

Guidance for Conducting Annual Review of Research Programmes

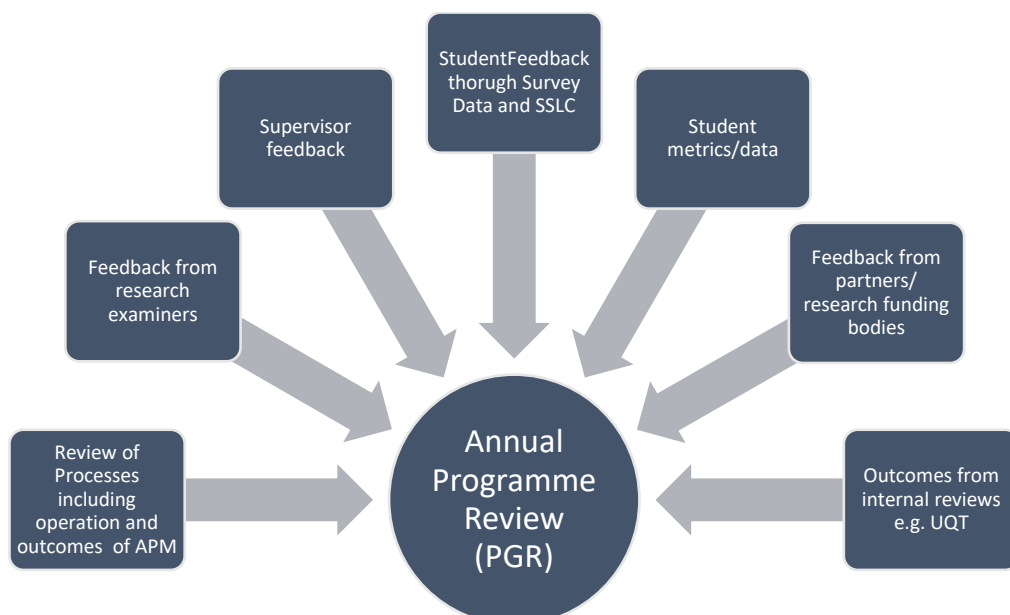
Purpose and Scope of the Annual Review

1. The purpose of the annual review is to bring together relevant colleagues who are responsible for the delivery and academic standards of the programme, or suite of programmes, to review the outcomes from annual monitoring processes and to agree relevant actions to address issues that have been identified and make refinements to the programme. The annual review may be organised at subject, department, or school or faculty level.
2. The annual review gives schools and faculties the framework to reflect on all aspects of their postgraduate research provision on a timely manner. It provides the opportunity to reflect upon the effectiveness of processes through discussion of the evidence inputs (figure 1), and to consider and plan any changes and developments required to improve and enhance the student experience.
3. For interdisciplinary postgraduate programmes, it is the responsibility of the host school, in consultation and with the involvement of the partner school, to annually review the programme(s). The host school may wish to invite a representative from the partner school to attend the review meeting. See the AQPO website for further guidance on interdisciplinary programmes.

What should we discuss at the Annual Review?

4. The annual review should include a discussion of successes from the previous year, and a review of the evidence inputs (see figure 1) that have been gathered during the year through various ongoing quality assurance mechanisms.
5. The review should discuss and agree immediate and future priorities relating to research postgraduate provision, based on the outcomes from the discussion of the evidence inputs.
6. An example agenda with a series of questions relating to the evidence inputs is provided in annex 1. The sample questions provided here are intended as suggested prompts for discussion and are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

Figure 1: Annual Programme Review INPUTS for research postgraduate programme



When should the Annual Review be held?

7. The annual review of research programmes should normally be carried out between April and August and in time to feed into the school's Education Action Plan priority setting prior to the start of the University Quality Review Team (UQT) cycle, at the end of September.
8. Please refer to the Education Action Plan timeline for further details on how the outcomes of the annual review feeds into this.

How should the Annual Review be carried out?

9. There is not a one-size-fits-all way to operate the annual PGR review. In some faculties PGR provision is managed at faculty level, for example through a graduate school model, whereas elsewhere this is managed at a school, or DTE level.
10. It is expected that PGR annual reviews may take place either through separate school, DTE or discipline-level reviews or as one faculty-wide review that encompasses a review of provision across the faculty.
11. Suggested formats for the annual review:
 - The review could be carried out as one formal review meeting that considers all data inputs (figure 1) and agrees actions and priorities.
 - The review could take place through a series of online synchronous and asynchronous discussions at different points over the summer as relevant data becomes available for discussion, and to agree the actions and priorities.
 - The review could be carried out through a combination of online asynchronous and synchronous discussions, to discuss the data as it becomes available with in-person meetings to agree priorities and actions.

Who should be involved in the Annual Review?

12. Attendees of the review meeting/s will typically include:
 - PGR Director
 - DTE Director
 - DTE Manager
 - PGR Supervisors
 - Student Administration Manager
 - Student representatives (if possible)
13. For interdisciplinary programmes, the programme Governance and Advisory Board will carry out the annual programme review. Please see the [Guidance for Interdisciplinary programmes](#) for further information.
14. Where programme(s) to be reviewed are delivered through an external partnership/collaborative arrangement, participants would typically include the collaborative partner where appropriate, e.g. for joint awards. It must be ensured that appropriate representatives of all such partners have access to the supporting information that contributes to the review.

What happens with the outcomes from the Annual Review?

15. The outcomes from the review including successes that were identified, will be fed into the school's Education Action Plan priority setting. The review outcomes may be in the form of a set of notes and actions, or minutes of the relevant meetings.

16. Actions that have been identified to enhance the student experience will be taken forward, and where relevant these will be transferred to the school's Education Action Plan.
17. The outcomes from the annual review should be fed-back to the student representatives.

Figure 2: Annual Programme Review OUTPUT for all programmes



ANNEX 1 - Example agenda for PGR annual review, with suggestions for further discussion highlighted in italics. The items on this agenda may be discussed at one meeting or through a series of synchronous and asynchronous discussions (see 11 above).

Annual PGR Review Agenda for Discussion

Attendees (see 12 above for list of recommended attendees)

Items for Discussion:

1) Review of the successes of the previous year:

- *What worked well?*
- *What were students happy about?*
- *What were staff happy about?*
- *Are there any particularly good examples of processes or events that went well?*
- *Have staff been awarded any grants or received awards for PGR developments?*
- *Any particular examples from external feedback?*
- *Are there any successes to take highlight in the school Education Action Plan?*

2) Review of the documents/inputs that feed into the review:

- **Review of operation of Processes**
 - *Are there programmes with a formal taught component? Are they covered in this review or have they been considered elsewhere?*
 - *How effective is your process annual progress monitoring?*
 - *What arrangements are in place for students whose supervisors are away e.g., on research leave?*
 - *Consideration of the suitability of the induction and support provided for research students, and any issues identified regarding the student experience.*
 - *Analysis of research student skills /development opportunities, including training to teach and the take-up of this training by students*
 - *Discussion of recent student destinations on completion of their research degree*
- **Feedback from Supervisors / Research Examiners**
 - *Comment appropriately on any actions arising from issues arising from Research Examiners.*
 - *How does staff feedback correlate with student feedback and discussions at the staff/student liaison committee (or equivalent)?*
 - *Are there any emerging themes or issues that need to be addressed?*
- **Student Feedback and Survey data**
 - *What have been the main points (positive and negative) that have been raised and discussed at SSLCs? What actions have been identified?*
 - *Has the student feedback been considered, and actions identified where relevant?*
 - *Discuss the outcomes of the most recent student survey results (PRES). Are there any areas which need particular attention? Identify actions to address any concerns.*
 - *Are there mechanisms in place for the school to communicate to students what is being done as a result of their feedback working?*
- **Student metrics / data**
 - *Are there any trends in the student data that need to be considered, e.g completion rates?*
 - *Do the data show that academic standards are being met?*
 - *How does the school intend to address any issues regarding supervisor/student ratio, trends, distribution of students among staff?*
- **Feedback from partners / funding councils**
 - *Are there any issues arising from the Research Funding Body annual review report?*

- *Are there PhD co-supervision arrangements with external academic or industrial supervisors? Are there any issues arising (e.g. for progress monitoring)?*
- *Have any specific issues been identified (e.g. in relation to the student experience, research environment, support and facilities) arising from programmes delivered through external partnerships, professional placements or split site delivery?*
- *Is the collaboration with partners in the delivery of the programme(s) working effectively?*
- *Have any changes been made to the operation of the collaborative arrangement?*

3) Agree the priorities for the programme and what actions are required to take these forward

- *What are the immediate priorities for the programme?*
- *What are the medium-long term priorities for the programme to be taken forward over the next academic year?*
- *Has alignment with the University Education Strategy been considered?*
- *How will students be informed of the outcome of the review?*