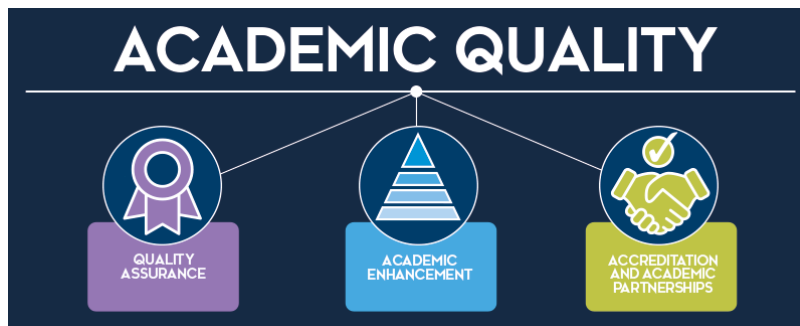




# Academic Quality Handbook: Professional Services Review

# Professional Services Review Handbook

Produced by Academic Quality | Quality Assurance Division



This Handbook is part of a series of Academic Quality policies, procedures and guides. They are intended to provide all colleagues with clear information regarding key quality assurance, enhancement and student experience processes. Further details can be found on the [Academic Quality website](#).

AUTHOR | Laura Johnstone, Quality & Academic Partnerships Manager  
APPROVED BY | University Committee for Quality and Standards  
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## Overview

The Academic-Related Professional Services Review is one part of Heriot-Watt's institution-led review processes, alongside Annual Monitoring and Review and Academic Review.

The Professional Services Review (PSR) meets the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) guidance for the 2017-2022 and 2022-24 quality cycle that all services which contribute to the student experience should be reviewed as part of an institution's review processes.

The Heriot-Watt approach to PSR is one of flexible, targeted reviews, either by identifying the services which will undergo a review on a six-yearly cycle or allow for the identification of specific topics for the review to focus upon which may cover more than one professional service.

The University's approach to PSR is overseen by the University Committee for Quality and Standards (UCQS) and is managed on behalf of UCQS by the Academic Quality Division within Registry and Academic Support.

The current approach to PSR was approved by UCQS at its meeting on 3 July 2023, and was based on the principles for PSR endorsed by UCQS in September 2022 and on the learning from a pilot review undertaken in February 2023. The approach also draws on QAA Scotland's *Focus On Shaping Professional Services* initiative.

## Key Principles of the Professional Services Review

- The process will be enhancement-led, focusing on how service(s) provision can benefit the wider student learning experience.
- The process will be open and transparent, with the outcomes disseminated, not just to the area(s) under review, but to the student body and Schools.
- Externality in the membership of the panel is key part of the process, with professionals in the relevant area appointed who can provide a valuable outside perspective.
- Student input will be key in the review process, both as representatives on the review panel and as participants in the review meetings.
- The review preparations and participation in the review visit will encompass all campuses and all modes of delivery.
- An indicative six-year schedule of the services under review is provided in [Appendix 1](#). Please note this will be subject to change if an emerging theme is identified.
- The University Committee for Quality and Standards will review the schedule on an annual basis to identify if any changes to the scheduled are required.

## The Professional Services Review Process

### Review Preparations

Approximately 6-9 months in advance of the review the Academic Quality Review Manager will meet with the key contact in the service under review to discuss:

- the timeline (an indicative timeline is available in [Appendix 2](#))
- the review process and documentation required
- the date for the review
- the identification of the Lead Contact for the AQ Review Manager to liaise with
- the identification and nomination of an external(s) to participate on the review team

### The Review Team

A Review Team will be appointed comprising of:

- Chair
- Academic member of staff
- Professional Services member of staff
- Student Representative(s)
- External Expert(s)
- Academic Quality Review Manager and Senior Administrative Assistant.

The External Expert nomination will be approved by the relevant Head of Service.

The student representative and External members on the panel will be paid a fee, which mirrors those associated with the Academic Review process:

TABLE 1 - FEES PAID TO STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES AND EXTERNAL MEMBERS OF THE REVIEW PANEL

DURATION (DAYS)	UK AND DUBAI		MALAYSIA	
	External payment	Student payment	External payment	Student payment
2	£750	£370	RM 2,400	RM 800
2.5	£940	£470	RM 3,000	RM 1000
3	£1125	£560	RM 3,600	RM 1200

The AQ Senior Administrative Assistant will liaise with the External and Student representatives to ensure the requisite HR process, including Right to Work checks, have taken place prior to the Review process commencing and will arrange payment of fees once the Review Visit is concluded and the report finalised.

The Lead Conduct will lead the development of the Self-Evaluation Document (SED), an indicative template for the SED is provided in [Appendix 3](#). The SED is an open and reflective document which sets out:

- The areas which are working well and are good practice for sharing more widely across

- the institution
- Areas identified where improvement is required
- Future Plans and developments
- How the area supports the Shaping Tomorrow Together Strategy 2025

The SED should be supported by relevant key information including, but not limited to, strategic or annual operational plans, relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and organisational charts and outlines of roles and responsibilities.

The AQ Review Manager and the AQ Senior Administrative Assistant will work together to identify a supporting data set from centrally held documentation including, but not limited to:

- Annual Monitoring and Review reports
- Academic Review reports
- External Examiner reports
- Internal and External student survey outcomes
- Annual plans and any relevant key performance indicators

The documentation will be submitted to the AQ Review Manager approximately 5-6 weeks prior to the review date and sent to the Review Team by Academic Quality.

A Review Team pre-meeting will be held approximately 2 weeks prior to the review date with Review Team members submitting their written comments on the documentation to the AQ Review Manager 3 weeks prior to the review date.

### **Review Team pre-meeting**

The Review Team pre-meeting will agree:

- The list of questions to be asked during each of the meetings.
- Finalise the schedule, including indicating any members of staff to be included in the review meetings.
- The Review Team will also agree on the most effective means of gaining student input into the Review Visit which could include, but not limited to, meetings on the day(s),
- separate focus groups (in person or via MS Teams) or additional student surveys.

The AQ Review Manager and the AQ Senior Administrative Assistant will confirm final arrangements for the Review Visit with the Lead Contact, including attendees at each meeting.

A template schedule of meetings is provided in [Appendix 4](#).

The AQ Senior Administrative Assistant will arrange the Teams meetings for the Review Visit inviting both the Team and Review participants.

### **The Review Visit**

The Review Team, in the course of their meetings with staff and students, will identify areas of good practice and recommendations for action.

The Review Visit will be an enhancement-led process and be conducted as an open dialogue, with all participants having an equal voice.

At the conclusion of the visit the Review Team will reach an overall judgement on effectiveness of the areas under review.

### **Post-Review Visit**

The AQ Review Manager will produce a draft review report based upon the discussions during the review visit and the Review Team's overall judgement, identified areas of commendation and recommendations. The full Review Team will have input to the report and agree the final draft.

Following the Review Team's agreement of the report, the AQ Review Manager will send the draft report to the Lead Contact for confirmation of the factual accuracy of the report.

### **Action Plan**

The AQ Review Manager will send the Lead Contact the final agreed report and a pre-populated action plan template ([Appendix 5](#)). The Lead Contact will liaise with key individuals from the area under review to produce a response and an action plan to address the review recommendations by a date agreed between the Lead Contact and the AQ Review Manager.

### **Submission and publication (inc. one-year progress report)**

The Review report and action plan are submitted to the next available meeting of the University Committee for Quality and Standards (UCQS). UCQS will be asked to confirm the overall judgement of the Review Team and approve the Report and Action Plan.

The Report and Action Plan will be published internally on the Academic Quality SharePoint.

One year on from the Review taking place, the Lead Contact will be asked to submit an updated action plan to UCQS for consideration. UCQS will be asked to consider the progress on the addressing the actions and on the conclusion of the review process.

The Report and Action Plan are additionally submitted to QAA Scotland and summarised as part of the Scottish Funding Council annual reporting.

## Appendix 1 – Schedule of Professional Services Reviews 2023-2028

ACADEMIC YEAR	REVIEW AREA
2022-23	Registry and Academic Support
2023-24	Mental Health and Wellbeing
2024-25	Learning and Teaching Academy*
2025-26	Information Services*
2026-27	Library*
2027-28	RAS #1*
2028-29	Research Futures*
2029-30	RAS #2*

\*Subject to UCQS approval (expected April 2024)



## Appendix 2 – Professional Services Review Timeline

The following review timeline provides an indicative overview of the key tasks, responsibilities and timelines. The AQ Review Manager will agree with the Lead Contact the relevant dates for each review.

TIME +/- REVIEW VISIT	TASK	RESPONSIBILITY
- 6 months	Identify panel and date for review	AQ and Lead Contact
- 6 months	Identify external(s)	Lead Contact
- 6 months	Approval of external	Head of Professional Service
- 5-6 weeks	Summary of issues from centrally held documentation	AQ Review Manager and Senior Administrative Assistant
- 5-6 weeks	Deadline for Self-Evaluation and supporting documentation	Lead Contact
- 3 weeks	Deadline for comments on the review documentation	Review Team
- 2 weeks	Panel pre-meeting	AQ Review Manager and Senior
- 1 week	Finalising the schedule for the review visit, including participants	AQ Review Manager, Senior Administrative Assistant and Lead Contact
0 weeks	Review Visit	
+ 3 weeks	Report produced and shared with area under review	AQ Review Manager
+ 5 weeks	Report considered for factual accuracy	Lead Contact
+ 10 weeks	Production of an Action Plan to address the recommendations	Lead Contact
Next available meeting	Report and Action Plan considered by UCQS	AQ Review Manager

## Appendix 3 – Professional Services Review Visit Schedule template

The following is an example of a Review Visit schedule covering the Scottish, Dubai and Malaysian campuses, the schedule for each individual review will be agreed between the Review Team, the AQ Review Manager and the Lead Contact.

DAY 1				
Meeting	To Attend	UK Time	Dubai Time	Malaysia Time
Senior Management Team – Initial Meeting	-	8.00 – 9.00	12.00 – 1.00	4.00 – 5.00
Review Team Meeting	-	9.00 – 9.15	1.00 – 1.15	5.00 – 5.15
Meeting with Scottish campus students	Mix of Foundation/UG/PGT/PGR students. Both student reps and non-reps.	9.15 – 10.15	1.15 – 2.15	5.15 – 6.15
Review Team Meeting	-	10.15 – 10.30	2.15 – 2.30	-
Meeting with Dubai campus students	Mix of Degree Entry Programme/UG/PGT/PGR students Both student reps and non-reps.	10.30 – 11.30	2.30 – 3.30	-
Review Team Meeting	-	11.30 – 11.45	3.30 – 4.45	-
Staff Meeting -	-	11.45 – 12.45	4.45 - 5.45	Timing prohibitive for Malaysia Staff. Alternative means of gathering views
Review Team – Lunch	-	12.45 – 1.45	-	-
Review Team Meeting	-	1.45 – 2.00	-	-

**DAY 2**

Meeting	TO ATTEND	UK TIME	DUBAI TIME	MALAYSIA TIME
Meeting with Malaysia campus students	-	8.00 – 9.00	12.00 – 1.00	4.00 – 5.00
Review Team Meeting	-	9.00 – 9.15	1.00 – 1.15	
Staff Meeting 2 -	-	9.15 – 10.30	1.15 – 2.30	5.15 – 6.30
Review Team Meeting	-	10.30 – 10.45	2.30 – 2.45	
Staff Meeting 3	-	10.45 – 11.45	2.45 – 3.45	Timing prohibitive for Malaysia Staff. Alternative means of gathering views
Review Team – Conclusions meeting	-	11.45 – 1.00	3.45 – 5.00	

**DAY 3**

Meeting	To Attend	UK Time	Dubai Time	Malaysia Time
Senior Management Team – review conclusions and recommendations	-	8.00 – 9.00	12.00 – 1.00	4.00 – 5.00

## Appendix 4 – Self-Evaluation Document Template

A template is provided to provide a basic structure to the Self-Evaluation Document but the template can be adapted to fit your needs. Academic Quality can provide examples of previous reports to assist the document writing.

### Self-Evaluation Document, Date

#### Focus and Scope of the Review

1. The overall focus of this Professional Service Review of Provide Name of Service or thematic area is:
  - Provide details of the agreed focus of the review
2. The scope of the review is:
  - Provide details of the agreed scope of the review e.g. the experience of on-campus students across all five campuses or the experience of all off-campus students.

#### Context and approaches to management

##### 1. Overview and Context

Provide an overview of the structure and management of the area(s) under review. This should reflect on, as appropriate to the agreed remit, how the service/thematic area is provided across all campus locations and mode of delivery.

This section should also include how the service/thematic area contributes to the overall student learning experience and supports University Strategy using appropriate data sources and key performance indicators.

##### 2. Areas of positive practice

Provide a reflective overview of the areas of good and effective practice within the service/thematic area using supporting evidence as appropriate.

##### 3. Areas for development

Provide a reflective overview of the areas which have been identified as requiring further development within the service/thematic area using supporting evidence as appropriate.

##### 4. Future Plans

Provide an overview of any future developments within the service/thematic area which will support the student learning experience.

##### 5. Evaluation of effectiveness of approaches to supporting the student learning experience.

Provide in the section a reflective evaluation on how effective the approaches taken to support and enhance the student learning experience within the service/thematic area are. This should be a critical analysis which is open and honest. The PS Review process is an opportunity to raise issues to the University with the view to ensuring that steps are taken institutionally to address any areas of concern.

##### 6. Summary and Conclusions

Please use this section to summarise your conclusions and specific areas to highlight to the Review Team.

**Appendix 5 – Professional Services Review Action Plan Template**

<b>Recommendations for Action</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Target Date for Completion</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
1.			
2.			

<b>Recommendations for University Consideration</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Target Date for Completion</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
1.			
2.			

## Glossary

KEY TERM	DESCRIPTION
Academic Quality (AQ)	Division within the Registry and Academic Services Directorate responsible for a broad range of services around quality assurance and enhancement, regulatory and policy development and student engagement
Academic Review	Process occurring on a five-year cycle to assure the quality and standard of programmes
Annual Monitoring and Review (AMR)	Annual institution-led process to monitor and review the University's academic provision
Professional Services Review (PSR)	Process occurring on a five-year cycle to assure the quality and standard of services that contribute towards the student learning experience
Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)	UK Governing Body responsible for ensuring the quality of higher education provision in Scotland
Scottish Funding Council (SFC)	Statutory Body responsible for ensuring the quality of higher education provision in Scotland
University Committee for Quality and Standards (UCQS)	Committee responsible, on behalf of Senate, for all aspects of academic quality assurance