UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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Student Academic Experience Review

General Guidance, 2018-19

Quality Assurance Team
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http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/SAER

Introduction

Student Academic Experience Review

Student Academic Experience Review provides the opportunity for a regular strategic overview of the entirety of a School's student education activity on a six yearly cycle. It is the principal means by which the University assures itself of the efficacy and robustness of each School's quality assurance procedures and of the continued enhancement of the quality of the student experience. The review also provides the opportunity to re-approve all taught provision.

The review of the student experience for taught (undergraduate and postgraduate) and postgraduate research students are not integrated. The taught student experience and research student experience will be reviewed as separate visits.

Team Membership

The Chair of the SAER team will be a Pro-Dean for Student Education. Pro-Deans will undertake reviews outside of their own Faculty. Membership will normally include:

> A member of the relevant Faculty Taught Student Education Committee (FTSEC)

> A Student representative (often LUU Student Executive Officer)

> A cross-faculty member (normally a member of another FTSEC)

> An External member[1] from a relevant academic discipline at a different institution

> A cross-Faculty Education Service Manager (FESM)

The Team are expected to:

- consider documentation prior to the review visit
- participate fully in meetings involving staff and students during the review visit
- contribute to Team discussions
- identify areas of good practice and make recommendations for further action
- provide feedback on the draft report

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[1] There is allowance for this to increase to two members, according to the scope of the Review visit.

Table of Contents

Section 1 - The suggested framework for Review

The Review will take place over two days. The specific timetable will be agreed following discussion with the School on the size and complexity of their provision.

Day 1

*11.00 - 12.00 pm	Initial Review Team Meeting
12.00 - 1.15 pm	Meeting 1 – Meeting with Students / Lunch
1.30 - 2.30 pm	Meeting 2 – Meeting with Senior Management Team
2.30 - 3.00 pm	Review Team Meeting
3.00 - 4.00 pm	Meeting 3 – Meeting with Programme Leaders
4.00 - 5.00 pm	Review Team Meeting / Review of documentation

Day 2

9.00 - 9.30 am	Review Team Meeting
9.30 - 11.00 am	Meeting 4 – Meeting with Staff
11.00 - 1.15 pm	Review Team Meeting / Lunch
1.30 pm*	Feedback to School

opportunity to expand timetable for larger/complex provision

Section 2 - Stages of the Review Process

Email notification from Quality Assurance (QA) Team to Head of School to identify dates and possible external reviewers

⇩

Pro-Dean for Student Education identified as Chair of the SAER

⇩

QA Team contacts the External to seek involvement in the visit, agrees dates with the External and the School and contacts possible team members

⇩

QA Team arranges meeting with the Director of Student Education and other key contacts (as agreed with the School) to discuss planning the review and confirm deadlines for submission of documentation

⇩

The School writes their Self Evaluation Document (SED) in consultation with staff and students from across the School (e.g. brought to School TSEC and Student Staff Forum meetings).

⇩

4 weeks before the visit the School uploads the SED, programme specifications and other documentation onto a dedicated SharePoint site.

⇩

Chair meets with the Faculty Pro-Dean to discuss school/faculty matters

⇩

Core Documentation circulated to the Review team at least **2 weeks** prior to the visit. Report received from External Reviewer.

⇩

QA Team undertake a desk based audit of School Documentation to inform review

⇩

The Review visit

⇩

Draft report produced by QA Team and sent to the School. Chair to meet with Faculty Pro-Dean to discuss outcomes of review

⇩

School to respond to any factual inaccuracies within the report prior to submission to the Taught Student Education Board (TSEB)

⇩

Formal response and action plan is requested from the School and received by FTSEC

⇩

Next Annual School Review Meeting notes progress against the submitted action plan

Section 3 - The External Reviewer

Nominations
It is expected that the External Reviewer will normally be of the rank of Professor, Reader or Senior Lecturer. Previous experience of external review, such as being an institutional auditor would be helpful, but not essential. Schools are asked to complete an External Reviewer nomination form for this purpose (http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/SAERforms).

Who would <u>not</u> be eligible to act as an external member of a review team?
- the current External Examiner;
- an External Examiner who has acted in the previous five years;
- a former member of the University's staff[2];
- nominations for external reviewers from outside the University sector (in exceptional cases Schools could nominate one HE external and one industrialist).
- retired staff would not normally be approved as the sole external member

In addition, schools will be asked to avoid nominating potential external reviewers who are from the same institution as the approved external from the previous SAER visit. Schools should contact the QA Team if clarification is required. Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that there are no 'reciprocal' arrangements between Universities.

Payment and Expenses for External Reviewer
Once the nomination has been agreed, the QA Team will contact the suggested External Reviewer to ask if they are willing to join the SAER team, providing further details of the review process and the dates for the review.

Fee: There is an agreed fixed fee of **£600** which is paid by the QA Team on approval of the final report.

Expenses: Valid expenses will be reimbursed by the QA Team on submission of receipts. Limits and rules on expenses are those that apply to University staff.
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/finance/policies/expenses/travel/expense_rates.htm

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[2] It is recognised that certain subject disciplines, particularly in small and unique areas may be taught in only a limited number of higher education institutions. This will be taken into consideration when nominations are proposed.

Role Description – External Reviewer

The External Reviewer will draw upon their subject specialism to provide independent assurance of the currency and coherence within programmes, along with the consideration of particular reference points such as benchmark statements and accreditation requirements.

Prior to the review:

- produce a brief report on the School's portfolio of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes (http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/SAERforms), focussing on the following:
  - o FHEQ level
  - o progression
  - o coherence
  - o reference points
  - o assessment

The report should be submitted to the QA Team 2 weeks in advance of the SAER.

The report provided by the External Reviewer will facilitate discussion and support programme re-approval.

During the review

Their role is to provide holistic consideration of the School's portfolio of taught provision with particular reference to:

- comparability of the University's standards with those in peer institutions and national benchmarks
- content, balance and structure of modules/ programmes and consideration of the balance and appropriateness of assessment.

Post review:

Provide feedback on the draft report.

Background Information to support External Reviewer
Leeds*for*Life

Leeds for Life helps students get the most out of university by supporting personal and academic development, enabling the students to obtain skills and attributes to help them succeed academically and impress potential employers. Leeds for Life is about preparing students for their future in line with University values and the Partnership.
https://leedsforlife.leeds.ac.uk/

Leeds Curriculum

The distinctive Leeds Curriculum has research at the heart of student education across all disciplines. A student's learning journey is shaped in both depth and breadth. All undergraduate programmes will:

- demonstrate explicitly the integration of research with learning and teaching, incorporating appropriate academic skills and competencies. In the first two years students will develop the skills and attributes needed to enable them to complete a major piece of inquiry-based learning in their final year.
- incorporate the agreed core threads – Employability, Ethics and Responsibility, and Global and Cultural Insight – in the context of the discipline and these will be evidenced in a variety of ways.
- encourage deeper learning and less 'pocketed knowledge'.

All students will:

- have the opportunity to broaden their education either within or beyond their discipline.
- have the opportunity for placement learning and/or study abroad.

http://curriculum.leeds.ac.uk/

Final Year Project

All students are prepared to undertake an autonomous piece of research work (referred to as the Final Year Project or 'FYP') as the culmination of their programme. This piece of work is seen by students as the pinnacle of their academic achievement, not only because of the academic rigour that is imposed on it by the University, but also because of the control they have to design, carry out and evaluate what they do. It is often seen to represent the point at which students become truly members of a disciplinary group.
http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22222/leeds_curriculum/1126/final_year_project_and_assessment

Broadening
As part of the Leeds Curriculum, all students will engage with a broad education which challenges, complements and contributes to the main discipline(s) being studied. The skills and intellectual flexibility which broadening develops will enhance academic outcomes and enable our graduates to compete and contribute in the workplace, and in wider society in the years after University.
http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22222/leeds_curriculum/1124/broadening_education_choices

Discovery Themes
To define the full breadth of study opportunities available at Leeds we have established ten interdisciplinary Discovery Themes. The Discovery Themes, each of which has a dedicated academic lead, and a number of sub-themes, bring together related teaching from across the University. The Discovery Themes are:

- Creating Sustainable Futures
- Enterprise and Innovation
- Ethics, Religion and Law
- Exploring the Sciences
- Language and Intercultural Understanding
- Media, Culture and Creativity
- Mind and Body
- Personal and Professional Development
- Power and Conflict
- Technology and its Impacts

http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22222/leeds_curriculum/1124/broadening_education_choices
https://leedsforlife.leeds.ac.uk/Broadening

Section 4 – Digital Education and Blended Learning

The University has a Student Education Strategy and staff across the University are actively using digital technologies and blended learning approaches to enhance the quality of student learning and the overall student experience. The School under review is asked to submit the Digital Education and Blended Learning checklist (http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/SAERforms) with a supporting narrative as part of the SAER documentation. The School should seek advice from their faculty's Digital Education Academic Lead when preparing the documentation.

Section 5 - Documentation

Documentation is categorised as either Core or Reference. Core documentation will be circulated to the review team in hard copy; reference documentation will be available electronically and will used to inform a desk-based review in advance of the review. A dedicated SharePoint site will be available for each review visit.

Core Documentation (for circulation to Review Team)

- Self Evaluation Document (SED)
- School Action Plan
- Previous review reports (Annual School Review and SAER)
- Student Representative written submission

Reference Documentation (for desk-based Review)

- Code of Practice on Assessment
- Taught Student Education Data Set (DLHE data and NSS/Programme Experience Survey results by programme)
- School Assessment Board minutes
- External Examiner reports and responses (available via SharePoint)
- School committee reporting structure
- School Handbooks: including programme/year; module; year abroad; collaborative
- Module reviews (QA Team to advise which modules)
- Programme reviews
- Subject Benchmark Statements
- School policies and procedures
- STSEC minutes and papers
- Student Staff Forum minutes
- Minerva directory
- PSRB reports and responses

Self-Evaluation Document
The School will provide a completed SED together with statistical data conforming to a set template four weeks before the Review visit. The SED will then be forwarded to Team members at least two weeks before the review begins. The template is available on the Quality Assurance Team website (http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/SAERforms).

It is important that Schools upload all the relevant documentation including the Self Evaluation Document at least 4 weeks in advance of the visit. Any delay in the submission will not allow the Team sufficient preparation time.

Provided by the School: Taught programmes
- Self-Evaluation Document
- School committee reporting structure diagram
- School Handbooks: including programme/year; module; year abroad; collaborative
- School Assessment Board minutes

- Module reviews
- Programme reviews
- Subject Benchmark Statements
- School policies and procedures
- STSEC minutes and papers
- Student Staff Forum minutes
- Minerva directory
- PSRB reports & responses
- Digital Education and Blended Learning checklist

Provided by QA Team
- External Examiners' reports and responses for taught programmes (2 years)
- Previous SAER report & response
- Annual School Review report(s) (4 years)
- Code of Practice on Assessment for the current session
- School Action Plan
- Taught Student Education Data Set results by programme (IPE KPI data sheet, DLHE data and NSS/Programme Experience Survey results)
- Student Representative written submission

Section 6 - Meetings with the School during the course of the review

Meeting 1: Students UG, PG taught
The meeting with students usually takes place over a sandwich lunch and will include students representing different cohorts. The team should decide at the first meeting how the meeting with students will be organised (groups representing individual programmes/years of study or cross-representation). This meeting offers the opportunity to ensure the review takes due regard of the opinion of the student body in the school under review. A list of potential questions to be asked is provided in Annex 1 of this document.

Meeting 2: Senior Management Team
(e.g. Head of School, Director of Student Education, Faculty Education Service Manager, School Education Service Manager, Joint Honours Link Tutor (where applicable))

This meeting offers the opportunity to pursue strategic and management issues in relation to the School programme portfolio and student education, as well as resourcing and future planning. Policy issues can be raised as well as any engagement with professional and accrediting bodies and/or links with external bodies. In addition, any faculty collaborative arrangements will also be discussed.

Possible agenda items for discussion include:

- School policy issues and the School committee structure
- Issues identified in the Self Evaluation Document
- Academic standards
- Strategies for resources
- Academic support, including provision for joint honours students
- Enhancement of the student experience
- Staff development, peer review, induction of new staff in the context of learning and teaching
- Collaboration with other schools/institutions

Meeting 3: Programme Leaders
The meeting will consider the programme specifications, the curriculum, learning outcomes and assessment. Likely areas to be covered include: programme rationale, curriculum and currency. In addition, this meeting will also consider the input of accreditation requirements from PSRB/accrediting bodies on the curriculum. The report provided by the External Reviewer will facilitate discussion and support programme re-approval.

Possible agenda items for discussion include:

- The programme portfolio
- The philosophy that underpins the programmes
- Breadth and depth of the curriculum
- Broadening and Discovery themes
- Approach to Final Year Project
- Use of Subject Benchmark Statements
- Contributions from employers/Industrial Advisory Boards
- Aims of the programmes and how the learning outcomes at each level support this
- Research informing the curriculum
- Assessment strategy
- Management of collaborative programmes
- International/Industrial/Placement opportunities and support arrangements
- Distance learning programmes

Meeting 4: Staff from the School
(e.g. Student Education Service Staff, Module Leaders, newly appointed members of staff, Assessment Lead, Academic Integrity Lead, Study Abroad/Year in Industry Co-ordinator, Collaborative Link Lead) This is an opportunity for the team to discuss broader curriculum issues, assessment and feedback procedures, academic standards including external examiners' reports and external reference points (such as benchmark statements), quality assurance mechanisms and how they operate at a programme and module level, Leeds for Life, staff development in the support of learning and teaching (including away days), quality enhancement, identification and dissemination of good practice and policies. This meeting could also cover progression and retention and any related strategies for student support (maths, study skills, etc.)

Possible agenda items for discussion include:

- Academic standards
- Use of external reference points
- Student assessment and feedback on assessment
- Student support
- Degree classification
- Quality enhancement mechanisms
- Learning resources
- Staff development
- Peer observation
- Student feedback
- Appointment of teaching assistants
- Staff development opportunities
- Links with other areas of the University in terms of student support

Feedback Meeting to the School
The feedback meeting will be presented by the Chair with all members of the review team present. Given the developmental nature of the review exercise, it is anticipated that the feedback will be presented to an open meeting to which all staff in the School are invited. The Chair of the review team will advise that the feedback will not necessarily include all the points that may be covered within the written report, but **all** substantive issues will be raised at this point. The Chair will highlight features of good practice, areas for action (recommendation on which the School is required to act) and areas for consideration (recommendation which the School may wish to reflect on).

Cases of Disagreement
In the University's experience it is highly unlikely that a team will fail to reach consensus on an issue at the final meeting of the review team. If, however, such an exceptional event should occur the University will usually seek to reconcile the impasse 'internally'.

The QA Team will arrange for the circumstances to be considered by a Pro-Dean for Student Education, who will take into account the views of at least two other Pro-Deans for Student Education in proposing the action needed to reconcile the differences of view. Should this proposed action prove unacceptable to the external reviewer and other members of the team, the issue will be referred to the Deputy-Vice Chancellor: Student Education.

Section 7 – Student Involvement in the Process

There are several opportunities for students be involved in the review process:

- to comment on the SED through the Student Staff Forum or via a wider consultation process within the School.
- to meet with LUU Student Executive Officer to highlight good practice and identify any concerns
- to meet with members of the Review Team to talk about the student experience and the learning opportunities available to them. (This meeting can cover a wide range of areas and Annex 1 has a list of the possible topics that might be discussed.
- Each SAER team will include a student representative (either an LUU Student Executive Officer or Student Representative trained by LUU).

Role Descriptions
LUU Student Executive Officer
The LUU Student Executive Officer provides representation on behalf of the wider student body within the School.
Prior to the review the LUU Student Executive Officer:

- Meets with School Student Representatives, from the School under review, (approximately 6 weeks before the SAER). The purpose of this is to highlight good practice and identify any issues.
- Produces a brief report detailing the following (http://ses.leeds.ac.uk/SAERforms):
  - o Accuracy of information published by the School
  - o The Partnership in practice within the School
  - o Opportunities that support the student academic experience
  - o Opportunities for students to provide feedback to the School, and action taken by the School in response.

The student report should be submitted to the QA Team 4 weeks in advance of the SAER.

Appointed Student Representative on Review Team
Prior to the review the Student Representative should:

- Read the review documentation and identify issues for exploration, from the student perspective.

During the review the student representative will:

- contribute to discussions from the student perspective, to ensure the review takes due regard of the opinions of the student body in the School under review
- contribute to the agenda of the meeting and identify questions for the School to answer relating to the quality of the student experience
- have a view on academic support and guidance
- reflect on how the School provides advice on improving student performance
- have a view on the effectiveness of assessment and feedback methods
- have a view on the availability of resources
- consider the clarity and accessibility of school information

Post review:

- Provide feedback on the draft report.

Section 8 - The Report

A report will be drafted on the findings of the team and sent to the School normally no later than 4 weeks after the visit. This is to allow time for the report to be drafted, circulated and commented on by all members of the review team. The School will have an opportunity to indicate any factual inaccuracies. Once the final version of the report has been agreed this will be forwarded to Taught Student Education Board. The Head of School and Director of Student Education will also be sent a copy of the final report with a request for a School response and action plan.

Report Format

The main report is divided into four sections:

1)   Student Education and the Curriculum

2)   Maintenance of Standards

3)   Supporting the Student Academic Experience

4)   Enhancement of Student Academic Experience

The report will identify features of good practice, areas for action (recommendation on which the School is required to act) and areas for consideration (recommendation which the School may wish to reflect on).

School Response

The School's formal response to the review usually takes the form of a simple action plan explaining how the School will capitalise on areas of good practice and take forward the recommendations.

The report and action plan are received by the Faculty Taught Student Education Committee (FTSEC).

Consideration of SAER findings at the School Annual Review meeting
Action taken in response to the findings of the review will be included as an agenda item for the next Annual School Review (Student Education) Meeting. The School will be asked to provide progress against actions identified.

Annex 1 - Meeting with Students

The meeting with students will include all members of the review team. The eventual number of students invited to meet with the review team will depend on the scope of the review visit and the size of the School. As a guide the School should ensure that each programme, each year and type of provision is represented.

Possible Areas for Discussion

Choosing the University
- Why did they choose the programme?
- Did they attend any Open Days? Or did they have an interview?
- Were they given plenty/sufficient/helpful information and guidance?

Induction Process
- Did they receive any information from the School before they started in September?
- What information were they given when they arrived? Too much/too little?
- Was there an induction course for new students?
- How did they find out about using the Library? Obtaining a username for email?
- Provision of Student Handbooks - a School Handbook? Programme Handbook? Module Handbooks? What is the main source of information in relation to their programme?

Learning and Teaching
- Currency of the curriculum? How are students made aware of this?
- Impact of research on teaching?
- Appropriateness of the curriculum?
- Awareness of Employability, Global and Cultural Insight and Ethics and Responsibility?
- Awareness of Broadening and Discovery Themes?
- Support for students Studying Abroad/Placement? – meeting requirements of minimum expectations?
- Is blended learning/digital education used effectively to support student learning?

Personal Tutoring
- Arrangements for personal tutoring?
- The Partnership between students and staff?
- Frequency of personal tutorials? Use of Leeds for Life, Living CV and Opportunities and The Leeds Network?

Integration of Transferable Skills into the Curriculum
- Have they been given opportunities to develop 'transferable skills' (communication, group work, etc.)?
- Were these skills flagged to them in particular modules? Is there a skills grid in any handbooks?
- Were these skills assessed and if so, did they have the opportunity to practice them before they were assessed?
- IT - where are these skills gained in the curriculum?

Assessment and Feedback
- Is there a range of assessment practices for the different modules: assessed essays, exams, projects, MCQs, projects etc?
- Assessment deadlines - are they known in advance? Is there any bunching of deadlines? How are such issues resolved?
- Penalties for late submission of work? Clearly documented? Adhered to?
- Feedback – What is the range of formative and summative feedback available to students?

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Student Feedback on the Programme
- How does the School obtain feedback from students on the different programmes? Module/programme questionnaires?
- What happens to the questionnaires once they have been collected?
- Does the information feed into any other discussions?
- Do students find out the results of the questionnaires?
- Does the information go to Student Staff Forum or is it included in the annual programme review?

Student-Staff Forum
- How well does it operate?
- How often does it meet?
- Are the minutes posted on a notice board or website afterwards?
- How does the information filter down to the student body?
- How do students find out how issues raised have been dealt with?

Resources
- Library facilities
- Computing facilities
- Laboratory facilities
- Social facilities in or near the School
- Students' views of general University facilities

Employability
- Employability and skills in the curriculum
- Careers guidance

Annex 2 - Checklist for the Chair of a Review Team

What use was made of:

- External Examiners' reports and School responses
- Recent report of professional/accrediting/statutory body
- External reference points
- Staff and student feedback
- Feedback from former students and employers
- Digital Education/blended learning resources

Main characteristics of the programmes covered by the review:

- Content and approach, and any notable strengths
- Innovative and/or good practice
- Digital Education/ Blended Learning (Minerva)
- Research and the curriculum
- Study Abroad/Industrial Placement
- Skills
- Evidence of communication to students of Research Based Learning and Core Programme Threads of Employability, Global and Cultural Insight and Ethics and Responsibility
- Final Year Project
- Discovery Themes or evidence of broadening in programmes which do not access discovery themes
- Review of learning outcomes and evidence of associated assessment

Management of Learning Opportunities:

- Support and Guidance
- Feedback
- Attendance and Monitoring
- Tutorials
- The Partnership
- Skills
- Leeds for Life

Conclusions on quality and standards

- Intended learning outcomes
- Assessment and feedback
- Quality and standards being achieved
- Programme specifications being delivered
- Programmes remain current in the light of developing discipline knowledge, practice and developments in learning and teaching
- Collaborative arrangements

Proposed Recommendations

- For actions to remedy any identified shortcomings
- For further enhancement of quality and standards

References

UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Part A: Setting and Maintaining Standards
The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf

Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-existing-uk-quality-code/part-b-assuring-and-enhancing-academic-quality

Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-existing-uk-quality-code/part-c-information-about-higher-education-provision