

Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy and Operational Handbook

December 2024

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Summary

What is this document about?

This policy and operational handbook document sets out the University's risk-based approach to annually monitoring and reviewing its courses, assessing the maintenance of academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities for our students, and the outcomes they achieve. It specifies the mechanisms through which this takes place including the use of data to support identification of areas requiring improvement, and the co-production of quality improvement plans with students.

Who is this for?

This document will be of most interest to our staff, students and external subject advisers. It will be of interest also to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and the Office for Students (OfS). It may additionally be of some interest to the wider public.

How does the University check this is followed?

The processes set out in this document are checked intrinsically through the processes it details and operationally monitored through Academic Registry.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?

If you have questions about this document, please contact Academic Registry: academicregistry@port.ac.uk

Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The Office for Students (OfS) sets out national expectations for standards and quality of UK higher education as a condition of registration. Universities must be able to demonstrate that students receive a high quality academic experience including, but not limited to the following:

- Courses are up to date;
- Courses provide educational challenge;
- Courses are coherent;
- Courses are effectively delivered;
- Courses are appropriate and develop relevant skills.

This policy has been designed to be consistent with the expectations and practices outlined in the Code, which capture ways of working that support effective management of quality and standards, and underpin the delivery of positive outcomes for students.

1.2 The University has a longstanding commitment to ensuring that the higher education it delivers reflects the academic standards and requirements set out in the national qualifications framework, and is of high quality – in other words, it is well-designed, provides an enriching and inclusive academic experience for all students, incorporates reliable assessment of students' achievements, and provides them with the support they need to access, succeed in and benefit from higher education.

1.3 The standards and quality of the learning opportunities available to students are assured through adherence to the Framework for the Maintenance and Enhancement of Academic Standards and Quality (FMEASQ). The University works in partnership with its students in order to enhance all aspects of the student experience, as outlined in the Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice.

1.4 The University subscribes to the following key quality principles:

- All staff and students own quality assurance, and responsibility for ensuring quality therefore rests with everyone.
- Students' views are at the heart of our policies and procedures for managing quality – they are engaged individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.
- The outcomes of our work to assure standards and quality drive improvement and enhancement.
- Our decisions about quality are made on the basis of shared information that is transparent and accessible across the academic community.
- Our policies, processes and practices treat everyone with equal dignity and worth, and accord with our Equality and Diversity Policy.

1.5 This policy is accompanied by the Annual Monitoring and Academic Review process document.

2. Principles

- 2.1 Our approach to assuring standards and driving up quality through annual monitoring and academic review is:
- Data-informed: A core data set will be used to evaluate quality and achievement against University quality indicators and sector benchmarks at different levels, and to drive enhancement. A supplementary data set will also be provided to support contextually-relevant analysis of core data, and to complement consideration of qualitative information.
 - Transparent: Our processes are underpinned by intelligent, agile use of shared information that is accessible to all staff.
 - Proportionate: Effort is directed where it is most needed.
 - Timely: Careful and routine analysis of data as it becomes available, rather than at a single point in the academic cycle, will support the early identification of risk, and early intervention.
 - Action-focused: Where performance against quality indicators needs to be improved, the process will clearly outline what action is required.
 - Inclusive: Annual monitoring activity, and the targeted actions arising from it, will identify and seek to address gaps for students with particular demographic characteristics.
- 2.2 The University's approach to annual monitoring and academic review provides an internal level playing field to assess and drive up quality at Portsmouth, facilitating the best possible opportunities for learning, progression and achievement for all students. All benchmarks that are applied within the annual monitoring and academic review processes will be periodically reviewed by the University Executive Board.

3. Scope

- 3.1 The policy incorporates all credit and award-bearing academic taught and research degree provision, including:
- Undergraduate courses
 - Postgraduate taught courses (including the taught phase of Professional Doctorates)
 - Apprenticeships
 - Postgraduate research degree provision (including the research phase of Professional Doctorates)
 - Collaborative Provision
 - Credit-bearing short courses

4. Purpose

- 4.1 In their entirety, annual monitoring and academic review offer a supportive and developmental system of review, reflection, and enhancement, through effective sharing of good practice and timely collaborative action planning. This allows for the early identification of shortfalls in performance against the University's ambitious Quality Indicator benchmarks, and for appropriate local action to be taken. Quality risks will be automatically indicated on the basis of variance from key internal benchmark data; however, it is incumbent on staff to design appropriate actions and be clear what support is required to drive improvement.
- 4.2 The indicators and benchmarks used by the University in evaluating the quality of provision and

identifying shortfalls in performance may be reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis to ensure that our focus remains continually on driving up quality where there is the opportunity to do so.

- 4.3 In order to enhance quality and standards, the University is committed to the effective capture and dissemination of good practice in learning, teaching, assessment, research and innovation. The annual monitoring and academic review policy and processes provide a structure for consistently capturing and recognising excellence at all levels, for sharing that effectively, and for understanding the impact of the good practice that colleagues and students have developed.
- 4.4 Consistent with the principle that responsibility for assuring quality rests with all of us, students are genuine, knowledgeable partners and participants in our quality processes.

5. Annual Monitoring

- 5.1 Academic colleagues are expected to engage with the Student Experience and Course Outcomes (SECO) Dashboard as relevant to their role (Module Coordinator, Course Leader, Department Director of Postgraduate Research (DDPGR), Head of School, Associate Dean, etc) throughout the year to review module, course and research degree Quality Indicator outcomes.
- 5.2 Taking a risk-based approach, Quality Improvement actions and activities will be developed according to the guidelines set out in the Operational Handbook. Good practice will also be captured in these processes.

6. Academic Review

- 6.1 The Annual Review process has been designed to enable academic teams to provide targeted intervention relating to student experience, quality, standards and outcomes. However, where courses are identified as being at the highest risk, they may be considered for Academic Review. Courses that have been selected for Academic Review will follow the Academic Review process outlined in the operational handbook below, consisting of a supportive review meeting with course teams, Heads of School, Academic Registry and the Centre for Academic and Digital Innovation's (CADI) .

7. Evaluation and Review

- 7.1 Any queries regarding this policy, and its accompanying process document, should be directed to academicregistry@port.ac.uk.
- 7.2 The fitness for purpose and effectiveness of this policy will be formally reviewed in line with Academic Registry's standard review schedule for University academic policies.
- 7.3 Future development of the annual monitoring and review process will take appropriate account of advances in data analytics and sector-wide good practice in quality management. It will also consider whether the data indicate that the process has asked the right questions to enable us to develop a full and robust understanding of our performance, and whether our use of the data and our application of the process has enabled us to implement improvements over time.

Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Operational Handbook

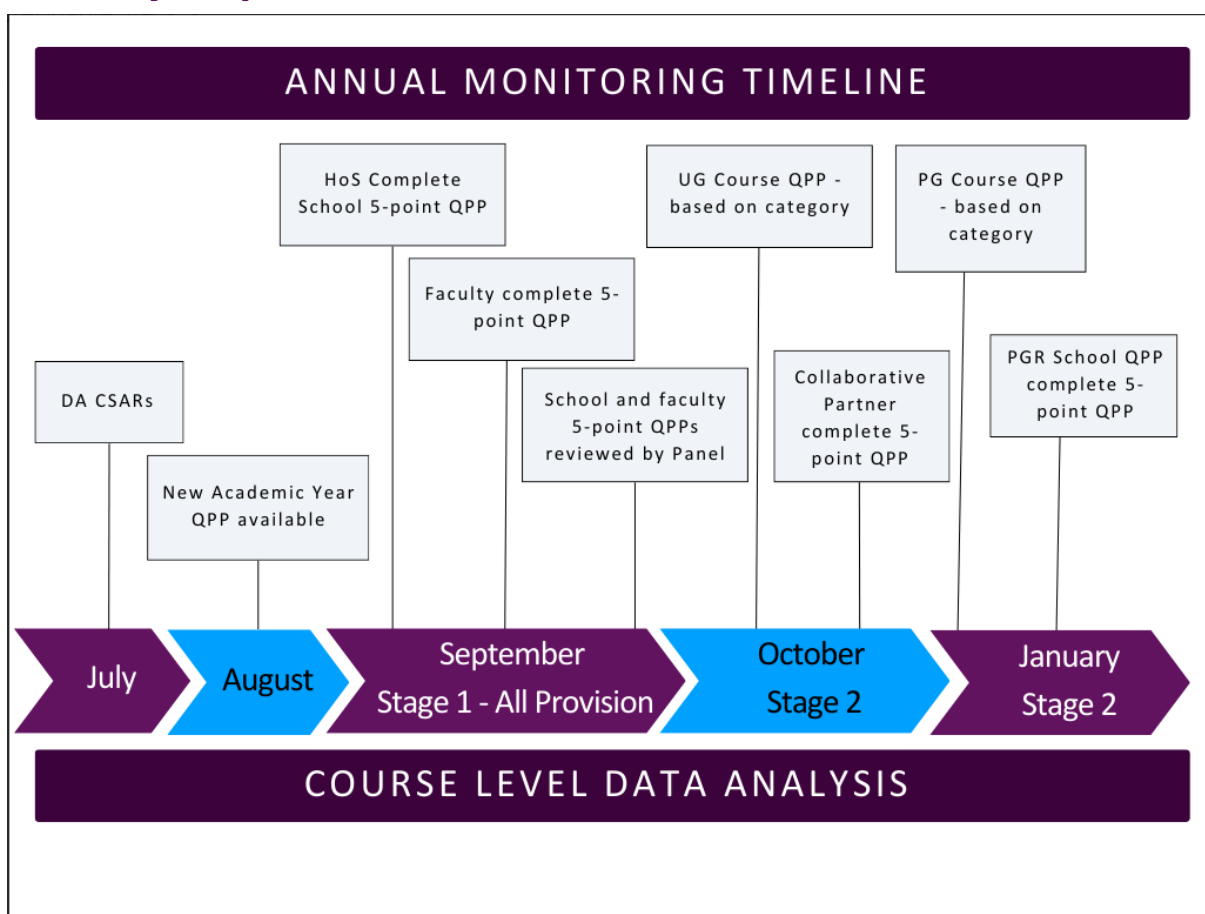
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the operational details for the University's annual monitoring and academic review of credit and award-bearing academic provision. This process document supports the Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy. Please refer to the Policy within this document for full details regarding the annual monitoring and academic review principles, scope, organisation and purpose.

2. Tools

- 2.1 Colleagues will be expected to engage proactively with the following tools when implementing the annual monitoring policy:
- The **Student Experience and Course Outcomes (SECO) Dashboard**, which captures the core quality data at each academic level. The SECO will be accessed via the University's business intelligence dashboards, and will be periodically refreshed through the year in line with updates to the individual metrics it includes. This will build a data picture over a number of months and will automatically indicate any variance from agreed University or external (sector) benchmarks to enable easy identification of any shortfalls and ongoing evaluation of performance. An action plan will be required where one or more of the quality indicators in the core quality data set results in a red outcome being applied.
 - The **Quality Priority Plan (QPP)**, which captures any good practice for wider dissemination, as well as actions that are required to address quality shortfalls indicated red in the SECO (where these are identified), within an appropriate time frame. **A QPP will need to be completed by all courses and schools** for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses and collaborative sub contractual courses, and by PGR Department Directors for postgraduate research provision, but the nature of the content required will vary depending upon performance against the agreed benchmarks. The QPP is intended to be a living/working document, that will evolve as planned interventions progress and are evaluated, and that facilitates regular ongoing review of the impact of any interventions at the appropriate level(s). All QPPs will be held within the [Annual Monitoring Google Drive](#).
 - For degree apprenticeships, an annual **Course Self Assessment Report (CSAR)** will be completed in line with the Ofsted [Education Inspection Framework](#). Course leaders will complete a **CSAR** in partnership with course teams and AD(A)s to identify areas of strength and outline where areas for improvement are present. Course level **CSARs** support the completion of the University level **Self Assessment Report (SAR)** and **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)** which Ofsted review as key documents within inspections. Apprenticeship courses will also be presented within the SECO dashboard to provide quantitative data to support CSAR completion.

3. Quality Improvement



3.1 Risk-Based Action Planning

- 3.1.1 The online SECO Dashboard captures various data sources to inform how courses are performing, and is updated monthly throughout the year to support those courses with non-standard intakes and/or multiple intakes. Where possible, in year data is also available to support monitoring of key areas, i.e. applications and withdrawals.
- 3.1.2 The specific quality indicators that are included within the SECO Dashboard at each level of the annual monitoring process are detailed in the latest Annual Monitoring Thresholds on the [Annual Monitoring \(AM\) website](#). These thresholds are against the relevant internal or external (sector) benchmark(s) agreed by UEB. The metrics against which we will evaluate the quality of our provision may be reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis against competitor and wider sector data, as well as the University's key strategic priorities.
- 3.1.3 The following outcomes will be automatically applied within the SECO Dashboard:
- **High Performing Course, Low Risk:** the agreed benchmark has been exceeded
 - **Effective Course, Low Risk:** the agreed benchmark has been met, with some areas for improvement.
 - **Low Performing Course, High Risk:** the agreed benchmark has not been met and course has identified areas of risk
 - **Poor Performing course, Highest Risk:** the agreed benchmark has not been met with high levels of risk.

- 3.1.4 Depending on the identified position of the course from the SECO Dashboard, QPPs will be completed. The following identifies which QPP document will be completed based on the categories identified within the Dashboard:
- **High Performing Course, Low Risk:** For all courses and research degrees that position as Higher Performing, a Good Practice Template will be completed to identify areas of strength, impact and good practice. Course teams will be required to share areas of Good Practice, which will be supported by the Centre for Academic and Digital Innovation's (CADI) to identify areas of practice that can be shared across the University.
 - **Effective Performing Course, Low Risk:** For all courses and research degrees that position as Effective, Low Risk, a QPP is completed to identify areas of strength and impact, as well as a priority action plan. These priority actions will be reviewed in January, April and June to measure progress and support timely completion.
 - **Low/Poor Performing Course, High and Highest Risk:** For all courses and research degrees that position as Low Performing Courses with Medium and Higher Risk, a QPP will be completed to record priority actions that will be taken to improve outcomes identified within the SECO Dashboard. Courses that are identified as having the highest level of risk will be considered for **Academic Review**.
- 3.1.5 Our quality monitoring processes are based on intelligent use of shared information that is accessible and transparent across the academic community. Colleagues are encouraged to consider the data pertaining to the provision they deliver or participate in against the information available for the University's other successful provision, and to use this to identify and explore possibilities for the adoption of practice that has been proven to be effective elsewhere.

3.2 Quality Priority Plans

3.2.1 Quality Priority Plan (QPPs) will be completed at 4 levels:

- School;
- Faculty;
- University;
- and Course.

The expected completion dates of all QPPs are illustrated in the timeline above.

3.2.2 There is a clear expectation that colleagues will outline what they might reasonably achieve locally and within their own sphere of experience; it is essential that action plans demonstrate ownership of the issues identified, rather than circumvention. Identification of support in order to complete actions should be identified within the Quality Priority Plan (QPP).

3.2.3 At **School** level, the Head of School is responsible for:

- Completing the School QPP by the appropriate timelines.
- Identifying areas of good practice and/or actions as core themes within the school, ensuring that the suggested impact of identified actions is both valid and measurable.
- Overseeing timely progress towards completion of the actions identified in each QPP.
- Providing updates on completed actions and identifying any recognised impact.
- Identifying any actions that have not been completed on schedule (and the reasons for any delay) and steps taken to escalate where required.
- Reviewing degree apprenticeship **CSARs** to ensure they are integrated into the school level **QPP**.

- 3.2.4 Faculty Executive Dean is responsible for:
- Completing a five-point **QPP** to identify five key actions to support the areas identified within their Faculty. These actions will outline what measurable impact these actions will have within key themes identified in the **QPP**.
 - Presenting their five-point **QPP** to the Annual Monitoring Panel to outline the five key actions identified as priorities for their faculty.
 - Communicating their five-point **QPP** to faculty colleagues to support implementation as required. These could include the Associate Dean (Academic), Associate Dean (Student), Heads of School and Course Leaders.
- 3.2.5 The Annual Monitoring Panel will be attended by all Executive Deans and Associate Deans where consultation and ratification of the Faculty five-point **QPP** will take place. The panel will ensure actions and their expected impact are realistic and measurable, enabling improvement of outcomes identified through school level **QPPs** and data presented within the **SECO** dashboard. The panel will also act as a forum for the discussion of good practice to be shared across the faculties, in particular identifying areas of practice that support student outcomes and reduction of the Awarding Gap consistently across the University. It will also identify any areas of training and support needed to ensure successful implementation of required actions. The panel will consist of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education), Academic Registrar and the Director of Education Strategies. Other panel members may be invited at the discretion of the Chair.
- 3.2.6 As a result of the Annual Monitoring Panel, a University level **QPP** will be created. This will include key actions that will be taken at a strategic level to support continuous improvement across the University.
- 3.2.7 Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Subcontracted Collaborative Partners and Professional Doctorates (PGR taught courses) will complete a course level **QPP** in line with the timeline above, noting that degree apprenticeship **CSARs** would have already been completed and can be linked into the course **QPP** to reduce repetition.
- 3.2.8 Course Leaders, University Academic Contacts, and Department Directors of Postgraduate Research should also be mindful of the following, as appropriate:
- Whether an action plan is required or not, the **QPP** should also provide commentary in relation to any attainment gap evidenced in the data pertaining to progression and graduate outcomes. Course Leaders/University Academic Contacts should consider and provide commentary on course-level interventions to address any gaps;
 - The **QPP** should also capture any specific actions arising from module and subject **External Examiners' reports**, or from reviews undertaken by **Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies** (PSRBs);
 - For **subcontracted collaborative provision**, the Course Leader/University Academic Contacts should liaise with the relevant University Contact and Partner Contact to ensure that the actions outlined in the **QPP** are produced collaboratively. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring clarity around which actions are the responsibility of the partner, and which are the responsibility of the University.

4. Sharing Excellence

4.1 Disseminating Good and Improving Practice

- 4.1.1 Colleagues at all levels are asked to identify **good practice**. For the purpose of this policy, good practice is defined as general ways of working or specific interventions that have led to either:
- Demonstrable improvement where improvement was required (for example, to address a gap in performance against agreed quality indicators); or
 - Maintenance or extension of established practice that is generally accepted as contributing positively to a specific aspect of the student experience.
- 4.1.2 This definition of good practice is intended to be inclusive of specific, targeted interventions to encourage change and/or improvement, as well as of broader strategies to develop and sustain positive practices.
- 4.5.3 Good practice is required where a course is presented as **Higher Performing, Low Risk and Effective, Low Risk** within the **SECO** dashboard.
- 4.5.4 The purpose of capturing good practice at these levels is to prompt reflection, conversation, discussion and the sharing of ideas in wider fora, and to ensure that excellence is recognised and rewarded where appropriate. A good practice highlight should capture:
- the context for the practice being described (for example, the problem or
 - issue that the good practice in question has helped to address or prevent).
 - the specific action taken;
 - the impact of the action or practice;
 - how that impact was measured (this could include formal measures, or more anecdotal evidence or feedback);
- 4.1.5 Those courses recognised as demonstration good practice will be invited to collaborate with the Centre for Academic and Digital Innovation's (CADI) to establish a plan for dissemination, staff training and development.

5. Academic Review

- 5.1 Academic Review is the overarching term for the review of award bearing academic provision. Academic Review encompasses the following:
- Course Review for level 4 to 7 provision, and Year 0 where relevant, including subcontracted collaborative partners and degree apprenticeships.
- 5.2 The principles which govern our approach to Academic Review are consistent with those which govern our approach to annual monitoring. These are:
- Supportive
 - Data-informed
 - Transparent

- Risk-based
- Timely
- Action-focused
- Inclusive
- Proportionate

5.3 The purpose of Academic Review is to provide a supportive and action focused approach to improvement where a course has not met the minimum requirements set by the University with specific focus on student outcomes, student experience and/or course performance. Consideration is also made in relation to feedback from External Examiners and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) when identifying courses for Academic Review. These courses will have been identified through annual monitoring as **Poor Performing - High Risk**. University Executive Members reserve the right to request an extraordinary review of any provision at any time if there are concerns regarding academic standards and/or the student experience

5.4 Where a course has been identified for Academic Review, the review will take place as soon as possible within the academic session.

5.5 When a course has been identified for Academic Review, a review meeting will take place. The Review Meeting will consist of the following members:

- Head of School and/or Associate Head
- Course Leader/team
- Associate Dean (Academic)
- Associate Dean (Students)
- Head of Academic Innovation and/or Senior Lecturer in Learning Design
- Academic Registry Quality Advisor
- External Examiner (optional)

As Academic Review has been designed to be a supportive process, creating an opportunity for course teams to identify areas for improvement and set an impact focused action plan, a member of the Centre for Academic and Digital Innovation's (CADI) will be in attendance to explore the most appropriate support package to implement the identified actions in partnership with the course team. It is expected that course teams will engage with the agreed programme of support offered by CADI and that the outcomes of these activities are reported within the Academic Review QPP action plan.

5.6 Academic Registry Quality Advisors will support the arrangement of this meeting and provide Quality Priority Plan (QPP) documents as required for review and discussion.

5.7 During the Academic Review meeting course and faculty members will discuss key factors affecting the course under review, using the QPP as a tool for reflection and impact based action planning. The review members will have an opportunity to explore and enhance the QPP as required to ensure that actions are realistic to measure impact within the current academic year.

5.8 Progress of the Academic Review QPP should be monitored through the school and faculty education and quality committees, with updates to the Academic Quality Group to ensure timely reporting and barriers to implementation are identified at the earliest opportunity.

- 5.9 There may be occasions when a course undergoes an Academic Review in the previous academic session and is identified again under the Review Criteria the following year. This may occur if course changes being put in place have not had sufficient time to embed and create a positive impact on the student experience and/or outcomes. In this situation, the Associate Dean (Academic) will provide a written report of progress against the Course Review action plan and submit a report to Academic Registry. It may also be necessary to assemble an additional review meeting to ensure that the planned actions are still relevant to the improvements required.
- 5.10 It is expected that the Academic Review meetings will take place online, unless it is deemed more appropriate for this to be conducted face to face.

6. Collaborative Partnership Review

- 6.1 Subcontracted collaborative courses follow the same approach for course annual monitoring as outlined above.
- 6.2 Validated collaborative partners will complete a five-point QPP at partner level to identify areas of priority for the year ahead. If validated collaborative partners have their own annual report they are welcome to use this to identify areas of improvement and actions planned for the next academic year.
- 6.3 Cyclical reviews will take place every five years with all collaborative partners, in line and ahead of any partnership agreement renewal with the University. Guidance for this process can be accessed [here](#).

7. Postgraduate Research Review and QPP

- 7.1 Postgraduate Research (PGR) Review applies to all postgraduate research degrees no matter where or how they are delivered, this includes with a partner. PGR Review is conducted at School and Faculty level.
- 7.2 PGR provision will be reviewed on an annual basis using a PGR QPP where areas of good practice and improvement are identified through action planning.
- 7.3 School PGR QPPs should be completed at the earliest opportunity, and preferably no later than end of Teaching Block 1 in the following academic session. This will allow for early intervention where improvements are required and for timely reporting.
- 7.4 Department Directors of Postgraduate Research (DDPGR) will complete QPPs in the first instance, supported by the Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research (FDPGR). Once QPPs have been completed the FDPGR will review all QPPs and provide a Faculty based report, identifying areas of good practice and improvement at Faculty level.
- 7.5 On completion of faculty QPPs all FDGRS will conduct a review with the Director of Graduate School and Academic Registry to agree to the overarching PGR action plan. On completion of this review the Director of Graduate School will present a report to the University Research & Innovation Committee (URIC) for final approval.

- 7.6 Where a PGR review identifies repeated areas of improvement where actions have not made the expected impact, an Academic Review may be required. The standard PGR Academic Review documentation includes:
- Commentary report from Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research (FDPGR) addressing primary areas of discussion
 - Data analysis report from Associate Dean (Academic) spanning 3 years
 - FDPGR QPP x 3 years
 - DDPGR QPP x 3 years
- 7.7 The standard Review Panel membership consists of:
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation
 - Academic Registrar/Nominee
 - Director of Graduate School
 - Quality Assurance and Academic Standards Officer (report writer in attendance)
- 7.8 The PGR Academic Review meeting will provide a supportive and proactive action plan to identify key areas of focus for impactful implementation. On completion of this review the Director of Graduate School will provide a written report of progress against the PGR action plan and submit a report to Academic Registry and URIC.