



## DCU Programme Review

### Policy, Purpose, Principles, Procedure

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## DCU Programme Review – Policy, Purpose & Principles

### 1. Introduction

1.1 To address national<sup>1</sup> and international<sup>2</sup> guidelines, and in order to be effective, all quality assurance and enhancement processes in DCU should be embedded, integrated and on-going, and involve a combination of regular monitoring and periodic review.

1.2 At DCU, regular monitoring of programmes is undertaken in the form of an Annual Programme Review (APR). The APR process provides an opportunity for self-evaluation, self-reflection, review and identification of issues, both positive and negative, at programme level.

1.3 APR is carried out for all DCU taught programmes.

1.4 The purposes of DCU's APR monitoring process are to:

- Ensure appropriate articulation between the initial validation and accreditation of programmes and their development over time.
- Ensure that issues highlighted in previous annual and periodic reviews have been/are being appropriately addressed.
- Ensure that curriculum, programme design, content and assessment are regularly reviewed.
- Ensure that issues highlighted by external examiners have been/are being addressed appropriately.
- Report on student recruitment and numbers registering, and marketing initiatives.
- Report on student progression and performance.
- Ensure that issues highlighted by students have been/are being addressed appropriately, and that feedback is provided to students on these issues.
- Report on proposed changes to academic structures for the following year, and provide a rationale for proposed changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Good Practice for the Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards in Irish Universities (Irish Universities Quality Board - IUQB, 2012)  
[http://www.iuqb.ie/news/latest\\_news.aspx?article=8f6458a4-a515-4aa1-9110-a351c7eab1ab](http://www.iuqb.ie/news/latest_news.aspx?article=8f6458a4-a515-4aa1-9110-a351c7eab1ab)

<sup>2</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA, 2009) [http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG\\_3edition%20%282%29.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20%282%29.pdf)

1.5 The main steps, and associated timings, involved in APR are as follows:

	Action	Responsibility	Inputs	Outputs	Completion Date
1	Collation of data and other information for APR report.	Programme Team <sup>3</sup> with input from Programme Board, School/Faculty/Open Education Offices, ITS and business intelligent system (OBIEE)	-OBIEE Reports -External examiner report(s) -Programme Board input -Student input: -Programme Board input - Student survey information	APR data collected	October following APR academic year
2	Completion of draft APR Report	Programme Team	APR data collected and entered into APR Template to produce draft APR report	Draft APR report	October
3	Review of draft APR Report	Programme Board	Draft APR report	Completed and approved APR report with summary action list	October /November
4	Submission of final APR report to Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee (FTLC) <sup>4</sup> .	Programme Team	Completed and approved APR report with summary action list	Noted and discussed as needed at FTLC	December
5	Submission of the relevant section of the FTLC minutes to Faculty Management Board (FMB) <sup>5</sup>	Chair of FTLC	FTLC minutes	Noted and discussed as needed at FMB. Summary recorded in FMB minutes.	At next available FMB

<sup>3</sup> For APR, the Programme Team may just comprise certain members of a single programme board; for PPR, the Programme team will comprise a selection of members drawn from the grouped programmes as decided by the Faculty. In Open Education, the Programme Team is the full-time staff members of the relevant Programme Board.

<sup>4</sup> In Open Education the equivalent of the FTLC is the Open Education Teaching and Learning Committee, and the equivalent of Faculty Associate Dean for Teaching & Learning is the Chair of this committee.

<sup>5</sup> In Open Education, the equivalent of the FMB is the Open Education Management Group

## 2. Periodic Programme Review

The purpose of DCU's PPR process is to fulfil DCU's commitment to consistent, transparent quality assurance, by means of a rigorous and effective quality monitoring process. It provides evidence that DCU's internal quality assurance and enhancement processes are reliable and effective. It enables DCU to meet both internal and external requirements<sup>6</sup> in an embedded and on-going periodic review procedure which is sufficiently robust to withstand external review. It therefore articulates with, and builds on, the initial processes of validation and accreditation of new programmes.

2.1 The PPR process achieves its purpose by:

- facilitating programme teams to review and monitor the impact on taught programmes of cumulative, incremental change over a longer review period;
- allowing academic staff to support curriculum and programme development in light of the programme review process;
- identifying further opportunities for enhancement of the student learning experience;
- enabling DCU to undertake a broader review of the continuing validity and relevance of programmes offered, and, where appropriate, evaluate these against the case made at validation for the creation of a new programme.

2.2 The PPR process will be conducted in a consistent, systematic and comparable way across DCU by means of a clear, published, PPR procedure that includes:

- the use of a template for the Programme Team PPR report and the external reviewer's PPR report.
- the central provision of statistical data by the business intelligence system (OBIEE) to inform the process.
- articulation within the DCU internal quality review process by ensuring, to the extent possible, that the PPR reports of all programmes within a School or Faculty are completed in the preceding five years before a School or Faculty's internal quality review.

2.3 In the Periodic Programme Review (PPR) process, the Programme Teams produce a report analysing developments in the programme(s) over the review period by drawing on the evidence provided in the previous cycle.

The PPR:

- follows an agreed five year cycle within each Faculty
- involves an External Reviewer<sup>7</sup>
- informs DCU's internal quality review process which addresses larger-scale issues regarding the quality, structures and processes of Faculties in a developmental and strategic manner.

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<sup>6</sup> Programmes offered must continue to meet the academic standards set both by DCU and relevant external bodies. In the case of DCU this includes assuring itself that its internal quality assurance and enhancement processes are fit for purpose, satisfy the requirements of national and professional/statutory bodies, and conform to the European Standards and Guidelines.

<sup>7</sup> An External Reviewer may be a current, external examiner.

### **3. Periodic Programme Review – Procedure**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

- 3.1.1 Periodic Programme Review (PPR) at DCU involves, in an agreed cycle (every five years), an extended annual review, which enables Programme Teams to evaluate, comment upon and monitor the impact on their taught programmes of cumulative, incremental change over a longer review period than is involved with APR and to identify further opportunities for enhancement of the student learning experience.
- 3.1.2 PPR uses the same statistical dataset as APR. The Programme Team’s PPR report will reflect on the data for the 5-year cycle. Data provision will be facilitated as automatically as possible by OBIEE reports and related ITS information.

#### **3.2 Main Steps of Periodic Programme Review**

- 3.2.1 The PPR procedure is conducted every fifth year for each taught programme. Programme Teams produce a report summarising developments in the programme over the review period by drawing on the evidence provided by the four previous APR reports as well as the APR report in the year of the PPR<sup>8</sup>. Where relevant and appropriate, reference will also be made to the accreditation report to Academic Council and the finalised accreditation documentation which is drawn up following this report.
- 3.2.2 The PPR procedure also involves a person external to DCU - a programme-level External Reviewer - who is asked to comment on the Programme Team’s summary report and accompanying documentation by means of an External Reviewer report.
- 3.2.3 The main steps of the PPR procedure are similar to those of the APR procedure. These steps, with associated timings, are as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> In the year of the PPR for a particular programme or set of programmes, the APR report will comprise the latest available data; any response or commentary on this data will be included as part of the PPR.

**3.3 The main steps, and associated timings, involved in PPR are as follows:**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1	Appointment/confirmation of External Reviewer for PPR	University Standards Committee (USC)	Recommendation from FTLCs based on proposal from Programme Team supported by Head(s) of School(s)	Approval of External Reviewer	May
2	Collation of data and other information for PPR report.	Programme Team with input from Programme Board(s), School/Faculty/Open Education Offices, ITS	-Five previous APR reports -OBIEE Reports -Programme Board(s) input -Student input -Stakeholder (Alumni, Employer) input	Completed Programme Team PPR report using PPR template	October on a 5-year cycle
3	External Review	Programme Team	External Reviewer template & accompanying documentation - APR reports - PPR report - Other documents	Feedback from External Reviewer in report form	Mid-December
4	Reflection and response on External Review report	Programme Board(s)	PPR report and External Reviewer Report	Programme Board response as addendum to PPR report	January
5	Submission of final PPR report to Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee (FTLC) for review.	Programme Team	Final PPR report	Noted & discussed as needed, resulting in FTLC statement of reflection & approval	February
6	Submission of PPR report to Faculty Management Board (FMB) for review.	Chair of FTLC	PPR report and FTLC reflection/approval.		March
7	Review by FMB of PPR reports, FTLC reflection and approval of actions.	Chair of FMB	Noted, discussed, and approved as needed at FMB	Summary of decisions recorded in FMB minutes	April

### 3.4 Periodic Programme Review Reports

The focus for PPR is on critical evaluation of the impact of incremental change. The PPR report should therefore draw on, and cross-refer to, the cycle of Annual Programme Review (APR) reports and include a critical evaluation of the programme of study since initial approval, or the previous PPR review, as appropriate. The PPR report should cover the following points as indicated in the template provided:

- Any amendments which have been made to the programme (and the Programme Descriptor) since the previous PPR, including the reasons for those amendments.
- The extent to which the programme has met its stated learning outcomes, and met its student number targets.
- Responses to recommendations made by the external reviewer to a previous PPR report.
- Responses over the cycle to issues raised in External Examiners' reports.
- Envisaged future developments and prognosis.
- Outcomes of and responses to any professional accreditation exercises by professional or other external bodies applicable.

### 3.5 External Reviewer's Periodic Programme Review Report

The following documentation and information should be provided for the External Reviewer by the Programme Team in order that the external reviewer report can be comprehensively completed.

- PPR report developed by Programme Boards
- APR reports for the cycle
- Programme descriptors
- Faculty and DCU Teaching & Learning Strategies, as appropriate
- Stakeholder input

## 4. Role and Appointment of the External Reviewer

The role of the External Reviewer is to provide feedback on the academic elements of the PPR. Decisions about the viability and other aspects of the programme remain within the remit of the Faculty and University, which can be informed by the External Reviewer's feedback.

4.1 The PPR External Reviewer will consider the supplied information and will complete a template which invites comment on the programme(s) as a whole in the light of this information. The template also invites the Reviewer to make any necessary recommendations for enhancement, and to comment on good practice currently taking place in the programme(s).

4.2 The External Reviewer will typically be a current or recent external examiner; External Reviewer nominations are made by Heads of School in consultation with Programme Teams. It is open to Programme Teams to avail of the services of more than one external reviewer, particularly in the case of programmes with a wide range of specialisms.

4.2.1 Where the proposed External Reviewer is a current External Examiner, there is no need for additional approval in order for the External Examiner to act as a PPR External Reviewer but this appointment will be sent to University Standards Committee (USC) for noting.

- 4.2.2 In all other cases, the appointment process is as follows:
- a nomination is made by the Programme Team to the Head of School;
  - the nomination is then endorsed by the Head of School;
    - the nomination is reviewed by the Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee (or its Chair by Chair's action) and is recommended to USC for approval;
    - USC make a decision on the appointment.

4.3 Where there are a number of similar or related programmes, these should be reviewed using a single PPR report; the External Reviewer should complete a single report which covers them all.

4.4 Where the PPR External Reviewer is a current external examiner they should be paid an additional honorarium for reviewing the PPR documentation and submitting an external reviewer report by the middle of December. If they are not a current external examiner an agreed honorarium will be provided.

## **5. Articulation with Internal Quality Review**

The PPR process is articulated with the internal Quality Review process as follows:

- by requiring Faculties to ensure that the PPRs of all relevant programmes are completed in the five years preceding the Faculty's internal quality review;
- by ensuring that selected information from each programme chair's PPR report, and the external examiner's comments and recommendations, are provided for internal review by including appropriate headings in School or Faculty templates for the Self Assessment Report (SAR).
- by the submission in full of programme chair PPR reports and external reviewer PPR reports as part of the SAR appendix documentation.
- by reducing the amount of programme related information required to be generated for the SAR as a result of the PPR reports developed along with External Reviewer input.

## **6. Reporting, Dissemination and Publication of Issues arising from Periodic Programme Review Reports**

6.1 DCU operates an integrated structure and review process at Faculties/Open Education level, and institutional level to assure programme quality and standards. This reflects DCU's academic- led and devolved approach to quality assurance and enhancement. The procedure at institutional level for the reporting of issues arising from programme review reports, including the identification of any action needed, is provided in the steps outlined above for both APR and PPR.

6.2 Details of PPR activities and outcomes in the previous academic year will be provided internally in the annual reports from the Director of Quality Promotion to Academic Council and Governing Authority. Education Committee and University Standards Committee will also be provided annually with information on PPR activities and outcomes.