

## **STRATEGIC SCHOOL REVIEW SCHEME**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

The Strategic School Review Scheme was approved in academic session 2009/10 by Academic Audit and Governance Committee (AAGC) and in 2011/12 AAGC agreed that the scheme be implemented from 2013/14, with training in the Autumn Term 2013/14 and the initiation of a full cycle of Strategic School Review from Spring Term 2013/14.

### **2. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

Senate approved the replacement of School Review with Strategic School Review (SSR) and this Scheme sets out the elements and methodology of the SSR process. A fundamental change from the former School Review is the acknowledgement of the greater differentiation of governance and management and that a range of matters previously considered in School Review were now already considered and monitored under the management line. In addition the change takes account of the complete revision of the University's Research Structure and its governance and management arrangements.

The Scheme also takes account of the University's increasing maturity and expertise, as recognised in successive Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Institutional Audits, in the maintenance of standards and enhancement of quality. Annual Programme Monitoring and Enhancement (APME) and Periodic Programme Review and Re-approval (PPRR) have been retained, subject to any amendment required by the Academic Governance Project Board of the Transformation Programme. Colleges and Schools already actively manage the APME and PPRR processes and this is supplemented by institutional level annual overview reports and by occasional academic audit reports commissioned by AAGC.

### **3. OTHER ELEMENTS OF INTERNAL REVIEW**

In earlier consideration of School Review, AAGC attributed minimal, if any, value to the process of the former Faculty Review. The establishment and disestablishment of academic units now falls to Executive in consultation with Senate. Should Executive determine a requirement ad hoc or on a recurrent basis for a review of a College or the College system, such a review could be commissioned by Executive for the specific purpose. After careful consideration and in the context of balancing the amount of internal review and the potential value added from that review, and in the light of the significant revision and enhancement of the University's governance and management arrangements, Senate therefore resolved that Faculty (or equivalent) Review be discontinued as an element of the University's Scheme for Internal Review.

Following the outcomes of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008, the precursor of Executive, Strategic Leadership Team, in consultation with Senate, resolved to disestablish Research Institutes and to manage the University's Research activity through Colleges and Schools. This Scheme therefore confirms that Research Institute Review has been discontinued as an element of the University's Scheme for Internal Review.

The University's Scheme for Internal Review therefore comprises:

APME  
PPRR  
and SSR

#### 4. **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of SSR is then to take an informed overview of the full range of the School's activities, and especially its academic portfolio, whether delivered in the form of teaching, research and innovation or engagement. Primarily, this overview is to be critically reflective and forward-looking and informed by external advice and internal consultation. In particular the overview should advise on how the School's activities might be enhanced and what new opportunities might be exploited by the School.

The objectives of SSR are:

- 4.1 to offer the School an opportunity to explore potential innovation and development in a supportive and conducive environment with the benefit of expert external expertise and advice
- 4.2 to assist a School to consider its longer term development especially in the context of the University's strategic themes and to formulate medium-term strategy, especially with regard to its academic portfolio
- 4.3 to assess the School's management performance and to consider how that might impact on its academic development. This entails an evaluation of that performance against its performance indicators and targets in:
  - teaching, learning and enhancement
  - research and innovation
  - engagement
  - planning and performance
  - staffing and physical resources
  - finance

SSR is a particular point in the School's on-going iterative process of self-evaluation and self-monitoring against strategic objectives. SSR is intended to take place in the context of standard on-going iterative governance and management processes. It would be informed by them but should not delay, interrupt or duplicate them.

- 4.4 To confirm that standard University quality assurance processes are operating consistently in practice at School level.

#### 5. **CYCLE**

A four-year cycle with a full programme determined by AAGC, after consultation with Colleges, taking account in particular of other external reviews such as those by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

#### 6. **SSR PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

##### Internal

- Dean from another College (Chair)
- An Associate Dean from the home College
- A Head of School from the third College
- A sabbatical officer of the Students' Union
- A Director/Head of a Professional and Administrative Services Unit nominated by the Registrar

External

A minimum of two and a maximum of three external members collectively with a background in the cognate disciplines of the School as well as experience of academic management at a senior level

- one nominated by the Dean of the home College
- one nominated by the Associate Dean (Academic) and with experience in relation to Teaching, Learning and Enhancement
- one nominated by the Associate Dean (Research and Innovation) and with expertise in relation to research and innovation and/or the commercial exploitation of knowledge.
- or, if only two are nominated, the first should be nominated by the Dean of the home College and the second jointly by the Associate Deans (Academic) and (Research and Innovation).

All three nominations should be made in negotiation with the Head of School so as to balance issues of independence, relevance of the external nominees' own institutions as comparators and the need to ensure that commercially sensitive information was not made available to competitor institutions. No nominee would be appointed against the wishes of the Head of School.

**7. SECRETARY**

The College Registrar (or his/her nominee) from the same College as the Chair.

The SSR Secretary would be assisted and advised on process by officers of the Governance Services Unit

**8. INFORMATION**

The main principle behind the input of information to SSR should be that this relies for the background detail mainly on existing documentation and reports from existing management information systems. SSR should maximise the use of existing data and, if essential, bespoke data sets provided by Professional and Administrative Services.

AAGC will want to consult as the Scheme is implemented with Colleges, Schools and the relevant Executive members and Directors/Heads of Professional and Administrative Services on which existing documentation and reports should be used and a guidance note will be provided to advise Schools on what would normally be included. However the guidance will be indicative rather than prescriptive and will be updated as experience is gained of the operation of the SSR process.

The Head of School, working with other members of the School Executive, should supplement that existing documentation with analysis and interpretation projecting forward to identify the School's trajectory, the strategic choices available to the School and how the School should develop in ways compatible with the University's vision and strategies.

The forward trajectory should be informed by a self-evaluation of the School's performance in relation to meeting key School and University strategic targets, describing how these will have been achieved and rehearsing lessons learned from any incomplete achievement of those targets. The Head of School, working with other members of the School Executive, should offer such analysis and interpretation in eight main sections, below 8.1 to 8.8. However the Head of School within that sectional framework will also wish to detail activities which promote synergy and integration: for example, the School's approach to Research informed Teaching.

**8.1 Previous SSR/Quality Assurance Processes**

A brief update by the Head of School in consultation with the School Executive on actions identified by the previous SSR and how those actions were completed and any on-going implications for the School not otherwise mentioned.

The Head of School should also summarise how the standard University quality assurance procedures are operating in practice within the School.

**8.2 Teaching, Learning and Enhancement**

This section should be written by the Head of School/member of the School Executive with consultation at a formative stage with the home Associate Dean (Academic) and Director of Student Information

The content and scope of this section may vary according to the current position and academic portfolio of the School but should always address:

Improvement of retention; improvement of student achievement and progression; widening participation; enhancement, for example, in response to issues raised in the National Student Survey (NSS); enhancement in response to issues raised by external examiners, APME and PPRR.

The School may also wish to address other elements at its discretion such as relationships with PSRBs and its engagement in discipline – based enhancement and innovation.

**8.3 Research and Innovation**

This section should be written by the Head of School/member of the School Executive with consultation at a formative stage with the Associate Dean (Research and Innovation) of the home College.

The content and scope of this section will vary according to the current position and academic portfolio of the School but indicatively is likely to address:

Number and percentage of research active staff; research performance and the School's engagement with the Research Excellence Framework (REF); College/School research and innovation strategy; activities and performance of Research Centres; contribution of the School to the University's research strategy; improvement of completion and student achievement.

**8.4 Engagement**

This section should be written by the Head of School/member of the School Executive with consultation at a formative stage with the Director of Research and Innovation.

The content and scope of this section will vary according to the current position and academic portfolio of the School but indicatively is likely to address:

The School's future developments across the range of relevant engagements.

**8.5 Staffing and Physical Resources**

This section should be written by the Head of School/member of the School Executive with consultation at a formative stage with the Executive Director of Human Resources and Executive Director of Estates.

The content and scope of this section will vary according to the current position and academic portfolio of the School but indicatively is likely to address:

A schedule of Operational Performance Indicators (OPIs) relating to staffing; the improvement of performance against these; the development of the School's staffing profile to meet future challenges; the physical resources available to the School in the context of the University's Campus Plan.

#### 8.6 **Finance**

This section should be written by the Head of School/member of the School Executive with consultation at a formative stage with the Director of Finance.

The content and scope of this section will vary according to the current position and academic portfolio of the School but indicatively is likely to address:

The schedule of OPIs relating to finance and how to improve performance against these.

#### 8.7 **Planning and Performance**

This section should be written by the Head of School/member of the School Executive with consultation at a formative stage with the Director of Planning and Performance.

The content and scope of this section will vary according to the current position and academic portfolio of the School and will cross refer as appropriate to Sections 8.2 to 8.6 above. Indicatively it is likely to address:

The schedule of agreed OPIs and how to improve performance against these.

#### 8.8 **Strategic Options for the School**

This section should be written by the Head of School, in consultation with the School Executive, and should set out the strategic options for the School in relation to international, national and regional opportunities for business, growth or redirection of the academic portfolio.

### 9. **PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION**

All information should be supplied electronically.

### 10. **TIMESCALE**

SSR documentation should be forwarded to members of the SSR panel at least three weeks beforehand.

Initial exchanges between members should be by confidential, secure access, e-mail prior to SSR itself.

At least a week before the SSR itself, and by arrangement between the Review Secretary and the School Operations Manager, the School should arrange secure electronic access, to the School's records and files relating to its operation of standard University quality assurance procedures so that internal members of the Review Panel may check that operation. The Review Chair may wish to allocate particular areas of focus to the Panel members.

SSR itself to last two days:

Day One Agenda confirmation by SSR Panel.

Meeting with Head of School and School Executive.

Tour of School premises.

Day Two Meetings with staff

Detailed groupings (eg key role holders, new staff, part-time staff) and focus to be determined prior to SSR itself by e-mail exchange.

Meetings with students. Detailed groupings (eg part-time, postgraduate, first years) and focus to be determined prior to SSR itself by e-mail exchange.

Brief headline feedback to Head of School and School Executive.

Draft report to be delivered three weeks after SSR. Final report to be delivered six weeks after SSR.

## 11. **REPORT**

The Panel Chair at the end of Day Two of the SSR will agree arrangements for the drafting of a report with the externals. The report will comprise:

- a brief description of the SSR process followed, of issues considered and of headline conclusions, to be drafted by the Secretary for the Chair's approval
- analysis of the issues considered under Section 8, Information, written jointly by the externals, commending good practice, advising the School on medium and long-term strategies and making recommendations to the University at Institutional, College and School level as appropriate. The recommendations will be identified in the report as advisable or desirable. Where appropriate, and, especially where a recommendation is deemed to be urgent it will be assigned a suggested timescale in which it should be acted upon.

The Chair will seek advice from the Review Secretary and the Head of School on the factual accuracy of both elements of the report before approving a final version.

## 12. **FOLLOW-UP**

The final report will be considered at special meetings of the College and School Executives with a view to College and School responses being placed with the report before it is considered by AAGC. The response must be placed with the Secretary of AAGC no later than three months after receipt by the College and School.

Where there are recommendations to the University at Institutional level, the Chair of AAGC will seek a response according to the nature of the matter at hand from Senate or its appropriate committee or from Executive.

Where the Chair of AAGC determines that a response should be sought from Executive, he/she will also determine:

- which member of Executive should have overview of a draft response and should present that response to Executive for endorsement;

- with advice from that Executive member, which University officer(s) should draft a response, under the overview of and for the initial approval of that Executive member, for presentation by that Executive member to Executive for endorsement.

Responses to the final report, whether from the College and School, Senate or its appropriate committees or Executive, should identify locus of responsibility and timescale for any remedial action.

AAGC will receive the final report and the consolidated responses to it for endorsement.

Progress against the remedial actions endorsed by AAGC shall be monitored by the Dean and College Executive which shall update AAGC on the first anniversary of the first presentation to AAGC of the final report and responses. If at the first anniversary any remedial actions are not identified by the Dean and College Executive as completed, a further report shall be sent by them to AAGC on the second anniversary. The expectation is that all remedial actions will then be able to be reported as completed.

# Strategic School Review Scheme Process

