**PERIODIC REVIEWS**

**Guidance for Panel Members**

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**Periodic Reviews: Guidance for Panel Members**

**Guidance for Panel Members**

Please contact the [Quality and Academic Development team](mailto:quad@essex.ac.uk) if you require this document in a different format.

## Introduction to Periodic Reviews

* 1. Periodic Reviews are the formal process by which a course, or group of related courses, is evaluated and the University assured of the continuing quality of provision in the department[[1]](#footnote-1) or Partner Institution. The process normally takes place every five years and is the basis for re-approval of the courses with effect from the following academic year. The Review process can be brought forward where there is a major variation to a course, or where a particular concern has been identified. Internal and external peer review is an essential part of Periodic Review, as it is during initial approval or validation process.
  2. Periodic Reviews provide an overview of the activity of departments, centres, or subject groups at the same time as reapproving provision. This allows external and internal subject experts to consider the cohesion of the courses offered and their relation to each other, as well as the validity of individual courses. This process provides teams with an opportunity to review the breadth of their provision and evaluate developments across their area.

## The purpose of Periodic Reviews

* 1. The purpose of the Periodic Review is:
* to review the continuing validity and relevance of the stated aims and the intended learning outcomes of the course(s), in accordance with relevant internal and external reference points ([Appendix B](#_Appendix_B_–)), including relevant subject benchmarks, national apprenticeship standards and other [sector-recognised standards](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/53821cbf-5779-4380-bf2a-aa8f5c53ecd4/sector-recognised-standards.pdf)
* to ensure that the awards conferred by the University are of an equivalent standard to comparable awards throughout the UK, and that threshold standards are being achieved (see [Appendix B](#_Appendix_B_–))
* to ensure that students[[2]](#footnote-2) continue to be provided with learning opportunities of an appropriate quality
* to enable an external subject expert(s) to contribute advice on the course(s)
* to identify exceptional practice for wider dissemination
* to identify areas for enhancement
* to audit the procedures for quality assurance and enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards as they apply to the course(s) under review
* to report to the appropriate Faculty Education Committee (FEC) or Partnerships Education Committee (PEC) with specific, reasoned conclusions for the future of the course(s) under review. Approval of outcomes from the Periodic Review and recommendations from the FEC/PEC rests with the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).
  1. The areas explored during a Periodic Review are set out in [Appendix A](#_Appendix_A_–).

## Periodic Review Panel

* 1. Membership of Periodic Review Panels is designed around the range of courses and provision within the department and will account for aspects such as professional body accreditation and requirements. There should be a variety of experience and viewpoints among the Panel members. Members must not be directly involved with the delivery of the course(s), but within the Panel as a whole there should be sufficient understanding of the subject matter and academic context to enable the Panel to make a sound judgement.
  2. As a minimum, in addition to the Chair (which is usually the Faculty Dean (Undergraduate or Postgraduate), the Panel will include an external academic subject expert, two internal academic member of staff and a student representative (for Partner Institutions - an academic member of staff from the University and an internal representative from the Partner Institution would also form part of the Panel). Where relevant, external Panel members may include representatives from Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), employer/industry representatives and service users. The Faculty Dean (Undergraduate/Postgraduate) not chairing the event would be invited to attend as part of the Panel depending on the provision under review. The Executive Dean of the Faculty would not usually attend the Periodic Review event, but they would be invited to input/provide comments in advance.
  3. Panel member involvement is essential to the Periodic Review process and members are asked to ensure they remain available for any dates associated with Periodic Review meetings. If a Panel member finds they can no longer participate after agreeing to be a Panel member, they should notify Quality and Academic Development as soon as possible. The department and Quality and Academic Development would then be required to seek alternative candidates to act as Panel members. This process can take time, and without a full Panel, the Periodic Review process could be disrupted or halted. The University welcomes the vital feedback of all Panel members in providing assurance of academic standards and quality.

## Duties of the Review Panel

* 1. It is the duty of the Review Panel to:
* critically examine the review documentation and undertake discussion with the department/course team representatives
* make a collective judgement on the continuing quality and academic standard of the course(s) under review, to ensure that the award(s) conferred by the University are of an equivalent standard to comparable awards throughout the UK, and that UK threshold standards (see Appendix B) are being achieved
* review the quality of the learning opportunities and information that students are provided with
* review the department’s (or Partner Institution’s) procedures for quality assurance and enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards as they apply to the course(s) under review
* confirm that all areas which should be explored during Periodic Review are covered in discussion during the event or sufficiently covered in documentation
* make a recommendation on the re-approval of the course
  1. The Panel must be assured of the continuing rationale for the course(s) concerned and that the department has the necessary resource base for the continued successful running of the course(s). In addition, the Panel must be assured that issues identified through Annual Review of Course Reports (ARCs), including the comments of students and external examiners, and issues from other sources (e.g., PSRB reports), have been addressed.

## Roles of the members of the Panel

**The External Academic Expert**

* 1. Every Periodic Review has at least one external Panel member[[3]](#footnote-3). The External Panel member’s role is to examine:
* the currency of the curriculum
* the appropriateness of the curriculum in relation to national benchmarks and similar provision at other HEIs
* the appropriateness of the strategy for assessment
* the quality of the student experience

**Internal University Panel members**

* 1. All Periodic Review Panels include members from departments other than the department being reviewed (for Partner Institutions – the Panel would include an academic member of staff from the University and a representative from the Partner Institution). The Internal Panel member isn’t expected to be able to comment on subject specific content, but experience of their own faculty and department’s practice in relation to learning, teaching and assessment should enable them to:
* critically evaluate the Periodic Review documentation
* identify possible issues or good practice
* comment on how the department has responded to institutional strategic developments as outlined in the Education and Research Strategies and the associated Curriculum Review
* ask questions about particular areas of responsibility or interest (for example assessment methods)

**The Student Representative**

* 1. Every Periodic Review should have a Student Representative Panel member. The student representative’s role is to:
* contribute to discussions from a student’s perspective
* help to ensure that the Periodic Review takes due regard of student opinion

**The Employer/Industry Representative**

* 1. Where programmes have a strong vocational focus and where work-based learning is involved, the Periodic Review Panel should include one or more representatives from a relevant industry. The role of this employer representative or industry expert is to examine:
* the relevance of the programme to the industry
* the content to ensure it reflects the industry’s current and future needs and recognised standards
* whether the work-based learning offers appropriate experience
* whether the graduates of the programme will have the skills and knowledge that an employer would wish to see

## Departmental Team

* 1. The departmental/course team that meets the Panel:
* helps the Panel understand the Periodic Review documentation and gain a greater insight into the departmental ethos and approach to learning, teaching and assessment
* takes a dispassionate view of both the weaknesses and the strengths of the course(s) under review
* should be prepared to engage in constructive discussions with the Periodic Review Panel

## Preparation for Periodic Review

* 1. When considering the course(s) under review, Panels may find it helpful to draw on the points below. You may also wish to consult this [guidance](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/advice-and-guidance-external-expertise.pdf?sfvrsn=6f2ac181_2) on the role of external expertise in education design and review more broadly.

**Before the Review Event**

* 1. Ensure you understand the [University’s procedure for Periodic Review](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/academic-standards-and-quality/periodic-review-of-courses) (process at [Partner Institutions](https://www.essex.ac.uk/information/university-partnerships/information-for-partners)) and contact the [Quality and Academic Development](mailto:quad@essex.ac.uk) team (or [Partnerships team](mailto:partnerships@essex.ac.uk)) in advance to clarify any aspects of the process.
  2. Take time to read the documentation in advance and ask for any supplementary documentation or seek clarification on any points of ambiguity via the Secretary to the review Panel well before the event. Guidance on the areas explored during Periodic Review is included in [Appendix A](#_Appendix_A_–).
  3. You will be asked to send your initial comments on the documentation in writing using the template provided in advance of the event so that panel meetings and meetings with departments are more able to focus on quality enhancement, lessons learned from the external(s), and future changes for the department and its academic provision. Please be mindful that your feedback will be shared with other members of the Panel ahead of the Stage 1 event.

**At the Review Event**

* 1. It is helpful to consider your role as a Panel member as that of a 'critical friend' who is there to discuss the course(s) in detail and offer helpful suggestions to the departmental team, as well as pointing out potential problems arising from your scrutiny of the review documentation.
  2. Aim to foster an atmosphere of constructive critical dialogue with the team rather than one of confrontation, for example by avoiding aggressive questioning styles that put the departmental team on the defensive and by endeavouring to highlight any positive aspects of the course(s) under review rather than focusing exclusively on areas of concern.
  3. Do not leave major concerns unvoiced - it is much harder to address these after a review event than before or during it.
  4. If you are a Panel member as a result of your subject expertise, please ensure that you are familiar with the appropriate QAA subject benchmark statement.
  5. External Panel members should be prepared to challenge assumptions held by the Departmental Team and offer a fresh critical but constructive perspective.
  6. Industry professional or employer representatives should offer a view on the value and relevance of the course(s) under review in relation to industry, the profession and/or employer needs, and give close consideration to any work placement, work-based learning or employment-related aspects of the course(s).
  7. The meeting with students should help you to form a more holistic view of the provision and allows you to ask about course delivery arrangements and learning and teaching from a student's perspective. The student experience should be a key focus of the Panel's considerations.

## Periodic Review Event

* 1. During a Periodic Review event, a Panel of experts explores key themes with the Departmental/Course Team and makes recommendations for the re-approval of the course(s) under review. The Panel will hold some private discussions and will meet department/course team and student representatives and other groups as appropriate (such as Professional, Statutory Regulatory Bodies - PSRB). Additional meetings and tours of specialist facilities may be arranged depending on the department and courses under review.
  2. A successful Periodic Review will be characterised by constructive dialogue, structured around a self-evaluation document (the Reflective Document) provided by the Head of Department under review. The Reflective Document is designed to take the form of a critical commentary, cross-referenced to any other documentation provided, and should identify those issues the department would find it helpful to explore in greater depth. It should also offer the department the opportunity to highlight any areas of good practice that can be shared across the University (or Partner Institution).
  3. Additional documentation in support of the Reflective Document provides more details of the courses under review, including documents such as ARC reports, external examiner reports, student survey results and course statistics. Consequently, each Periodic Review will be slightly different, in order to both meet the specific needs of the department/course and to address any particular issues or concerns the Panel might have.
  4. The event may take place in two stages, depending on the size and nature of the award(s) being reviewed. The agenda, agreed by the Chair, is normally based on a standard agenda (below), which may be modified as appropriate for each Review event. It is recognised that there would be cases in which a different format or approach would be needed; for instance, if the periodic review were to be combined with an accreditation visit or PSRB review. Procedures would be varied if appropriate for Partner Institutions to ensure that reviews continued to be suitable for their specific needs.
  5. The default position for all Periodic Review events is that they will be conducted remotely via Zoom. This is to enable participation as widely as possible, and to make the most efficient use of the time of panel members and of University resources and space. It also aligns with the priorities set out in the University’s Sustainability sub-strategy and Climate Action Plan. However, where there are specific reasons why meeting in person is required or considered to be more appropriate for one or more stages of the event, then conducting these in person will be considered.
* **Stage One** consists of the Initial Panel meetings:
  + **Initial Closed Panel discussion** (approximately 1 hour)
  + **Panel meeting with group(s) of students** registered (or previously registered) on the course(s)/degree apprenticeship(s) under review. The Departmental Team will not be present for this part of the review (approximately 1 hour meeting for each level of provision under review). In order to provide a complete view of student feedback, the documentation will include summaries of various student survey results, and actions taken by the department in response to these, as well as to other areas raised in their Student Staff Liaison Committees (or equivalents).
  + **Closed Panel meeting to conclude Stage One** and for the Panel to agree themes and questions for the department/course team. The Panel can also request any additional information / documentation (approximately 1 hour).

* **Stage Two** takes place approximately six weeks after the Initial Panel meetings in Stage One and consists of:
* **Panel meeting with the Departmental Team** to respond to the points raised during Stage One (approximately 1.5-2 hours).
* **Panel meeting with any other groups**, as appropriate e.g., PSRB (approximately 1 hour)
* **Closed Final Panel meeting** where the outcomes are agreed. The Chair normally commences this private meeting of the Panel by summarising the key themes and the Departmental Team’s responses and will conclude by agreeing the outcome of the event with the Panel. A unanimous decision of the Panel is required for the conclusion of the Review event. (approximately 1.5 hours)
* **Outcome meeting** is where the department representatives are invited back for verbal feedback from the Panel. During the feedback session, the Chair will announce the outcome of the event and notify the department of any conditions and/or recommendations that should be addressed or considered. Commendations and developments in progress will also be highlighted. A deadline will be set by which conditions, recommendations and developments in progress should be met and/or responded to (the deadline is usually 8 weeks after the final stage meetings depending on the nature of the conditions set) (meeting approximately 15 minutes).
  1. Developments in progress are actions that the department is already taking to resolve issues they have identified through their monitoring and review processes. These will be noted by the Periodic Review Panel, where a condition or recommendation would have been set had the department not already initiated action. Developments in progress will have the same deadline as any conditions or recommendations and should be included in the department/course team’s response.
  2. The Chair and Secretary will liaise to ensure that draft commendations, conditions, recommendations, and developments in progress are circulated to the Departmental team as soon as possible after the event (usually within 3 days after the final Panel meetings), and the Secretary will produce a detailed report to circulate to the Panel and department (usually 5 weeks after final Panel meeting).

## Periodic Review outcome and report

* 1. The Periodic Review report summarises the Panel’s conclusions and specifies any conditions that are to be met in order to successfully complete the Periodic Review process; the Panel may also make recommendations for areas the department should consider. The Dean (Executive, Faculty or Partnerships) will refer recommendations raised in reports that fall outside the remit of the department, for example University-wide issues, for consideration by the relevant Committee or Section of the University. The Review Panel may not set further conditions or recommendations after it has been reported.
  2. The Panel should specify the date by which the conditions and recommendations and any developments in progress must be met and recommend when the course would be subject to the next Periodic Review, which for most courses is five years.
  3. There are three possible outcomes from a Periodic Review event:
     + **Recommendation for the course(s) to continue to be offered**, in which case no further action by the departmental team is required
     + **Recommendation for the course(s) to continue to be offered, with conditions and/or recommendations and/or developments in progress**, in which case the departmental/course team must provide the Chair with evidence, within agreed timescales, that the conditions have been met, and must respond to any recommendations and developments in progress.
       - * **Commendations** - allow the Panel to congratulate the departmental team on aspects of exceptional practice that can be shared more widely across the Faculty/University or Partner Institution. (Other areas of good practice or that are going well that the Panel would like to highlight may be included in the report, rather than listed as a commendation).
         * **Conditions** - are those issues that must be addressed to the satisfaction of the review Panel by agreed deadlines in order for the course(s) continuation to be approved.
         * **Recommendations** - are those issues on which action is to be considered, possibly beyond the start of the following academic session. A response to recommendations must also be made by agreed deadlines.
         * **Developments in progress** - are those issues for which the department is already taking action, and which might have led to the Panel setting a condition or recommendation. A response to developments in progress must be made by agreed deadlines.
     + In exceptional circumstances, the report may recommend **suspension of the Periodic Review process** whilst the Departmental Team undertakes a major revision to the course(s) under review.
  4. The Periodic Review report will be submitted to the appropriate Faculty/Partnerships Education Committee. The Committee will then make a recommendation to Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Authority for final approval rests with the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
  5. When approved by the relevant Committee the outcome would also be communicated in a timely manner to students by the department.

## Appendix A – Areas explored by the Periodic Review Panel

These questions are provided as a guide only and are intended to be neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. However, Panel members may find it useful to refer to these questions when reading the Periodic Review documentation as a prompt for possible lines of enquiry.

1. **Progress made since periodic review**
   1. Have the recommendations made at the last review or since approval/validation been met?
   2. Have changes to the course(s) since the last Periodic Review enhanced the course and ensured that the course design, title and curriculum remained appropriate and aligned with internal and external reference points (see [Appendix B](#_Appendix_B_–))?
2. **Maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality**
   1. Does the documentation demonstrate the department/course team’s systematic monitoring, review and enhancement?
   2. How effectively has the department drawn on the full range of information available when considering improvements to the course(s)? For example, reference to the following areas and to those set out in [Appendix B](#_Appendix_B_–):
      1. Key Performance Indicators, NSS, internal student representation and feedback mechanisms, DLHE, progression, retention and achievement data, equality and diversity data, External Examiner reports and any other departmental monitoring systems in place.
   3. Have recent External Examiners been satisfied with the standards set by the award and achieved by students?
   4. Are you satisfied that UK threshold standards (see [Appendix B](#_Appendix_B_–)) are being achieved?
   5. How is good practice shared amongst those involved with delivering the courses?
3. **Rationale, Market Demand and Student Recruitment**
   1. Is the proposed course compatible with the strategic mission of the University (and Partner Institution)? [[4]](#footnote-4)
   2. Is there a continuing market demand for the course(s) under review? Have targets been met? Are student numbers viable?
   3. Do the courses continue to enable students to acquire skills and knowledge which will be of use to them in their future careers and future studies?
   4. Have graduates been able to gain relevant employment?
   5. Are student entry profiles appropriate?
   6. Are admissions procedures fair and transparent, including those for dealing with Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)?
4. **Course Design**
   1. How does the course align with the University’s strategic plan and its supporting Education and Research Strategies? 4
   2. Do the aims and learning outcomes of the course(s) continue to be clearly defined and appropriate to the course(s)?
   3. Are there clear learning outcomes that reflect published QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, qualification benchmarks (for example for master’s or foundation degrees), the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies (Qualifications Frameworks), national occupational standards and any relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements?
   4. How has the course been developed over the last five years to reflect major developments in the discipline?
   5. How have changes in student and employer demand influenced course and/or apprenticeship design?
   6. How have employers/industry experts been involved in the ongoing development of the course(s) under review and what impact has this had?
   7. Does course design continue to take due regard for issues of equality, diversity and accessibility?
   8. Where there are health and safety risks, does the course design provide students with suitable information, instruction and training?
   9. How has the curriculum been influenced by the research interests of the teaching team?
   10. For courses embedding work-based or work-related learning:
       1. Is the work-based or work-related element relevant to the programme and its aims?
       2. Do learning outcomes adequately demonstrate the integration of work-based or work-related learning and the academic programme of study?
       3. Has there been continuing engagement with appropriate Sector Skills Councils?
   11. Are there any aspects of the modules that might present any difficulties for disabled students, including mental health and medical conditions?
   12. For Apprenticeships: does the course design reflect the needs of the apprenticeship standard e.g., does it map against the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, does it include British values, and are apprentices supported to develop their English and maths skills?
5. **Curriculum**
   1. What impact has the department’s engagement with the University-wide Curriculum Review (Curriculum 2025) had, or how could this be considered in future developments?
   2. Is each learning outcome (subject-specific or skills-related) supported by appropriate elements within the curriculum?
   3. Is the curriculum content appropriate to each stage of the course, and to the level of the award?
   4. Does the design of the curriculum enable appropriate academic and intellectual progression by imposing increasing demands on the learner in terms of the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the capacity for conceptualisation, and increasing autonomy in learning?
   5. Is each course balanced, for example in terms of academic and practical elements and the breadth and depth of the curriculum? Is there a balance and integration between employment related skills and academic study?
   6. Is work-based learning embedded in the programme of learning, and does work based learning contribute to the overall coherence and integrity of the course?
   7. How has sustainability been taken into consideration in the design and delivery of the curriculum in accordance with the University’s [sub-strategy for sustainability](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/sustainability/sustainability-sub-strategy-2021-26.pdf?la=en)?
   8. For Apprenticeships – does the off the job learning support the apprentices on the job learning? Is it coherent and delivered at an appropriate time to support apprentices’ development and progression?
6. **Assessment**
   1. Do assessment methods support learning? Are they appropriate, sufficiently varied and inclusive? Is the balance of coursework and examinations across the course appropriate?
   2. What innovations in assessment methods are under consideration or have recently been introduced?
   3. Is the assessment strategy (including reassessment) adequately responsive to the varying needs and backgrounds of students (e.g., in terms of nationality or disability)?
   4. Are there adequate opportunities for formative assessment to support the development of students’ abilities?
   5. Is achievement of every learning outcome assessed?
   6. Do the present methods of assessment provide adequate opportunities for the learning outcomes of the course(s) to be demonstrated?
   7. Are individual assessments weighted appropriately?
   8. Are there clear assessment criteria?
   9. Are External Examiners satisfied with assessment strategies and implementation in practice?
   10. For courses embedding work-based or work-related learning:
       1. If employers are involved in the assessment of students, how do they work with academic staff? Are there systematic arrangements for coordinating such activity involving academic staff?
7. **Learning and Teaching**
   1. Are there appropriate methods of learning and teaching in place to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes?
   2. Is the approach to learning and teaching designed to stimulate and challenge students, and to encourage them to actively engage?
   3. What variety of teaching and learning methods are used in the module to meet the needs of a diverse range of students, including those with disabilities?
   4. Have developments in learning and teaching (either generally or in the particular discipline concerned) affected teaching on the degree courses under review over the last five years?
   5. How effectively do staff draw upon their research, scholarship, or professional activity to inform their teaching?
   6. How is good practice shared among those involved in delivering the course?
8. **Work-based learning**
   1. Are arrangements for management and supervision of workplace learning systematic and clear?
   2. Are mentors and employer representatives supported in understanding their roles and responsibilities (including assessment if relevant)?
   3. Are Learning Agreements in place to define the specific outcomes intended for the workplace learning, the responsibilities of the employers, students, mentors and academic tutors?
   4. Are appropriate checks in place to ensure the work-based learning/placement provider provides the learning opportunities necessary for the student to meet the intended learning outcomes?
   5. Do both the University/Partner Institution and WBL/placement provider give appropriate support to students during their placement?
   6. Is it clear who is responsible for WBL assessment, and is assessment appropriate? Are there opportunities for all students, including those with accessibility requirements and what is in place to ensure equal opportunities?
   7. Are you satisfied that University (or Partner Institution) staff, placement students and employers understand and have consideration of their responsibilities under health and safety legislation? Are you satisfied that the University’s health and safety standards for work placements are being met?
9. **Learning Resources**
   1. Are the learning materials relevant, sufficient, and readily available (e.g., library resources, reading lists; hard copy or web-based learning materials, VLE and IT facilities)?
   2. Is suitable learning and teaching accommodation available?
   3. Are equipment, materials and accommodation provided for learning maintained in a safe condition?
10. **Staffing**
    1. Have there been any staffing changes which may affect the delivery of the course?
    2. Is appropriate technical and administrative support available?
    3. Are adequate staff development opportunities available to support staff in terms of their professional development? Are there adequate opportunities for scholarly activity?
    4. Where employers or others from outside the University are contributing to the delivery of the course, how are these contributions designed and integrated for all students?
    5. Where there are health and safety risks associated with the learning activity, have staff (and external providers) had suitable information, instruction and training? (NB: Records should be kept)

*Additionally, for research provision*

* 1. What training is available for supervisors?
  2. How does the department/Partner Institution organise allocation of research students? How many research students are allocated to each supervisor and what is the department/Partner Institution’s approach to workload allocation?
  3. How many new and experienced supervisors are there in the department?

1. **Student support and progression**
   1. Is the Review Panel satisfied with levels of student retention, progression and achievement?
   2. Are arrangements in place to identify any differing levels of retention, progression and achievement? Where these are found, are steps taken in response?
   3. Are there well-designed arrangements for student induction which meet the needs of all students?
   4. Are students provided with an appropriate level of academic support?
   5. Are arrangements in place to ensure that any additional needs of students are identified, and reasonable adjustments are put in place to meet them? What forms of accessibility are being used for all students?
   6. Are arrangements for tutorial support and progress reviews clear and generally understood by staff and students?
   7. Are Student, Course and Employer Handbooks and other information for students clear and complete?

*Student representation and feedback*

* 1. Are student representation and feedback arrangements adequate? Is there evidence of effective consideration and action in response to student feedback?
  2. How have regular student questionnaires and other forms of student feedback contributed to enhancement in relation to these courses?
  3. Are students and staff provided with information about student feedback and subsequent actions?

1. **The research environment (for PG research provision)**
   1. How does the department/course team create a research environment for its research students?
   2. Are the arrangements for supervision systematic and clear?
   3. Are arrangements for Supervisory Boards/Progress Committees clear and systematic and in line with the University’s PGR Code of Practice?
   4. Are there clear progression guidelines and milestones?
   5. How does the department support research students to acquire transferable skills? What research skills training is provided?
   6. What facilities (such as dedicated office space and equipment) are available?

## Appendix B – Benchmarking against internal and external reference points

* 1. [Benchmarking against internal and external reference points](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/directories/academic-section/academic-standards-and-quality/guidance-on-internal-and-external-reference-points.docx)

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1. References to departments in this guidance also refer to faculties, schools, centres, or other structures appropriate to the course(s) under consideration. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Where this document refers to ‘students’, this encompasses all learners, including students undertaking flexible or

   part-time study, and apprentices. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cannot be a current or previous external examiner employed by the University, unless at least five years have elapsed between ceasing employment as an external examiner and the date of the review event [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.essex.ac.uk/about/university-strategy> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)