



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



PERIODIC REVIEW

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This procedure applies to Bucks New University and Academic Partners.

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Introduction

- 1 The purpose of the review is to consider the continuing currency and validity of programmes in light of developments in research, professional and industry practice and pedagogy, changes in the external environment such as requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and continued alignment with the provider's strategy and mission. The review is also intended to evaluate whether students are attaining the intended learning outcomes and whether the assessment regime enables this to be appropriately demonstrated.
- 2 The review process provides a focus on academic standards, the scholarship of academic staff and their engagement with the pedagogy of their discipline as evidenced through the documentation, dialogue and discussion.
- 3 The process ensures that a full range of subject areas/academic partners present and planned activities are reviewed along with the standards and quality of teaching and learning whilst engaging with the views of staff and students.
- 4 The review enables the monitoring of all the ways in which a programme is experienced by students, whether in alternative forms of delivery (for example distance learning, flexible and distributed learning) or within different programme pathways.
- 5 The review takes place on a periodic cycle and normally operates at subject or partner level. Academic Registry is responsible for drawing up an institutional schedule for ratification by the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC). The process of subject review and academic partner review are separate from approval and re-approval of individual programmes, but will inform any subsequent review and re-approval of University awards delivered by the academic partner and future re-signing/extensions.
- 6 Review of academic partnership activity is undertaken as an alternative to subject review providing a major focus on standards and quality. Academic partner reviews follow the same process as the subject review but in addition will focus on the robustness of the partnership.
- 7 The review schedule will be drawn up by Academic Registry and agreed in negotiation with the academic partners. The University has an agreed taxonomy of academic partnership activity. The categories of such activity are:
 - accreditation
 - distance learning with partner support
 - franchise
 - joint/dual degrees
 - professional: degrees with integral professional training
 - validation
- 8 All partnerships will require their own academic partner review. For newly established partnerships with a medium to high risk a full review will take place normally after a maximum of three years; for established partnerships or those with low risk reviews will normally take place every five years. Higher risk partnerships may be subject to more frequent reviews.

Purpose of Review

- 9 The University identifies the aims of subject review to be:
 - a to enable an 'exchange of ideas' with externals in relation to teaching in the subject area and to support staff in their aims to develop their programmes
 - b to contribute to programme review and enhancement
 - c to consider the range and nature of scholarly activities of staff and to evidence how staff draw upon these to maintain currency within the curriculum
 - d to evidence staff awareness of subject and sector pedagogical principles and to provide examples of how such engagements inform the delivery of the curriculum
 - e to consider how feedback from former students, employers, professional bodies, subject associations and professional practice, has been used in the development of the subject and its delivery
 - f to evaluate current strengths and weaknesses in the teaching, research and management activities of the department with a view to identifying potential enhancements that can be made to the departments activities
 - g to identify potential improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the subject area's previous review
 - h to confirm that actions have been completed or addressed from the previous review or addressed through the approval, re-approval or modification of its programmes
 - i to identify examples of good practice for wider dissemination
- 10 The purpose of an academic partnership review is to establish the same principles as for the subject review with the additional following principles:
 - a review the success of the operation of the partnership from recruitment to graduation between the University and the academic partner
 - b review the overall success of the partnership including recruitment, retention and progression rates and a review of the overall minimum and maximum numbers set for the programmes
 - c review the academic partner's current higher education strategy and its alignment with the University's strategy where appropriate
 - d explore the academic partner's achievement of appropriate academic standards in its contribution to the delivery of the programme(s) and its understanding of higher education quality and standards in relation to teaching, learning and assessment
 - e explore contribution of all teams at the University involved in the operation and support of the partnership
 - f review the student experience at the partner including, use of student feedback, learning resources, student support and the accuracy and completeness of published information
 - g review the current staffing in place at the partner and ensure all staff are entered on the partner staff register and are suitable to undertake their duties
 - h consider the range and nature of staff development activity in place at the partner
 - i consider the continued appropriateness and adequacy of the partner's physical and human resources and facilities
 - j explore key due diligence information

Stages of the Review Process

- 11 Please refer to Appendix 1: Process Flowchart.
- 12 A schedule for subject and academic partner reviews will be drawn up by Academic Registry and will be approved by Quality and Standards Committee (QSC). This will act as due notice for the departments/partners under review. Academic Registry will also notify the departments within the subject areas and academic partners of their upcoming reviews in the spring term prior to the academic year in which the review takes place.
- 13 The review process will be administered, organised and supported by Academic Registry. The schedule and dates for the reviews will be set by Academic Registry before the start of each academic year.
- 14 The appropriate Head of School(s) will identify the lead academic(s) who will liaise with Academic Registry and the course team in the preparation for the review.
- 15 The lead academic(s) will identify and invite the external subject academic and professional industry panel members to the review. The academic external cannot be an existing external examiner, but someone who is independent and has no vested interest in the department/academic partner under review. The industry external could be a potential employer of graduates from the subject area/academic partner. Where the overarching subject area/academic partner under review has a number of very specific programme areas covering different departments/schools, a subject specialist may be appointed for each area as deemed appropriate. The Chair must check that the external reviewers are appropriately qualified for the role and must be agreed prior to invitations being formalised.
- 16 Academic Registry will collate and distribute all the documentation provided by the lead academic(s) for the subject/academic partner to the panel members normally two weeks before the review event. The documents will normally be published via Blackboard.
- 17 The review event is normally a whole day, but this is dependent on the size and nature of the subject area/academic partner event. For subject areas an appropriate campus location will be determined by Academic Registry, and for academic partners their home campus will be used. The review will include various meetings with staff and students.
- 18 A report of the event will be considered by Faculty Board and QSC. QSC will note any issues raised, and will make any appropriate recommendations for follow up action to Senate.

Membership of the Review Panel

- 19 For the subject area review the panel will consist of the following:

Role	Person specification
Chair	An appropriately qualified member of staff, appointed by Academic Registry
Internal Academic	a member of QSC or their nominated representative with an appropriate quality and standards remit , appointed by

Role	Person specification
Chair	An appropriately qualified member of staff, appointed by Academic Registry
	Academic Registry
External Academic	A subject specialist
Industry Professional	a relevant professional representative or employer
Student Member	proposed by the Students' Union
Secretary	Academic Registry member
Observer	up to four (at the discretion of the Chair)

20 Other representatives from the subject area under review who will be invited to attend are:

- Head of School
- Head of Academic Department
- Faculty Quality Coordinator
- Departmental teaching staff including any associate lecturers
- Learning resources representative
- Student representation across a range of programmes and levels

21 The panel size may vary depending on the amount of programmes under review and should be appropriate to the size of the subject area, number of programmes included and number of staff in the teaching team.

22 For the academic partnership review the panel will consist of:

Role	Person Specification
Chair	An appropriately qualified member of staff, appointed by Academic Registry
Internal Academic	with experience of partnership activity, appointed by Academic Registry
External	with experience of partnership activity
Student Member	proposed by the Students' Union
Secretary	Academic Registry member
Observer	up to four (at the discretion of the Chair)

23 Other representatives who will be invited to attend the meeting from the University will be:

- Head of School

- Head of Academic Department(s)
- Partnership Tutors
- School Registrar(s)

24 And from the academic partner the following will be invited:

- Senior staff
- Senior lead
- Programme leader(s)
- Teaching team
- Support staff
- Programme administrator(s)
- Student representatives

25 Additional members may be included, either internal or external, depending on the complexity of the partnership under review.

26 The student body should be a mix of final year foundation degree, undergrad and postgrad students and where possible students who reflect the diversity of protected characteristics. The minimum number of students is six, and should range from all the different programmes under review. Where possible, the elected course representative should be included. Where the subject area/academic partner's provision includes work-based learning and FDL, the student views will be captured electronically via Blackboard and on-line surveys.

27 Other academic or professional service colleagues should be encouraged to observe the review events or engage in the process. For example where a subject area is due for a review in the coming year, the observation or engagement will benefit the department the following year. The panel should not consist of more than four observers per review.

28 Quorum will not be established without the presence of the Chair, or their nominated deputy, the nominated internal academic and the Academic Registry Secretary. If the external subject academic is unable to attend the panel event owing to unforeseen circumstances but has submitted a detailed report to the secretary the event can still go ahead. (See form 11).

Areas of Responsibilities

29 The Chair's responsibilities:

- to approve the external reviewers (to use form 3)
- to facilitate and ensure the review event is conducted according to the approved process
- to ensure all panel members are allowed an equal opportunity to participate in the discussions
- to ensure the subject area/academic partner is assessed comprehensively and objectively

30 The panel's responsibilities:

- to read all the documentation and prepare for the review event by identifying areas of discussion which will form basis of the questioning of various staff and students. The template to use and areas to explore are in form 7 & 8
- making a sound judgement on the evidence provided taking into account the discussions as to the robustness and integrity of the teaching and learning within the subject area/academic partner
- make any recommendations to enhance activities or identify good practices for dissemination

31 Academic Registry's responsibilities:

- setting the schedule of dates of the reviews before the start of the academic year in which the review will take place
- liaising closely with the lead academics in the subject area/academic partner in the compilation of the documents for the review
- set the agenda with the approval of the Chair (form 5 & 6)
- managing all the arrangements of the event to take place, for example, room bookings, hospitality, access to Blackboard for externals, parking and all communications with all parties
- uploading documentation to Blackboard
- processing external fees and expenses (to use form 4)
- act as secretary to the event and prepare the final report for approval by the Chair
- advise on matters of process and regulations

32 The lead academic's responsibilities:

- preparing a self-evaluation document using the template in appendix 2. This will outline the activities within the department(s)/academic partner highlighting issues and achievements that have affected the performance and practices
- providing all required documentation to Academic Registry in a timely manner
- liaising with Academic Registry on attendance of academics, students and externals
- identifying external panel members

33 The Academic Partner will have joint responsibility with the partnership tutor (lead academic) and they should work closely on the responsibilities highlighted above.

34 External members will be expected to comment on/exchange ideas on issues relating to standards (in relation both to national expectations and their own experience), currency of scholarly activity of staff, approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. The external members will be expected to share fully in the discussion in terms of challenges and developments from their own experience and compare this with activity and developments at Buckinghamshire New University.

Documentation

35 Documentation will be prepared ready to be circulated to the panel at least two weeks prior to the event and is normally made available via Blackboard. This will comprise of:

36 Programme Specific:

- Self-Evaluation Document (see appendix 2)
- Subject Annual Monitoring Meeting (SAMM) Record and Action Plans for the previous two years
- Previous Department/subject area/Academic Partner Review report (if available)
- National Student Survey results
- External Examiner reports and responses for all the programmes covered by the review for the previous two years
- Staff Profiles*
- Programme Handbooks
- Programme Committee action sheets
- Definitive Course List
- Definitive Module List
- Programme Specifications
- Module Descriptors

37 Review process documentation:

- Guidance for Panel members
- Guidance for Students
- Agenda
- Panel Membership
- Academic and Student attendance listing
- Panel Members note sheet
- Fee payment and expenses form (for externals)

38 For an academic partnership review the following additional documentation will be required:

- Operations Manual
- Academic Partner Operational Structure (roles and responsibilities)
- Examples of marketing material and confirmation from Student recruitment and Marketing that the material is appropriate and accurate
- Updated core due diligence information and analysis prepared by Academic Registry

The Review Event

39 The initial meeting of the panel will discuss the documentation and identify areas that require further clarification. The Chair may direct members of the panel to take the lead on certain lines of questioning. This will be followed by:

- a The first meeting will be with the relevant Department Manager(s) and the Head of School(s) for the subject area. This meeting will be strategically focused on such

* Information will be provided to the panel on staff research and scholarly activity and staff development (especially pedagogy). This should include summary details on institutional/faculty/school/department staff development and CPD activities, with particular emphasis on the activities within the last three years.

- areas as curriculum development and significant changes within the subject area in terms of subject/awards/delivery and internal structure changes.
- b The second meeting with a group of final year students from the programmes in the subject area. In this meeting it is important to remember that feedback from the students should be distinguished between comments about their programme and complaints on academic matters, which will be considered separate from this process and should be fed through to the appropriate monitoring and review processes.
 - c A third meeting with the teaching staff will focus on how they draw upon their scholarly and pedagogical activity to inform curriculum development, subject matter and teaching and learning. Where appropriate, technicians and/or administrative staff may be included. Participants from the first meeting will not attend this meeting.
- 40 Once all the meetings have been concluded, the panel will meet in private to consider its findings and prepare the recommendations to feedback to the academic team.
 - 41 The academic teams return to meet the panel to hear feedback before a final report is prepared.
 - 42 The academic partnership review event will normally take place at the Partner's premises and may include a tour of the facilities. The event will follow the same format as that of the subject review but where applicable will include staff from both the University and the academic partner at each of the meetings.
 - 43 The review will start in the same way as the subject review and then be followed by:
 - a The first meeting with the senior staff of the academic partner. This meeting will strategically focus on the partnerships management and future direction.
 - b The second meeting will be conducted with final year student representatives from the academic partner.
 - c The third meeting is with partner academic staff who are involved with the delivery of the programmes.
 - d The final meeting is with the relevant University staff i.e. academic partnership tutors that are involved in the partner (as listed above)
 - 44 For overseas academic partner reviews, the panel will meet in private to discuss any issues or areas that need further clarification. Where it is not possible for all panel members to meet, a desk based exercise can be undertaken using form 13.
 - 45 This is then followed by a site visit to the overseas academic partner institution to meet the senior staff, teaching staff and student representations to address the questions or issues raised by the panel. The Secretary will then complete form 14, which is an overseas visit report, which is shared with the rest of the panel before the final meeting is undertaken to conclude the review.
 - 46 Given the logistical challenge of a full panel visiting an overseas academic partner, at a minimum the Chair and the Secretary will undertake the meetings and site visit to partners located overseas.

Areas for Discussion

47 Where possible the same themes should be explored at each review. Below is a comprehensive list of areas which could be addressed at each meeting.

48 Quality and Standards

- is there sufficient evidence in the documentation to demonstrate that the characteristics of and direction of the course programmes within the subject area/academic partner are appropriate and fit for purpose,
- the course programmes are meeting the required standards for an award of the level indicated in the framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ)
- the course programmes are meeting the relevant subject benchmark standards and/or any relevant PSRB requirements.
- the subject area/academic partner team are sufficiently qualified and up to date in order to teach the curriculum

49 Learning, Teaching and Curriculum

- what staff engagement has there been with the wider sector and external reviewers in relation to research, scholarship and professional development activities.
- what measures have been taken to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning approaches?
- where appropriate how has feedback from students, graduates, employers and external reviewers been used in the design of the curriculum
- is the curriculum informed by current research and scholarship of staff? And how have pedagogic developments affected delivery of the curriculum.
- have external links influenced the curriculum including explicit reference to the UK Quality Code

50 Student Experience

- is the programme content vocationally and professionally relevant
- do students feel that they are being prepared for the world of work
- are students offered sufficient support while undertaking the programme?
- is student feedback sufficiently embedded?
- how does the relevant department(s)/academic partner ensure all students are treated equally?

51 Employability

- will the curriculum prepare students for the range of opportunities potentially available on completion of the programme?
- are links with potential employers supported?
- has employability been defined by the course team and has this been translated into the curriculum?
- are students supported through the course to enhance their overall employability?
- are opportunities built into the curriculum for students to develop the personal skills, competencies and attributes necessary for their future careers?
- does the course encourage and/or support work-based or work-related learning opportunities during the course

52 Other areas for discussion can include

- communication between the partner and the university and between the staff and students
- resources and facilities
- NSS results

53 The level of scrutiny involved will depend on the scale of the provision being reviewed.

Report

54 The report should highlight good practice and how this is to be disseminated; there will be areas to commend, and areas which require improvements. The improvements should reflect on the students' learning experience and encourage the development of more inclusive approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.

55 The report should also make conclusions on quality and standards and currency of programmes. The review must consider the entitlement of students, ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

56 The report will help identify where changes to enhance a programme may be made and how they should be acted upon, mainly through action plans. The action plans will provide a guide and focus for the future years. Should other opportunities for improvement arise throughout the years these should be acted upon immediately, especially where they advantage the students.

57 A report of the event will be prepared by the Secretary (see form 9 & 10). Once approved by the Chair, the report will be sent to the lead academic for consideration and to formulate a response and action plan. This draft report with the response and action plan is then considered at Faculty Board for endorsement. The final report is then presented to QSC.

58 The faculty will be expected to reflect on issues raised in the report and its response and action plan in the following annual review reports.

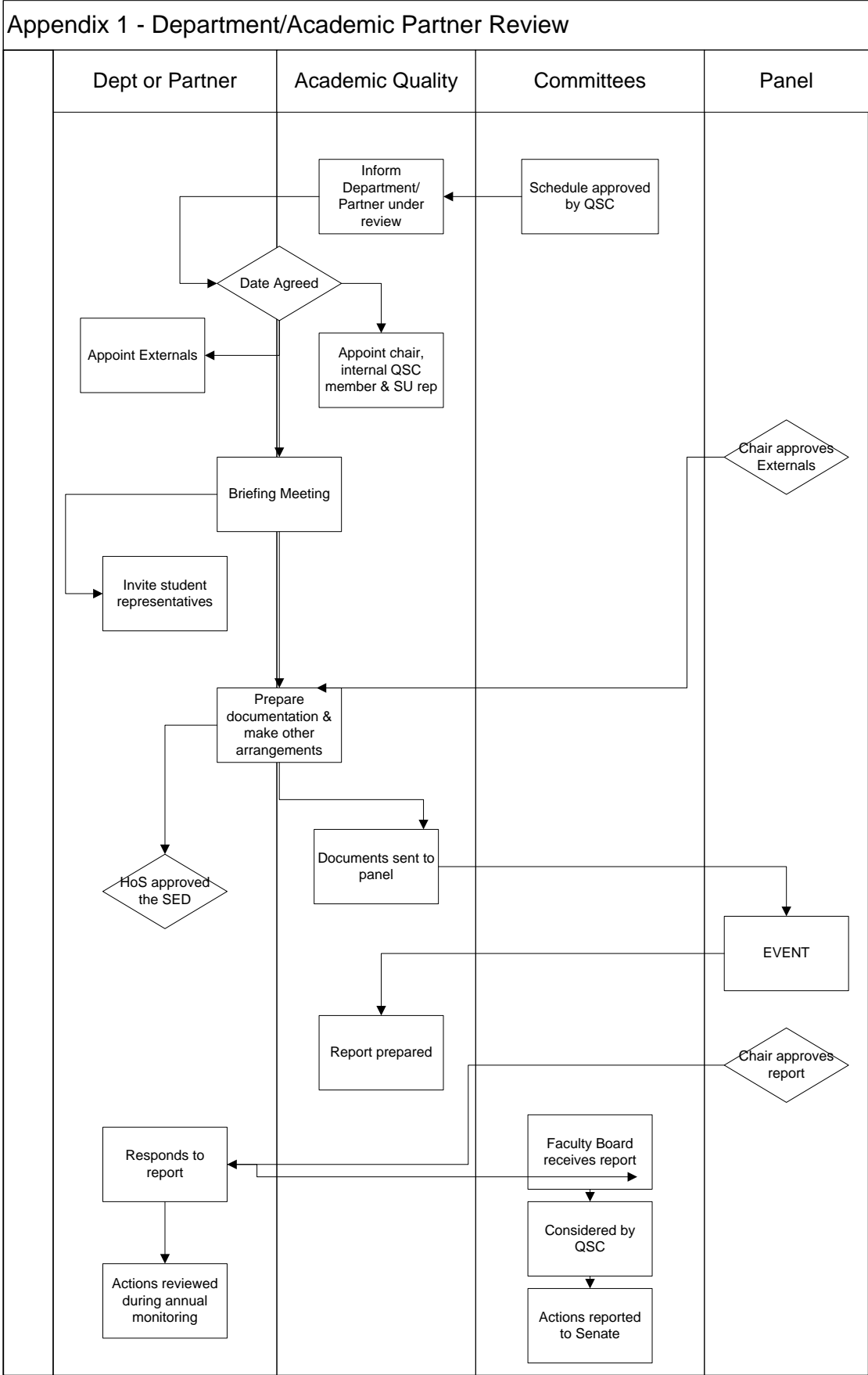
59 For the academic partner the report will include actions to be addressed at the University, the academic partner or faculty level and a response and action plan will be prepared as appropriate.

Fees/re-imbusement

60 Academic Registry will process the re-imbusement of any travel, subsistence and/or accommodation expenses incurred by the external panel members in undertaking their role.

61 Payment of fees to external panel members will be made from the Faculty budget as per the standard University rate.

Appendix 1: Process Flowchart



Appendix 2: Guidance for producing a Self-Evaluation Document (SED)

Introduction

- 1 This additional guidance document is designed to enable subject teams to produce the required self-evaluation document (SED).
- 2 The key principle to the reviews is the process of self-evaluation that is undertaken by the subject team, culminating in the production of a self-evaluation document which forms the focus of the review event itself.
- 3 The document will set the scene to the panel members and provide context for the review. This is likely to be the first document read by the panel.
- 4 The document need not be lengthy and should be open, fair and honest. The SED should include core information presented in a structured way and be analytical and evaluative rather than descriptive.
- 5 The document needs to be concise; the length is at the discretion of the department but should not exceed 15 pages.
- 6 Self-evaluation requires the team to reflect honestly and to consider objectively both strengths and weaknesses. For the process to have any real worth, it has to be owned by all involved and should not simply be issue-driven nor an attempt to hide areas that require improvement. Self-evaluation should always been seen as improving the student experience.
- 7 It is essential that during the preparation of the document, full consultation takes place with all members of the department. It is important that the opportunity is taken at any departmental meetings to consult support staff and it is strongly suggested that the subject team collectively compile the self-evaluation.
- 8 Critical evaluation need not cover any more than the two year period prior to the review.
- 9 The Head of School should receive the document before it is presented to the panel.
- 10 Examples of the self-evaluation documents which have previously been submitted for a review are available upon request from Academic Registry.

Content of the SED

- 11 Guidance on drafting the self-evaluation document and preparing information for the review is provided in this section.
- 12 It is recommended that the SED should cover the following topics:
 - Introduction
 - Context of the Subject Area Provision
 - Curriculum
 - Student Data
 - Appeals and Complaints
 - Collaborative Provision
 - Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (Accreditations)

- Staffing
- Staff Development
- Research Strategy
- Resources
- Strategic Goals
- Strengths
- Future Developments and Challenges
- Conclusion

- 13 These areas are discussed in more detail below.
- 14 The Introduction should describe the purpose of the document.
- 15 The context of the subject provision illustrates where it fits into the University wide structure. For example which faculty and school the subject area relates.
- 16 For a partner review, this will need to be the partners operational structure, all roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the partnership.
- 17 Evaluate the curriculum by mentioning the stronger, better recruited programmes against the programmes which are not currently recruiting. Where any programmes have been closed, the department will need to demonstrate how they have protected the academic interest of the students (by offering them alternative programmes). An explanation on how the subject area/academic partner aim to find a balance of programmes which recruit. If any programmes have undergone a revalidation in the last two years, this will need to be mentioned along with any discussions on how the two curriculums are balanced.
- 18 This section should contain student data presented in tables; this can include student progression and achievement. Where national student survey (NSS) results have been presented to the panel, a short commentary can be given to support the results.
- 19 A summary highlighting all students complaints and appeals received in the previous two years.
- 20 This is mainly relevant to the subject area review where the team may wish to comment on the collaborative provisions including UK based partners, overseas and flexible distributed learning programmes. Particular attentions should be given to analysing whether the programmes across these partners work the same as the programme taught at Bucks; if not how do they differ. If the partner has undergone a review either at institutional level or as a partner of the university then the outcome or main points can be mentioned in this section.
- 21 For PSRB's this could be a list of the professional bodies for which the University have accreditation and which courses these are linked to. Other information on the accreditation can include the length of term, approval dates and reference to any approval quality assurance visits reports that may be provided to the panel.
- 22 Details on staff could be a full staffing profile or organisation chart and reference made to the relevant supplementary documents provided to the panel (for example the staff profiles). Where associate lecturers are used, their contributions need to be mentioned.

- 23 The continuing professional development which has been undertaken, for example courses and conferences and how this has aided in the teaching of the curriculum. Future staff development may also be mentioned.
- 24 Staff research strategy summarises the scholarly activity in the department and the information can be presented in a table which includes titles of papers written etc. This should be attached as part of an appendix to this document.
- 25 A brief summary of the subject area/partners physical resources, learning facilities and learning resources.
- 26 Strategic goals can include the relevant School/department(s) objectives, goals for the next five year period and learning and teaching strategy. This section should make clear links between current and future direction of the programmes and strategic direction the Faculty intend to take. It is possible to use the Faculty strategic plan to explain why the provision is the shape it is currently and to show that future developments will fit in with the direction that the faculty intends to take.
- 27 The strengths of the various schools and departments within the subject area should include areas of good practice, which have been commended through the annual review process, programme committees and/or approval events.
- 28 Future developments and challenges can include challenges for the programmes, the staff or the subject area as a whole. It would be ideal to mention possible solutions to the challenges along with indicative timelines.
- 29 The conclusion is a summary of the strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement identified throughout the document. This also includes the future plans for taking the provision forward and any issues which the team would particularly wish to focus on during the review.