University of Sussex

Procedures for the Conduct of

School Periodic Review

Exceptionally Incorporating Curriculum Approval

Academic Office, November 2011 (2)

School Periodic Review 2011/12

Content

1   Background and Context of Portfolio Review at Sussex

1.1   In December 2010, Senate approved proposals to simplify the University's credit framework and the structure of the academic year following an extensive period of investigation and consultation. These proposals included:
- All courses to be delivered in multiples of 15 credits from 2012/13, with 15 credit courses limited to one term (standard) and ≥ 30 credit courses delivered in one term (short fat) or across two terms (long thin). At postgraduate level, extended projects and dissertations to be set at an appropriate credit volume (generally 45 or 60).'

- Two 12 week terms (Autumn & Spring) for teaching.
- Two periods allocated for assessments (a shorter mid-year diet in January and a longer diet in the summer term) with a resit diet in August each year.
- With the exception of PGT project/dissertation supervision, teaching will not normally take place during the assessment period.

1.2   It is in this context that the University agreed to a complete review of its academic portfolio to be completed in time for the 2012/13 academic session. **Portfolio review** was the term used to describe the unified process which incorporated the following three phases delivered over a 12 month period:

     I.   **Strategic Engagement (summer term 2010/11)**
    II. **Curriculum Development & Enhancement (autumn term 2011/12)**
    III. **School Periodic Review (spring term 2011/12)**

1.3   **(I) Strategic Engagement** was the first stage of portfolio review and involved half day meetings between the PVC (Teaching & Learning), the Academic Office, and the Senior Management Team (SMT) of each school. The SMT generally included the following individuals: the Head of School; Director of Teaching & Learning; Director of Student Support; Director of Doctoral Studies and/or Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange; together with the Heads of Department or relevant discipline leads. The SMT were briefed on the three stages of the review and asked to present their vision for the School together with plans and aspirations for developing their portfolio (amendments, additions and withdrawals) to further enhance the student experience. SMTs were also asked to signal any difficulties or constraints associated with the new credit framework and academic year structure. Stage I meetings were completed for all eleven Schools in the summer term 2010/11.

1.4   **(II) Curriculum Development and Enhancement** was the second stage of portfolio review and provided an opportunity for Faculty to review curriculum design and delivery in some detail in advance of the new curriculum framework and academic year structure being introduced in 2012/13. Although an informal stage with a focus on enhancement, a seven member panel was formed with a majority school membership comprising the PVC (Teaching & Learning) as Chair, Head of School, Director of Teaching and Learning, two senior Faculty from the School, Head of Academic Registry and Head of Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU). Meetings have taken place over one or two days depending on the size and complexity of the portfolio under consideration. In particular, Stage II meetings have challenged Schools to consider creatively 'designing-in' opportunities to: enhance assessment and feedback; broaden student learning (via planned University wide electives) and to improve the acquisition of employability skills (curriculum design, placements and study abroad).

1.5   The schedule for Stage II events was agreed with the school and allowed for presentations by programme/ course conveners and reflections on enhancements in response to NSS and CEQ feedback. In particular, schools were invited to review the alignment of learning outcomes and assessment strategies; to reflect on the appropriateness of the assessment instruments; and to consider the appropriateness of using the mid-year assessment period for unseen exams. Notes are circulated following Stage II meetings which are due to be completed for all Schools in the autumn term 2011/12. The academic office and TLDU are using these notes as the basis for de-briefing the Schools and assisting them with their preparations for Stage III.

1.6   Following the informal first two stages, Schools are required to follow formal procedures for: approval of new programmes (New Academic Programmes Committee is a sub-committee of the Council Performance Committee which includes commitment of institutional resources; and for approval of programme withdrawal (Senate rules for Type 1 and Type 2 withdrawal aim to protect the interest of existing students during teach out).

1.7   **(III) School Periodic Review** is the third and final stage of the portfolio review and is scheduled to take place during the Spring term 2011/12. Periodic subject review (PSR) was last undertaken in 2007/08 on a five year cycle. PSRs planned for 2008/09 were suspended due to the restructuring of the University from 5 Schools into 12 academic Schools. During this period annual monitoring of programmes continued at School level with oversight provided by TLC. This was considered to be proportionate and has worked well to date. However, the programme redesign required to accommodate the new academic year structure presents an increased level of risk. To address this risk it is proposed to re-introduce periodic review but to undertake this at the school (rather than the subject) level for all educational provision in each of the remaining 11 Schools (Informatics and Engineering merged during 2010/11). The main purpose of School Periodic Review is to assure the standards and enhance the quality of all aspects of the School's educational provision.

1.8   The University's decision in 2010 to review its entire portfolio included agreement in principle to formally link periodic review and curriculum approval into a single quality assurance process. Exceptionally, School Periodic Review in 2011/12 will also incorporate approval of new programmes and re-approval for the continuation of existing programmes following minor/major revision required to accommodate the new curriculum framework and academic year structure in 2012/13.

1.9   The procedures included in this document reflect the current QAA Code of Practice for Programme Monitoring and Review. These will be superseded by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education due to be published in December 2011 to be implemented across the sector during 2012/13.

1.10   At the time this document was drafted, the University was consulting on changing the current terminology of the use of 'programme' and 'course' to 'course' and 'module. This document refers to current terminology

2. **Aims of School Periodic Review and Relationship to School Annual Monitoring**

2.1 The main aims of **School Periodic Review** are to:
- provide an opportunity by which the Institution can, in collaboration with externals and members of the wider University community, review the quality and standards of a School's educational provision over time;
- enable the University more broadly to audit the implementation of its policies and strategies for enhancing the student experience.

2.2 **School Periodic Review** is an Institutional process, involving external participants of high calibre and with academic/professional credibility. School Periodic Review assesses the continuing validity and relevance of programmes in particular:
- the effect of changes, to the design and operation of the programme, including those which are cumulative and those made over time;
- the continuing availability of staff and physical resources;
- current research and practice in the application of knowledge in the relevant discipline(s), technological advances, and developments in teaching and learning;
- changes to external points of reference, such as subject benchmark statements, relevant PSRB requirements;
- changes in student demand, employer expectations and employment opportunities.

2.3 **School Annual Monitoring** is an activity undertaken within the School and is the responsibility of people who appraise their own performance at the end of each academic year. School Annual Monitoring plans are reviewed by the University Teaching and Learning Committee. Annual Monitoring reports will not be required from Schools for the 2010/11 session as Annual Monitoring will be integrated into Periodic Review scheduled for Spring 2012 and will provide part of the evidential base for the panel.

2.4 **Periodic Review and Annual Monitoring together** provide a process of continuous evaluation and enhancement which aims:
- to ensure that programmes remain current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application;
- to evaluate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are being attained by students;
- to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and of assessment in relation to the intended learning outcomes;
- to ensure that recommendations for appropriate actions are followed up to remedy any identified shortcomings.

3. **Authority for School Periodic Review**

3.1 This document sets out the procedures for the conduct of a School Periodic Review (PR) as determined by the University Teaching and Learning Committee (UTLC), and with which the conduct of PR should adhere to 2011/12 only.

3.2 Reviews will be organised centrally through the Academic Office which will:

- publish timetables agreed in consultation with Heads of Schools and approved by UTLC;

- provide professional support for reviews in the form of review secretaries who will service the event, including co-ordination of appointment of panel members, distribution of all documents and drafting of the final report;
- provide a central information point to support those engaged in the review process.

3.3   In addition, the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU) will support Schools preparing for PR in consultation with the School Director for Teaching and Learning and the Director for Doctoral Studies.

4.   Form and Scope of School Periodic Review

4.1   Each programme of study will undergo Periodic Review (PR) at School level, normally **once every six years**, as one of the three elements of the University's academic audit procedures (curriculum approval and annual monitoring being the other two elements). PR will provide an opportunity for in depth scrutiny and quality enhancement of all aspects of a School's educational provision.

4.2   SPR covers all taught and research programmes of study offered to undergraduate and postgraduate students in a School including programmes delivered by an external partner for which the school has cognate responsibility. Programmes validated by the University for delivery at partner institutions undergo revalidation every 3-5 years (co-ordinated by the Partnership Office) and are therefore out with the SPR process. Collaborative Provision Committee signs off all validations and re-validations and reports into UTLC.

4.3   An independent review panel, consisting of internal and external assessors sufficiently independent from the educational provision under review, shall be convened for each review which will take place over 1-2 days, depending on the complexity of the School's programme portfolio. Each review will include meetings with faculty and students to discuss the School's educational provision. A review report will be produced for each event.

4.4   PRs will consider undergraduate taught and postgraduate taught and research programmes together. All relevant programmes for which the School is responsible shall be included within the scope of the review. The appropriateness and success of Major: Minor and Joint combinations will be evaluated, in addition to single honours provision.

4.5   Schools which provide Minor or Joint components of programmes owned by other Schools should include review of the minor or joint provision for which they are responsible. Schools can also present electives for approval, if available at time of submission. Alternatively, Schools can defer elective approval and submit later for consideration at a specially convened approval event planned later in the Spring term 2012 to review electives across a number of Schools (repeated annually).

4.6   In cases of Interdisciplinary Programme Elements (IDPEs), these will be reviewed independently, grouped together for the purposes of review, or reviewed at the same time as an appropriate cognate department. The portfolio of programmes to be included in each review will be confirmed by the Academic Office and checked against the relevant list of programmes on the central university database.

4.7   Where there is accreditation by a relevant professional or statutory body, the review will examine the criteria for, and requirements arising from accreditation. This will include not only assuring the appropriateness of the curriculum in relation to any accreditation requirements, but may also consider those areas where the curriculum is constrained in its development by the existence of those requirements.

5.   Terms of Reference of the Periodic Review Panel

5.1   To assess the quality of the student experience on the programme(s) under review (with reference in particular to: curriculum, teaching, learning, assessment, staff development, resources to support learning, student guidance; equality of opportunity and widening participation).

5.2   To consider the appropriateness of intended programme aims and learning outcomes with reference to relevant external reference points (e.g. the QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* and national subject-level benchmarks).

5.3   To assess actual levels of student progress and attainment in relation to the intended programme aims and outcomes, and consider the effectiveness of assessment strategies.

5.4   To ascertain whether the programmes remain current and valid in the light of:

- Developing knowledge in the discipline and developments in teaching, learning and research (including technological advances);
- Changes in student demand, employer expectations and employer opportunities (as appropriate).

5.5   To evaluate whether there are effective links between student learning and discipline-based research in the School.

5.6   To advise on how the quality of the educational provision and student learning experience might be further enhanced.

5.7   To identify any aspect of the provision that is innovative or represents good practice for wider dissemination.

5.8   To examine the effectiveness of school-level quality assurance.

5.9   To recommend actions to remedy any shortcomings.

5.10   To recommend whether the programmes of study under review should continue, continue subject to certain conditions or be discontinued.

5.11   To report its findings to the University.

6.   Composition of the Periodic Review Panel

6.1   A **review panel** will be established (the academic office will lead on all correspondence with panel members following approval by the Chair) for each School Periodic Review comprising:

- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Teaching & Learning (or representative) will serve as Chair of the PR panel;

- At least two external assessors, nominated by the School and approved by the Chair;

- At least two elected student representatives (UG and PG);

- Student Sabbatical Officer

- Two internal assessors acting as a representative of UTLC (or one of its sub-committees) with one for a related cognate area;

- The Academic Registrar (or representative).

- A senior librarian (learning resources);

- A senior ITS representative (e-learning provision via Study Direct);

- A senior Careers and Employability Centre representative (Sussex Plus);

- Assistant Director of the Doctoral School;

- A secretary appointed by the Academic Registrar.

7.   Periodic Review Supporting Documentation (The School should prepare the items indicated # in electronic format with the remaining documents co-ordinated and provided in electronic format by the Academic Office)

7.1   A full list of staff members and their School roles #

7.2   The most recent approved School 5-year plan #

7.3   Web links to all promotional materials including information on careers and employability#

7.4   Prospectus entries for both taught and research programmes

7.5   A list of relevant QAA subject benchmark statements

7.6   Annual Monitoring report for 2009/10 (1st year of new school structure) #

7.7   Reports of external examiners for taught programmes for 2009/10 and 2010/11 and school responses to these as detailed in individual annual programme monitoring reports. #

7.8   The most recent reports (where appropriate to the programmes of study) from a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory body (PSRB) and the school response. #

7.9   Minutes of the following school committees from 2009/10 to date: #
- School Teaching & Learning Committee
- School Student Experience Group
- School Research Degree Committee

7.10   Statistical data for UG & PGT provision for at least 3 years:
- Student numbers, entry qualifications, progression and completion rates
- Degree classification and first employment destinations
- NSS, CEQ and other# relevant student feedback collected by the School

7.11   Statistical data for PGR provision for at least 3 years:
- Student numbers, entry qualifications and progression rates;
- Research student training provision
- Summary of submission and completion rates (both 'raw' (some RCs use this measure) and taking into account intermission (FCs use this measure) by programme, by funding type and by supervisor (coded to ensure confidentiality);
- Viva outcomes and employment destinations

In addition to support curriculum review and approval of new programmes:

7.12   Revised specifications for all existing taught and research programmes entered onto the new Course and Module templates **#**

7.13   Mapping of programme and course learning outcomes for all programmes together with an assessment schedule for each level of study **#**

7.14   New programme documentation **#** where the School has outline approval for a new programme from 2012/13 or 2013/14 which has not already been through the full curriculum approval process.

8   School Self-evaluation Document (SED)

8.1   The School will need to provide a critical self-evaluation of the education it provides. This high level document should not normally be more than 10 pages of A4 (excluding appendices in page count), including, as appendices, any material presented at Stage 2 which the School consider may be useful to the panel

8.2   The SED should focus on explaining to the review panel how the school ensures that all of the education that it offers is of high quality and how it seeks to further enhance the quality of its provision. The SED should make reference to past performance but have a clear focus on appraising the changes made to its education provision as a result of portfolio review and in preparation for the new curriculum framework and academic year structure in 2012/13. The SED should not reproduce the evidence but cross reference existing documents (section 7) and should comment on the School's response to the most recent external examiner reports and/or PSRB reviews if not already included in the latest annual monitoring report. The report should be structured into five sections as outlined in 8.3-8.7. It is good practice to have the SED approved by the School Teaching & Learning Committee (TLC), subject to availability, which may be best dealt with by correspondence. There is no requirement to have any other changes processed through TLC as the Periodic

Review Panel will review all programmes and courses presented for delivery from 2012/13.

8.3   Section A: Taught Programme Design and Delivery
- **Educational Aims of the Provision** – a statement of the overall aims of the School in relation to the taught programmes delivered by the School.
- **Learning Outcomes** – evaluation of the appropriateness, to the educational aims, of the intended learning outcomes of the programmes, making reference to internal and external reference points such as *Subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ*
- **Curricula and Assessment** – evaluation of the ways in which programme content and methods of assessment support achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s); how curricula and assessment together determine the academic level of the award(s) to which the programme(s) lead; the extent to which students achieve the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (including reference to student monitoring and progression)
- **Relationship between Teaching and Research** – a description and evaluation of the effectiveness of links between student learning and discipline-based research in the School.

8.4   Section B: Postgraduate Research Provision
- **Educational Aims of the Provision** – a statement of the overall aims of the School in relation to its postgraduate research provision.
- **Research Student Experience** – an evaluation of the research student experience within the School including the delivery of its programme specifications, student achievement and the maintenance of quality and standards.
- **Research Supervision** – evaluation of the appropriateness of the research supervision provided by the School and its supervisory staff.

8.5   Section C: Learning Opportunities
- **Learning Resources** – evaluation of the effectiveness of the deployment of the resources, both human and material, that support the learning of taught and research of students, and of the effectiveness of their linkage to the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s).
- **Student Learning/Research Environment** – evaluation of the quality of the student learning and research environment provided by the School.

8.6   Section D: Student Support and Guidance
- **Academic Advising**– description of the operation of academic advisor and/or year tutor system and reflection on the effectiveness of this for taught students.
- **Support for Research Students** – description of the methods used by the School to provide support to its research students and an evaluation of the opportunities provided to students to develop transferable skills in accordance with *Research Council expectations*. An evaluation of the training and support provided to postgraduate students who teach within the School.
- **Personal Development & Employability Skills**– description of the School's engagement with Skills Cloud and Sussex Plus to support Personal Development and additional support for Employability Skills including reflection on its effectiveness.

8.7   Section E: Maintenance and Enhancement of Quality and Standards
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of procedures for maintaining and enhancing the quality of provision and the security of academic standards in respect of the programme(s) including the management of quality information and the routes for enhancing practice (For example, peer observation, appraisal and/or staff development). This should include an assessment of how the School responds to student feedback (For example NSS results and feedback from CEQs).   The mechanisms used to disseminate good practice within the School should also be discussed.
- The Self-evaluation Document should also include discussion of the School's strategies with regard to areas such as staff development, learning resources including library and e-learning (study direct), assessment and accommodating students with disabilities.

9   Periodic Review Panel Schedule and Preparation

9.1   Deadlines for submission of all School documentation will be notified by the Academic Office (taking account of public holidays) to enable all documents to be sent to the panel by the Academic Office **at least 2 weeks before the scheduled visit. The Academic Office will notify Schools of cancellation of events if documentation is not received on time.**

9.2   The review visit will normally extend over a two day period, although the length of the visit may be determined by the size and complexity of the provision under review. The programme for the visit will be proposed by the Academic Office after consultation with the Chair of the Panel. An example of a standard review programme would be the following:

Day One
- Private meeting of the Panel (1/2 hour)
- **Presentation by School (1 hour)** (Lead: Head of School, Heads of Department and Director of Teaching and Learning)
- **Meeting A: Curriculum Design and Delivery (1.5 hours)** (Lead: Director of Teaching and Learning)
- Private meeting of the Panel (1/2 hour)
- **Meeting and lunch with Student Representatives (1.5 hour)** (Lead: Director of Student Support to co-ordinate elected Student Representatives)
- **Meeting B: Postgraduate Research Provision (1 hour)** (Lead: Director of Doctoral Studies)
- Private meeting of the Panel (1/2 hour)
- **Meeting C: Learning Opportunities (1.5 hours)** to include a tour of facilities (Lead: Head of School and Director of Teaching and Learning)

Early evening: Dinner for Panel members

Day Two
- Private meeting of the Panel (1/2 hour)
- **Meeting D: Student Support and Guidance (1.5 hours)** (Lead, Director of Student Support)
- **Meeting E: Maintenance and Enhancement of Quality and Standards (1.5 hours)** (Lead: Director of Teaching and Learning)
- **Meeting and lunch re: Approval of new programmes (up to 2 hours if needed)** (Lead: Director of Teaching Learning/Programme Convenor designate)
- Private meeting of the Panel (1.5 hours)
- **Feedback to School** (Lead: Head of School, Heads of Department and Director of Teaching and Learning)

9.3   Key Faculty including the Head of School, Heads of Department and those with responsibility for taught and research programmes should be available to attend relevant meetings. The School should advise the Academic Office of the names of all members of staff and student representatives who will be attending each meeting.

9.4   Members of the review panel will consider the documentation and provide the Chair of the panel with brief feedback including a list of key points they believe need to be focused on during the review visit. The proposed programme for the visit, including staff attendance, will be included in the documentation sent to the Panel at least 2 weeks prior to the review visit. The Chair may propose changes to the programme, including changes to the length of certain meetings or adding new meetings, and request for additional staff to attend specific meetings in the light of feedback and consultation with the panel once the documentation has been circulated.

10   Periodic Review Panel Conditions, Recommendations and Format of Report

10.1   In the case of existing programmes of study the Panel should decide whether the programmes under review should continue, continue subject to certain conditions or recommendations or be discontinued.

10.2   The panel should also advise the School where it perceives there are opportunities for the School to enhance its educational provision.

10.3   The panel should commend area of innovation and good practice so that this can be shared across the University and /or subject discipline.

10.4   It is acknowledged that some recommendations (in relation to resources or institutional policies) may be outside the immediate control of the School and Panels should, therefore, specify whether the recommendation is being made to the School or the University.

10.5   Where a University-level recommendation has specific reference exclusively to the taught provision offered by a school, it should be addressed to the Teaching and Learning Committee for consideration and action.

10.6   Where a University-level recommendation has specific reference exclusively to the postgraduate research provision offered by a school, it should be addressed to the Doctoral School for consideration and action.

10.7   All reports, in their entirety, will be received by UTLC and DSC. The Head of School will arrange for the panel report to be considered by their School Executive and appropriate School committees, with an action plan, addressing any recommendations, in place within three months.

10.8   In the case of new programmes the Panel should decide whether the programme should be approved subject to conditions or recommendations or whether the School should be asked to withdraw the proposal. The latter would be very rare as the programme will have undergone internal scrutiny to reach the approval stage.

10.9   The Panel may also, if it considers it necessary, ask for further documentation or for further meetings subsequent to the visit.

11   Actions to be taken following Periodic Review

11.1   The Secretary to the Panel will prepare a draft report and send this, to all members of the Review Panel, for revision and/or approval **not more than two weeks** after completion of meetings.

11.2   The Secretary to the Panel should also send a copy of the report as approved by the Chair of the Panel to the Head of School and ask that it be checked for factual accuracy. The Chair will be responsible for signing off the final report.

11.3   The Secretary to the Review Panel should send a copy of the final report to all members of the Panel and to the Head of School for circulation. In cases where programmes of study are approved to continue subject to conditions, the School will be required to submit a one-year follow-up report to UTLC commenting on the implementation and progress of actions taken to satisfy any conditions set to allow for the continuation of programmes.

11.4   Should the report contain any recommendations to the University, the Secretary in consultation with the Chair of the panel shall send the report in its entirety to the Secretaries of the Teaching and Learning Committee and Doctoral School, as per 10 above, so that the recommendations to the University can be considered by those bodies as soon as possible. The Head of School should be asked to arrange for the reports to be considered by the School SMT and appropriate School Committees, within three months, to provide a response from the School to the report for consideration by the UTLC.

11.5   The Teaching and Learning Committee and/or the Doctoral School will decide whether it considers that the actions taken by the School have proven satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If the report is unsatisfactory the Teaching and Learning Committee or Doctoral School may, in cases involving failure to meet set conditions, recommend that the programmes concerned be discontinued.

12   Publication of Summaries of School Periodic Reviews

12.1   Following approval of the full report by the Chair of the Periodic Review panel, the Secretary of the review will draft a factual summary report detailing:

- A list of programmes considered in the review
- Standard text setting out the review process
- A summary of key areas considered by the review presented in accessible language
- A summary stating in which areas there were commendations and recommendations
- An email address providing contact for requesting the full report

12.2   Approval of the factual summary for publication will remain with the Chair of UTLC and will not require referral elsewhere before publication. A pre-publication circulation of the summary will be sent to the School, Department, Head of Admissions, Student Recruitment Services and the Communications Office for information.