual Monitoring Review (AMR), Survey Action Planning and College Compliance with University quality assurance and quality enhancement policies in the TQA Manual) that are extended throughout the year into one meeting for Taught Programmes and one meeting for Postgraduate Research (PGR).

In addition, it provides the opportunity for a strategic overview of the entirety of a College's learning and teaching activity. It is the principal means by which the University assures itself of the efficacy and robustness of each College's quality management procedures and of continued enhancement of the quality of the student experience.

Every College in the University (including INTO) will be subject to an Enhanced ASER over a 5-year cycle. This review will normally include any partnership activity.

A report of the review is produced and, in conjunction with the standard College ASER action plan any issues arising from the Enhanced ASER Meetings will be included. The Report and Action Plan will be considered by the Faculty Deans, and reported to the Boards of Faculty and Senate. Progress in meeting the Action Plans' objectives is monitored through the normal ASER Action Planning process.

1.2   College Level Activity

A College that is subject to Enhanced ASER must carry out routine internal ASER processes as outlined in the Quality Review Framework (QRF) Chapter 2 – Annual Student Experience Review as normal.

The provision of evidence beyond what is normally required for routine ASER processes has been kept to a minimum. However, the College must provide the following additional information no less than one month before the Enhanced ASER College Meeting:

a) Brief outline of the College's aims, aspirations and challenges. This should be no more than 3 pages in length.
b) College structure charts
c) Management and committee organograms
d) Recent PSRB reports
e) Optional written report from the College Officer and SSLC Chairs

University Level Scrutiny, in the form of a College ASER Meeting as outlined in Chapter 2 Point 2.2.3 with vary as per below.

1.3   Enhanced ASER College Meeting

The Enhanced ASER College Meeting will be chaired by the Academic Dean for Students supported by a panel comprised of an Associate Dean Education (ADE) from another College, a representative from the Students' Guild/FXU and colleagues from Academic Policy and Standards.

APS staff will work with the College to compile a schedule of meetings across one full day. The day will normally comprise of two parts:

Part One: A series of short meetings with senior College staff members (both academic and Professional Services) to enable the Panel to review the College's strategies for growth, development and quality assurance and ensure that suitable management and staffing structures are in place to support these activities. The student acting as College Officer will be asked to attend these meetings.

Part Two: A longer meeting with the ADE, Education and Student Experience business Partner and students following the standard ASER meeting agenda as outlined in the QRF Chapter 2 – Annual Student Experience Review Section 2.1.3.

1.4   Outcomes of Enhanced ASER

Following the Enhanced ASER Meetings a report of the review will be produced.

Any areas requiring action by the College arising from the Part One Meetings will be added to the standard College ASER Action Plan considered in Part Two.

The Report and Action Plan will be considered by the Faculty Deans, and reported to the Boards of Faculty and Senate. Progress in meeting the Action Plans' objectives is monitored through the normal ASER Action Planning process.

2   **Annual Student Experience Review**

The Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) draws together and streamlines existing monitoring activities (External Examiner Reports, Accelerate, Annual Monitoring Review (AMR), Survey Action Planning and Annual College Compliance with University quality assurance and quality enhancement policies in the TQA Manual) that are extended throughout the year into one meeting for Taught Programmes and one meeting for Postgraduate Research (PGR).

An ASER will take place for all Colleges (including INTO) every academic year, whether or not a College is undergoing Enhanced ASER). ASERs are an annual 'health check' by the University with the purpose of providing a single opportunity to:

- Monitor each College's scrutiny of student datasets, subsequent action plans and monitoring completion of actions from the previous year

- Review progress towards achieving actions identified in the College's most recent CAA;
- Reflect annually on risks and weaknesses, identifying action to be taken forward where necessary;
- Review processes and compliance with University quality assurance and quality enhancement policies;
- Discussing College engagement with key strategic education/research priorities;
- Providing a formal opportunity for the senior team to discuss student experience matters including the programme portfolio and the efficacy of the response to student feedback;
- Review academic partnership activity (e.g. student exchanges/split-site PhDs;
- Review common themes emerging from External Examiner reports;
- Providing an opportunity to identify good practice worthy of wider dissemination;
- Consideration of the Students' Guild/FXU 'Visions for Education'

Separate meetings will be arranged to review Taught provision and Graduate Research provision.

2.1   **ASER for TAUGHT PROGRAMMES**

2.1.1   **Discipline Level Scrutiny**

Annual Programme and Discipline level scrutiny of datasets

The University recognises that the process of reviewing taught provision is iterative, and that much of this business takes place at different times and through a variety of mechanisms during the monitoring year.

Responsibility for reviewing such provision is devolved to Colleges and, for this system to work, it is important that a College is able to identify concerns:-

(a) that apply to a particular module, programme or discipline;
(b) that are common to a number of its modules, programmes or disciplines;
(c) and to take timely and appropriate action.

Colleges will ensure that detailed scrutiny of taught programmes student progress takes place at module and programme level at an annual meeting of relevant academic staff. Strategic Planning and Change will prepare datasets. Following these meetings, each College will document, on an annual basis, the performance of each programme against a range of quality parameters and University KPIs:

- Admissions
- Progression and awards
- Any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body/accrediting body or other external reports
- Internal survey results (e.g. Accelerate)
- External survey results (NSS, PTES)
- Consultation with students (SSLC)
- Employability statistics (DLHE)

- INTO Progressors and International students
- ILP Report

Data should be considered on the basis of the whole cohort (e.g. to include analysis of both off-campus versus on-campus, part-time versus full-time provision, where appropriate). Particular attention should be paid to any programme where amendments have been made such as the inclusion or deletion of modules. The Review of such programmes would need to ensure that any changes have not substantively changed the programme.

A suggested checklist (**Annex A**) is available to guide reflection at these meetings.

2.1.2 **College Level**

College Scrutiny meetings

This process is instrumental in maintaining and enhancing the quality of provision offered by Colleges, but a mechanism is still required by which to scrutinise and analyse this process within the College. This should be managed through Scrutiny Meeting(s) which may, for instance, subsume a meeting of a College Education Strategy Group(s) or equivalent. Student representatives, undergraduate and/or postgraduate as appropriate, should be present. To ensure independence and accountability, the Associate Dean of Education should oversee the Scrutiny Meeting(s).

This Scrutiny Meeting(s) will consider the monitoring reports for all College taught programmes, undergraduate and postgraduate, using the minutes of the Programme/Discipline Review Meetings as evidence. The Scrutiny Meeting(s) will wish particularly to discuss unresolved matters of concern identified in the reports, along with the action proposed to address them and the identification of the person or body responsible for resolving them. Where there is a lack of clarity, the College may wish to consider its own documentation relating to such topics.

An important aim of annual review should be to promote enhancement and to disseminate good practice, not only within the College, but also across the University. It is therefore important that both disciplines and Colleges consider and record good practice for all provision. This will then be referred to Education Enhancement for further development and dissemination.

An Action Plan in the form of **Annex C** should be completed by the College and submitted to Quality Review prior to the annual ASER meeting. Actions should be precisely stated, ensuring that they are measurable and achievable. Where more than one person is listed against an action it should be clear who is the lead and is responsible for completion. The Action Plan should include the date on which it was subject to College level scrutiny. **This will negate the need for the College to supply minutes of such a meeting, which may replicate much of the content of the Action Plan.** In addition, Colleges should supply to Quality Review evidence of annual monitoring discussions of modules and programmes at Discipline level. The Action Plan will form the basis of discussion at the ASER meeting with representatives from Academic Policy and Standards to consider the outcomes of the College's internal scrutiny.

2.1.3 **University Level Scrutiny**

Following the provision of the statistical and survey data by Strategic Planning and External Examiner Overviews by Quality Review there will be a meeting of Academic Dean for Students and Academic Policy and Standards staff to gain an institutional overview of common themes arising. This will inform the lines of enquiry pursued in the ASER meetings with Colleges.

The ASER Meeting

The ASER takes the form of a half day meeting during the Spring Term, taking place within the College with the Associate Dean (Education) and the Education Business Partner, and a student representative, usually the College Officer.

The meetings will be Chaired by the Academic Dean for Students supported by colleagues from the Academic Policy and Standards. Meetings will be informed by the following information:

- Previous ASER report
- Report of previous Review or College Academic Audit and progress against actions identified
- College themes emerging from External Examiner reports
- National survey action plans (NSS, PTES)
- College action towards the Students' Guild/FXU 'Visions for Education'
- Student Cases (e.g. Academic Conduct, Student Appeals and Student Complaints)
- College analysis and scrutiny of student datasets to include:
  - Admissions
  - Progression and awards
  - Any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body/accrediting body or other external reports
  - Internal Survey results (e.g. Accelerate)
  - Consultation with students (SSLC)
  - Employability statistics (DLHE)
  - INTO Progressors and International students

At the College ASER meeting, discussion will focus on the Action Plan and the common themes identified by the Academic Dean for Students. The Panel will agree with the College which thematic areas will receive targeted support from Professional Services and identify them in the College Action Plan. Following the ASER meeting, a report, which will include the College Action Plan, will be prepared by Academic Policy and Standards. Specific actions required of Professional Services will be agreed with the Academic Dean and relevant departments prior to final approval by the Academic Dean. The final version will be reported to the Board of Faculty of Taught Programmes. The Associate Deans of Education are responsible for follow-up action within their College.

The final version will be reported to the Board of the Faculty of Taught Programmes. These reports will be used by the Education Strategy Strategic Leads to support their work. Each Professional Service will be sent a report outlining the areas identified by Colleges as requiring support from them. Exceptional Good Practice will be reported to ADEs for discussion and dissemination via the Education Executive. The Associate Deans for Education are responsible for follow-up action within their College.

Colleges are expected to monitor progress of their own Action Plans at least once per term, normally in an Education Strategy Group (or equivalent) meeting. Interim reports will not normally be required although updates may be requested if there are particular areas of concerned identified centrally.

2.1.4 Online Programmes

Special provisions for online programmes offered in partnership with Keypath Education are set out in a document of that same name, which has the same force as this Handbook. The special provisions should be read in the context of this handbook, and unless the *Special provisions for online programmes offered in partnership with Keypath Education* make clear otherwise, the provisions of this Handbook remain in force. In the event of inclarity or uncertainty, the matter should be referred to the Dean of the Taught Faculty.

2.2 ASER for POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

2.2.1 Discipline Level Scrutiny

Annual Programme and Discipline level scrutiny of datasets

The University recognises that the process of reviewing research degree provision is iterative, and that much of this business takes place at different times and through a variety of mechanisms during the monitoring year.

Responsibility for reviewing such provision is devolved to Colleges and, for this system to work, it is important that a College is able to identify concerns:-

(a) that apply to a particular discipline;
(b) that are common to a number of its disciplines;
(c) and to take timely and appropriate action.

Colleges will ensure that detailed scrutiny of PGR student progress takes place at discipline level through Annual Monitoring Review. Strategic Planning and Change will prepare datasets. Following discussion, each College will document, on an annual basis, the performance of each discipline against a range of quality parameters and University KPIs:

- Admissions
- Progression and awards
- Internal survey results
- External survey results (PRES)
- Consultation with students (PGR Liaison Forums)
- Employability statistics (DLHE)
- Annual Monitoring Review
- ILP Report

Data should be considered on the basis of the whole cohort (e.g. to include analysis of both off-campus versus on-campus, part-time versus full-time provision, where appropriate). Particular attention should be paid to any programme where amendments have been made. The Review of such

programmes would need to ensure that any changes have not substantively changed the programme.

A suggested checklist (**Annex B**) is available to guide reflection at these meetings.

2.2.2 **College Level**

College Scrutiny meetings

This process is instrumental in maintaining and enhancing the quality of provision offered by Colleges, but a mechanism is still required by which to scrutinise and analyse this process within the College. This should be managed through Scrutiny Meeting(s) which may, for instance, subsume a meeting of a College Graduate Research Committee or equivalent. Student representatives should be present. To ensure independence and accountability, the Associate Dean of Research should oversee the Scrutiny Meeting(s).

This Scrutiny Meeting(s) will consider the monitoring reports for all College disciplines using the minutes of the Discipline Review Meetings as evidence. The Scrutiny Meeting(s) will wish particularly to discuss unresolved matters of concern identified in the reports, along with the action proposed to address them and the identification of the person or body responsible for resolving them. Where there is a lack of clarity, the College may wish to consider its own documentation relating to such topics.

An important aim of annual review should be to promote enhancement and to disseminate good practice, not only within the College, but also across the University. It is therefore important that both disciplines and Colleges consider and record good practice for all provision.   This will then be referred to Education Enhancement for further development and dissemination.

An Action Plan in the form of **Annex D** should be completed by the College and submitted to Quality Review in readiness for the annual ASER meeting. Actions should be precisely stated, ensuring that they are measurable and achievable. Where more than one person is listed against an action it should be clear who is the lead and is responsible for completion. The Action Plan should include the date on which it was subject to College level scrutiny. This will negate the need for the College to supply minutes of such a meeting, which may replicate much of the content of the Action Plan. In addition, Colleges should supply to Quality Review evidence of annual monitoring discussions of at discipline level. The Action Plan will form the basis of discussion at the ASER meeting with representatives from Academic Policy and Standards to consider the outcomes of the College's internal scrutiny.

2.2.3 **University Level Scrutiny**

Following the provision of the statistical and survey data by Strategic Planning and External Examiner Overviews by Quality Review there will be a meeting of the Dean of Graduate Research and Doctoral College and Academic Policy and Standards staff to gain an institutional overview of common themes arising. This will inform the lines of enquiry pursued in the ASER meetings with Colleges.

The ASER Meeting

The ASER takes the form of a half day meeting during the Autumn Term, taking place within the Associate Dean (Research), Director of Postgraduate Research Students (DPGR) and the Assistant College Manager (Research or Graduate Research) and a student representative.

The meetings will be Chaired by the Dean of Postgraduate Research supported by colleagues from the Doctoral College and Quality Review. Meetings will be informed by the following information:

- Previous ASER report
- Report of previous Review or College Academic Audit and progress against actions identified
- College themes emerging from External Examiner reports
- National survey action plans (PRES)
- College action towards the Students' Guild/FXU 'Visions for Education'
- Student Cases (e.g. Academic Conduct, Student Appeals and Student Complaints)
- College analysis and scrutiny of student datasets to include:
  - Admissions
  - Progression and awards
  - Equality and diversity
  - Internal Survey results
  - Consultation with students (PGR Liaison Forums)
  - Employability statistics (DLHE)
  - Annual Monitoring Review data

At the College ASER meeting discussion will focus on the Action Plan and the common themes identified by the Dean of Postgraduate Research. The Panel will agree with the College which thematic areas will receive targeted support from Professional Services staff and identify them in the College Action Plan. Following the ASER meeting, a report, which will include the College Action Plan, will be prepared by Academic Policy and Standards. Specific actions required of Professional Services will be agreed with the Dean and relevant departments prior to submission final approval by the Dean of Postgraduate Research. The final version will be reported to the Management Group of the Doctoral College/Graduate Research Faculty Board. The Associate Deans (Research) are responsible for follow-up action within their College.

The final version will be reported to the Management Group of the Doctoral College/Graduate Research Faculty Board. Each Professional Service will be sent a report outlining the areas identified by Colleges as requiring support from them. Exceptional Good Practice will be reported for discussion and dissemination via the Management Group of the Doctoral College/Graduate Research Faculty Board and the Doctoral College. The Associate Deans (Research) are responsible for follow-up action within their College.

Colleges are expected to monitor progress of their own Action Plans at least once per term, normally in a Graduate Research Committee (or equivalent) meeting. Interim reports will not normally be required although updates may be requested if there are particular areas of concerned identified centrally.

3   **External Examining**

External Examiners must be appointed for all taught programmes delivered by Colleges (including INTO) and academic partner institutions. The procedures outlined in this document are applicable only to taught programmes of study.

The University operates a two-tier system of Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees (APAC) as follows:

Tier One – Programme/Discipline APACs whose primary responsibility is to safeguard academic standards for the particular programmes under consideration.

Tier Two – College APACs whose primary responsibility is to assure that academic regulations are applied consistently and equitably across disciplines within the College.

External Examiners are expected to be present at Tier One APACs but not Tier Two APACs.

3.1   Criteria for Appointment

a)   Each External Examiner's academic/professional qualifications should be appropriate in level and subject for examining the programme(s) to be examined, and should meet any criteria set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

b)   Each External's standing, expertise and experience should be such as to:
   - enable fulfilment of the External's responsibility in the maintenance of the academic standards of the programme(s) in the context of higher education nationally;
   - include an awareness of the latest developments in the design and delivery of the flexible curriculum;
   - include expertise in the enhancement of the student experience.

c)   Normally the University would expect such experience to be demonstrated only by those of Senior Lecturer level (or equivalent) status. Where this is not the case, Colleges will be asked to state their reasons for considering the candidate meets the criteria.

d)   Each External should have had significant recent examining experience as an internal examiner at the required level.

e)   There should not be current reciprocal external examining between departments.

f)   For any one programme, External Examiners should not be appointed consecutively from the same institution, nor should more than one External Examiner be appointed from any one department.

g)   An External who has served for a period of four years shall not be re-appointed for the same programme(s) without exceptional reason, normally after a period of five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.

h)   As a norm, an examiner should not hold more than two External Examining appointments for taught programmes at the same time; this includes their appointment for the University of Exeter.

i)   Former members of staff of the University should not be invited to become External Examiners before a lapse of at least five years. This would normally include honorary staff, members of staff at partner institutions and those who become University employees during their External Examiner appointment.

j) Academics who have acted as External Assessors for a programme during the approval process would not normally be appointed initially as External Examiners. A College may apply for an exception to this rule if it can demonstrate to the Dean of the relevant Faculty that it has taken full account of any potential conflict of interest as identified in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Chapter B7: External Examining.

k) Those registered for an award of the University are ineligible for appointment as External Examiners in any part of the University.

l) To avoid potential conflicts of interest, External Examiners should not be appointed if they come under any of the following categories:
- Council or Senate member
- anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study
- having been involved with the supervision of any of the students being examined on placement or professional training
- in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
- involved in collaborative research activities with a member of staff or anyone who has been directly involved as an external member of the validation panel for the programme

m) The Dean of the relevant Faculty will be responsible for resolving conflicts of interest in the appointment of an External Examiner.

3.2 Responsibilities of the University

a) At the time of nomination the College should provide the External Examiner with sufficient information to enable him/or her to make an informed decision as to whether or not to accept the appointment.

b) Quality Review will issue an appointment letter and contract clarifying the period of appointment, range of programmes and modules, along with details of the College contact.

c) The College should ascertain whether or not External Examiners have any access requirements or require any reasonable adjustments in order to carry out their duties, as outlined in the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.

d) The College will agree the dates of Programme/Discipline APACs and any visits with all External Examiners well in advance of the assessment period.

e) The College will pay expenses promptly on receipt, and the fee on receipt of the External Examiners' report.

f) Where resources permit, Colleges should take the opportunity of inviting new External Examiners to Exeter ahead of their first Programme/Discipline APACs, to ensure that a Committee meeting is not the first time at which they meet the generality of academic staff.

g) The University will provide new External Examiners with details of the general regulations and codes of good practice relating to their appointment, by providing details regarding access to the online Induction Module.

h) As a minimum, Colleges must provide new External Examiners with the following information by the start of the first session of their appointment:
- College handbook(s) or online equivalents
- Discipline/Programme handbooks
- Programme specification(s)
- Module descriptions (including International Summer School modules)
- College assessment conventions

- Previous External Examiner's final report and the College response

3.3 Responsibilities of the External Examiner

a) In accordance with Ordinance 3 an External Examiner is responsible to the Senate of the University.

b) The External Examiner agrees that during the appointment they will not hold more than one other external examining appointment for a taught programme unless otherwise agreed by the Dean of the relevant Faculty, in writing in advance.

c) The External Examiner agrees that during the appointment they will not undertake any additional activities or accept any other engagements that lead or might lead to any conflict of interest between the External Examiner and the best interests of the University.

d) The External Examiner agrees that they will declare to the University any conflict of interest that may arise in the course of the appointment, including in particular if they are placed in a position of making a judgement about any student with whom they have had direct contact.

e) The External Examiner agrees to inform the University in good time, of any particular access requirements or any reasonable adjustments needed to enable them to carry out their duties, as outlined in the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.

f) The External Examiner agrees to ensure that they make themselves familiar with the University's Codes of Practice and assessment arrangements as detailed in the online Induction Module.

g) The External Examiner has the responsibility of ensuring that each candidate is treated fairly and with an even application of academic standards against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and in line with the University's assessment procedures.

h) The External Examiner is responsible for ensuring that the standard of the University's awards is maintained and is equivalent to threshold academic standards set in accordance with frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements.

i) The External Examiner should compare the achievements of the University's students with those in other UK higher education institutions of which they have experience.

j) The External must judge each student on the basis of work submitted for assessment without being influenced by any previous association with the programme, the staff, or the student.

k) The External should compare the performance of students with that of students on comparable programmes elsewhere.

l) The external must be satisfied that the assessment requirements are such as to enable students to be fairly assessed in relation to programme intended learning outcomes. In relation to this, Externals may be asked to review proposed changes to programmes. Please refer to the Approval and Revision of Taught Modules and Programmes Handbook, Chapter 5.5 for further detail.

m) External Examiners must approve the methods of assessment, assessment criteria and feedback processes for all summative assessments including the form and content of prepared examination question papers and any coursework which contributes to the final assessment.

n) The College should discuss with the External any changes to methods of assessment.

o) The External has the right to see all examination scripts including course work which contributes to the final assessment. Where it is agreed between the College(s) and the External that a selection of scripts only is made available, the principles for such selection must be agreed in advance. Where External Examiners see only a selection of scripts from a module, this should normally include sample scripts from the top, middle and bottom of the range, and all the scripts of failing candidates. The guiding principle for selection is that the External must have sufficient evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and that they are consistent.

p) External Examiners are not normally responsible for, or involved in, the assessment of individual students to the extent that they do not carry out marking of assessed work.

q) In viewing samples of students' assessed work, External Examiners should not expect or encourage a Programme/Discipline APAC to raise or lower marks for individual students, on the basis that such a practice would be unfair to those candidates whose work is not part of the sample.

r) The External is expected to be present at any meeting of the Programme/Discipline APAC at which recommendations are made for the award of degrees, diplomas or certificates. Attendance in person is recommended, however, it is acceptable for Externals to attend by Skype, video conference link or conference call if necessary. When, exceptionally and for good reason, this is not possible, the external's absence must be approved in advance by the Dean of the relevant Faculty. (This will be held to exclude the examination of referred candidates, where communication by email, fax or letter may be held to be sufficient.) In the case of programmes offered in partnership with Keypath Education it will be acceptable, provided that the External Examiner is physically present at at least one meeting of the Programme APAC in any given academic year, for the External Examiner to provide written comments in lieu of attendance without the advance approval of the Dean of the relevant Faculty.

s) The External must be satisfied that decisions relating to individual students are reached in accordance with agreed regulations.

t) The External is entitled to expect that all available relevant information has been presented to the Committee before it reaches a final decision. The External must be given access to students' marks for all the modules contributing to an award, whether or not the External has been involved in an earlier Programme/Discipline APAC meeting that approved individual module results.

u) External Examiners are not expected to be involved in individual cases relating to mitigating circumstances or academic integrity except to ensure that the decisions have been applied fairly and equitably applied. Such decisions are the responsibility of the Mitigation Committee who will inform the Programme/Discipline APAC of decisions affecting a module result or progression/award decision.

v) The External Examiner is expected to confirm the decisions taken and awards recommended by the Programme/Discipline APAC by either signing the minutes of the Programme/Discipline APAC or verbally in their report to the Board, and an appropriate minute made. In any case of disagreement which cannot otherwise be resolved, the External must be consulted and their views considered by the Programme/Discipline APAC, whose decision is final.

w) As a condition of appointment and payment, the External shall be required to submit an annual report in the prescribed manner within four weeks of the main meeting of the Programme/Discipline APAC.

x) An External Examiner who considers it appropriate may send an additional report to the Vice-Chancellor under separate cover marked 'strictly confidential'. If an External Examiner remains concerned having exhausted all internal procedures including a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, they may refer to the QAA arrangements for addressing concerns.

y) An External Examiner shall not be expected to:
- act as a second marker;
- amend the marks of individual students;
- consider cases of mitigating circumstances; and
- act concurrently as an advisor to a programme team on programme design, or be part of any activity established to review programmes on which he/she examines.

3.4 Period of Appointment

In accordance with Ordinance 5, Para 3, an External Examiner shall normally be appointed for a maximum of four years. Only under exceptional circumstances shall an External Examiner be appointed for a fifth year.

3.5 Termination of Appointment

The University has identified the following circumstances under which the appointment of an External Examiner may be terminated early:
- failure to attend Programme/Discipline APAC meetings without the prior agreement of the Dean of the relevant Faculty (acting on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor);
- failure to submit an annual report within the specified time;
- failure to carry out duties identified in the University's code of good practice;
- cessation of, or non-recruitment to, the programme(s).

The early termination of the appointment of an External Examiner shall be made by the Vice-Chancellor on the recommendation of the Faculty Dean.

3.6 Student Contact with External Examiners

The contacting of External Examiners by students regarding any aspect of their programmes of study is prohibited and will be treated as an offence under the University's Disciplinary Procedures. Externals are requested to inform the University's Examinations Office should such an occurrence take place.

An informal meeting between students and the External may be held at the request of the External by arrangement and with the agreement of the College.

3.7 Submission of Reports

All External Examiners are required to submit an annual report to Quality Review within four weeks of the main meeting of the Programme/Discipline APAC.

When compiling the annual report, the External Examiner is expected to comment upon:

- The curriculum, its aims, contents and development
- Resources
- The academic standards of the student cohort in relation to that of previous cohorts and other comparable institutions
- The quality and standards of provision in relation to comparable institutions Any issues arising regarding equality and disability
- The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award
- The design, structure and marking of assessments
- Assessment procedures
- The level of access to any material needed to make the required judgements The coherence of policies and procedures relating to External Examiners

At the end of the report External Examiners are asked to make recommendations for improvement to University processes and for the specific programme examined. Externals are asked to state whether these recommendations are Essential, Advisable or Desirable. The definitions for these criteria are as follows:

Essential: Areas of concern which, in your opinion, place academic quality and/or standards at **immediate** risk and requires an *urgent* response from the Associate Dean for Education **within two weeks.**

Advisable: Areas of concern regarding threshold standards which, while currently being met, in your opinion, could be significantly improved.

Desirable: Areas where, in your opinion there is potential for enhancement.

An External Examiner who considers it appropriate may send an additional report to the Vice-Chancellor under separate cover marked 'strictly confidential'. If an External Examiner remains concerned having exhausted all internal procedures including a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor, they may refer to the HEFCE arrangements for addressing concerns.

Examiners' fees and expenses shall not be paid by the College until in receipt of a report.

3.8   Distribution of Reports

On receipt of the reports, Quality Review will send copies for internal programmes to the Associate Dean of Education or equivalent and compile files of reports for the Dean of the relevant Faculty, and maintain the University records.

In the case of validated programmes, copies of reports will also be sent by Quality Review to the nominee of the partner institution, College and the appropriate University Programme Co-ordinator.

External Examiners reports will be shared with student representatives through Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC), and should not include any reference to an individual student or member of staff by name. Reports are released for requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

3.9   Response to Reports

Colleges are expected to provide a formal response to the recommendations raised in an External Examiner's report. Responses should be forwarded to Quality Review within 2 weeks of the receipt of the report by the College for **Essential** recommendations and within 8 weeks for all other recommendations. Responses must be approved by the Associate Dean Education before submission to Quality Review.

Recommendations requiring attention within Professional Services will be referred by Quality Review to the relevant member of staff. Responses should be forwarded to Quality Review within 4 weeks.

College responses will be approved by the Dean of the relevant Faculty and Colleges informed of the outcome within 2 weeks for **Essential** recommendations and within 8 weeks for all other recommendations. Responses to recommendations for Professional Services will be approved within 4 weeks.

Immediately any exchange over a report between a College and the Faculty Dean has closed, the College should forward for information to the External Examiner copies of the College's response to the report and subsequent correspondence with the University.

As noted in 3.8 both External Examiners reports and College (or partner institution) responses to them should be shared with student representatives through SSLCs. Colleges are encouraged to formulate their responses through the discussion with the SSLC where timing allows. If this is not possible the response must be shared at the next scheduled meeting of the SSLC.

3.10   Academic Review

External examiners' reports on taught programmes are made available to external and internal academic review processes, including Enhanced Annual Student Experience Review (Enhanced ASER) and Annual Student Experience Review (ASER).

3.11   Monitoring of Reports

Responses to all reports will be monitored by Quality Review.

Quality Review will prepare annual reports on matters of general interest and concern for inclusion in ASER, for the Boards of Faculty to consider and for wider dissemination to Education Enhancement and the DVC Education.

A College's (or partner institution's) annual main meeting of the APAC for a programme at which an External Examiner is present should include early in its agenda a copy of the report and the College's response for the previous year.

4   **Peer Dialogue Scheme**

4.1   Process

Peer dialogue among staff colleagues is a key dimension of academic and professional life at the University. Through engaging imaginatively in peer dialogue and review, staff can find the most creative and successful ways of teaching and assessing students, and of ensuring that students have the highest quality guidance and support. This applies through all levels of the curriculum, from foundation through undergraduate to postgraduate research programmes.

The Peer Dialogue scheme is designed to enable all staff who teach, supervise and/or support students' learning to gain feedback from one colleague, or from a group of colleagues where appropriate, as part of the process of reflecting on their own practices. Detailed guidance on the scheme, including templates for reports and action planning is hosted on the academic development website (http://as.exeter.ac.uk/aspire/peerdialoguescheme/)

Please note that these guidelines do not incorporate procedures for observations/reviews which are triggered by poor performance. In these circumstances separate procedures are required, which are best considered in a policy relating specifically to performance management (http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/procedures/capabilityperformance procedure/)

TAUGHT LEVEL SCRUTINY OF DATASETS: SUGGESTED CHECKLIST OF ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED AND DOCUMENTED

Discipline/programme/module teams should consider and document these issues as part of the annual scrutiny process:

1   Outstanding actions from the previous year's action plan
    Consideration of the action plan compiled as part of the previous year's Annual Monitoring procedure.

2   Comments from External Examiners
    Including commendations and issues recommending further action (at College or University level). Programme/Discipline teams should include any actions in the annual monitoring action plan. If the External Examiner's annual report is not available at the time annual monitoring is being considered, then oral comments made by External Examiners at Examination Board meetings should be referred to. Comments regarding whether all External Examiners have received a response to their reports and whether they have been appropriately acted upon, where relevant, as specified in the University's Guidance on External Examiner Procedures.

3   Recruitment, retention, progression and achievement by students
    Comments on any particular trends noted during the year.

4   Information, advice and guidance to students and published information
    Comments on the effectiveness of information, advice and guidance to students Comments about how information is given to students about their programme (e.g. handbooks and web information, including the HEFCE KIS data) and how the programme team (including PS staff) ensures this is kept up to date and accurately describes University, Faculty and College policies and procedures.

5   Induction and Welcome Week
    Review the operation of Welcome Week and induction, including the support and contribution of PS staff.

6   Student engagement and responding to feedback (from students and staff)
    Comments made by students throughout the year. This should include College responses and resulting actions as a result of feedback from the Student Barometer, National Student Survey, staff-student liaison committee minutes and issues raised by student representatives on College committees.

7   Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
    Accreditation reports and visits received during the year – commendations and areas requiring action.

8   Other feedback
    Any input from employers or authoritative sources from within the discipline, e.g. from industrial advisory panels, any input gained from alumni.

9   Employability

    When considering approaches to improve student employability, useful prompts for discussion adapted from latest QAA guidelines include*:

Student engagement
- What steps are taken to enable their students to develop relevant employability skills across all courses and how are engagement levels measured and reviewed?
- What work-based and/or placement learning initiatives are available to students and how are they promoted?
- What analysis is undertaken of first destination leaver statistics and/or other related surveys to inform the range of support provided and how is it used to enhance learning opportunities within the curriculum?
- What provision exists in order to help graduates gain and keep graduate-level jobs or secure further study opportunities?
- What steps are taken to enable students to develop enterprise and entrepreneurial skills?

Curriculum development
- How do external stakeholders (alumni, employers, professional associations and labour market intelligence providers) assist and inform the development and delivery of initiatives that enhance student employability and work-readiness?
- How actively are employers/industry engaged in the development, design, assessment and review of degree programmes?
- How is feedback gained from students/alumni that their studies are preparing/have prepared them for employment?

Impact
- How is the currency, relevance and quality of employability support assessed and validated? Are targets set and how is impact measured and reviewed?
- How do staff delivering relevant provisions engage in relevant professional development and maintain their knowledge and awareness of best practice in the sector and graduate labour market?

* QAA Higher Education Review: Themes for 2015-2016
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/HER-Themes-Guidance-15-16.pdf

10 Curriculum development and learning support
Evaluation of the continuing effectiveness, currency and validity of the curriculum and of assessment in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the programme. This will include the provision of learning support and learning resources. This should also include support provided by eLearning teams and other PSS staff.

11 Academic partnerships, student exchanges and study abroad arrangements
Comments about whether all academic partnership activity is approved, monitored, reviewed and supported appropriately, as per the Academic Partnerships Policy.

12 Individual Learning Plan Review
To use the ILP report to ensure ILPs are being appropriately considered at discipline level.

13 Innovations and good practice
Innovations, improvements and good practice in teaching and learning practice, which could be disseminated as appropriate. This should include initiatives to improve the efficiency of student related administrative processes led by PSS staff or in partnership between academic and PSS programme teams.

14 Staff development
    - Any staff development needs, including PSS staff.
    - Peer dialogue - consider how effective this has been throughout the year.

15 Support needs
    Any support needs identified, e.g. IT, Library or Estates support.

PGR DISCIPLINE LEVEL SCRUTINY OF DATASETS: SUGGESTED CHECKLIST OF ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

Discipline/programme teams should consider these issues as part of the annual scrutiny process:

1 Ongoing Actions from the previous cycle
- Details of action to date
- Outline what further action is required in order to progress the action, including if there is any Professional Service support required.

2 Admissions
  Disciplines may wish to consider the following points under this heading:
- quality control and monitoring of the admissions process;
- clarity of the discipline policy and practice on recruitment and selection;
- marketing plans;
- a reflection on the PGR per Staff FTE data and entrant numbers.

3 Student Experience
  Disciplines may wish to consider:
- the effectiveness and delivery of information, advice and guidance to students;
- a reflection from Student Cases raised within the academic year.

  The following headings may be useful:
  Research Culture
  What action the discipline is taking to develop a 'vibrant research community' within the discipline? How do PGR students 'fit' within the discipline? What opportunities are made available to PGR students?
  Training and Development
  The process for inducting new students; how the Training Needs Analysis is used within the disciplines; any specialist training provision; the University Researcher Development Programme.
  Resources
  Any matters relating to physical space, Library provisions, IT and computing facilities and requirements, and outline (if there are any resourcing issues) any mitigation in place.
  Supervision
  Supervisor and PGR pastoral tutor training and guidance; consistency of supervision across the discipline; matters relating to student/supervisor relations.
  Support and Wellbeing
  How 'non-standard' (i.e. part time, distance learning) students are supported; any peer mentoring/buddy systems in place; wellbeing or welfare support in place in the discipline; international student support.
  Individual Learning Plan Review
  To use the ILP Report to ensure ILPs are being appropriately considered at discipline level.
  Student Voice
  PGRLF's and other methods of listening to student feedback; reflection on the Students Guilds/FXU Vision for Education; student led activities and student engagement in College and discipline opportunities.
  Employability

Reflections on the DLHE data; availability of internships/placements; opportunities to teach and training and support given; implementation of the Code of Good Practice: Employment of PGR students; careers support.

When considering approaches to improve PGR student employability, useful prompts for discussion adapted from latest QAA guidelines include*:

PGR student engagement
- What steps are taken (centrally or locally) to enable their PGR students to develop relevant employability skills across all courses and how are engagement levels measured and reviewed?
- What work-based and/or placement learning initiatives are available (centrally or locally) to PGR students and how are they promoted?
- What analysis is undertaken of PGR Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey statistics and/or other related surveys (e.g. PRES) to inform the range of support provided and how is it used to enhance learning opportunities within research degree programmes?
- What provision exists (centrally or locally) in order to help PGR students gain and secure jobs at an appropriate doctoral graduate skill level within or outside of academia or secure further study opportunities?
- What steps are taken (centrally or locally) to enable PGR students to develop enterprise and entrepreneurial skills?

Programme development
- How do external stakeholders (alumni, employers, professional associations and labour market intelligence providers) assist and inform the development and delivery of initiatives that enhance PGR student employability and work-readiness?
- How actively are employers/industry engaged in the development, design, assessment and review of research degree programmes?
- How is feedback gained from students/alumni that their research degrees are preparing/have prepared them for employment?

Impact
- How is the currency, relevance and quality of employability support assessed and validated? Are targets set and how is impact measured and reviewed?
- How do staff delivering relevant provisions (e.g. supervisors and PGR pastoral tutors) engage in relevant professional development and maintain their knowledge and awareness of best practice in the sector and doctoral graduate labour market and/or of which services/teams within the University to direct PGR students to for this information?

* QAA Higher Education Review: Themes for 2015-2016
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/HER-Themes-Guidance-15-16.pdf

4   Completion
To interrogate the submissions and completions data to ensure there is a thorough understanding of any failures to submit or complete in a timely manner. The following headings may be helpful:
Progression and Monitoring
Retention statistics; upgrade procedures; any matters arising from AMR; progress monitoring procedures including dealing with unsatisfactory progress matters.
Use of Continuation Status
Current use of continuation status within the discipline
Submission and Completion Rates

Review of the use of interruptions; reasons underlying the submission and completion statistics.

5   TAUGHT ELEMENTS OF PGR PROGRAMMES (e.g. professional doctorates or integrated PhD programmes) (if relevant)
Any issues arising from External Examiner recommendations that require further action.

6   PGR PARTNERSHIPS
Disciplines should reflect in this section on the monitoring and review procedures for any collaborative provision programmes; mitigations for any different levels of experience of support (and how this might be affected by if this collaboration is part of a cohort or a singular arrangement); best practice gained through these collaborations that can be extended to other PGR students. Consideration should include the following:
- Doctoral Training Partnerships/Doctoral Training Colleges
- Split-site Arrangements
- Joint awards or co-tutelles
- Off-campus arrangements (e.g. undertakes the majority of their research with a research organisation at an off-campus location)

7   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY
Any differences noted in the supporting evidence in demonstrable groups. This could focus on support for students returning from interruption; policies relating to maternity or paternity leave; provision for part-time or distance learning students.

8   GOOD PRACTICE
Examples from across the discipline

TAUGHT PROGRAMMES ANNUAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Please contact Quality Review for an electronic version of the Taught Programmes ASER Action Plan

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH ANNUAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Please contact Quality Review for an electronic version of the PGR ASER Action Plan

Last reviewed August 2017