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This document is part of the Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures which govern the University's academic provision. Each document has a unique document number to indicate which section of the series it belongs to.

9C – Focussed Enhancement Review: Policy and Procedure

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy and procedure is intended for BU staff involved with the process of Focussed Enhancement Review (FER). It provides guidance on the methodology and process of FER, focusing primarily on its aims and purpose, the schedule, process, documentation requirements, the FER panel, outcomes and reporting. This must be followed to ensure compliance with the FER process ensuring that the requirements of BU's internal quality assurance and enhancement framework are met.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 **Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC)**¹ maintains oversight of the FER process. It identifies areas of activity (e.g. specific programmes, Departments or Faculties) which should be subject to FER, and advises Faculties of the schedule of FER (via chairs of Faculty Academic Standards Committee). ASEC approves the scope, methodology, lines of inquiry and requirements for panel membership for specific FERs. ASEC is responsible for the overall effectiveness of the FER process. It receives reports on the outcomes of individual FERs, and monitors progress on actions arising from FERs via its oversight of the Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER) process.
- 2.2 **Faculty Academic Standards and Education Committee (FASEC)**² identifies and informs ASEC of areas of activity that could benefit from FER, via its evaluation of AMER outcomes and other data as appropriate. FASEC oversees arrangements for scheduled FERs in collaboration with Academic Quality, including identification of appropriate participants and collation of the evidence base. It appoints an individual to manage the Faculty's involvement in the FER and act as a key point of contact throughout the process (referred to as the 'Faculty contact' throughout this document). This would typically be a Head of Education, Head of Department, Deputy Dean Education and Professional Practice or other experienced academic, depending on the scope and scale of the FER. FASEC oversees the responses of participants to FER outcomes, and monitors ongoing progress via the AMER process.
- 2.3 **Academic Quality** manages the FER process. It advises ASEC on areas that would benefit from FER, via evaluation of AMER outcomes and other data as appropriate. Academic Quality develops the methodology for specific FERs for approval by ASEC, and advises on appropriate lines of inquiry. It appoints panel members in accordance with the requirements determined by ASEC, and in consultation with the Centre for Fusion Learning, Innovation and Excellence. Academic Quality manages practical arrangements, and advises Faculties on documentation requirements and matters of process. It drafts outcomes and a report of each FER, to be agreed and signed off by the Chair of the panel and the Faculty contact. A member of the Academic Quality team acts as Secretary to the FER panel.

¹ Areas of activity to be subject to FER, and the timing, scope, methodology, lines of inquiry and requirements for panel membership for specific FERs may be approved by the Chair of ASEC on the recommendation of Academic Quality on behalf of the committee, in order to ensure that the process is able to respond to the needs of the University in a timely manner.

² Recommendations to ASEC for areas of activity to be subject to FER and decisions relating to arrangements for specific FERs – including the appointment of the Faculty contact – may be made by the Chair of FASEC on behalf of the committee. The Chair of FASEC may also act directly on behalf of the committee in maintaining oversight of responses to the FER panel.

- 2.4 **The Centre for Fusion Learning, Innovation and Excellence (FLIE)** may advise ASEC on areas that may benefit from FER on the basis of data available to it. FLIE recommends internal and/or external panel members on the basis of their specific expertise as applicable to the parameters of the FER set out by ASEC. FLIE may be involved in the implementation of recommendations arising from the FER process, for example by holding workshops on specific aspects of pedagogy, teaching, learning or assessment and disseminating good practice identified as result of FER.

3 ACCESSING OTHER RELEVANT BU DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 All documents can be accessed [here](#).
- 3.2 Other documents with direct relevance to this are:

This *policy and procedure* document makes reference to the University's Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER) process. AMER is detailed in '5C – Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review: Policy and Procedure'.

Policy

4. PRINCIPLES OF ENHANCEMENT REVIEW

- 4.1 The FER process seeks to:
- provide an additional source of support and guidance to programmes, Departments and Faculties where opportunities for improvement are identified;
 - provide focussed advice and guidance targeting excellence in areas that are already performing well;
 - identify and disseminate good practice that can be applied more widely across the institution;
 - provide additional assurance that the University can continue to place confidence in the management of quality and standards;
 - inform future development of the University's Academic Policies, Procedures and Regulations;
 - be as 'light touch' as possible in achieving the aims of the FER.
- 4.2 FER is intended to be a flexible process that can be appropriately scaled and targeted to meet the needs of the University as determined by ASEC, e.g. at individual programmes or groups of programmes, whole departments or at Faculty level as required.
- 4.3 The outcomes of the AMER process are the primary means by which areas of activity that should be subject to FER are identified. FASEC is expected to propose candidates for FER to ASEC on the basis of its interrogation of AMER data and discussion of programme and Department action plans. ASEC considers these proposals and determines the annual FER schedule, taking into account the overview of AMER outcomes from across the institution, the strategic priorities of the University and available resources to support the process. The effectiveness of specific FERs is evaluated via AMER outcomes and appropriate qualitative data, for example data gathered via direct engagement with the student body.
- 4.4 FER takes the form of a supportive peer review process, conducted in an atmosphere of collaboration and collegiality. It provides an opportunity for participants to benefit from the advice of internal and external experts, gain a deeper understanding of relevant performance data and to engage with the student body with a specific focus.

Procedure

5. SCHEDULE OF FERs

- 5.1 The schedule of FERs is determined by ASEC³, informed by the outcomes of the AMER process and by advice provided by Faculties, Academic Quality and FLIE.
- 5.2 ASEC may determine that a FER is necessary in response to other evidence. Examples may include:
- level of engagement with core processes related to quality and standards (e.g. assessment processes; annual monitoring etc);
 - performance in student surveys e.g. MUSE, NSS, PTES, or PRES;
 - performance in other metrics related to the student experience including those featuring in national assessments such as TEF, e.g. continuation rates;
 - patterns in complaints and/or academic appeals data;
 - comments made in an External Examiner's report;
 - analysis of progress against BU2025 Key Performance Indicators;
 - evidence of innovation or good practice that would benefit from deeper understanding and wider dissemination.
- 5.3 ASEC⁴ defines the scope, methodology, lines of inquiry, requirements for panel membership and timeline for each FER, with support from Academic Quality and FLIE.
- 5.4 FERs may take place at any time, as the need arises. Consideration should be given to alignment with other relevant quality assurance and enhancement processes, for example by ensuring that FER outcomes can feed into the next round of AMER.

6. PROCESS

- 6.1 An initial briefing meeting is held between a member of the Academic Quality team and the Faculty contact. The content of the evidence base, a deadline for submission and distribution of the evidence and dates for meetings with the panel are agreed.
- 6.2 Academic Quality manages the collation of the evidence base for the FER (see section 7) in line with the agreed methodology and in collaboration with the Faculty, Students Union (SUBU) and other professional services as appropriate.
- 6.3 The panel conducts an initial review of the evidence with reference to the agreed lines of inquiry and may identify that further evidence is required. The panel may determine that meetings with specific individuals/teams are necessary in light of this initial review, and/or may request that the Faculty contact nominates appropriate participants. The initial panel discussion takes place by correspondence and is coordinated by the Secretary to the FER panel. Any specific requirements with regard to the next stage of the process are agreed between the Chair and the Faculty contact.
- 6.4 The Secretary to the FER panel drafts an agenda and schedule of meetings, to be agreed with the Chair and the Faculty contact.
- 6.5 The schedule will include an initial panel meeting to review the evidence and agree lines of questioning, and private panel meetings may be scheduled at appropriate points throughout the event in order for the panel to review its findings and make amendments to the agenda as necessary.
- 6.6 The schedule will typically include panel meetings with academics delivering the provision, programme leaders, academic advisors, management of the relevant Department(s)/Faculty, relevant Faculty professional and support staff and central services staff (e.g. members of Library and Learning Support, learning technologists) as appropriate. The panel may also hold meetings with students if required (meetings with students may have been held as part of the evidence gathering phase - see paragraph 7.5). The grouping and order of these meetings will be determined by the requirements of the event.

³ The Chair of ASEC may act on behalf of the committee on the recommendation of Academic Quality in determining the timing of FERs.

⁴ The Chair of ASEC may approve the scope, methodology, lines of inquiry, requirements for panel membership and timeline on behalf of the committee on the recommendation of Academic Quality.

- 6.7 The outcomes of the FER are drafted by the Secretary on behalf of the panel, and are jointly 'signed off' by the Chair and the Faculty contact prior to circulation to the wider team of participants.
- 6.8 The Secretary produces a full report of the FER, which is agreed with the Chair and the Faculty contact, prior to circulation to the rest of the panel and the wider team of participants.
- 6.9 The Faculty contact manages/coordinates responses to the outcomes of the FER, with support from within the Faculty and central services as appropriate, and overseen by FASEC.
- 6.10 Recommendations for action arising from the FER are incorporated into the next AMER action plan (programme, Department and/or Faculty action plans as appropriate) and progress is monitored via FASEC and ASEC.

7. EVIDENCE BASE

- 7.1 The evidence base provided to the FER panel should be appropriately scaled and directly relevant to the agreed scope/lines of inquiry. Where possible the panel should draw on existing evidence.
- 7.2 The Secretary to the FER panel produces a briefing paper outlining the context, rationale and lines of inquiry/terms of reference of the FER as approved by ASEC, with reference to appropriate supporting evidence.
- 7.3 AMER data, action plans and reports normally form the core of the supporting evidence base.⁵
- 7.4 Evidence could also include minutes and relevant papers of formal Faculty committees (e.g. Faculty Academic Standards and Education Committee, Faculty Research Degrees Committee, Faculty Research and Professional Practice Committee, Faculty Academic Board, Department Committee), student forums, student representative meetings, programme/department team meetings or other meetings/forums as appropriate and relevant to the focus of the FER.
- 7.5 Evidence may also include strategy documents, organisational diagrams, programme/unit specifications, student facing documentation (e.g. programme handbooks, unit guides, assessment briefs), SUBU survey data etc as required. Academic Quality will advise on initial documentation requirements. In addition, evidence may also be gathered via meetings such as student and/or staff focus groups. Panels may request further evidence after conducting an initial review of the documentation provided.

8. FOCUSED ENHANCEMENT REVIEW PANEL

- 8.1 The panel requirements for each FER event - including number of panel members and any specific expertise required - are determined by ASEC⁶, with reference to the planned scope, scale and focus of the FER and with advice from the Centre for Fusion Learning, Innovation and Excellence and Academic Quality.
- 8.2 Panel members are approached and appointed by Academic Quality, with reference to the requirements of ASEC and advice provided by the Centre for Excellence in Learning. Advice may be sought from Departments/Faculties if subject specific expertise is required.
- 8.3 Panels are normally chaired by an experienced member of the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG), whose seniority is proportionate to the scale and focus of the FER. Panels will normally include members of the area of activity that is subject to the FER, colleagues with relevant expertise recommended by FLIE, and one or more student representatives able to comment on the provision subject to review.

⁵ Core AMER data normally includes NSS/PTES data, progression and retention statistics, degree outcomes statistics, unit monitoring data, external examiners reports and Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) data.

⁶ The panel requirements for the FER may be determined by the Chair of ASEC acting on behalf of the committee on the recommendation of Academic Quality.

- 8.4 The appointment of one or more external panel members with relevant pedagogic and/or subject expertise is regarded as good practice. Any requirement for externality will be determined by ASEC⁷, with reference to the scope and focus of the specific FER.
- 8.5 Academic Quality will consider potential conflicts of interest when appointing panel members, e.g. recent previous relationships with BU on the part of external panel members. However, a conflict of interest does not immediately exclude an individual from appointment as an external panel member.
- 9. OUTCOMES OF FOCUSSED ENHANCEMENT REVIEW**
- 9.1 The outcomes of the FER are determined by the panel, and are 'signed off' by the Chair and the Faculty contact.
- 9.2 Outcomes take the form of commendations for good practice, and recommendations for action that feed into the AMER process. Recommendations may include the wider dissemination/implementation of good practice identified by the FER, as well as identifying areas for further improvement or issues to be addressed. They may be targeted at specific programme teams, Departments, Faculties, professional services or directed to the institution.
- 9.3 Recommendations should utilise or link to existing BU processes wherever possible. Examples might include:
- recommendations that inform the Faculty's approach to the Peer Review of Education Practice process;
 - the identification of staff development needs that would inform Personal and Professional Development plans;
 - a recommendation for early curriculum review of specific provision;
 - ongoing engagement with relevant experts from the Centre for Fusion Learning, Innovation and Excellence or elsewhere;
 - engagement with other teams within BU who have been identified as relevant exemplars of good practice.
- 9.4 Recommendations are incorporated into relevant AMER action plans (Faculty, Department and Programme action plans as appropriate), and monitored via FASEC. Any recommendations for the University will be monitored by Academic Quality and reported to ASEC.
- 9.5 A report on each FER is produced by Academic Quality, agreed with the Chair of the panel and the Faculty contact, circulated to the rest of the panel and participants and submitted to ASEC.

⁷ Any requirement for externality may be stipulated by the Chair of ASEC acting on behalf of the committee.