

Policies and Procedures

Academic Programme Review (APR) Policy

Policy Number:	1.6.2.35
Responsible Officer:	Director Planning & Quality
Policy Contact:	Director Planning & Quality
Approving Authority:	Executive Committee
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1. Purpose

This policy provides the guiding principles for review of academic programmes/ disciplines at The University of the South Pacific. The policy applies to academic programmes/ disciplines offered by the Schools and Centres at the University.

All academic programmes and disciplines at the University must be reviewed on a regular basis in a way that is appropriate to the characteristics of the programme, including its size, complexity and strategic importance. A review of academic programmes and disciplines is a comprehensive and periodic assessment of academic programmes/ disciplines to assure and enhance the quality of the programmes.

A review of academic programmes and disciplines will normally be undertaken on a seven-year cycle by a panel of reviewers. Special purpose programme reviews that do not conform to the seven-year review cycle and Terms of Reference may be requested by the Vice-Chancellor & President, Deputy Vice-Chancellor & President and the Head of School. These reviews complement the internal University monitoring procedures for academic programmes/ disciplines.

2. Objectives

The policy provides the principles for review of academic programmes to:

- Provide overarching guidelines for review of academic programmes/ disciplines.
- Clarify the responsibilities of stakeholders in the review process.

3. Definitions – Classification of Programme Reviews

The academic programmes are classified for Internal or External Reviews as per the programme categories given below. Most of the programmes/ disciplines will be reviewed externally under the Category A and Category C programmes.

Category A programmes will have a review panel with the chair and all members being external to the University whilst Category B programmes will have at least one member external to the

University. Category C programmes will be reviewed by the external review panel from Institutes that externally accredit these programmes.

As the review panels for Category A and C programmes are composed entirely of members external to the University, the review of these programmes are classified as **External Reviews**. The review of Category B programmes are classified as **Internal Reviews** as the review panel will have at least one academic staff from within the programme/ discipline being reviewed. Category B programmes will benefit from the membership of at least one external member on the review panel.

The programme categories with review classifications are summarized below:

Programme Category	Description	Review Classification
A	Programmes with large enrolments and/ or of strategic importance to the University. Cognate and staircased qualifications will be reviewed together. For example, certificates and diplomas that staircase into bachelor's degree programmes will be reviewed together, and postgraduate certificates and diplomas that staircase into master's degree programmes will be reviewed together.	<p>External Review</p> <p>Review is undertaken by a review panel consisting of chair and members external to the University.</p> <p>The review is commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor & President or delegate once every seven years.</p>
B	Programmes with limited enrolments and scope.	<p>Internal Review</p> <p>Review is undertaken by a review panel consisting of at least one academic staff from within the programme/ discipline being reviewed as a panel member and at least one panel member external to the University.</p> <p>The review is commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor & President or delegate once every seven years.</p>
C	Programmes that are regularly reviewed by external institutes/ bodies for accreditation purposes, involving preparation of self-review report and a site visit.	<p>External Review</p> <p>These programmes are externally reviewed in the course of the professional or accreditation reviews and reported to the Teaching Quality Committee and Senate.</p>

4. Policy Principles

- a. All academic programmes/ disciplines offered by the University shall be subject to planned seven year periodic cycle reviews.
- b. Review of programmes/ disciplines shall provide a strategic assessment of the programme/ discipline or school, and identify future directions that are consistent with the University's strategic goals and resource availability.
- c. Review of academic programmes/ disciplines shall be coordinated by the Planning & Quality (P&Q) Office of the University.
- d. All reviews of academic programmes/ disciplines shall be carried out according to the Terms of Reference approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education (DVC Education).
- e. A decision to conduct *special purpose* review of academic programmes/ disciplines may be made by the Vice Chancellor & President (VC&P). The Terms of Reference shall reflect the particular circumstances that prompt the review and can address strategic, academic and/or resource issues.
- f. The review of academic programmes shall be overseen by the Director Planning & Quality and shall encompass:
 - (i) The selection and communication of programmes to be reviewed at least one year prior to the review by the Heads of Schools.
 - (ii) Approval of Terms of Reference for the review by the DVC Education.
 - (iii) The appointment of members of the review panel by the VC&P.
 - (iv) A comprehensive self-evaluation and preparation of a self-review report by the programme/ discipline representatives (programme and discipline staff).
 - (v) A site visit by the appointed panel of reviewers.
 - (vi) Receipt of review report from the chair of the review panel.
 - (vii) Formulation and deployment of action plans that are consistent with the recommendations of the approved review report of the programme/ discipline.
 - (viii) Submission of the report of the academic programme review with action plan for endorsement at the School Academic Standards and Quality Committee (SASQC), Teaching Quality Committee (TQC) and approval by the Senate.
 - (ix) Monitoring of the action plan by the Head of School with submission of progress reports on the action plan to the TQC and Senate at yearly intervals from the time that the action plan is first approved by Senate.
- g. Action on items in the action plan from the review are to be completed within 24 months of approval of the action plan at the Senate meeting.

5. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for review of academic programmes/ disciplines is to be approved by the DVC Education after consultation with the Head of School. Please refer to Appendix 1 *Terms of Reference for Academic Programme Review and Guidelines for Review Panel*.

6. Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for the review processes shall rest with the VC&P. External reviews shall be overseen by the Director Planning & Quality and managed by the P&Q Office. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

a. Vice-Chancellor and President

- (i) Provide approval of a review panel and a designated review panel chair and;
- (ii) Provide formal acceptance on review report upon receipt from the chair of the review panel.

b. Director Planning & Quality and the Planning & Quality Office

- (i) Provide a formal recommendation to the Office of the VC&P regarding the prospective members of the review panel and chair of the review panel. The recommendation shall include bio-data of the prospective members of the review panel and the Terms of Reference for the review.
- (ii) A standard Terms of Reference for the review will normally be used.
- (iii) Upon approval from the VC&P, ensure formal appointment of the review panel through issue of appointment letters with Terms of Reference to the chair and panel members.
- (iv) Prepare review site visit programme in consultation with both the chair of the review panel and the Head of School.
- (v) Provide guidance to the programme/ discipline in the preparation of the self-review report.
- (vi) Ensure that the self-review report is forwarded to the members of the review panel.
- (vii) Provide further information as may be required by the panel of reviewers.
- (viii) Ensure that travel, per diems and accommodation for review panel members are arranged in accordance with the University processes.
- (ix) Coordinate review panel site visit in accordance with the review programme.
- (x) Facilitate written submissions to the review panel where written submissions are made.
- (xi) Convey the comments provided by the Head of School and programme/ discipline staff on the draft review report to the panel of reviewers.
- (xii) Disseminate final review report to the Heads of Schools.

(xiii) Provide guidance to the School for the development of an action plan to address recommendations and affirmations.

(xiv) Maintain repository of all key review documents (appointment letters, Terms of Reference, self-review reports, review reports, action plans, progress reports).

c. Heads of Schools

(i) Identify and propose the review panel in accordance with the policy and procedures.

(ii) Ensure that all programmes/ disciplines are reviewed once in the seven year review cycle.

(iii) Coordinate preparation of self-review reports by the programme/ discipline staff.

(iv) Review the self-review reports and ensure timely endorsement of self-review reports by the SASQC.

(v) Forward the self-review report to the Director Planning & Quality at least six weeks prior to the review site visit.

(vi) Support P&Q Office in preparation of the review site visit programme.

(vii) Critique on any factual errors, but not matters concerning with the panel's opinions, judgment or conclusions except where these are clearly formed on the basis of factual error upon receipt of draft report of the review.

(viii) Coordinate feedback on any factual errors in the draft review report from the programme/ discipline staff and relevant senior managers and convey the collated feedback to the P&Q Office.

(ix) Develop action plan to specifically address the recommendations and affirmations made by the review panel following internal approval processes.

(x) Present review reports and action plans for comments to Senior Management Team, endorsement by TQC and approval by Senate.

(xi) Submit progress reports on the action plan at yearly intervals from the time that the action plan is first approved by Senate.

(xii) Maintain programme/ discipline review records.

7. Related Documents

- a. Terms of Reference for Academic Programme Review and Guidelines for Review Panel
- b. [Academic Programme Review Procedure.](#)

Terms of Reference for Academic Programme Review and Guidelines for Review Panel

1. Terms of Reference for Review

- a. The review shall be conducted in the context of the Strategic Plans of The University of the South Pacific (USP), School and the discipline.
- b. The review shall consider the progress on the action plan of the previous programme/ discipline review.
- c. The review shall consider governance and management structures for the programmes.
- d. The review shall consider the standard of the programme or discipline benchmarked against international comparisons and specifically indicate whether USP is meeting high quality standards. Hence, the review shall indicate relevant best practices at other international universities that might be adopted by the programme/ discipline.
- e. The review shall evaluate the comprehensiveness, relevance and currency of the curriculum in light of developments in the discipline and industry. The curriculum content should be informed by current research in the discipline.
- f. The review shall consider the admissions requirements for the programmes and comment on the appropriateness of the admission requirements.
- g. The review shall consider structure, content, quality and overall coherence of the programmes in relation to the following:
 - 1.g.1. Communication of programme learning outcomes and course learning outcomes to the students.
 - 1.g.2. Assess/evaluate the alignment between course learning outcomes, programme learning outcomes and University graduate outcomes and identify gaps/issues in the alignment.
 - 1.g.3. Assess/evaluate if the stated course learning outcomes, programme learning outcomes and University graduate outcomes are adequately addressed in the curricula and co-curricular activities.
 - 1.g.4. Processes in the School/discipline for evaluating the course learning outcomes and programme learning outcomes in light of curricula changes.
 - 1.g.5. Assess/evaluate the effectiveness of formal structures that enable the needs of dependent programmes to be incorporated into the design and improvement of courses in service.
- h. The review shall consider effectiveness of assessment processes on student learning in relation to the following:
 - 1.h.1. Processes for assessing each of the course learning outcomes, programme learning outcomes and University graduate outcomes.
 - 1.h.2. Responsibilities for data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting.

- 1.h.3. Use of assessment results by the teaching staff.
- 1.h.4. The panel will propose changes and improvements to student assessments where this is required.
- i. The review shall consider student success measures and processes in place to measure, evaluate and improve student success. This will include review of:
 - 1.i.1. Key trends in undergraduate and postgraduate enrolment, retention, progression, graduation, pass rates and other indicators.
 - 1.i.2. Undergraduate and postgraduate student feedback and utilisation of data.
 - 1.i.3. Alumni and employer feedback and utilisation of data.
 - 1.i.4. Graduate destinations and employability data.
 - 1.i.5. Student advising (course selection, academic policies, mentoring, career guidance, etc) structure/model, roles and resources.
 - 1.i.6. Student tutoring including structure, roles and resources.
- j. The review shall consider resources for the successful delivery of the programme(s) in terms of:
 - 1.j.1. Academic and support staff capacity, professional qualification and diversity to support the programme.
 - 1.j.2. Quality and sufficiency of physical and technical resources.
 - 1.j.3. Fiscal resources.
 - 1.j.4. Library and information resources.
- k. The review shall consider the role of the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) in informing the structure and content of the programme.
- l. The review shall consider how scholarship and curricular innovation for both students and staff are valued and supported.
- m. The review shall consider the research performance of staff and students under the university's Strategic Research Themes (including publications, research income, research training and support).
- n. The review shall consider research and innovation opportunities including research collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.
- o. The review shall evaluate the appropriateness and adequacy of support provided to postgraduate research students including orientation, research progress reviews, support with thesis preparation.
- p. The review will consider the quality of supervision of postgraduate research students.
- q. The review will consider the effectiveness of staff development processes.

2. Guidelines for Review Panel and Chair of the Panel

- a. The review panel shall provide input into the formulation of a review site visit programme in consultation with the Planning & Quality (P&Q) Office and subsequently provide confirmation on the final programme to enable it to meet the Terms of Reference for the review.
- b. The review panel will provide an overall assessment of the programme or discipline under review based on the Terms of Reference and self-review document through:
 - 2.b.1. Structured meetings with managerial, academic and professional support staff.
 - 2.b.2. Meetings with Students and relevant stakeholders.
 - 2.b.3. Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data supplied to or acquired by the panel.
 - 2.b.4. Review of any additional documentation requested.
 - 2.b.5. Written submissions can be provided to the review panel prior to and during the site visit programme. The written submissions will be confidential to the review panel.

Note: Terms of Reference and self-review report developed by the programme or discipline shall be forwarded to the review panel in advance by the Planning & Quality Office.

- c. The review onsite visit will normally be for three days' duration and can be complemented by virtual meetings with relevant senior managers prior to the onsite visit. The duration of the onsite visit maybe adjusted through consultation between the review panel and the P&Q Office and will take into account the geographical distribution of the programme's or discipline's activities across the USP campuses in member countries. Virtual meetings may completely replace onsite visits where feasible.
- d. The chair of the review panel shall coordinate the preparation of the review report based on the findings of the review and its conclusions. The writing of the report may be shared amongst the panel members.
- e. The chair of the review panel shall send a draft review report that is evidence-based and structured around the Terms of Reference for the review to the Director Planning & Quality within 28 days after the site visit. The draft review report shall include the following:
 - 2.e.1. Recommendations (indicating aspects that the panel considers requires attention);
 - 2.e.2. Commendations (highlighting areas the panel considers constitute good practice and commendable approaches / outcomes);
 - 2.e.3. Affirmations (drawing attention to an area that the panel considers requires attention but which has been recognized by the programme or discipline that is being reviewed.)

- f. An assessment of priority will be attached to the recommendations and affirmations in the following terms: 'critical'; 'essential'; 'advisable'; and 'desirable', to which may also be attached the review panel's assessment of urgency.
- g. The review report will also comment on the utility of the self-review document and the extent to which the review panel found it open, transparent, reflective and evaluative.
- h. The review panel will comment on the standard of the programme or discipline benchmarked against international comparisons and will specifically indicate whether USP is meeting high quality standards.
- i. The University's response to the draft review report shall be communicated to the chair of review panel through the P&Q Office after internal verification on whether the draft report contained any errors of fact, or whether any statements of the draft report required clarification, or any additional matters should be addressed to make clarifications.
- j. The final review report shall be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor & President by the chair of the review panel.
- k. Structure of the review report

The following sections shall be included in the report:

- Table of Contents.
 - List of Abbreviations.
 - Executive summary, including a list of the commendations, affirmations and recommendations.
 - Introduction, including review panel membership.
 - Broad Overview.
 - Findings of the review panel with reference to all items in the terms of reference for the review. The findings should include commendations, affirmations and recommendations. The findings can be placed under section headings that reflect the terms of reference for the review.
 - Concluding comments.
 - Appendices, including the terms of reference for the review, programme of review activities and relevant review documentation.
- l. The panel shall prepare the review report on the following assumptions:
 - Most recommendations for change will have to be achieved by redeployment of the programme's/ discipline's existing resources.
 - Recommendations for change will have to be implemented by the Head of School for the programme or discipline rather than the University. Where the panel believes the University rather than the Head of School needs to take action, the panel may write a specific recommendation to the University for consideration.

3. Review Funding

Payment of costs will be arranged as follows:

- An honorarium to the chair of panel of reviewers – FJ\$3000.00.
- An honorarium to review panel member – FJ\$2000.00.
- Expenditure related to onsite visits and facilitation of the review will be met by the University as per policy. The reviewers are responsible for their own insurance for the purpose of travel for the external review onsite visits.