

# Periodic Departmental Review Policy

**Scope:**

All academic departments (or equivalent) within schools at City St George's, University of London, covering the portfolio of taught programmes (UG and PGT) and research endeavours delivered within those departments.

**Senate Regulations:**

N/A

**Summary:**

To outline City St George's, University of London's approach and principles in relation to Periodic Departmental Review.

**Date approved/re-approved:**

June 2025

**Date for review:**

To be reviewed by the end of 2027/28 academic year, with allowance for minor updates, as required.

**Effective from:**

September 2025

**To be read in conjunction with:**

Annual Programme Evaluation Policy and Guidance  
Periodic Departmental Review Guidance

## Equality and Diversity Statement

City St George's, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.

## Freedom of Speech

City St George's, University of London, regards freedom of speech and academic freedom to be fundamental to delivering its mission as the University of business, practice and the professions. Its values in this respect are set out in a code of practice on freedom of speech and academic freedom, which explains how the University will uphold, secure, and promote freedom of speech within the law. See: <https://www.citystgeorges.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/code-of-practice-on-freedom-of-speech> . Nothing in this policy should be interpreted in any way that would be inconsistent with the code of practice and – in the event of any inconsistency – the provisions of

the code will prevail.

Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.

## Introduction

City St George's is invested in ensuring it has an excellent academic portfolio and a cohesive and appealing programme offer for students. The Periodic Departmental Review is an enhancement process that will ensure:

- current academic provision and proposed developments within a Department (or equivalent) are in keeping with the strategic priorities of the University.
- priority actions identified through previous reviews at department level, including the Portfolio Review, are reflected in the Department's plans.
- overall education quality is high and meets the [B conditions of the OfS regulatory framework](#) and the relevant guidance set out in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). This includes ensuring academic programmes meet relevant legislative requirements (e.g. [CMA](#))
- research priorities of the Department (or equivalent) align with City St George's strategic priorities.
- ongoing investments support areas of strength and address areas of weakness.
- leadership and management capabilities of the Heads of Department (HoD) (or equivalent) are enhanced through providing each HoD (or equivalent) with the framework and the mechanism to enact strategic change at local level.
- HoDs (or equivalent), alongside Executive Deans, are supported to make cases for investment and resource to the Academic Planning Board.

The Periodic Departmental Review Policy and Guidance applies to all academic Departments (or equivalent) within schools at City St George's, University of London, covering the portfolio of taught and research programmes and research endeavours delivered within those Departments. This includes foundation provision, distance learning programmes and partnership provision leading to a City St George's, University of London award. Where partnership provision is included within the scope of a review, the review should explicitly address the effectiveness, and continued appropriateness of the partnership elements of the programme.

The process replaces the Periodic Programme Review by combining a peer review of academic quality and standards (including the measurement of student academic success, curriculum design and strategies for learning and assessment), alongside a broader review of the Department's alignment to the University Strategy, its overall performance, market attractiveness, financial sustainability, and opportunities for innovation and development in both education and research. The Annual Programme Evaluation (APE) will continue to take place each year. APE documents will be included as an appendix for consideration by the Panel as part of the Periodic Departmental Review Process.

The Review process is led by the Deputy President, with a Vice-President responsible for leading each review. The process will be administered by Quality and Academic Development (QUAD), and the data will be provided by the Strategic Planning and Performance Unit (SPPU).

## Principles of Periodic Departmental Review

City St George's is committed to regular evaluation of its Departments (or equivalent), academic programmes and research in order to:

- assure the quality and currency of its programmes and research
- facilitate continuous enhancement based on student experience, giving due consideration to the diverse student body
- promote constructive discussion to facilitate improvements to its Departments (or equivalents) and academic provision, drawing on the expertise of internal colleagues, students and external experts
- facilitate holistic evaluation of provision in the context of the School, University and wider sector considerations.

The review process should:

- have significant staff and student input
- be evidence-based drawing on outputs from other activities including but not limited to Annual Programme Evaluation, Staff Student Liaison Committees and external examining, and where applicable the requirements of professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs)
- provide an opportunity to reflect on existing and potential partnerships
- aid in the development of:
  - new, amended or enhanced provision
  - innovative approaches to delivering academic programmes and research
  - alignment to relevant university strategies and frameworks
  - student support, to promote increased levels of student satisfaction
  - links to and/or joint provision with other Departments (or equivalent) and Schools or partners.
- identify good practice, areas for improvement and ideas for future development within the Department (or equivalent)
- result in an achievable Action Plan that is supportive of the aims of the Department (or equivalent) and School, in accordance with the University Vision, Education and Student Strategy and School Plan.

### **Scheduling of Periodic Departmental Review**

For each Department (or equivalent), the Review are expected to take place every five years. The Educational Quality Committee is responsible to Senate for setting a timetable for Reviews according to a 5-year cycle, in liaison with QUAD.

Where substantial changes are proposed to a Department, outside of the Periodic Review cycle (such as in response to student feedback, or to align to the strategic vision of the School or University, or if there are substantial changes in PSRB standards/requirements/guidelines), then consideration should be given to making effective use of the Periodic Departmental Review process. For this purpose, in such cases it may be preferable to bring forward the scheduled Periodic Departmental Review.

Periodic Departmental Reviews should be undertaken independently of any other external reviews (for example professional accreditation), due to the number and variety of reviews that may be applicable to a Department (or equivalent). The findings of the Periodic Departmental Review are expected to help inform preparations for relevant external reviews and vice versa.

Periodic Departmental Reviews will take place during term time.

### **Periodic Departmental Review Panel**

QUAD will establish the Review Panel, which will be constituted as:

- Chair: A Vice President of City St George's, University of London.
- Minimum of two external members from outside the university.
- An Executive Dean
- A School Director of Operations or Chief Operating Officer (where relevant).
- One academic member (from a non-proposing School) to be nominated by the Chair.
- A minimum of one academic member of the Education Employability Board (EEB) to be nominated by the Chair.
- The Director of Marketing and External Relations (or nominated colleague).
- The Director of SPPU.
- One or two members of the student community from outside the Department and School.
- Secretary: A member of Academic Services.

The Chair is responsible for:

- Ensuring all processes and procedures pertaining to the Periodic Departmental Review event are followed.
- Confirming that the Department's action plan meets the expectations of the Panel and aligns with the principles set out above.

External Members are to be nominated by the Head of Department (or equivalent) and agreed by the Chair. External Members should be familiar with UK academic standards in relation to the department (or equivalent) programmes but not currently be an External Examiner or have served, or will serve, in that capacity within 3 years of the Review event. The Head of Department (or equivalent) will provide a long list of possible external independent panel members to ensure there is a well-balanced mix of external panellists covering all the areas of the Department's (or equivalent) activities using a standardised list of criteria set out in the guidance. The proposed list will then be reviewed and signed off by the relevant VP in consultation with the Executive Dean. The Secretary will contact and confirm the paid external members and inform the relevant VP and Department (or equivalent).

To ensure the student voice is a key element of each Periodic Departmental Review, a number of members of the student community will be trained. They will most likely be recruited via the SU and will be paid. Students will be recruited on a fixed-term basis of approximately two years and, between them, will cover all Periodic Departmental Reviews within this two-year period.

The Secretary will provide advice and guidance on regulatory, policy and procedural matters and produce the formal report of the review.

### **Periodic Departmental Review Process**

Full details of the Periodic Departmental Review process can be found in the published Guidance.

The Periodic Departmental Review is comprised of the following stages:

#### **Pre-Meeting**

- For the School, Department (or equivalent) and relevant Professional Services to finalise the scope and timeline of the review.

#### **Periodic Departmental Review Event**

- The Periodic Review Panel meets with senior members of the School, the Department, Students and Alumni to discuss the department and programmes. This is informed by the Reflective Review and Action Plan of the programme/s submitted by the Programme Teams and supporting evidence.

In conjunction with the VP, SPPU will define a set of criteria to help identify and propose a 'peer set' of institutions against which the Department's (or equivalent) performance will be benchmarked. Criteria for selecting institutions may slightly vary between Departments to ensure discipline-specific aspect of the provision are accounted for. Departments (or equivalent) will be invited to comment on the proposed list of peer institutions and will be given the opportunity to request alternative institutions when supported by a clear rationale. The list of benchmarked institutions will be reviewed by SPPU in consultation with the Chair. The final list will be signed off by the Chair.

The Secretary with input from the Chair, the Executive Dean, panel members and SPPU will compile a list of -specific questions (building on the core questions listed below). The final list of questions will be reviewed and signed off by the Chair. Seven core questions underpin the review process:

- What does the Department (or equivalent) see as its current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)?

- How do the Department's (or equivalent) plans support City St George's strategy (including growth, programme portfolio development, student support and student outcomes)?
- How do the Department's (or equivalent) plans address the programme-specific recommendations arising from the Portfolio Review, TEF and/or Annual Programme Evaluations?
- How does the Department (or equivalent) propose to improve continuation, completion and progression ([B3 conditions](#)), address the attainment gap and respond to student voice (including NSS, Your Voice 1&2, PTES and PRES)
- What are the Department's (or equivalent) plans for its future development?
- How does the Department (or equivalent) propose to develop and enhance its academic provision to ensure its offer is of high-quality and meet expectations of students and employers and where relevant how the Department intends to close the gap (where one is indicated) between its own performance and that of leading peers?
- What support from the School and/or the University does the Department need to deliver its plans and/or address challenges?

The Department (or equivalent) will complete a Self-Evaluation Document. It will also supply answers to the associated list of specific questions. Should a department (or equivalent) wish to do so it can submit in advance of the review some key points or questions it would like the review panel to consider or address during the review. These points or questions should be submitted at the same time as the SED.

The review will be undertaken by a panel of internal and external members chaired by the relevant VP. The basis for the panel's evaluation will consist of the core and specific questions, the department's (or equivalent) SED and contextual data supplied by SPPU.

The review panel will consider the review material and then conduct the review event to explore in detail matters arising from the documentation. Review events will typically be conducted over 2 to 3 days, with the option to be extended to 4 days when deemed necessary. Review events will usually be scheduled over consecutive days unless there are particular situations where this is not sensible. The duration and schedule of the review event will be determined by QUAD, in liaison with the Chair, who will provide a detailed timetable to the Head of Department (or equivalent) and the Executive Dean ahead of the review.

The Panel will meet with the Head of Department (or equivalent), Department's representatives, including academics and colleagues from within the school's professional service teams, as determined by the HoD (or equivalent) with input from the Executive Dean and the Chair. Those will typically include representation from:

- The academic team for each taught and research programme under review. It is expected that this would include the relevant Associate Deans and Course Directors.
- A full range of students from each taught and research programme under review. To ensure the meetings explore students' views, students from different years of study, Home, Overseas (distance where possible) and Alumni will be invited to meet with the Panel.
- The School COO and representatives from professional services who have been chosen.
- Directors of research centres and PhD representatives.

### **Reporting of Periodic Departmental Review**

The Review Panel will prepare a report on the department's (or equivalent) overall performance, academic quality and vision. The Panel will seek to identify areas of good practice for commendation and may set conditions that need to be met within a prescribed timescale, and recommendations for consideration and response. In doing so, the Panel will not use conditions or recommendations to curtail lawful free expression or academic judgement; any requirements it

sets will be limited to matters relevant to academic standards and regulatory or safety obligations and be no more extensive than necessary to achieve those aims.

The report will typically be structured as follows:

1. Key Findings
2. Leadership, Management and Organisation of the Department (or equivalent)
3. Evaluation of quality and standards and provision
4. The student voice
5. The alignment between the department and business, practice and the professions
6. The current performance of the department against potential
7. Future suitability of the subject provision
8. Commendation of strengths
9. Recommendations for enhancements covering all aspects of the review.  
Recommendations for actions will be set within a defined timeframe where appropriate

The report will be shared with the Executive Dean and Head of Department (or equivalent) who will then respond and prepare an action plan to be approved by the school PARC.

The panel report and Department response will be approved by EQC and noted at Senate. EQC will reflect on the maintenance of standards and enhancement of quality, evaluating the effectiveness of actions proposed to enhance the quality and standards of academic provision, including learning and assessment, student support and student outcomes (continuation, completion and progression) and ultimately determine if confidence can be placed in the academic standards of the reviewed provision and the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

EEB will also consider the report and Department (or equivalent) response.

A short Senate report will then be submitted to the Academic Planning Board (APB) for noting. The panel recommendations and Department action plan will also be provided to APB for information. A review of how the action plan is progressing will be undertaken each year by the APB as part of the annual review of the School overall performance. APB may choose to request further detail where it is relevant to the agreed ToR of the board. The overall progress on actions will feed into the annual academic planning cycle discussions.

From 2025/26, a high level summary of the Department's PDR action plan should be integrated into the annual refresh of the School Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) or other applicable plans. A review of how the action plan is progressing should be undertaken each year by the Academic Planning Board as part of the annual review of the School overall performance.

Progress on actions will be monitored through the Department and School governance mechanisms and where relevant embedded in the Annual Programme Evaluation (APE) action list. Recommendations and progress on actions will be monitored by EEB.

In some circumstances, the Panel may decide that it is not able to confirm confidence in the academic standards and/or quality of the learning opportunities of the provision. If this is the case, next steps will be agreed by the Chair and the Vice President (Education), with support from Academic Services.

An annual report on the Periodic Departmental Review process, covering the outcomes and key themes, will be produced by QUAD to be considered by the EQC and Senate.

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| <b>Policy Title</b>   |  |
| Periodic Departmental Review Policy   |  |
| <b>Policy Enabling Owner and Department</b>   | <b>Responsible for Implementation and Department</b>   |
| Academic Services   | Academic Services  |
| <b>Approving Body</b>   | <b>Date of Approval</b>  |
| Senate  | June 2025  |
| <b>Last Reviewed &amp; Version</b>  | <b>Review Due Date</b>   |
| June 2025   | July 2028  |
| <b>Publication of Policy</b> <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>   |  |
| <b>For public access online (internet)?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>   | <b>For staff access only (intranet)?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>   |
| <b>Website Link:</b><br><a href="https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/student-policies-and-regulations">https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/student-policies-and-regulations</a> | <b>Intranet Link:</b><br><a href="https://staffhub.city.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-and-guidance/quality-manual/programme-evaluation-and-review">https://staffhub.city.ac.uk/academic-services/policies-and-guidance/quality-manual/programme-evaluation-and-review</a> |
| <b>Storage of Policy</b> <i>(Previous versions of the policy must be stored in the drive by the author)</i>   |  |
| <b>Drive Address</b>  |  |
| <b>Queries about this policy should be referred to</b>  |  |
| <a href="mailto:quad@citystgeorges.ac.uk">quad@citystgeorges.ac.uk</a>  |  |

