

# UCL Academic Manual

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# 1 Introduction

1. A risk-based, proportionate, outcome-driven quality and review framework is a vital tool for ensuring the security of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities for processes for monitoring standards, the student experience and strategic quality enhancement activities.

## *External Context*

University College London (UCL) is responsible for the standard and quality of the awards made in its name and the quality of the programmes that lead to those awards.

Responsibility for developing and delivering programmes is delegated to Departments which all aspire to excellence on taught or research programmes. These aspirations require regular monitoring, review,

## 2 Faculty and Department Education Plans

### 2.1 Introduction

1. These regulations set out the requirement for Departments and Faculties to produce and maintain education plans to address areas of identified risk to quality and standards.

### 2.2 Faculty Education Plans

#### 2.2.1



- d) Where necessary, an outline of support that the Faculty feels it needs to achieve success.
7. The Quality and Standards Committee is responsible for monitoring the progress of the activity detailed in the FEP and advising the Education Committee of any faculties that appear to be at risk of not achieving their actions.
8. The Education Committee is responsible for reviewing the recommendations of the Quality and Standards Committee and taking appropriate action, which may include escalation to another committee or role holder for additional scrutiny or action.

### 2.2.5 Supporting the completion of the Faculty Education Plan

1. Each Faculty will be supported by its HEDS Faculty Partnership Team to complete the actions outlined in its FEP.
- 2.





Department. The communication plan should be ready in time for the start of the academic year.

2. The communication plan must go beyond submission of the DEP to Student Staff Partnership Committees and should include plans for engaging the whole student body.

### 2.3.4 Monitoring and reviewing the Department Education Plan

#### **Monitoring progress within the Department**

1. The Departmental Teaching Committee is responsible for monitoring the progress of the activity detailed in the DEP and, where necessary, for advising the Head of Department on the need to review the scope, the resourcing or the timeline associated with that activity.
2. To support this activity, the DEP must be a standing item for discussion on each Departmental Teaching Committee agenda.
3. The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring the successful completion of the DEP, and for reporting on progress to the Dean.
4. The Head of Department is also responsible for communicating progress on the DEP to students and staff within the Department. To assist this, Heads of Department should ensure that the DEP is submitted to relevant Student Staff Partnership Committee and departmental meetings throughout the year.

#### **Reporting on progress to the Faculty**

5. Each Dean of Faculty must agree a reporting schedule with their Heads of Departments.
6. The schedule should enable the submission of reports on the progress of DEP actions to the Faculty Education Committee at least once per term. The Faculty should advise on the format these reports should take, but at a minimum, they should include:
  - a) A commentary on any milestones that have been met.
  - b) An outline of any changes to the DEP since the last report, and the reasons for those changes, for example reflection on data sets that have been published since the last update.
  - c) An evaluation of the achievability of the DEP based on the remaining time and resource available.
  - d) Where necessary, an outline of support that the Department feels it needs to achieve success.
7. The Faculty Education Committee is responsible for monitoring the progress of the activity detailed in the DEP and advising the Dean of any departments that appear to be at risk of not achieving their actions.
8. The Dean is responsible for following up with Heads of Departments judged to be at risk of not achieving their DEP milestones to either agree a plan for enabling the Department to achieve its original DEP milestones, or to agree an amended plan that is achievable within the remaining time and/or resource.

### 2.3.5 Evaluating the Department Education Plan

1. The Head of Department will conduct a self-evaluation of their progress against the actions
2. Both processes are conducted in tandem to encourage the Head of Department to review with reference to the data that has been produced at the conclusion of the academic year.

The Head of Department should use that data to evaluate whether the actions have achieved

DEP.

3. The self-evaluation should be submitted to the Dean, the Vice Dean Education, and the Faculty Tutor alongside the DEP that is being proposed for the new academic year. Each Faculty can agree the format that this evaluation should take.
4. A Dean may, based on poor performance against a DEP, choose to include the Department in the Faculty Education Plan for the following year.



2. The Quality and Standards Committee/Internal Quality Review Panel may also consider other factors presented to them, as outlined above, to support them in making their recommendations. This may include the distance from the last review visit, and a review of progress made as evidenced within the Department and/or Faculty Education Plan.
3. Heads of Departments that are nominated for an IQR will be informed by the Head of Academic Policy, Quality and Standards, and invited to arrange an initial meeting to discuss the reasons for the nomination and to receive guidance on the process of preparing for the review visit. They will also be asked to nominate a contact within the Department who is responsible for liaising with the review secretary on all aspects related to the operational delivery of the review.
4. Heads of Departments that are not nominated for an IQR will be informed that they were considered by the Quality and Standards Committee/Internal Quality Review Panel, and that their Dean will be asked to include them in the Faculty Education Plan for the year.

### 3.2.3 Repeat qualification for an IQR visit

1. As some issues can take more than one academic year to resolve, it is feasible that a department may, based on their metrics, qualify for an IQR in consecutive years, or within a short interval from their last visit.
2. In the interest of giving departments sufficient time to embed enhancements, while maintaining assurance that progress is being made, the following decision framework will be used:
  - Year 0: Department is nominated to receive an IQR visit in Term 1 and the visit happens in Term 2 or Term 3.
  - Year 1: As the review visit happened within the last year, there will not be immediate follow up, other than ensuring that IQR actions are being addressed through the DEP in line with 1.7.
  - Year 2: The Head of Department and Dean of Faculty are invited to meet with the Chair of the IQR Panel to discuss their progress against any Essential recommendations and, where necessary, will agree an enhanced reporting schedule and additional actions based on changes in the data since the review visit.
  - Year 3: The Department will be nominated for, and likely approved for, a new IQR visit.

## 3.3 The Review Team

1. The IQR Panel will constitute a review team for each visit. As far as possible, the constitution of the team should be matched to the needs of the visit, based on the factors that contributed to the decision to conduct the review of that department.
2. The review team leader must be a senior member of staff directly involved in delivering and/or supporting education and the holistic student experience.

3. The maximum number of reviewers that should be appointed is ten, but a smaller, more agile team may be appointed where appropriate to the needs of the visit. The Chair of the IQR Panel/Quality and Standards Committee will confirm how many reviewers they think would be appropriate, and the relevant expertise required, with the Head of Academic Policy, Quality and Standards.
4. As far as possible, all internal members of the review team must come from outside of the faculty to which the department being reviewed belongs.
5. All review teams must have at least one student reviewer, and one external reviewer who will be appointed based on either subject or issue specific knowledge.
6. All review team members will undertake to read all supporting documentation, participate fully in interviewing staff and students during the review visit, and make appropriate contributions to the preparation of the final report.

### **Role of the Team Leader**

7. To conduct the pre-meeting with the Faculty leadership team, supported by the secretary and at least one other internal reviewer.
8. areas of exploration that are being assigned to each member of the team.
9. During the review visit, to ensure that each interview session is conducted in a collegial and supportive manner, while ensuring that the relevant avenues for discussion are appropriately covered.
10. To agree with the other members of the team, the main findings, and conclusions of the review visit, and to ensure that these are correctly recorded by the secretary.
11. To approve the formal report of the IQR visit once this has been agreed between the review team and the Department being reviewed.

### **Role of the Student Reviewer(s)**

12. To conduct the pre-meeting with the course representatives for all relevant



## Meeting with Faculty education leadership

2.







actions that will be taken to address advisable and desirable recommendations into the DEP.

### ~~3.7.2~~ Relationship with the IQR Panel

1. At the start of each academic year, the IQR Panel will receive the agreed Department Education Plan and review it against the IQR Action Plan to monitor progress against the recommendations of the review team.

## 4 External Examining

1. External examining provides one of the principal means of maintaining UK academic standards within autonomous higher education providers. External Examining is therefore an  
following regulations are applicable only to taught programmes of study, including Undergraduate, Initial Teacher Education and Postgraduate.

### 4.1 Criteria for Appointment

1. External Examiners must be appointed for all taught programmes delivered by UCL and academic partner institutions.
2. External Examiners must be competent in assessing students' knowledge and skills at higher education level; expert in the field of study concerned and have appropriate academic and/or professional experience and authority.
3. External Examiners appointed to programmes must meet any specified qualification requirements of the relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.
4. External Examiners must be from outside UCL and must not be involved in teaching on the programme, or be involved in collaborative activity with the staff or students of that programme, for five years before their term of office and during their term of office. This includes Honorary staff members.
5. Former members of UCL staff and former UCL students must not be appointed as External Examiners before a lapse of at least five years. It must also be ensured that all students taught by that former member of staff have left the programme being examined.
6. External Examiners should not normally hold more than one other substantive External Examinership in addition to their appointment for UCL.
7. External Examiners should not be appointed to examine a single module unless there is a good reason for doing so.
8. External Examiners for undergraduate Boards of Examiners must be eligible to work in the UK.
9. A member of the academic staff of a College of the University of London other than UCL, or any other external institution with which UCL has service teaching arrangements, may be appointed as an External Examiner. It is imperative that the Board of Examiners at UCL, on which the appointee will serve, so far as can be anticipated, is examining no
- 10.



- viii) Reports of External Examiners from the previous cycle and the departmental responses.
  - ix) Timescales for the external examiner process including when to expect items for review, and when to expect access to Moodle/ IT systems.
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## 4.3 Responsibilities of the External Examiner

1. The primary responsibilities of a Taught Programme External Examiner are to assure themselves that summative assessment tasks are being set at an appropriate level and standard for the module and to submit an annual report via Portico, based upon their professional judgement, about the following aspects of the programme(s) they examine:

- i) Whether the academic standards set for the programme qualifications are
- ii) The extent to which the assessment processes are rigorous, ensure equity
- iii) The standards of student performance in the programme, or parts of
- iv) To formally delegate authority to Sub Boards to make decisions on their
- v) Where appropriate, the comparability of the standards and student achievements with those in some other higher education institutions in the
- vi) Identify comparable practice.

**It is not an External Examiner's responsibility to mark any form of summative assessment.**

2. recommendations based on areas of concern not satisfactorily resolved at the
3. The form must be completed on Portico (UCL's student and assessment record system) within one month of receiving the email with the Portico report link (this email will be sent within a week of the Board of Examiners meeting), so that External  
unit for the next academic session.  
Please refer to the External Examiners webpages for details on the External Examiners Reporting procedures: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-policy-and-quality-assurance/external->

from all modules the External Examiner oversees.

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9. External Examiners may recommend to the Board of Examiners changes to the marks already arrived at by the Internal Examiners if these appear to them to be inappropriate. Where significant changes are recommended by External Examiners it is essential for them to see all the assessments for that component of the

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11. External Examiners will be sent details of other local responsibilities which may exist for the programme(s) they examine.

## 4.4 Nomination and Appointment

### 4.4.1 Process of Nomination

1. The Chair of a Board of Examiners must take account of the appointment criteria specified in [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#) an External Examiner for all or part of a taught programme, and submit details via the [External Examiner Details Nomination Form](#).

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2. External Examiners must be appointed before the start of the academic session so that they can approve assessment tasks in good time. Nominees must not be asked to undertake any duties until their appointment is formally approved.  
  
Further Guidance

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1. On approval by Academic Policy, Quality and Standards, the External Examiner is appointed by UCL for a period of 4 years.

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2. Chairs of Boards should consider the travelling distances involved from a proposed costs to UCL in expenses, noting that Student & Registry Services is only able to reimburse up to certain values, and any additional sums will be charged to the relevant department / division. Please refer to the [UCL Expenses policy](#).

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3. The appointment of overseas External Examiners should be limited.

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### 4.4.3 Continuation of Appointment

1. An External Examiner has the right not to seek continuation in appointment at any time during the period in which they are eligible to serve. See point 4.4.4.2 below for details on early termination of appointment.
2. If an External Examiner interrupts his/her service, the interrupted period does not count when calculating the total period of service. [examiners@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:examiners@ucl.ac.uk) should be informed of any interruption of service before the interruption takes place.

### 4.4.4 Termination of Appointment

1. UCL reserves the right not to continue the appointment at any time during the period that the External Examiner is eligible to serve. External Examiners will be formally notified by the Chair of the Board as outlined in [Section 4.4.2 Period of Appointment](#).
2. If the External Examiner wishes to terminate their appointment, this should normally be arranged to take effect at the end of an academic year, but in any case is subject

## 4.5 Student Contact with External Examiners

1. UCL is required to provide details of its External Examiners, for information only, to students, including the name and institution of the External Examiner.
2. Students must not make direct contact with External Examiners regarding their individual performance in assessments. Appropriate mechanisms are available to raise these concerns through the procedures set out in [Chapter 6, Section 7: Academic Appeals Procedure](#). External Examiners should inform [examiners@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:examiners@ucl.ac.uk) should a student contact them.
3. External Examiners may be given an opportunity to meet students to ascertain their thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of their educational experience at UCL. This is not something that is routinely offered to External Examiners but can be arranged by the programme / board administrators should the External Examiner wish to meet students.

## 4.6 Entitlements of External Examiners

1. External Examiners are entitled to withhold their approval to decisions of the Board of Examiners under the following circumstances:
  - i) They are in a dispute with those decisions which cannot be resolved at Board of Examiner level.
  - ii) They are not satisfied that the examination procedures have been properly carried out.
  - iii) They perceive serious deficiencies in the examination procedures. In all such exceptional circumstances the matter in question will be referred directly to the UCL Quality and Standards Committee.
  - iv) External Examiners have the right to raise matters of serious concern at the highest level of UCL, either with the Chair of Quality and Standards Committee or Vice-Provost (Education & Student Experience). When all institutional avenues have been exhausted, External Examiners may contact QAA through its Concerns scheme route.





# 5 Peer Dialogue Scheme

Enhancing research-based education at UCL

## 5.1 What is the Peer Dialogue Scheme?

- 1.

## 5.4 Option B: Pair-based Teaching Observation

1. Identify with a colleague one or more aspects of your face-to-face teaching which you would like feedback on. You are encouraged to select a new partner for the Peer Dialogue each academic year, so that you can draw on and contribute to the expertise of diverse colleagues.
- 2.
3. Spend time on preparation before the session. It will be very helpful if you understand session.
4. When observing, make notes on what you will feed back to your colleague and on what you can apply to your own teaching/course design.
5. Engage in a constructive follow-up discussion, exploring how your practice can be mutually enhanced.
6. Write a brief joint report (50-150 words) summarising any changes you plan following the Peer Dialogue, focusing particularly on suggestions of benefit to others in the department.

## 5.5 Option C: Reflection and dialogue with Student Reviewers

**Staff work in partnership with one or two students, who are not taking the course under**



# 6 Student Academic Representation

## 6.1 Introduction

1. Department [1] there shall be at least one departmental Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC). Each Staff-Student Consultative Committee shall meet regularly in each academic year to enable joint working between staff and students, through
2. The purpose of student academic representation is to enable partnership working between students and staff throughout UCL. Representative Student Voice should shape and influence education and student experience activity in departments, faculties, and across UCL.
3. Arrangements for academic representation are overseen by the Student Staff Partnership Committee (SSPC), with staff and student membership from UCL reports to Education Committee.
4. who shall:
  - i)

- meetings of the same SSCC.
4. All representatives must be appointed by process of election. All elections, including (RON) option to encourage and support the accountability of representatives to the students they represent.
  5. The appointment of representatives should be completed by the close of the October appointment schedule which is agreed and circulated by the SSPC in advance of each Union via the designated contact in the Faculty.
  6. Should a representative step down during their term of office prior to the term two reading week, the representative should be replaced by any method approved by the SSCC Co-Chairs.
  7. the Faculty in the same manner as during appointment of the Student Academic Representatives in October.
  8. The SSCC may choose to invite additional students to attend the meeting to ensure a
  9. All departments should take steps to ensure their representatives attend training
  - 10.

8. The unconfirmed minutes should also be reported to the Department and Faculty Education Committees (and/or doctoral-education equivalent), along with the Faculty Academic Representative Forum.
9. A template for the SSCC agenda and minutes is available at Annex 9.6.1.

## 6.5 SSCC Terms of Reference

1. To act as a focal point of student engagement and partnership in the Department, bringing staff and students together to celebrate successes, to reflect on challenges, and to jointly identify priorities for change in the future.
2. To report on priorities and agreed actions to the Department and Faculty Education Committees (and/or doctoral-education equivalent), along with the Faculty Academic Representative Forum.
3. To ensure joint student and staff discussion at every meeting, focusing on:
  - a) Any areas of concern raised by the Student Representatives or other SSCC members.
  - b) The content of and progress against the Department Education Plan.
  - c) UCL ChangeMakers or other staff-student led projects including discussion of project proposals and tracking of progress of the projects throughout the year.
  - d) Opportunity for the Lead Department Representative to report on work they have been conducting on behalf of the SSCC, including their attendance at any Faculty or institution level meetings.
4. To ensure joint student and staff discussion at least once during every Academic Session of:
  - e) Proposals for new programmes and revisions to existing programmes.
  - f) Outcomes of institutional and national surveys, and activities leading from them.
  - g) responses to those recommendations.
  - h) Student employment outcomes and other careers and employability related data.
5. To facilitate greater communication between students and staff, and report key actions,

shaping their departments. They will also represent their Faculty in institution-wide

3. The Faculty Representative(s) must be invited to join their Faculty Education Committee (or doctoral-education equivalent). Other student representatives may also be invited where appropriate.

## 6.8 Faculty Academic Representative Forums

1. Each faculty should operate a forum which brings together faculty staff, Faculty representatives, and the Lead Department Representatives (or their nominee) from each SSCC in the faculty.
2. The purpose of this forum will be to identify shared priorities within the faculty and any action required to address such priorities, and to involve students with faculty decision-making. The Faculty Education Committee, Faculty Research Degrees Committee and/or the Faculty Representatives may additionally wish to utilise the forum as a sounding board where they identify a need for greater student involvement with particular matters.
3. A staff lead for the forum should be established, who should be a member of the Faculty Education Committee and/or the Faculty Research Degrees Committee. The staff lead and the Faculty Representatives will be responsible for agreeing the agenda and format of each meeting.
4. This forum should meet at least twice each year.
5. Faculties may wish to operate more than one forum to cover different levels of study.
6. The format of this forum is not required to be a committee meeting, and creative approaches to considering business are encouraged, i.e., workshop-style items.
7. A record of each meeting should be taken and circulated to attendees. This may be in the form of summary notes rather than formal minutes.

## 6.9 Interdepartmental Degree Programmes

1. Interdepartmental degree programmes may wish to have separate programme-based SSCCs, but in line with regulations for management instruction, these are not required where there is a suitable alternative (e.g., reps from these programmes are included in the SSCCs for the Home department for the pr3(r)-3(ee)3(s59C)-4(ems)9(.)-4( )] TÆT





### 7.1.6 Further Information

1. For more information on your SSCC, DTC, FEdCom, FRDC or Faculty Academic Representative forum, students should contact their undergraduate or postgraduate tutor or the Faculty Office.

## 7.2 Student Academic Representatives

1. Student Academic Representatives sit on various committees at a programme (such as SSCCs), faculty and university level, at which they act as the voice of students, ensuring that UCL takes into account the needs of students in its decision-making processes. The Student Academic Representative scheme is managed by the , and students can be representatives at both a departmental and faculty level. For general enquiries, please .

## 7.3 Representation[(f) 11.04 Tfu42.6 591.67 510.36 88.464 reW\*4



**Discipline Committee**

34.

**Discipline Review Body**

35.

Discipline Committee decision

**University Management Committee and its committees**

**Change and Digital Portfolio Review Committee**

36.

**Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee**





# 10 Module and Programme Evaluations Policy

## 10.1 Continuous Module Dialogue

1.

4. Departments will be asked to support central efforts to collate all programme level evaluations by reminding students to complete surveys and including links to summaries of changes made in response to previous feedback.
5. Evaluation results will be analysed by Education Services and then disseminated back to departments for discussion and circulation as per the existing process for NSS and New to UCL.
6. Each department must have in place mechanisms for closing the feedback loop, whereby students are informed of any actions which have been taken in response to the programme evaluation. Whilst the final responsibility for this rests with the department, it is recommended that the closing the feedback loop guidance should be followed to ensure the ongoing feedback cycle is supported.