

Accreditation (PSRBs)

Guidance for departments

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Accreditation

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## Accreditation (PSRBs)

### Guidance for Departments

#### What is Accreditation?

“Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are a very diverse group of professional and employer bodies, regulators and those with statutory authority over a profession or group of professionals. PSRBs engage with higher education as regulators. They provide membership services and promote the interests of people working in professions; accredit or endorse courses that meet professional standards, provide a route through to the professions or are recognised by employers.” ([HESA](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c12061/accreditation_guidance), 2012).

#### Wider context of external regulation

The University must ensure it meets the standards as outlined by all external, independent regulators in order to operate as a provider of higher education. The University is frequently reviewed by regulators, independent reviews, and frameworks to ensure the quality and standard of what we offer at Essex.

#### Impact on Students

Students may make decisions on whether to take a course based on links with a PSRB, so it should be made clear in any published information to students what the status of accreditation is, what accreditation is possible, and what students need to achieve to gain accreditation (including whether this is automatic or whether students need to apply separately). Where an application has been made for accreditation, but this has not yet been confirmed, this should be clear in the information prospective and current students are provided with.

#### Courses and Modules

Methods and the frequency of accreditation (of any type) vary. Departments should ensure that clear information is provided on the PSRB requirements for accreditation when asking for approval of new and amended courses.

#### Published Information

Information on accreditation is published in programme specifications, in [Course Finder](https://www.essex.ac.uk/subjects), and in the prospectus. It’s also collected by the [Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/) who [share the information with public authorities](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/about/what-we-do/statutory-customers) who require it to carry out their statutory and/or public functions. The information is also published on [Discover Un](https://discoveruni.gov.uk/)i. It’s therefore essential for all information on links with PSRBs to be clear and accurate before it is published.

#### What are departments expected to do?

Responsibility for maintaining links with PSRBs rests with the departments. Departments are responsible for the areas listed below to ensure the information we hold and publish is accurate. Heads of Department and Department Managers should allocate these tasks to a specific member or members of staff the department.

1. Maintain contact and links with the PSRBs that accredit, approve or recognise their courses.
2. Submit applications for PSRB accreditation (of any type).
3. Liaise with PSRBs over requirements and provide information about these requirements when requesting approval of new or amended courses and modules.
4. Maintain records of PSRB accreditation (of any type), including information about the dates and frequency of review or re-accreditation.
5. Ensure that the University’s records and published information is accurate and up-to-date. Departments will be asked to actively review and confirm all course accreditations annually via **Curriculum Update**. Departments should also periodically review the information held in ESIS and the centralised accreditation Box folders (and any other published information) to ensure it is accurate. Please contact the Quality and Academic Development Team (QUAD) by emailing [quad@essex.ac.uk](mailto:quad@essex.ac.uk) for access to your Departmental accreditation Box folder.
6. Check that PSRB webpages (or other forms of published information) are accurate. Departments should ensure information on ESIS and information that is published on both University and PSRB webpages is consistent and accurate. Please contact Course Records ([crt@essex.ac.uk](mailto:crt@essex.ac.uk)) for information and advice on accessing your Departmental accreditation records on ESIS.
7. Notify QUAD in advance of when an accreditation visit or review is due. If you have any upcoming accreditation reviews or visits from PSRBs scheduled, please inform QUAD as soon as possible. A representative from QUAD and/or a Dean would be invited to observe PSRB visits and/or any meetings to confirm outcomes. This is particularly key when this coincides with a Periodic Review or course validation event, so the department and QUAD can arrange the event to meet the needs of the PSRB and the University as effectively as possible.
8. Organise and manage the arrangements for visits by PSRBs where these occur in isolation from other events such as Periodic Reviews or course validations.
9. Send copies of schedules and key correspondence concerning accreditation visits and information about forthcoming accreditation to QUAD and their Faculty. Decisions and outcomes from accreditation reviews and reports should also be made available to QUAD as soon as they are available and will be reported to Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
10. Include the response to recommendations from PSRB accreditation processes in the Annual Review of Courses and Periodic Review processes.

#### Reporting Requirements

* Accreditation trends and updates will be reported as part of the Annual Quality Report which is reviewed by Academic Quality and Standards Committee in the Autumn term.
* Departments have been required for several years to share confirmations of accreditation with QUAD and to report within their ARC reports on feedback or requirements from PSRBs. This will continue but from 2023/24 the PVCE has introduced the requirement that all reports and/or outcomes from PSRB monitoring, reviews or visits are shared directly with QUAD and with the relevant Faculty. An institutional overview report on these will then go to Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
* Following any set of PSRB conditions, recommendations or other outcomes an action plan should be shared with QUAD and approved by the Faculty Dean.
* When a department informs QUAD and their home Faculty of a forthcoming accreditation visit or review, this should be discussed with the relevant Faculty Dean and the level of risk assessed. Factors to be considered in assessing risk include, but are not limited to:
  + a previous unsatisfactory accreditation visit
  + concerns about progress with any actions from a previous accreditation visit
  + an unexpected or out-of-sequence visit

A [**risk assessment form**](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/directories/academic-section/academic-standards-and-quality/accreditation-upcoming-activity-risk-assessment-form.docx)should be completed by departments/schools when notification of an upcoming review or visit from an accrediting body is given. The form is available on QUAD’s External Regulation [webpage](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/academic-standards-and-quality/external-regulation-and-monitoring). Departments should complete Section 1 of this form and send this to QUAD via [quad@essex.ac.uk](mailto:quad@essex.ac.uk) QUAD will then review the information, add any other relevant information and seek the Faculty Dean’s confirmation regarding level of risk. This will then be communicated back to the department or school.

If the visit is assessed as anything other than low risk, the Faculty Dean will raise this with the Executive Dean of the relevant Faculty outlining the reasons for the assessment. The Executive Dean, the PVCE and the Registrar and Secretary will discuss the risk, agree any actions to support the Faculty and department in preparation for the visit and agree any other actions that may be required in support of the University’s quality and standards obligations.

#### How can QUAD help?

**Resources**

* [Accreditations by programme](https://ssrs.essex.ac.uk/reporting/sao/CRRM%20Reports/Accreditations%20(Programmes).rdl?d=w77aa4b5a56034d12ba3a9bed2867d776) – This report allows you to review accreditation information held in Programme Specifications. The report is grouped by Faculty, then Department, then Programme Title, then Study Mode.
* ESIS – Accreditation data should be stored/edited by departments in the Programme Specifications screens on ESIS.

**Document review information**

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