

QUALITY REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK

4. Chapter 4 - Programme Enhancement Process

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Programme Enhancement Process (PEP) offers enhanced scope to contribute to institution-wide oversight of the taught portfolio, to ensure that programmes:

- i. Align with the University of Exeter's [Strategy 2030](#); and
- ii. Comply with the Office for Students (OfS) [Conditions of Registration](#) including:
 - a. Access and Participation for Students from All Backgrounds,
 - b. Quality, Reliable Standards and Positive Outcomes for all Students,
 - c. Protecting the Interests of All Students, and
 - d. Financial Sustainability.

4.2 This policy

4.2.1 Can be **tailored to the needs of the faculty/programme/cluster**, time period, and context. It can also be adapted for those programmes which have recently had Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB), or local-level internal reviews.

4.2.2 Provides a mechanism for the oversight of externality of our taught educational portfolio at a **programme/cluster-level**, and should build upon existing local-level reviews, and other Quality Review and Enhancement (QRE) activities undertaken at a **department level**.

4.2.3 Provides a **forum for in-depth conversations** between academics, professional services staff, students, and External Advisers, facilitated **through a light-touch, faculty-led process**, which aims to review and enhance the quality of our provision and experience for our students, as well as our Student Outcomes.

4.2.4 Can be **driven by data and risk** (e.g., NSS performance, continuation/completion, Graduate Outcomes), **and/or by thematic reviews and strategic imperatives** (e.g., inclusive curriculum, greener, fairer, healthier, etc.). Questions and prompts for Faculties/ programmes/ clusters and panel members to consider are provided separately.

4.2.5 Can be utilised for all programmes, including **new** programmes (once embedded), whether that is to **review and refresh** programmes or to monitor the performance of

them. PEP can also aid considerations regarding programme **withdrawal**; an outcome of PEP where appropriate may result in a programme withdrawal.

4.3 Definitions

4.3.1 **Programme:** A combination of academic courses or modules leading to a degree or certificate.

4.3.2 **Programme cluster:** A group of cognate programmes that share common subject matter and are academically linked.

4.3.3 **Risk-based:** PEP will follow the approach of the regulator for Higher Education in England, the OfS, in utilising metrics/datasets (where possible) to inform Reviews; Reviews will not follow a pre-determined pattern and the focus and frequency are determined by the faculties to adapt to their current needs.

4.3.4 **Faculty:** Where the term faculty is used in this policy, this refers to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean (PVC) (delegated to the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (APVCE).

4.4 Responsibilities

4.4.1 The Education Board, with representation from each of the new Faculties, broadly determines the requirements of PEPs, conferring considerable autonomy to Faculties, supported by the University.

4.4.2 The Taught Portfolio Review Board (TPRB) will collaborate with the Education Board to maintain oversight of the PEP process, and to ensure it aligns with institution-wide oversight of our taught portfolio (see above).

4.4.3 PEP is a process owned by the **faculties**, supported as appropriate:

- i. The **Faculty Taught Portfolio Group (FTPG)** (or equivalent) maintains a regular agenda item to discuss the requirements of PEPs and appropriate programmes/clusters and themes to review.
- ii. **FTPG (or equivalent) recommends to the Education Board** the frequency, theme(s) and proposed programme/cluster(s) for review during each academic year, utilising the data provided to inform decisions as appropriate. *The Education Board ensures that the TPRB has oversight of these recommendations.*
- iii. The **faculty** then:

- a. Plans and manages the PEP review process, and will cover any associated costs, i.e., remuneration of External Advisers, as appropriate, as determined by the faculty.
- b. Appoints the PEP Review Panel and Chair (including externals and student representatives. Student representatives and External Advisers should normally participate in Reviews. However, a faculty may decide to form a panel without such representation if there is a legitimate reason, for example, if the focus of the review is commercially sensitive. This is at the discretion of the Chair.
- c. Oversees and approves the compilation of the PEP Review Report with the panel Chair (or PEP Self-evaluation Report (SER)).
- d. Ensures the PEP Review Report (or PEP SER) is shared with the Education Policy, and Standards Team ([EPQS](#)), and relevant Boards, for information and to facilitate learning and policy enhancement.
- e. Reviews the actions resulting from the PEP throughout the year, or as appropriate, as well as sharing good practices, as appropriate.

iv. The **Chair of the PEP Review Panel:**

- a. Will usually be from outside the programme/cluster.
- b. Approves the PEP Review Report (or PEP SER).
- c. Nominates a Deputy Chair if they are not able to fulfil their role.

v. **In general, the faculty:**

- a. Provides secretarial support to each PEP review process, who will compile the PEP Review Report or PEP SER on behalf of the faculty/programme/cluster. Templates can be accessed via the [QRE SharePoint](#). Please contact [EPQS](#) if you require permission to access this site.
 - b. Should consider how they will ensure that a diversity of voices can input into any given PEP review process.
- 1) This should consider all stakeholders directly involved, benefitting, or impacted by the programme/cluster, including the different communities served or associated with a programme/cluster whether they be students, academics, professional services staff, local communities, local authorities, trade bodies, companies etc.

- 2) Student representatives should be empowered to lead change through the PEP review and should be kept updated with PEP Review Panel progress, i.e., through Follow-up Report outcomes (see templates below).

4.4.4 Central teams:

- i. Develop and maintain the PEP policy, with approval from the Education Board, with representation from the faculties (e.g., via EPQS).
- ii. Provide datasets to appropriate Academic and Professional Services staff, as agreed with the faculties, to help facilitate the review. *Dialogue should take place with the faculty/department(s) to address any concerns raised during the consideration of datasets.* (e.g., via PPBI and relevant Professional Services Staff).
- iii. Maintain a central repository of PEP Review Reports (and PEP SER), recommendations, and actions to enable the preparation of annual academic assurance reports (e.g., via EPQS).

4.4.5 Panel members, including student representatives and External Advisers:

- i. Attend a PEP Review Panel via a series of meetings (this may be virtual and/or in-person).
- ii. Provide reflective analysis, feedback, and suggestions for enhancement of the programme or programme cluster.
- iii. Provide objective and supportive input for the programme or programme cluster during the PEP Review Panel, commenting on the quality of the programme/cluster under review.
- iv. Pursue lines of enquiry relevant to their areas of expertise and experience.
- v. Review the agenda and relevant documentation in advance of the meeting, including this PEP policy, Module Descriptors, Programme Specifications, relevant data sets, and other documentation where appropriate to the theme. This can be delegated as appropriate by the faculties/the PEP Review Panel Chair.
 - a. This activity may not be required for programmes regulated by PSRBs/other accreditors, or programmes with exceptions, as listed in the sections below. This is at the discretion of the Chair of the PEP Review Panel.
- vi. External Advisers only: Provide a sounding board for the PEP Review Panel, including offering relevant academic, experiential, and/or professional insight at relevant PEP

meetings. The Criteria for Appointment of External Advisers can be accessed via the [QRE SharePoint](#).

4.5 Reviews

4.5.1 PEP Review Panels are organised and managed by the faculties, supported as appropriate, in a time and duration that is appropriate to the faculty and programme/programme cluster under review.

- i. A pre-panel meeting should take place with the Chair and panel members to determine the focus and agenda for the Review.
- ii. **A main panel meeting** should then review the programme/cluster(s) through the lenses determined by the faculties. Sub-meetings should occur as appropriate with stakeholders. Students must have the opportunity to provide feedback without their faculty staff present. A one to one-and-a-half-day main panel meeting event is recommended as a maximum; faculties determine the length of any PEP Review Panel meeting(s).
- iii. **A post-panel meeting** should then take place with the Chair and panel members to confirm the actions for the PEP Review Report or PEP SER. Templates can be accessed via the [QRE SharePoint](#).
- iv. **A follow-up review** should take place at 12 months post-review, or as appropriate. All panel members should be informed of the progress made, including student representatives (or the replacements for those, should they have left their roles).

4.5.2 **Frequency:** The PEP review process should take place every year, however, the faculty **determines the frequency and number of Reviews undertaken**, via the PVC or delegate. The review of one programme/cluster, per faculty, per academic year, is recommended as a minimum.

4.6 Panel memberships:

4.6.1 Panel members are selected by the faculties. Advice can be sought from central teams as appropriate.

4.6.2 The Chair of the PEP Review Panel should be from outside the programme/cluster.

4.6.3 External Adviser(s) and student representative(s) must be present for the main panel meeting(s), unless the focus of the meeting is deemed commercially sensitive. The Criteria for Appointment of External Advisers can be accessed via [QRE SharePoint](#).

4.6.4 If there are aspects of the review that are commercially sensitive, it may be permissible, at the discretion of the Chair, for the External Adviser and student representative to be present for only part of the panel's proceedings, and to see a redacted version of the PEP Review Report (or PEP SER).

4.7 Themes and focus

4.7.1 Enhancement should be a core focus of any PEP review process, as should the sharing of best practice.

4.7.2 The PEP review process should also focus on areas for improvement, i.e., risks or issues which may be significant as they are occurring on a large scale across a programme or programme cluster, and/or where they are significantly affecting the quality of a programme or programme cluster.

4.7.3 Faculties determine the focus of PEP; themes may include one or more of the following:

- i. Programme design and quality enhancement,
- ii. Scale: admissions, recruitment, and enrolment,
- iii. Efficiencies and Margins: portfolio/programme costs, e.g., direct/indirect costs, pricing, module costs, workload costs, etc.,
- iv. Attendance and engagement,
- v. Assessment and feedback,
- vi. Continuation, completion, progression and degree outcomes,
- vii. Student experience and support,
- viii. Student surveys and student feedback,
- ix. Employability,
- x. Sustainable, healthy, and socially just futures,
- xi. Innovation, entrepreneurship, and digitalisation,
- xii. Cultural competence and global citizenship.

4.8 Outputs

4.8.1 A short **PEP Review Report** must be completed following the PEP Review Panel. This is a short, light-touch report. No other documentation is required for completion when utilising this report template, before or after the Review. Please see the "Exceptions" section for those using the PEP SER in place of the PEP Review Report. Templates can be accessed via the [QRE SharePoint](#).

- 4.8.2 The faculty must **share** the PEP Review Reports (and PEP SERs) with the EPQS, and relevant Boards for information.
- 4.8.3 Reports generated under the QREF, including the PEP, will provide information that can help **inform decisions** on institutional strategy and development, re-development and enhancement, or withdrawal of programmes.
- 4.8.4 The PEP Review Report or PEP SERs may also sit as an **appendix to other relevant documentation utilised within the QREF**, e.g., QRE Meetings. Outcomes of QREF meetings may contribute to the instigation of the PEP if a risk has been identified that requires in-depth investigation.
- 4.8.5 **Programme approval or amendment** resulting from the PEP review process must be progressed via the policy outlined in the Approval and Revision of Taught Modules and Programmes Handbook.
- 4.8.6 A **final copy of the PEP Review Report** (or PEP SER) must be **shared with the EPQS**, to ensure this can be stored centrally, to support and enable institutional quality assurance processes. This is for information only.
- 4.8.7 **The templates can be accessed via [QRE SharePoint](#).**
- i. A separate PEP **SER template** is provided for programmes/clusters where there is unlikely to be the same level of data directly available to the University and thus it would not be possible to flag a programme or programme cluster for review on this basis.

4.9 Exceptions

4.9.1 Principles:

- i. There is no obligation to use the PEP SER template for anything other than those types of programmes/programme clusters deemed to be 'exceptions.'
- ii. It is still expected that a PEP Review Panel meeting(s) takes place and that the associated requirements for membership and procedures are adhered to, with adaptations where needed.
- iii. **Section 1** of the Report should be completed and circulated **prior to a panel meeting(s)**. The rest of the Report is completed after the PEP Review Panel has taken place.

- iv. It is recommended that this template and PEP be utilised on a **four-yearly cycle**, with annual review/updates in between, however, the frequency for reviews with 'exceptions' is at the discretion of the faculties, as is the scope of any Review(s).

4.9.2 New programmes: Should not normally be selected for the PEP until they have been embedded into the faculty for three years. However, internal faculty-led light-touch monitoring processes should ensure these programmes are reviewed in the interim.

4.9.3 Partnerships - with an International Partner: Where a programme or programme cluster is under review, and they are part of a collaborative **academic partnership**:

- i. Appropriate staff from the [Global Partnerships Team](#) should be consulted, as well as the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global), or deputy, as appropriate.
- ii. Outcomes of the PEP should also be shared with the relevant Partnership Board (see the [Academic Partnerships Handbook](#) for more information), however, a Partnership Board cannot fulfil the requirements of the PEP alone.
- iii. Data-sharing agreements with the partner(s) should be reviewed when utilising data to inform Reviews. This is the responsibility of the faculties.

4.9.4 Higher and Degree Apprenticeship programmes:

- i. A Review should primarily focus on the academic elements of the programme.
- ii. A representative from the partner/industry should be invited to the PEP Review Panel.
- iii. There is no requirement to replicate content from Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) and Self-Assessment-Reports (SARs) - these can be appended to the PEP SER if appropriate.

4.9.5 Partnerships – Validated Programmes:

- i. For programmes delivered and assessed via a **Validation Partnership** with a UK or global partner, following which a qualification is awarded by the University and/or students' progress on to a programme at the University, an additional **Validated Partnership-specific SER** is available, providing additional guidance and alternative signatories.

- a. Where a Validation Partnership encompasses programmes that are linked to several cognate departments/faculties, PEP may be initiated by the Director of Teaching Excellence and Student Experience and coordinated by EPQS.
- b. The Chair (from the University of Exeter) and EPQS, work together to confirm the focus of the PEP, utilising the themes outlined above, as well as the lines of questioning.
- c. Outcomes of the PEP should also be shared with the relevant Partnership Board (see the Academic Partnerships Handbook for more information), however, a Partnership Board cannot fulfil the requirements of the PEP alone.

4.10 Further support and guidance:

4.10.1 For central policy support: email [EPQS](#)

4.10.2 For additional templates and guidance, access the [QRE SharePoint](#). Please contact [EPQS](#) if you require permission to access this site. This includes but is not limited to:

- i. Questions to consider for Reviews.
- ii. Template communications.
- iii. Forms/templates.