

# ACADEMIC PROGRAMME REVIEW HANDBOOK

2020

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## Acknowledgment

In Afghanistan, the higher education sector has proliferated after the establishment of the new government in 2002 before which, there were only six public higher education institutions while there has been no private higher education institution.

Presently, there are 39 public higher education institutions and since 2004 to date, there are 128 private higher education institutions offering higher education.

services at various degree programs levels across the country. Though the quality of higher education has always been a matter of concern to the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and for the employers at the job market, the MoHE has recently developed distinctive strategic approaches in addressing and improving the quality of higher education; viz. revision and unification the academic curriculums, capacity building of the faculty members, research enrichment, reforming the MoHE administrative structure, legal document revision and development, quality assurance and accreditation process enhancement, infrastructure development and e-learning embedment.

However, notwithstanding, the program review is one of the essential parts of the stated priorities of the MoHE, it builds a direct link with the quality assurance processes.

The program review process has a vital role in the enhancement of quality, addressing, and improving the academic programs weaknesses as an integral of the academic administration at the higher education institutions. The academic program review handbook is a very useful tool for colleagues at the MoHE and the higher education institutions. It provides information and guidance on the quality cycle, quality processes, new program approval, annual program monitoring, action planning, periodic program review, program level changes, and etc.

To embed and sustain the academic program review process as an integral act of academic administration, efforts are made to convert it into a legal document to make it a required practice for the higher education institutions in the country.

The development of the academic program review process has started in August 2017 under the title “PAL5 (Partners in Academic Learning)”; several workshops and virtual meetings were organized among the relevant stakeholders to complete this handbook.

It is worth thanking and appreciating the contributions of the National Committee of Program Review (NCPR), the National Training Team (NTT), Dr. Alex Moseley, Andrew Petersen and Prof. Jon Scott from the University of Leicester, Hank Williams independent consultant, Ms. Gulghutai Waizi, Higher Education Program Manager at the British Council office in Kabul, Prof. Haji Mohammad Naimi, former director of QAAD, Prof. Khwaja Zubair Sediqi former director of Academic Program Development, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Naim Azimi the director of QAAD, Prof. Sediqullah Barakzai the director of Academic Program Development, Prof. Ali Ahmad Kava, Prof. Abdul Ahad Zahed, and as whole the British Council Office in Kabul for facilitating and supporting this partnership opportunity to work together and produce this useful handbook for the improvement of the higher education system in Afghanistan.

Obediently,

Prof. Abdul Tawab Balakarzai

Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs, MoHE

## Section 1: Foreword

Higher Education is one of the key enablers for societies to progress. It produces our future leaders, thinkers, specialists in medicine, engineering, technology, urban planning, water resources, agriculture... the list is a long one and can go on and on. It is through these generations of young people that we can develop talent and people assets which allow us to progress and develop.

The wonderful work of the Quality Assurance Partnership between the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Leicester is the result of a partnership and close collaboration between Afghanistan and the United Kingdom. I would particularly like to thank the National Committee for Programme Review (NCPR); the National Training Team (NTT); Prof Haji Mohammad Naimi, former Director of QAAD; Mr. Zubair Sediqi, former Director of Academic Programme Development; Hank Williams, independent consultant, Dr Alex Moseley, Andrew Petersen and Prof Jon Scott from the University of Leicester; and Gulghutai Waizi, Higher Education Manager at the British Council in Kabul. They have led us on this journey to explore the development and embedding of quality assurance in the Higher Education system in Afghanistan.

After years of conflict, many generations of young Afghans have forfeited their education and the HE institutions themselves have suffered closure, and worse. The Afghan Ministry of Higher Education has an ambitious programme to overhaul the sector to ensure it is fit for purpose as Afghanistan progresses towards peace and stability. A major part of this is having assurance that quality standards are monitored, and guidelines are in place to help those in the sector to aspire to agreed standards set by the MoHE.

I would encourage anyone interested in education development to read this handbook. It is written in a thoughtful way that allows the reader to either read it cover to cover or to dip into it and pull out specific areas of interest.

Eric Lawrie  
Director  
British Council Afghanistan

## Preface

Since 2009, “Quality Assurance and Accreditation” has become one of the main priorities and a significant pillar of the higher education system in Afghanistan and the Ministry of Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as “MoHE”) continuously progresses towards its advancement and institutionalization.

In 2011, the relevant bye-law was drafted, as a result of which the MoHE established the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAAD) within the MoHE organizational structure to administer and oversee the quality assurance and accreditation processes.

In 2012, the first Accreditation Framework was drafted and approved by MoHE to foster the practice of its standards at higher education institutions in Afghanistan.

As a result of the empirical application of the recent accreditation framework and based on feedback from the pilot studies, the framework was revised in 2017 to suit the dynamic circumstances of academics towards standardization in the country in which, one of the key criteria being that academic programmes should be consistent with the institution’s mission and should be regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.

New Programme Approval (NPA), Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) and Periodic Programme Review (PPR) are the essential processes within higher education institutions’ internal quality assurance mechanisms that enable the academic administrative responsibilities to be exercised and form a fundamental part of the academic cycle. These processes ensure that education institutions have made, and continue to make, available to students appropriate learning opportunities which enable the intended learning outcomes of the programme to be achieved. They also evaluate the students’ attainment of academic standards and allow higher education institutions to confirm that their portfolio aligns with their mission and strategic priorities.

Programme monitoring and programme review enable the higher education institutions to reflect on the learning opportunities that the students have experienced, the academic standards that are achieved, and their continuing relevance. Ultimate responsibility for monitoring and review of programmes rests with the higher education institutions.

This handbook includes the processes and steps for implementation of approval, monitoring and review of academic programs. It is a guidebook for all the academic staff including, QA staff, lecturers, heads of departments, deans of faculties, vice-chancellors and chancellors of the Universities to use for better implementation of NPA, APM and PPR at their respective higher education institutions and focus on quality assurance and enhancement of academic programmes.

Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation  
Ministry of Higher Education

## Introduction

This handbook has been written to provide guidance for all universities and higher education institutions to undertake the core quality assurance processes that are required by the *Academic Programme Review Policy* as set out by the Ministry of Higher Education.

The development and implementation of a national set of quality assurance processes, *New Programme Approval*, *Annual Programme Monitoring* and *Periodic Programme Review* are key to establishing a standard framework for quality across all universities. This framework will allow every university to ensure that its academic programmes remain aligned with the national and institutional strategic aims for higher education and will allow confirmation of the academic quality of those programmes. It will also allow the Ministry of Higher Education to monitor the quality and standards of the programmes at a national level.

An important element of the quality assurance processes is the identification of aspects of the programme that need improvement and the development of an action plan to address those issues. This underpins the link between quality assurance and quality enhancement. As we will discuss, the quality cycle is an ongoing process of monitoring, action planning and improvement. The overall intention therefore is not just to assure the quality of the programmes but to continually improve the quality of the learning experience of the students and to improve the value of the programmes in training the students for their future careers.

In this handbook we take an overview of the quality cycle and then provide detailed guidance for undertaking *New Programme Approval*, *Annual Programme Monitoring* and *Periodic Programme Review*. We also focus on the outcomes of these processes and the development of action plans as the key to improving the programmes.

The preparation of the handbook has been a collaborative exercise throughout and the drafts have been shared with colleagues from the National Training Team the National Committee for Programme Review and the Ministry of Higher Education who have reviewed the contents and provided very helpful feedback and guidance. We have also discussed its development through a series of workshops with these colleagues and are very grateful for their input. Particular thanks are due to Prof Naimi and Hank Williams for their support and advice throughout the writing of this handbook and for all their work in developing the Academic Programme Review scheme, and to four members of the National Training Team: Ahmad Reshad Jamalyar, Ali Ahmad Kaveh, Laila Nadir and Abdul Ahad Zahid for particular assistance in checking the chapters and providing case studies and examples.

Special thanks are also due to the British Council of Afghanistan and, in particular, Ms Gulghutai Waizi, who supported the development of the handbook and the associated workshops.

We hope that this handbook will be very useful to all the universities in developing their processes and also that it too will be improved over time in response to feedback from those users.

With our best wishes,

Dr Alex Moseley, Andrew Petersen and Prof Jon Scott, University of Leicester, UK.

## Section 2: Overview of the Quality Cycle

The *Academic Programme Review Policy* sets out clearly the four stages of the Quality Assurance Cycle for programmes of study. Within the MoHE, there are three main Directorates that have oversight of the different aspects of quality assurance. These are:

- *The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAAD)*
- *The Directorate of Academic Programme Development (APDD).*
- *The Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation of Academic Affairs (AM&ED)*

*The Directorate of Academic Programme Development of the Ministry of Higher Education* has set out its requirements regarding the processes of ongoing quality assurance within institutions in the By-law: *Establishing, Suspension, Merger and Closure Bill of Academic Programs of Higher Education Institutions*.

The word ‘cycle’ suggests that these stages are continuous and ongoing, and this idea is at the heart of the policy’s aims: that quality assurance and enhancement become part of our everyday activities in all Universities.

The broad principles and process for each of these four stages of the quality cycle are set out in the Academic Programme Review Policy and underpinned by more detailed procedures and supporting documentation. National responsibility for the implementation of these components is split between two directorates within the Ministry for Higher Education which are QAAD and APDD.

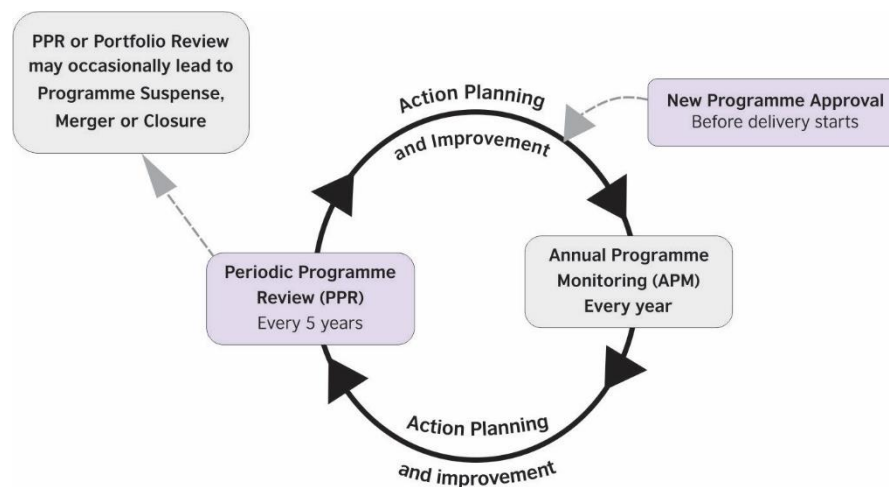
These are as follows:

1. New Programme Approval (NPA) - APDD
2. Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) - QAAD
3. Periodic Programme Review (PPR) - QAAD
4. Merger and Suspension (major programme revisions) and Closure (permanent removal) - APDD

All of the processes are linked to the life of the individual programme: NPA is the initial stage in the life of the programme; APM and PPR are on-going, regular stages throughout the life of the programme for its regular improvement and Merger/Suspension/Closure are the final events when the programme is no longer viable.



The main focus of the quality cycle is continuous improvement. This is based on the action planning that results from the APM and PPR processes. Normally, therefore, the quality processes for the programmes will remain within the cycle. Occasionally, however, PPR may identify significant issues that cannot be addressed in the short-term and so lead to a recommendation of suspension, merger or closure but these are rare outcomes (see Figure 1).

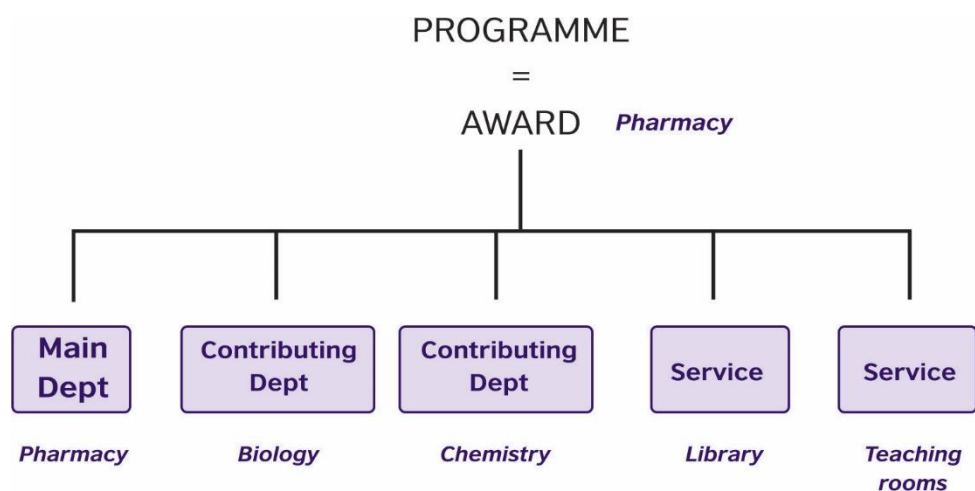


**Figure 1: Quality Assurance cycle for a programme.**

## 1. Development and Approval of new programmes

### A Focus on Programmes

All the processes and the quality assurance cycle (Figure 2.1) focus on the individual programme. A programme is a collection of elements that leads to a specific *award*. This may be delivered by a single department, or involve several departments and services within the institution – as shown in figure 2.2.



**Figure 2: Elements that contribute to a programme/award.**

Individual staff, departments and services might therefore have input to several New Programme Approvals and to several APM or PPR reports, to cover all of the programmes/awards they contribute to.

### **New Programme Approval**

Any proposal to develop a new programme of study should be tested against local and national strategic priorities, the needs of the market and University requirements for the quality of teaching and the student experience. A standardised programme development and approval process is designed to ensure that all of these factors are taken into account when developing a new programme, and that all aspects are rigorously scrutinised and evaluated according to the related by-laws and regulations before a new programme is launched.

First, the need for the programme must be established. This should be done through market research, engagement with relevant local and national authorities, employers and alumni. A programme will only be able to proceed through the approval process where there is clear evidence of the need for its introduction.

Second, the institution must review the proposed curriculum and intended learning outcomes of the new programme, and test these against established best practice. During this process the institution must demonstrate how it assesses whether the programme meets the required standards of academic scholarship, will deliver positive outcomes and will represent a high-quality learning experience for students.

Finally, the institution must demonstrate that it has an appropriate physical and learning environment to deliver a high-quality academic experience for students. This includes sufficient staffing to deliver the programme. An institution must demonstrate appropriate numbers of sufficiently qualified faculty members, as well as administrative and technical staff, where appropriate. There is also a requirement to demonstrate appropriate physical resources, such as Library resources, teaching space, including equipped laboratories where necessary, and IT resources.

The related by-law and *Academic Programme Review Policy, New Academic Programmes* process sets out these criteria for approval in further detail. The ability to establish new

programmes requires institutions to have achieved stage 3 accreditation with the Ministry of Higher Education, otherwise in exceptional cases the Ministry may decide. Institutions must complete the *New Programme Approval* process and receive approval from the Ministry before any new programme can be launched.

Ministry oversight of the development of new programmes ensures that the new programmes which are created serve the identified strategic needs of the market, and also ensures a threshold level of academic quality and the student experience.

Once a programme has been approved it enters into the standard schedule of quality assurance processes which include APM and PPR as set out below. As part of New Programme Approval institutions may be required to produce an action plan, which would subsequently be monitored through APM.

## 2. Annual Programme Monitoring

Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) is undertaken by the department on an annual basis overseen by the faculty and university quality assurance committees. Within the APM process programme teams reflect on the output of various different data sources, including student recruitment, progression and employment, as well as feedback from staff, students, alumni and employers. Review of this information enables the programme teams to develop and implement action plans to improve the quality of the.

Undertaking an annual process to reflect upon the academic quality of programmes and the associated student experience is a central element of academic quality assurance. Annual Programme Monitoring allows programme teams to perform a 'health check' on their programmes and identify opportunities for improvement that can be implemented by the department. Detailed reflection by those members of staff closest to the degree programme, directly informed by feedback from students supports a process of enhancement and continuous improvement. Regular, small scale actions can often have the greatest impact upon student satisfaction and outcomes, and the annual review of core data, previous actions and student feedback supports this approach.

Annual Programme Monitoring focuses on actions that can be taken by the programme team in order to address issues which may have been identified with the day to day running of the programme, student outcomes and the student experience: these form a local *Action Plan* (see section 5 of this Handbook). Annual Programme Monitoring typically will not directly involve input from outside of the department(s) that are delivering the programme in question. If there are issues identified through an APM exercise which cannot be addressed locally, they should instead be fed into the more comprehensive Periodic Programme Review mechanisms set out below.

Detailed guidance for managing the Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) process is set out in section 4 of this handbook.

### 3. Periodic Programme Review

Periodic Programme Review (PPR) allows institutions to undertake a more detailed and structured review of individual programmes and their place within the wider portfolio of programmes. The PPR is undertaken by the VCAA through appointing a panel at University level which is external to the department under review. Periodic Programme Review is undertaken on a rolling five-year basis for all programmes.

Periodic Programme Review is a high level, strategic review of a programme. It considers many of the same data sources as APM but over a longer timescale, and within a wider University perspective. PPR will consider the alignment of the individual programme with the University strategy and the needs of employers, alumni and wider national developments to ensure that it remains relevant. It will also look in detail at issues such as trends in student outcomes and satisfaction and the resourcing of the programme. As PPR is undertaken externally to the department, it may identify issues which are outside of the department's power to resolve and raise these to the University for consideration.

Following this strategic, external review the University may require significant amendments to be made to a programme in order to ensure its ongoing validity. In some cases, there may be a recommendation to suspend, merge or ultimately close a programme if it is not found to be appropriate within the wider portfolio.

Periodic Programme Review therefore represents both a high-level strategic review of the viability of a programme from an external perspective, but also a detailed consideration of the performance of a programme over time in key measures such as student outcomes and experience. It builds upon the annual reflection undertaken through Annual Programme Monitoring but is a distinctly different process. Whereas APM is local and reflective, Periodic Review is less frequent but at institutional level with wider ranging scope and outcomes.

Periodic Programme Review is undertaken via the PPR process set out in section 6 of this Handbook.

### 4. Merger, Suspension and Closure of Programmes

There are some circumstances under which a University may decide that a programme is no longer viable in its current form. This may result from changes in the University strategy, staffing changes, poor recruitment of students or the output of a PPR which determines that a programme is not performing appropriately or is not appropriately aligned with the needs of students or employers. In these circumstances a University may elect to:

Merge programmes – this will usually be recommended where two or more programmes are covering large elements of the same academic content and may include merging two or more departments.

Suspend a programme – ceasing recruitment to a programme for a specified period, typically a year, to allow for a more detailed review or for significant revisions to be made to the programme.



Close a programme – permanently cease recruitment to a programme.

The final decision regarding whether to suspend, close or merge programmes rests with the Supreme Council of Higher Education at the Ministry of Higher Education.

### The Quality Assurance Cycle

Each component of the Quality Assurance cycle is based directly on a section of the *Academic Programme Review Policy* and is supported by specific processes and documentation, as set out in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Quality Assurance Lifecycle, with supporting documentation.**

<b>Quality Assurance Lifecycle</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Process(es)</b>	<b>Documentation</b>
Programme Development and Approval	Brings a new programme into the quality cycle.	Engagement with stakeholders Market research and business case Academic Case Ministry Approval	Related by-law and regulations APR Policy – Section 1 Programme Specification Template Programme Proposal Form
Annual Programme Monitoring	Checks on the quality of programmes within the departments which run the programme.	Annual Programme Monitoring Review of datasets Action planning and review	Related by-law and regulations APR Policy – Section 2 APM Form NTT Notes of Guidance Action Planning
Periodic Programme Review	Wider, institutional/national, review of programmes involving reviewers external to the departments who run the programme.	Periodic Programme Review Action Planning Interim and Final response Monitoring through APM	Related by-law and regulations APR Policy – Section 3 PPR Template NTT Notes of Guidance Action Planning
Merger, Suspension or Closure	Ministry-level decision based on recommendations from the institution.	Portfolio review Outcomes of APM / PPR	Related by-law and regulations APR Policy – Section 4 Programme Suspension, Merger and Closure

## **Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

*Quality Assurance* and *Quality Enhancement* are separate but fundamentally linked concepts, and both are vital to the establishment of an effective system.

**Quality Assurance** is defined as: Processes required by the MoHE and implemented by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to monitor, review and report on the quality of all aspects of the operation of the HEI.

**Quality Enhancement** is defined as: Processes implemented by the HEI to ensure that the improvements recommended by quality assurance are implemented in order that the quality of the student learning experience is enhanced.

Effective Quality Assurance processes allow institutions to ensure that their programmes are operating effectively and meeting all required thresholds. Through undertaking these assurance processes it also identifies where there are opportunities to enhance programmes. Effective Quality Assurance therefore feeds Quality Enhancement

As an example, an Annual Programme Monitoring report may confirm that the levels of student achievement within a programme are appropriate and in line with institutional and national standards. This represents effective Quality Assurance as the relevant department is reflecting on the academic standards of its programmes. That reflection may also identify modules with particularly strong outcomes and evaluate what contributed to this. Where effective strategies are identified through this process the APM *Action Plan* would then include a commitment to deploying the relevant strategies more widely across other modules.

This is an example of a Quality Assurance process driving a Quality Enhancement process, through effective Action Planning.

## Section 3: Preparing for quality processes

The quality assurance cycle relies on everyone within the university knowing the role they play in a particular process, and that the processes are embedded into the day-to-day work of each department, faculty and central committee.

This will not be the case when the processes are first introduced. In order to prepare the university for the quality assurance cycle, roles will need to be allocated and defined, there will need to be a programme of briefing and training, and data auditing and collection will need to take place.

This chapter deals with each of these preparatory steps and provides a detailed guide for setting up the core quality processes.

### Defining roles

#### *The Quality Cycle*

The following roles are central to ensuring the quality cycle is implemented correctly and continually.

- The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA)  
*leads the institution's quality assurance and enhancement processes and has ultimate responsibility for them to the Ministry.*
- The Institution Quality Assurance Committee (IQAC)  
*is normally chaired by the VCAA, and is responsible for the set-up and continuous running of quality processes across the institution.*
- A Faculty Quality Assurance Committee (FQAC)  
*sits within each Faculty, chaired by the Dean. FQAC is responsible for the operation of quality processes within the Faculty, and report to the IQAC.*

#### *New Programme Approval*

New programmes might be proposed by the Ministry, Vice Chancellor or Curriculum Committee as strategic developments; or might be proposed by Faculties or Departments based on expertise and interest in a particular area.

The approval of the new programme will involve:

- The Programme Lead  
*A programme lead (normally the Head of the awarding department) will be involved in preparing the new programme documentation according to the related by-law, and proposing the programme to the FQAC.*
- The FQAC  
*creates the Programme Approval Panel to consider the new programme. The panel will also include members from other Departments or Faculties.*
- The Head of Quality



*The Head of Quality will review and advise on the documentation and oversee the process.*

- Academic Council of the Faculty  
*The ACF will review the new program documentation and either approve it or ask for further information*
- The IQAC  
*The IQAC will review the FQAC recommendations, consult with the Curriculum Committee, and after approval by the Academic Council of the University, send the proposal to the Ministry of Higher Education for final approval.*

### *Annual Programme Monitoring*

The following roles are needed for APM:

- The Dean  
*The Dean decides the timescale of APMs within their Faculty.*
- Head of department  
*The Head of department leads the process for each programme awarded by their department. They produce the APM report (assisted by an FQAC member) and oversee the gathering of data.*
- The FQAC  
*The FQAC approves the APM report, produces implementation plans, and reports key issues to the IQAC.*
- The Head of Quality  
*The Head of Quality will review all the APMs that are conducted, monitor the operation of the APM cycle and maintain a record of the action plans.*
- Students  
*Current students on the programme will be surveyed as part of the APM investigation. Student panels will be convened specially for the APM.*
- Teaching staff  
*All staff who teach on the programme will be involved in data gathering, and who may be involved in the action plans resulting from the APM.*
- Administrative staff / services  
*Administrative staff will support the Head of Department with data collection and analysis.*

### *Periodic Programme Review*

PPR involves the same roles as the APM above, but additionally includes:

- The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and/or Chancellor  
*The VCAA defines the timing and sequence of PPR within their institution, and will appoint a panel to conduct PPR for a programme. The VCAA will also Chair the majority of the PPR Panels.*
- A PPR Panel  
*Formed from:*
  - Dean of the Faculty in which the program sits
  - a member of the IQAC (who may Chair in the absence of the VCAA)
  - 3 senior academics from other Faculties
  - 1 representative from the University Curriculum Committee
  - 1 student studying on the program in the previous year.
- Alumni  
*Alumni of the programme will be surveyed and, if possible, some representatives may meet the Panel.*
- Employers  
*The Panel will meet with key employers of graduates from the programme, to review existing provision in line with the needs of the market and identify opportunities to enhance current provision.*
- The Head of Quality  
*The Head of Quality will review all the PPRs that are conducted and maintain a record of the action plans.*
- The IQAC  
*The IQAC approves the PPR report, produces implementation plans, and reports key issues to the Ministry of Higher Education.*

### *Suspension, Merger and Closure*

Recommendations for suspending, merging or closing (SMC) programmes can come out of PPR decisions, or can come from the University (Vice-Chancellor or Curriculum Committee) or direct from the Ministry. In all case the Ministry has to approve any change.

- The IQAC  
*The IQAC identifies SMC as the result of a PPR, and recommends the decision to the Ministry of Higher Education for approval.*
- An investigation team  
*A team will be assembled by the IQAC, led by the VCAA or the Dean of a different faculty to the one containing the programme, and containing academic peers from within the institution.*  
*Alternatively, if the decision is from MoHE or contentious or sensitive, an independent team will be appointed by the Ministry. The team will normally be led by the Academic Monitoring & Evaluation Directorate.*

When the investigation team has made a decision, the resulting output will be dealt with internally and then reported to the Ministry. If the programmes are to be merged, a New Programme Approval will be needed for the combined programme.

## Briefing and Training

Each member of the department, whether student, teaching or administrative staff - and even graduated students (alumni) and employers who work with the department or its graduates - will need *briefing* or *training* to help them understand their role in the quality cycle processes. Overseeing the training is an important role for the Head of Quality of the University.

**Briefing** is to provide information about the **value** and **purpose** of the APM or PPR, and can be provided either in person or through documents, slides, web pages etc.

**Training** is focused on the **practice** of APM and PPR, with an understanding of their **value** and **purpose**. Training is usually provided by experts (such as the Head of Quality, National Training Team members, IQAC members, or others who have already experienced APM and/or PPR).

The needs of each role are different: students might only need a short *briefing* of their role in the process, yet a Head of Department will need thorough *training* in all aspects of the process. It is therefore useful to draw up a *briefing and training plan* for all roles, similar to that shown in Table 2.

Over time, more members of the Faculty will have received briefing or training and experienced an APM or PPR, and so requirements will change and the pool of potential trainers will grow.

**Table 2: A Briefing and Training Plan Template, with example plan**

Role:	Briefing or training needed	In order to...	Outputs
Students	<i>General briefing for all students (document, web page) Specific briefing for student panel members (FQAC)</i>	<i>Understand the quality process, and contribute effectively to the panel</i>	<i>Better student awareness and representation</i>
Teachers	<i>Briefing (Head of Department, Faculty staff meeting)</i>	<i>Ensure all staff know about the process, and the correct staff are contributing data and information</i>	<i>Efficient data collection, staff awareness of quality process</i>
Admin/services	<i>½ day training to help admin lead to understand the data needed (FQAC)</i>	<i>Help the admin lead to manage their team. organise student and staff questionnaires, etc.</i>	<i>Admin lead provides all the data for the form</i>
Head of Department/ QAC member	<i>Training, before APM/PPR starts (NTT member)</i>	<i>Lead the panel and process effectively</i>	<i>The quality process is implemented effectively</i>
Alumni	<i>Briefing (email, web page) Specific briefing for alumni panel members (FQAC)</i>	<i>Understand the quality process, and contribute effectively to the panel</i>	<i>Reputation of programme/ institution intact.</i>

Employers	<i>Briefing (personal email from Head of department, web page)</i>	<i>Involve employers in the panel process.</i>	<i>Useful input from employers for the panel.</i>
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### *Briefing and Training methods*

There are many ways to approach briefing and training, some of which are indicated in Figure 3.1, and those chosen should reflect the local context and needs. Some common methods/suggestions are provided below:

#### **Face-to-face methods:**

- Information sessions (briefing or training): overview of the **value, purpose** and/or **practice** of APM/PPR.  
- eg. 1h talks/lectures or slides/document; individual meetings.
- Workshops: training, focusing on the **purpose** and **practice**.  
- eg. Group work, exploring documentation, working out data needed, how to complete sections. etc.
- Programme team training: to develop local **practice**.  
- regular workshops or at-desk training, to develop local cycle of data gathering, reporting, reflecting/planning, implementing.

#### **Resources:**

- The use of resources for briefing a specific audience in the **value, purpose** and/or **practice** of APM/PPR.  
- eg. Information on a student-facing web site, or in a course handbook; or a simple diagram of the quality process for staff
- Local guides/templates for data collection, local role definitions (who does what), internal process / dates / submission methods etc.
- Annotated slides, for those who can't make the face-to-face training.

### Collection of data

APM and PPR require similar sets of data or input from key stakeholders such as students, alumni and employers. Some of this data is already being collected by academic departments and administrative services of the university and will provide valuable input.

However, not all the data that is needed to implement a full APM and PPR may be available or easy to access. If this is the case, the process should be completed using the data currently available or relatively easy to collect, and steps should be identified in the action plan to ensure that more data will be generated for the next APM or before the next PPR.

#### *Collection of new data*



For information areas where data is not currently collected, these will form into two main groups:

*1. Data that is easy to collect but isn't currently being collected.*

Identify what data is possible to collect in an appropriate timescale and set up mechanisms to collect it. This might be through a short one-off survey, or a student focus group. If that isn't possible, include in the action plan the steps you will take to collect this data for the next APM or PPR.

Always try to use existing processes and sources to collect any new data. If a student questionnaire already exists, for instance, then modify the questions on that to provide the data you need. If a suitable questionnaire doesn't exist at the moment, use one of the Ministry-approved templates in the *Resources* section of this handbook.

*2. Data that the department doesn't currently have access to.*

Heads of Department and their Deans can ask the Faculty or Institution to set up the necessary data collection methods, either for this or a future APM or PPR. If that isn't possible, the unavailability of data can be recorded in the APM or PPR, and raised by the IQAC at either Institution or Ministry level if deemed important for the process.

More detailed data needs are provided in the APM and PPR chapters. The above processes for collecting data can apply whenever you read about new data within those chapters.

## In Summary: how to prepare for quality processes

Drawing on the three areas of need described in this chapter (role definition, training and data collection) the following steps are recommended for faculty and departments preparing for quality processes.

### *Preparations for all processes*

1. Identify quality process roles within the Faculty and departments.
2. Ensure that the core roles (Dean, FQAC, Heads of Department) are briefed/trained in the overall quality process, and in both APM and PPR.
3. Standardise student records, student questionnaires, staff performance checks, etc. to ensure that good quality internal data is collected across all departments.
4. Investigate any existing alumni and employer data collection, and explore options to improve and extend this to provide data necessary for PPR in the future (this may need institution or Ministry support).
5. The Dean confirms and advertises the timetable for quality processes (APM, PPR) within the Faculty, giving suitable notice for each department.
6. Ensure that departments complete at least one APM before they undertake their first PPR. Then much of the data – and action plans - will be available from the first APM to feed into the PPR.

### *Preparations for APM*

1. Allocate FQAC member as co-lead with the Head of department.
2. Develop a training plan so that all staff and students are informed and aware of their role, and implement it.
3. Head of department oversees data collection, ensuring that data is gathered, student interviews are allocated and timetabled, etc.
4. If there has been a previous APM or PPR, review the status of any action plans from previous reviews.

### *Preparations for PPR*

1. The VCAA constitutes a panel, and the panel members are briefed of their role.
2. Develop a training plan so that all staff, students and employers are informed and aware of their role, and implement it.
3. Head of department oversees data collection, ensuring that data is gathered, student interviews are allocated and timetabled, alumni and employers are contacted, etc.

## Section 4: New Programme Approval

The processes for developing and approving new programmes are summarized in the *Academic Programme Review Policy* and in the *New Academic Programme processes, Articles 13 & 14* of the Bylaw. Oversight and final approval of the process is managed by the *Academic Programme Development Directorate (APDD)* of the *Ministry of Higher Education*.

In order to be eligible to establish new programmes, universities normally have to have achieved Stage 3 accreditation with the Ministry of Higher Education, otherwise in exceptional cases the Ministry may decide. They must then complete the New Programme Approval (NPA) process and receive approval from the Ministry before the new programme can be launched and students recruited. Oversight of the development of the proposal for a new programme will normally be the responsibility of the Head of the proposed awarding department or faculty.

The process of approving new programmes is designed to make sure that:

- there is a clear need for the programme, supported by evidence;
- there are clear educational goals and learning outcomes;
- the curriculum is appropriate to deliver those goals;
- there will be sufficient physical and staffing resources to enable the programme to be delivered with a high-quality student experience;
- the University has the appropriate quality assurance processes in place to confirm the ongoing quality of the programme.

Details of the above aspects are set out in a document called the **Programme Specification** which forms the core documentation of the programme approval process. The programme specification defines the nature of the programme. Use of a common format for the programme specification allows comparison to be made:

- between programmes with a similar degree title being delivered by different universities (e.g. bachelors' programmes in biological sciences delivered by different universities) and also
- comparison between the programmes delivered by the departments within an individual university, providing a clear picture of each university's portfolio of programmes.

Detail of the programme structures is important to enable good understanding of the structure, aims and outcomes of the programme and to enable the need for the programme to be confirmed in terms of its difference from existing programmes.

An example template for a programme specification is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

### Need for the programme

The Dean/Head of the Department that will award the programme, along with the academic members of staff making up the programme team should identify the proposed discipline area and level of the award they wish to develop, for example an undergraduate bachelors' degree in Biology.

In order to identify the need for the programme, the programme team should:

- determine what similar programmes, if any, are already being delivered by the university or by other universities within the region;
- meet with regional Governmental and non-Governmental employers and industry representatives to explore their need for graduates within the discipline area and the skills they are looking for when recruiting employees;
- discuss with the MoHE their identification of potential need for the programme within the region;
- clarify the potential areas of employability of the graduates through analysis of the market statistics for employment at a national level.

The outcomes of each of these activities should be clearly presented in the application form.

### Educational goals of the programme

If it has been determined that there is a need for the programme in terms of the graduate employment and that there are sufficient numbers of potential students, the programme team should proceed with developing the specification for the programme.

The key to the programme specification is the development of the educational goals and the learning outcomes. These set out what the overall **aims** of the programme are, and what skills and knowledge the students should have acquired and be able to demonstrate by the time they graduate from the programme – the **learning outcomes**. It is important, when drafting the framework to take account of the feedback from the MoHE and from the prospective employers regarding the skills they need the students to have acquired.

The **aims** of the programme define the over-arching educational goals the department plans to deliver. As such they are broad in scope. For example, a programme in Biology might have the aims of providing:

- a teaching and learning programme of high quality that is informed by research;
- an education that will enable graduates to follow a variety of careers including research or working in related industries;
- students with a broad appreciation of biological sciences, and advanced knowledge of one or more areas of the subject including appreciation of aspects of the underpinning research;
- students with a range of practical and transferable skills;
- students with the skills to analyse and interpret data from experiments or field work and to present those findings to different stakeholders.

The **learning outcomes** for the programme specify what the student should have achieved and be able to demonstrate by the time they have completed the programme. The learning outcomes are therefore represented through the curriculum, in terms of what the students are taught, and through the assessments, in terms of how achievement of the outcomes is demonstrated.

A prospective employer should therefore expect the graduate to be able to demonstrate a specific subject-based knowledge and a set of defined subject-based and transferable skills.



The subject-based aspects can be defined as:

- acquisition of a specific body of knowledge for that discipline;
- understanding of the key concepts of the discipline;
- ability to analyse and present key issues in the discipline;
- demonstration of practical skills, e.g. laboratory or technical skills where appropriate;
- preparation for progression to a specific career (e.g. pharmacy or medicine).

The transferable skills can be defined as the ability to:

- communicate effectively orally and in writing;
- manipulate and interpret numerical data;
- access and utilise databases and electronic resources;
- evaluate the value and reliability of different sources of information;
- use information to solve problems;
- work effectively as an individual or as part of a team.

Learning outcomes are expressed in terms of what the student should be able to do by the time they have successfully completed the module or the programme as a whole. The first word of the learning outcome should always be a verb that describes an action which can be assessed, such as *describe*, *explain* or *demonstrate*. This is then followed by the subject, i.e. what is to be explained or described.

Examples of the expression of learning outcomes could be:

On successful completion of the programme students should be able to:

- Describe the core principles of....
- Explain how the ecology of the region has developed over ...
- Undertake an analysis of data derived from....
- Interpret the findings of laboratory experiments...
- Research the literature to explain...
- Communicate effectively in writing the concepts of....
- Demonstrate the ability to work safely within the laboratory...
- Solve mathematical problems using...

For each individual programme, these learning outcomes should be expressed within the specific context of the programme. For example, the specific body of knowledge would be summarized in terms of the subject area of the discipline which the degree programme is planned to cover. Each module will have more specific learning outcomes that relate to an element of the programme so that all the modules taken together will encompass the learning outcomes of the programme as a whole.

### An appropriate curriculum

The curriculum for the programme is based on the educational goals of the programme. It comprises:

- What is taught

- Subject knowledge
- Subject skills – e.g. laboratory techniques
- Transferable skills
- How it is taught – the modes of delivery, e.g.
  - Formal lectures
  - Seminars and tutorials
  - Practical classes
  - Independent study
  - Online learning
- How the programme is assessed
  - Coursework assessment, e.g.
    - Essays
    - Reports
    - Presentations
    - Posters
    - Data analyses
    - Problem solving
  - Examinations/tests e.g.
    - Multiple-choice questions
    - Short-answer questions
    - Essay questions
    - Problem solving

The programme is normally made up of a set of modules which the student will follow each academic year. Some of these will be modules, which all students have to take as part of the degree. These include modules that are core to the discipline (representing at least 50% of the programme), basic modules that address skills needs etc., and general courses that are included in all programmes (for example Islamic studies, foreign language, computer skills, Afghan contemporary history and environmental preservation). Some programmes will include optional modules, which allow the student to choose to study specific specialisations within the overall subject of the programme.

Each module should be described in a module specification which defines, in the same way as the programme:

- the module learning outcomes;
- what is taught;
- how it is taught;
- how the module learning outcomes are assessed.

The module learning outcomes will be more detailed than the over-arching programme level outcomes, but will relate to them.

An example template for a module specification is shown in [Appendix 2](#)

For each programme the set of module specifications should map onto the overall programme specifications. Any stakeholder, for example a prospective student, a member of academic staff or a graduate employer should be able to see how the set of modules builds up to make the full programme. Modules should build on each other, so that students' knowledge and skills progress as they move through the programme.

### Sufficient resources

In order for the programme to be delivered successfully, the department and the university must be able to provide sufficient resources. These resources include staffing, educational resources and estate resources:

#### Staffing:

The department must be able to demonstrate that it has already in place, or has credible plans to employ:

- sufficient numbers of academic staff with the appropriate educational experience and subject knowledge to be able to deliver the programme;
- sufficient numbers of trained staff to manage the library facilities, the IT infrastructure, technical staff to support the operation of specific facilities such as laboratories;
- sufficient numbers of administrative staff to manage the programme in terms of operations such as student admissions, management of student records, maintenance of student teaching timetabling, assessment scheduling and management, student support functions.

#### Educational resources:

The department must be able to demonstrate that it has:

- sufficient resources in terms of books and journals for the students to use during their studies;
- sufficient IT resources to support the students' studies;
- sufficient resourcing of individual equipment for safe laboratory or fieldwork use.

#### Estate resources:

The department must be able to demonstrate that it has access to sufficient teaching space for the lectures, seminar teaching, laboratory teaching and any specialist facilities required for successful delivery of the programme.

### University quality assurance processes

The University will need to demonstrate that it has in place effective quality assurance processes to assure a high-quality student learning experience. This will require the university to have been operating both Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) and Periodic Programme Review (PPR) and to have reported on these operations to the MoHE.

## Process for New Programme Approval

The initial proposal for a new programme may be initiated at any organizational level within the university. This may therefore be developed by a department, a faculty or the university leadership. The proposal may also be based on a recommendation by the MoHE where there is identification of a regional need for the new programme.

### Stage 1

When it has been agreed to develop the initial plans for a new programme, the faculty should identify the department that will take responsibility for the development. The Head of Department should then establish a group of academic staff, with administrative support, to:

- undertake the initial assessments of the need for the programme,
- develop the programme specification (Appendix 1),
- and prepare the submission form (Appendix 3).

See the Appendixes for the example templates

### Stage 2

Faculty approval should be undertaken by a panel:

- Dean of the Faculty (Panel Chair)
- Two senior academic staff from outside the department but from related academic disciplines
- Chair of the Faculty Quality Assurance Committee (FQAC)/ or another member of the FQAC if the Faculty Dean is Chair
- Member of the institutional Quality Enhancement Committee
- Member of the Faculty Curriculum Committee

The panel should determine whether:

- there is a need for the programme;
- there are clear educational goals and learning outcomes;
- the curriculum is appropriate to deliver those goals;
- there are sufficient physical and staffing resources to enable the programme to be delivered with a high-quality student experience.

On the basis of the panel's conclusions, the faculty Academic Council and the Dean (Appendix 3 sections 8 & 9) may:

- Approve the proposed degree programme  
Or
- Approve the programme with recommendations for the department to consider for improving the programme.  
Or
- Approve the proposed degree programme with conditions that have to be met before the programme can start

- Or
- Refer the programme for more developmental work
- Or
- Reject the programme proposal

If the programme has been approved at Faculty level but with conditions, the Head of Department should prepare an action plan setting out how the conditions will be addressed before the proposal is considered at university level.

The outcome of the panel's considerations should take the form of a report for the University setting out the rationale for the programme, the panel's judgement regarding whether the programme should be approved or referred and the action plan (if required) setting out how any conditions will be addressed and by when.

### Stage 3

University level approval (Appendix 3 sections 10 & 11):

This requires consideration of the programme proposal by the university's Academic Council. The Council should receive the report from the Faculty Approval process along with the action plans to address any specific conditions. The Council should also receive guidance from the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Vice-Chancellor for Administration and Finance. The VCAA will report on the academic quality of the programme and the VCAF will confirm that the equipment, staffing and facilities required for the programme are available or can be put in place in time before the programme commences. The final step at the university level is approval by the Chancellor (Appendix 3 section 12)

### Stage 4

Ministry approval

Following approval by the university's Academic Council, the university should submit the proposal form to the Directorate of Academic Programme Development of the Ministry of Higher Education. The MoHE approval process involves approval by:

- the Academic Programme Development Directorate (APDD),
- the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAAD),
- the National Curriculum Committee,
- the Minister and
- the High Council of the MoHE.

The Ministry will first send a team to undertake a site visit (Appendix 3 section 13) on the basis of this report, the APDD and MoHE will undertake final approval of the programme (Appendix 13 section 14-16).

Once the programme has been fully approved and any conditions have been met, the department can recruit students and deliver the programme. The quality assurance processes will then proceed as for the normal cycle, with Annual Programme Monitoring and Periodic Programme Review.

## Appendix 1 Exemplar Template for a Programme Specification

### University of XXXXXXXXXX

1. Programme Specification: *Programme Title*
2. Faculty: *Faculty name* Department: *Department name*
3. Level: *undergraduate/graduate,*
4. Award: *BSc/BA/MSc/MA*
5. Normal period of study: *3 years/4 years/5 years*
6. Entry Requirements: *set out any specific entry requirements for applicants for the programme*
7. Programme Aims:  
The programme aims to provide:  
*Insert the programme aims...e.g.*
  - *an education that will enable graduates to follow a variety of careers – specify any targeted career paths - including higher degrees and research;*
  - *a high quality learning experience;*
  - *development of an in-depth appreciation of subject xxxxx;*
  - *development of a range of practical and transferable skills – specify any specific skills delivered by the programme as well as the generic ones.*
8. Programme learning outcomes:  
On successful completion of the programme students will be able to demonstrate the following subject-based learning outcomes:  
*Specify each of the subject-based learning outcomes that the students should be able to demonstrate on completion of the programme, stating how it will be taught within the programme, through which modules, and how achievement of the learning outcome will be assessed.*  
On successful completion of the programme students will be able to demonstrate the following transferable skills:  
*Specify each of the transferable skills that the students will be expected to be able to demonstrate on completion of the programme learning outcomes, stating how it will be taught within the programme, in which modules it will be taught, and how it will be assessed.*  
*For example....*  
*On successful completion of the programme students will be able to demonstrate effective oral communication skills.*  
*Training in oral communication skills will be delivered in modules XXX, YYY, ZZZ in which students will gain experience of giving oral presentations and receive formative*



*feedback. Assessment will be through assessed presentations of coursework (Module ZZZ) and of the project outcomes (final year project module)*

9. Programme structure:

*For each academic year list the modules that the student will study and identify which ones are core (modules that all students on the programme will study) and which are optional (the list of modules students may choose from where there is some choice of specialisation allowed within the programme).*

*Make sure that the module learning outcomes and the programme learning outcomes map together.*

## Appendix 2 Exemplar template for a module specification

### University of XXXXXXXXXX

1. Module Specification: *Module Title*
2. Faculty: *Faculty name* Department: *Department name*
3. Level: *undergraduate/graduate,*
4. When delivered: e.g. *1<sup>st</sup> semester year 1 or 2<sup>nd</sup> semester year 3*
5. Indicative content of the module: *give a brief description of the subject content of the module that will be taught.*
6. Module Aims:

The module aims to provide:

*Insert the module aims...e.g. for a 1<sup>st</sup> year biosciences module in ecology*

- *an introduction to conservation biology;*
- *training in plant identification;*
- *training in plant sampling techniques.*

7. Module learning outcomes:

On successful completion of the module students will be able to demonstrate the following subject-based learning outcomes:

*Specify each of the subject-based learning outcomes that the students should be able to demonstrate on completion of the module, stating how it will be taught within the module, and how achievement of the learning outcome will be assessed. e.g. for a biosciences module*

*Describe the relationship between soil type and plant distribution for a specific habitat;*

*Taught through lectures and fieldwork*

*Assessed through coursework essay and end-of-module exam*

*Explain how the introduction of specific plant species has changed the local ecology;*

*Taught through lectures and fieldwork*

*Assessed through mini fieldwork project*

*Demonstrate effective plant identification skills*

*Taught through practical classes*

*Assessed through practical test of identification skills*

On successful completion of the module students will be able to demonstrate the following transferable skills:

*Specify each of the transferable skills that the students will be expected to be able to demonstrate on completion of the module learning outcomes, stating how it will be taught and how it will be assessed.*

*For example....*

*On successful completion of the module students will be able to demonstrate effective oral communication skills.*

*Students will gain experience of giving oral presentations and receive formative feedback in the three tutorials.*

*Assessment will be through an assessed presentation of the mini fieldwork project*

#### 8. Module structure

*Specify how the student learning and assessment will be structured, e.g.*

*Teaching: The formal teaching will be delivered through 10 lectures, 2 tutorials and 3 laboratory classes.*

*Independent Study: Students should undertake guided independent study equivalent to 20 hours work. This will comprise reading specified chapters of the course textbook and undertaking research for the coursework essay.*

*Assessment: The module will be assessed through a 1000 word coursework essay, a 10 minute oral presentation and a 1 hour short-answer examination paper.*

## Appendix 3 – MoHE Application forms for New Programme Approval

**Table 3: Application form for New Program Approval**

1		Contents of proposal	Summary programme description
2		Proposed Program	Program name
3		General information	History of faculty/HEI, readiness for establishment of new program, logics of establishment and primary preparations, who prepared or assisted the proposed program curriculum....
4		Need assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Description of program</li> <li>2. Aim of the program</li> <li>3. Reason of establishing the new program</li> <li>4. Necessity and importance of proposed program</li> <li>5. Establishment of the new program based on national and regional requirements</li> <li>6. What new scientific revolutions especially in national level demanded the establishment of new program</li> <li>7. Does this program exist in neighbouring and regional countries? If yes which country and University?</li> <li>8. In which organizations or entities can the graduates of this program work?</li> </ol>
5		Functional conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of existing appropriate academic staff for running the new program (Bachelor, Master, PhD)</li> <li>2. Does the HEI own its buildings. If yes what is the number and specification of the teaching buildings (number of floors, teaching rooms, laboratory, library, computer lab, health clinic and air conditioning facilities)</li> <li>3. Number of existing programs</li> <li>4. Required facilities and equipment for the new program</li> <li>5. Approval of curriculum by the national curriculum committee at MoHE</li> <li>6. For financial issues, what precautionary measures are undertaken to ensure extra budget for infrastructure and expenses if required</li> </ol>
6		Current condition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standard teaching rooms</li> <li>2. Laboratory, working group rooms, project based works.... To ensure practical works based on the program requirements</li> <li>3. List of academic staff authorized to teach along with their academic ranks, academic degree (Bachelor, Master, PhD) and field of study.</li> </ol>

			4. Description of facilities, library, internet, IT centre					
		Approval steps						
7		Description of three members of proposal team	#	Name	F Name	Academic rank	Academic degree	Related Dept
	1							
	2							
	3							
8		Approval of Faculty academic council	Registration number, date and approval text				No of total members	
							No of Members attended	
							No of Votes in favor	
							No of opposed votes	
							No of Neutral votes	
9		Approval of the Dean of the faculty	Registration number, date and approval text				Full name, academic rank, signature and stamp	
10		Approval of administrative council of the University /or vice chancellor in administrative affaires in relation to infrastructure, facilities and equipment	Registration number, date and approval text				No of total members	
							No of members attended	
							No of votes in favor	
							No of opposed votes	
							No of neutral votes	
11		Approval of University academic council	Registration number, date and approval text				No of total members	
							No of members attended	

				No of votes in favor	
				No of opposed votes	
				No of neutral votes	
12		Approval of university chancellor	Full name and academic rank Registration number, date and approval text	Signature and stamp	
13		Site visit description by MoHE team			
14		Approval of academic board of APDD	Registration number, date and approval text		
15		Approval of Minister	Registration number, date and approval text		
16		Approval of High council of MoHE	Registration number, date and approval text		



## Section 5: Annual Programme Monitoring

*Annual Programme Monitoring* (APM) supports section 5 of the *National Accreditation Framework*, to ensure that:

“Academic programmes are consistent with the institution’s mission and are regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement”. APM is “a formal process conducted by all departments within an HEI each year to review their academic programme and identify areas for improvement” (*QA Policy Section 2*).

APM is at the heart of the quality assurance cycle, as it provides a regular opportunity to *check* and *improve every* programme through the use of *action plans*, and to highlight any quality issues to the rest of the quality cycle.

APMs take place annually for each programme, and are based around the completion of an APM form. The action plans developed as part of the APM form are then used to check progress between each APM, and form an evidence base for the *Periodic Programme Review* that can pick up longer-term issues. Chapters 5 and 6 cover these aspects in greater detail.



**Figure 3: The position of APMs in the quality cycle.**

### APM focus on the Programme

APM takes place internally for each *programme*: a separate APM form is used for each programme within the institution. A programme is a collection of elements that lead to a specific

*award*, which might involve several departments and services within the institution – as described in Chapter 2 and shown in figure 2.

Individual staff, departments and services might therefore be part of several APM reports, to cover all of the programmes/awards they contribute to.

The head of the department that *awards* the programme undertakes APM for that programme.

### **When, who and how?**

APM takes place for all programmes at the end of the academic year. The process is undertaken by the head of the awarding department and a member of the Faculty or Institutional QA Committee.

The head of the awarding department asks other members of the department to contribute to the standard APM form, by collating and analysing data and reporting on their own area of activity. Involvement of all staff in the compilation and discussion of the form is a good way to engage staff with the quality process.

The QAC member will normally create a first draft of the form with their commentary, then check this with the Head of Department before an agreed form goes to the Dean and Faculty QAC.

## The APM Form

Each section of the APM form is described below, with notes on what is required and practical advice from the Head of Quality and from QAC members who have completed APMs previously.

**Table 4: APM Form**

APM section	What is required																								
Department	The department that <b>graduates</b> students on the <b>programme</b> should complete the APM form for that programme, even if many departments are involved in teaching or support.																								
Faculty																									
Head of Department	The head of the department that graduates students on the programme.																								
1a Title of Programme 1b Type of Provision: <i>(for example, undergraduate, masters etc)</i>																									
Section 2: Student data	<p>In this section (boxes 2a to 2d), you will need to draw on some or all of the following data sources: <b>recruitment</b> and <b>registration</b> numbers, <b>retention</b> and <b>withdrawal</b>, student <b>progression</b> (movement through the programme, from year to year) and <b>completion</b> (graduation), <b>alumni</b>.</p> <p>Where it is possible, obtain data for the three previous years, in order to make a comparison over time.</p>																								
2a Student numbers <i>(how many students were enrolled this year and the past three years)</i>	<p>Data in a table, separating by years and possibly different specialisms/routes/degree titles if relevant.</p> <p>Eg. Student intake over past 3 years</p> <table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Enrolments</th><th>% change</th></tr><tr><td>2015/16 Academic Year</td><td>102</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>2016/17 Academic Year</td><td>115</td><td>+ 12.75%</td></tr><tr><td>2017/18 Academic Year</td><td>120</td><td>+ 4.3%</td></tr></table>	Year	Enrolments	% change	2015/16 Academic Year	102	0%	2016/17 Academic Year	115	+ 12.75%	2017/18 Academic Year	120	+ 4.3%												
Year	Enrolments	% change																							
2015/16 Academic Year	102	0%																							
2016/17 Academic Year	115	+ 12.75%																							
2017/18 Academic Year	120	+ 4.3%																							
2b Student Progression <i>(proportion of students successfully completing each year and number of graduates)</i>	<p>Data in a table, showing figures and percentages by year of progression (eg. year 1, year 2, year 3, graduation), and retention figures (students remaining or withdrawing for any reason).</p> <p>Eg. <b>Year 1 (progressing to year 2)</b></p> <table><tr><th></th><th>Students</th><th>Number progressing to year 2</th><th>% progressing to year 2</th></tr><tr><td>2015/16</td><td>102</td><td>96</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>2016/17</td><td>115</td><td>102</td><td>88%</td></tr><tr><td>2017/18</td><td>120</td><td>95</td><td>79%</td></tr></table> <p><b>Year 2 (progressing to year 3)</b></p> <table><tr><th></th><th>Students</th><th>Number progressing to year 3</th><th>% progressing to year 3</th></tr><tr><td>2015/16</td><td>98</td><td>96</td><td>98%</td></tr></table>		Students	Number progressing to year 2	% progressing to year 2	2015/16	102	96	94%	2016/17	115	102	88%	2017/18	120	95	79%		Students	Number progressing to year 3	% progressing to year 3	2015/16	98	96	98%
	Students	Number progressing to year 2	% progressing to year 2																						
2015/16	102	96	94%																						
2016/17	115	102	88%																						
2017/18	120	95	79%																						
	Students	Number progressing to year 3	% progressing to year 3																						
2015/16	98	96	98%																						

	<table><tr><td>2016/17</td><td>96</td><td>92</td><td>96%</td></tr><tr><td>2017/18</td><td>102</td><td>95</td><td>93%</td></tr></table> <p>...etc.</p> <p>Where it is useful, data might be provided about performance (marks, grades) on individual modules – especially if many departments contribute to the programme.</p>	2016/17	96	92	96%	2017/18	102	95	93%
2016/17	96	92	96%						
2017/18	102	95	93%						
2c Employability ( <i>proportion of graduates from last year entering employment</i> )	<p>The data provided here will be based on what is available locally. There are internal and external data sources:</p> <p><b>Internal:</b> how are students taking up opportunities within the programme, such as work experience, attending careers talks or sessions, taking modules that have an industry or professional element, etc.</p> <p><b>External:</b> Does the institution contact graduates to collect data on their employment? If so, can this data be separated into categories (eg. those in graduate-level or professional jobs, those in further study, those in non-graduate/professional jobs)?</p>								
2d Issues ( <i>identify any issues arising from this data</i> )	<p>3 year recruitment trends, conversion rates and issues of concern. Impact of recruitment initiatives, new proposals.</p> <p>3 year student progression rates, student outcomes, issues of concern.</p> <p>Trends in employment &amp; further study rates, student work experience, employability and career skills in the curriculum.</p>								
3a Student Feedback ( <i>results of student surveys and other feedback</i> )	<p>Data sources: issues or themes obtained from: reports/minutes from regular student-staff committees; student module/programme evaluations (feedback forms collected at the end of a module/programme); irregular focus groups or student meetings, etc.</p> <p>Student module evaluations (questionnaires): try to adopt a standard evaluation form across all modules of the programme, to help comparison and analysis. A set of suggested questions for module or programme level are provided in the Resources section.</p> <p>Avoid over-evaluating students: try to use or adapt existing student feedback methods, and use a mixture of programme-level surveys, and targeted module-level surveys each year.</p> <p>It might be useful to set a benchmark for feedback – for example, 80% of students on the module choose 'excellent' or 'very good'.</p>								
3b Issues ( <i>identify any issues arising from this data</i> )	<p>Issues might be academic programme related: specific issues raised regarding the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment methods.</p> <p>Highlight actions taken in response to feedback and how these are then fed back to students.</p> <p>Identify any actions that have demonstrated a positive impact on the student experience.</p>								
4a Staff Feedback ( <i>feedback from teaching and administrative staff</i> )	<p>Feedback from staff with regard to how they work with students (teaching, learning, pastoral) can be obtained in a variety of ways. It could be an annual staff survey, minutes from a department meeting, interviews with particular staff, issues raised to the Head of Department.</p> <p>A set of suggested questions for the annual staff survey are provided in the Resources section.</p>								

4b Issues ( <i>identify any issues arising from this data</i> )	<p>Common issues might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Those relating to physical resources.</li> <li>- Those relating to the organisation and delivery of the curriculum.</li> <li>- Staff engagement with development opportunities or initiatives to support the student experience.</li> </ul>
5a Physical Learning Resources ( <i>comment on the learning resources available and any specific needs</i> )	Data sources: room occupancy levels, Staff and student feedback, availability and capacity of facilities in relation to student numbers.
5b Issues ( <i>identify any issues arising from this data</i> )	<p>Common issues might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Library and IT resources to support learning and teaching.</li> <li>- Management and capacity of physical resources (laboratories, teaching spaces etc) to support learning and teaching.</li> </ul>
6a Staff Resources ( <i>comment on the number of academic and support staff and the level of qualification</i> )	Data sources: Staffing data across academic, technical and clerical, staff comments via formal and informal mechanisms
6b Issues ( <i>identify any issues arising from this data</i> )	<p>Common issues might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- staffing numbers and staff:student ratio; any impact on teaching delivery</li> <li>- staff development: how many staff take training courses, are there differences in performance or practice across the programme</li> <li>- staff availability and engagement (are they on time for teaching, are they available for student consultations, do they respond to student emails, do they take part in departmental meetings etc.)</li> </ul>
7 Update on progress made on action plan from last year's APM Review ( <i>with time scale if not yet complete</i> )	<p>If this is the first APM for a programme, have any actions to improve the quality of the programme been taken in the past year that can be reported here?</p> <p>If the programme has already had an APM, copy the Action Plan table from the previous APM here, and update it to show actions that have been completed or are still ongoing.</p>
8 Update on progress made on action plan from previous periodic review ( <i>if the programme has had a periodic review within the past 5 years, comment on the progress made to implement the action plan</i> )	<p>If the programme hasn't had a PPR, are there any major changes to the programme that have been made within the past five years?</p> <p>If the programme has already had a PPR, copy the Action Plan table from the PPR here, and update it to show work that has been done/completed or is still ongoing.</p>
9 Good Practice ( <i>any specific areas of good practice to note</i> )	Is there any good practice that would be useful to share with the University, so that others can benefit from it?
10 Conclusion ( <i>summarise the issues that need to be addressed</i> )	Identify the most important issues raised in sections 2 – 6, and list them briefly here. See if any of them can be grouped together as related issues.

11a Action Plan <i>(the actions that the Department will take during the next academic year to improve the programme – regarding programme outcomes, content, materials, teaching methods, assessment etc)</i>	<p>Create an action plan out of the issues listed in (10). Each action should be achievable (ie. can be completed within the next year, with existing staff and budget – or with appropriate extra support), accountable (have a named person who will undertake the action), time-limited and monitored (when will the action take place, and how will you know it is being done and is working?). Use a table format for ease of tracking, like the following example:</p> <table><tr><th>Action</th><th>Description</th><th>Who?</th><th>When?</th><th>How monitored?</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>Revise feedback form and apply to all assignments</td><td>HOD oversees revision; teachers implement form.</td><td>Semester 1 2019</td><td>HOD checks implementation</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>...</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Action	Description	Who?	When?	How monitored?	1	Revise feedback form and apply to all assignments	HOD oversees revision; teachers implement form.	Semester 1 2019	HOD checks implementation	2	...			
Action	Description	Who?	When?	How monitored?												
1	Revise feedback form and apply to all assignments	HOD oversees revision; teachers implement form.	Semester 1 2019	HOD checks implementation												
2	...															
11b Requests for support <i>(the requests that the Department wants to make to the Faculty or the University for support to address issues that it can't address itself)</i>	<p>These result from actions that can't be completed due to a lack of resource. Some of these issues will be escalated to University level, usually at the next PPR. It helps the case if programmes can demonstrate that they are trying their best with existing resources (by making efficiencies, etc.)</p>															



## What happens once the form is submitted to QAC?

The APM form is considered by the Faculty QAC and Dean, who may ask for further information if required. They will then approve the form, and ensure that:

- action plans are confirmed with the Head of Department
- the APM feeds into a Faculty programme monitoring report, which in turn goes to the IQAC.
- any issues that need raising institutionally are referred to the IQAC.

An overview of the APM process and information flow is shown in figure 4.

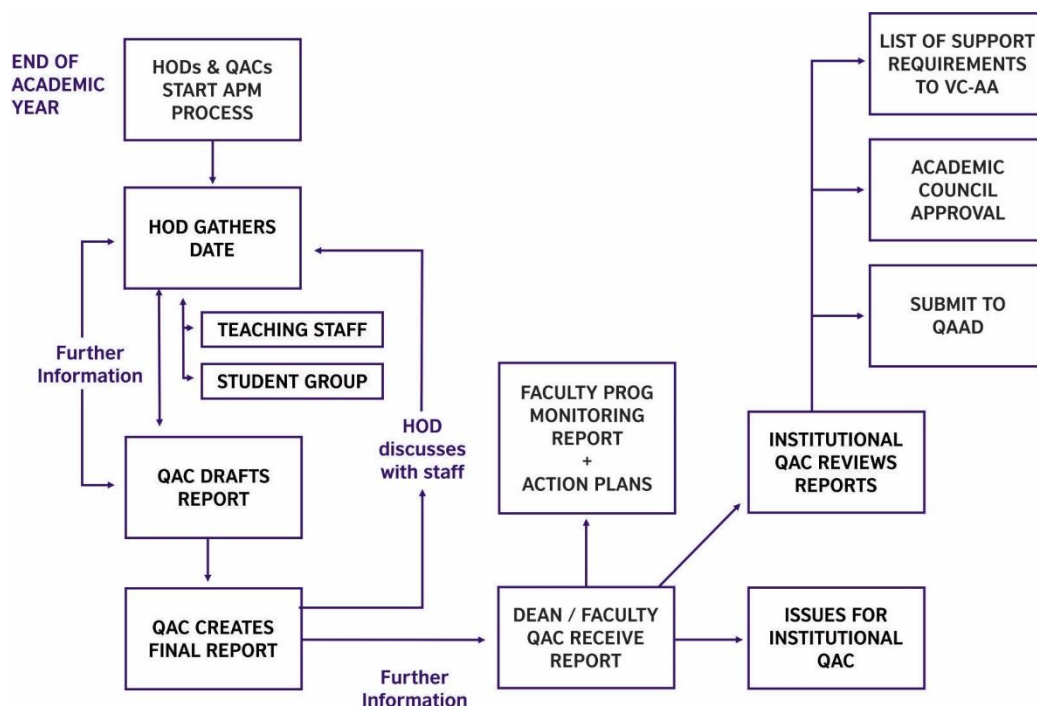


Figure 4: APM Process

## Section 6: Action Planning

An essential part of the output of any quality assurance process is the set of actions that will be taken in order to address any issues that have been identified and to undertake *enhancement* activities. Annual Programme Monitoring (APM), Periodic Programme Review (PPR) and New Programme Approval (NPA) all require programme teams to produce *action plans*. These plans define:

- what needs to be done;
- when it needs to be done;
- who is responsible for doing it;
- what resources or inputs are needed to do it;
- how successful completion of the plan will be evaluated.

An action plan represents a single record of what has been agreed in response to the outcomes of the quality assurance activities. This plan should be shared with staff at all levels of the relevant programme or department to ensure that all colleagues are engaged with the actions required. An action plan will also identify the criteria that will be used to measure whether an action has been successfully completed. From an institutional perspective, action plans are important tools enabling the Faculty or University to monitor the output of quality assurance processes, to ensure that the necessary actions are being taken and to hold relevant individuals or groups to account.

As part of Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) programme teams are required to reflect on the completion and impact of the action plan from the previous APM and the action plan from any previous PPR. As part of Periodic Programme Review (PPR) programme teams are required to reflect on the action plans from a minimum of the past three years of APM reports, and identify which actions have been completed and evaluate their impact. It is also important to identify which actions may still be outstanding. If a new programme has been developed and approved through the New Programme Approval process there may be conditions or recommendations arising from that which need to be actioned either before the programme can begin or during the first year of operation. These again can be reported on through the APM.

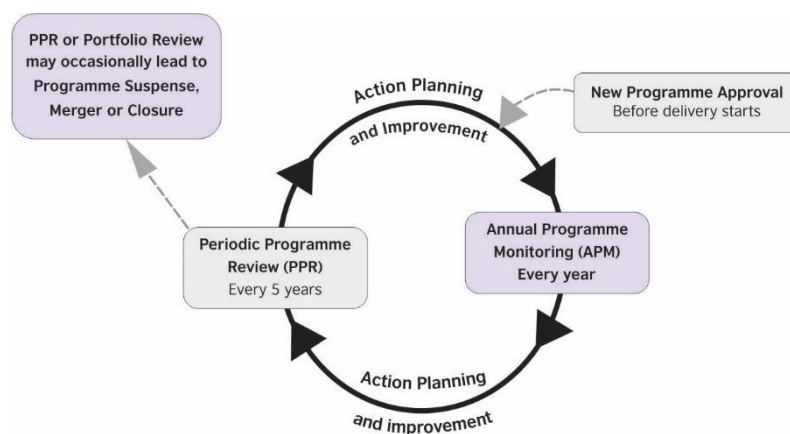
As a result of this connection between the APM, PPR and ongoing actions within the department, action planning is at the heart of the quality cycle: it's what drives continuous quality enhancement (as shown in figure 5.1).

An effective action plan will consist of the following core components:

- Clear, defined actions which set out the steps that need to be taken;
- Clear accountability for completion of actions;
- A realistic and manageable timescale for completion of actions;
- Mechanisms for monitoring the completion of actions and evaluating their success.

Action plans may also consider the following:

- What resources (within departments, programmes or from the wider university or Ministry) may be required to support implementation;
- Communication with the various stakeholders involved in the plan.



**Figure 5: The quality cycle. Note how action planning and improvement connect all elements together.**

## Components of an effective action plan

### 1. Clear, defined actions

All actions should be clear and direct. If an action is not clearly defined or expressed there is a risk of misinterpretation or a lack of focus in its completion. If the individual or group are not clear on the specific action that they are seeking to complete this may result in action being taken that does not meet the overall strategic objectives underpinning the action plan.

In order to address this, all actions should be specific (focused) and should not be thematic (wide). Some actions will be significant in scale, for example undertaking a review of part of a programme, or introducing new staff training programmes. In such cases although the headline action may be thematic this should be broken down into a series of smaller defined actions which demonstrate precisely the steps that need to be taken in order to meet the overall strategic objective.

Clearly defined actions also allow the relevant senior leader or governance group to monitor progress against those actions and define the measures that will be used to assess whether they have been successfully completed. This helps to hold relevant colleagues or groups accountable for completing actions as intended.

**Example:**

- Thematic Action: Improve student progression in year 2

Weaknesses of this approach – This is a very broad summary of a complex issue. It does not break down the individual steps that would be required to review, plan, approve and implement an approach. Individual tasks cannot be assigned and there are no specific progress points to monitor.

An alternative would be to provide a series of specific actions underpinning the thematic action and providing clear steps to be followed:

- Specific Action 1: Form working group of all year 2 module leaders, Curriculum Committee and QA Committee membership
- Specific Action 2: Analyse student performance for all assessment types in year 2.
- Specific Action 3: Hold student focus groups to gather feedback on experience of year 2.
- Specific Action 4: Identify where and why student progression is below expectation.
- Specific Action 5: Develop proposals for curriculum revision.

Strengths of this approach – This breaks up a large action into smaller, clearly defined steps. This allows timescales to be applied to each component and also allows the definition of a clear output that can be monitored and measured.

**2. Clear ownership and accountability**

The clear allocation of responsibility and accountability for the completion of tasks is central to effective action planning. Where there is not clarity of accountability there may be confusion over who is responsible for completing actions, or the risk duplication of effort. Allocation of responsibility via an action plan also allows the relevant management or governance structures to more effectively monitor progress against the actions.

Actions may be assigned to individual role holders, or to specific Committees. Where assigned to the Committee, that body may decide how best to carry out the action, for example through the establishment of a working group.

Actions should not be assigned to broad groups of staff or informal groupings where possible. By spreading accountability among multiple individuals without either a formal structure or clear and consistent guidelines there is a risk of a lack of ownership or inconsistent approaches to the action across different groups or individuals.

Where an action requires the input of many different stakeholders it is best practice to assign an appropriate senior individual to co-ordinate other relevant colleagues.

**Example:**

- Action: Publish assessment descriptors to students
- Accountable Officer: Module leaders

Weaknesses of this approach – this does not specify how descriptors should be published and by leaving this to module leaders there could be variations in practice. Inconsistent practice has a negative impact on student satisfaction and may be counterproductive.

A combination of a clear action and a single named officer makes the action more focused and establishes a clear line for accountability.

- Action: Publish assessment descriptors to students in the Student Handbook
- Accountable Officer: Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that all module leaders submit assessment descriptors. Administrative officer responsible for ensuring that the descriptors are set out in the student handbook before publication.

Strengths of this approach – Identifies in the action plan precisely how the outcome will be achieved. Separates out the tasks associated with completing the action and identifies who is responsible for each. Confirms that it is the Head of Department's responsibility, thus making them visibly accountable, rather than sharing the responsibility between several colleagues and risking a lack of ownership or inconsistency.

**3. Manageable and realistic timescales**

The actions arising from APM or PPR can be many and varied. An important component of effective action planning is to consider the full range of actions required and their timing in order to take account of:

- The risk of overburdening key individuals such as the Head of Department;
- The risk of assigning too many actions to a short period, or a period in which other key business as usual processes are taking place (for example large amounts of teaching or assessment);
- When in the academic year cycle may be most appropriate to introduce different sorts of changes, for example some changes such as amendments to curricula or revised policies should only be introduced at the start of an academic year.

Where actions are clustered in a short period or individuals are overloaded this increases the risk that actions will not be completed in a timely manner or to a high standard. Including a large number of actions with similar timescales can lead to difficulties in prioritisation or cause confusion among staff that are being asked to contribute to many different actions in a short period of time.

The action plan should be viewed holistically, rather than as a set of separate tasks. An individual, typically the Head of Department, should take responsibility for the allocation of actions and associated timescales to ensure that the overall workload is managed effectively across the year and across the relevant accountable officers.

As noted above, in drafting an action plan, departments should consider breaking down large actions into individual steps. The same is true when assigning timescales to actions. If interim timescales or points of review/approval are aligned with individual steps in the action plan this

helps to create a structured approach to addressing the issue in question. This also aligns well with the final step of monitoring the progress of an action. Clearly defined timescales for each component of an action also provide a helpful reference point when planning how either senior leaders or governance groups will monitor the progress of the plan.

#### 4. Monitoring and measuring success

In order to ensure that actions are completed and the relevant individuals or groups are accountable it is essential to have a clear process for monitoring the completion of actions and evaluating their success.

Clear monitoring mechanisms have a number of benefits, including focussing the relevant accountable officers on specific tasks, allowing senior leadership to have oversight of progress and providing clear milestones to develop, approve and implement more complex proposals.

Monitoring mechanisms or points should be linked to the individual action steps and associated timescales set out in the action plan.

Typically, the evaluation of the success of an action arising from an APM or PPR action plan will take place in the subsequent APM exercise. Under these circumstances it may not be necessary to include a formal evaluation mechanism within the action plan as there is a separate process already in place. There may, however, be some circumstances under which action is required quickly, before the next round of APM, and therefore it would be appropriate to include potential evaluation mechanisms in the action plan itself.

##### Timescales for Action Planning

Action plans generated through APM and PPR feed into a number of further review processes at programme, departmental, faculty and institutional level. They are also subject to review through subsequent APM and PPR exercises.

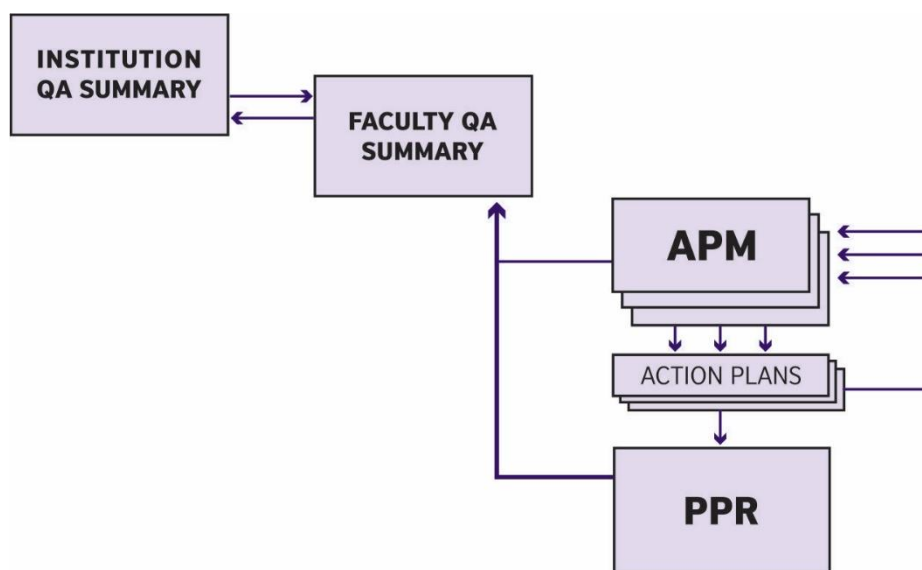


Figure 6: The Quality Assurance connections.



### APM Action Plans

Annual Programme Monitoring is completed for all programmes, every year. Each APM for each programme, each year, will produce an Action Plan.

As set out in Section 4, APM is a local reflective process which focusses upon actions which can be taken at a local level. Actions arising from APM will typically be short to medium term and should be completed within no more than a year. Each action within the plan should include clear evidence of how it will be monitored over the course of the coming year.

As part of each subsequent APM exercise, programme teams will be required to report on the completion or otherwise of each component of the action plan from the previous academic year. Where actions have been completed the APM offers an opportunity to reflect upon their success or failure. It can also be an opportunity to spread good practice to other departments through the faculty and institutional summary processes.

Where actions have not been completed APM is an opportunity for the team to reflect on the reasons for this and to identify whether this is due to a flaw in the planning or expression of the action, the action being superseded or failure on the part of individuals to complete their assigned actions.

The review of an APM action plan also offers an opportunity to consider the structures that are in place within the programme team or the department to effectively monitor the action planning process. In the event that elements of an APM action plan have not been completed this could feed into a PPR where the structures for leadership, management and accountability within a department may be subject to review. Persistent failure to complete action plans may trigger an 'out of cycle' PPR.

### PPR Action Plans

As noted in Section 6, PPR will take place for all programmes every 5 years. In contrast to APM, PPR is a process that is managed outside of the department in question and typically has a wider scope in terms of the strategic management and development of a programme, department or portfolio. PPR will also consider wider issues where University level support or intervention may be required, for example in the area of portfolio management of physical learning resources.

As part of the evidence base for a PPR the Panel will consider APM action plans from the last five years, and the PPR template requires the department to reflect upon the completion of action plans arising from APM. As noted above, if there is evidence of ineffective action planning or a regular failure to complete the actions set out in the plan this issue will be considered by the PPR Panel as part of its review of the strategy, leadership and management within the Department.

As part of the process of responding to the report of a PPR Panel, the relevant department will be required to produce an action plan that addresses all the issues raised in the PPR.

The scope of PPR is such that some of the actions which may be required could be significant in scope and need to be carried out over a longer period of time. Such examples may include a comprehensive review of all or part of the curriculum within a programme, or a realignment of provision across the faculty.

These longer-term actions are managed in a number of ways. As above, all actions should be clear and, where necessary, broken down into individual steps. All actions should also have a clear mechanism for monitoring progress and evaluating success.

In each subsequent APM report following a PPR, the programme team or department will be required to provide a summary of progress that has been made against all of the actions set out in the PPR action plan. The IQAC may also require the department to provide periodic updates on progress against elements of the action plan. The next PPR for the department will include the previous PPR report and action plan as part of the evidence base, to assess the success of the actions.

### Case Study – Kabul University

Annual Program Review and Periodic Program Review are the sub-criteria for action planning in section 5 that seemed challenging for every quality assurance member in every institution. Once it was really vague as I did not know exactly what to do, how to apply them in my institution, and as a member how to help others. Fortunately, I had the chance to attend workshops through British Council out of Afghanistan and the essential topics of the workshops covered “Annual Program Review (APR) and Periodic Program Review (PPR)”. The workshops led by two expert professors who mainly focused not only on specific topics related to APR and PPR, but also involved discussions and opportunities to share perspectives and issues related to the topics. Attending the workshops and the way that the Trainers defined and clarified the topics helped me to find out how to design action plans in order to apply APR and PPR successfully.

The action plans that we have used them at Kabul University cover clear and defined actions to be taken, accountability for completion of actions, realistic timescale for completion of the actions, and mechanisms for monitoring the completion and evaluating of the actions.

Having the action plans helped the ones who have some responsibilities toward applying APR and PPR since the plans function as clear guidance in doing what and who is responsible for which action. In addition, the plans define the actions step by step which help the readers and quality assurance members to easily clarify every single action by turn. If we did not have such action plans, it would be imprecise for everyone since applying them was something new and no one had the experience of applying them before.

To sum up, learning the points discussed through the workshops helped all the members to be expert in applying new issues such as APR and PPR. Moreover, every participant got to know how to design a realistic action plan in order to help others know what needs to be done to complete APR and PPR in Afghan institutions.



**Kabul University**  
**Academic Affairs Office**  
**Annual Program Monitoring Action Plan**  
**2019**

**Table 5: AMP Action Planning**

No	Activities	Responsible Person/s	Starting Date	Outcome	Ending Date
1	Completing the first part of the form which is information about the Academic Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HoDs</li> </ul> By the help of QAC Members	Dec. 1	To provide information about the programs	Dec. 10
2	Completing the 2 <sup>nd</sup> part of the form which includes Students' number, progression and recruitment	Students' Affairs Managers and Admin officers	Dec. 11	To know more about specific number of students and their progress	Dec. 20
3	Completing the 3 <sup>rd</sup> part of the form which includes Students' Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HoDs</li> <li>• Faculties</li> <li>• QA Members of the Faculty</li> </ul>	Dec. 15	To collect reliable data through the learners in order to make right decisions	Jan. 15
4	Completing the 4 <sup>th</sup> part of the form which relates to the teachers' feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HoDs and Assessment Committee members of the Faculties</li> </ul>	Jan. 16	To collect data to complete the report	Jan. 30
5	Completing the 5 <sup>th</sup> part which is about Physical Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HoDs</li> <li>• Students' Affairs Manager</li> <li>• Admin Officers</li> </ul>	Feb. 1	To find information about physical resources that are available in faculties	Feb. 5
6	Completing the 6 <sup>th</sup> part of the report which includes Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HoDs</li> <li>• Students' Affairs Manager</li> <li>• Admin Officers</li> </ul>	Feb. 6	To find information about Human resources in faculties	Feb. 10
7	Finding the results and Completing the 7 <sup>th</sup> part of the report which is on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HoDs</li> </ul>	Feb. 10	To consider the main points of the report and	Feb. 20

	preparing and providing action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QA Members</li> </ul>		find out about the strengths and weaknesses	
8	Submitting the Reports to QA Head Office	QA Main Members of the Faculties	Feb. 21	To review and provide feedback	Feb. 27
9	Submitting the reports back to Faculties	QA Head Office	Feb. 30	To revise the reports based on the provided feedbacks	March 5

## Action Plan Example – APM template

**Table 6: APM Template**

APM section	What is required
Department	The department that <b>graduates</b> students on the <b>programme</b> should complete the action plan template.
Faculty	
Head of Department	The Head of the Department that graduates students on the programme.

Issue	Action to be taken	Responsible person/team	Date for completion
Poor student feedback regarding lectures on module XXX – students state the lectures are out of date	1. Update the lectures for module XXX	Module leader	20/07/20
High number of students failing 1 <sup>st</sup> year exams	1. Review the format of the exams	Programme leader	20/07/20
	2. Review the alignment of the subject teaching to the assessment questions	Module leader	20/07/20
	3. Meet with students to ask them why they think they failed	Head of Department	01/9/20
Low number of graduates entering employment	1. Meet with employers to discuss their expectations	Head of Department	01/09/20
	2. Work with Careers Service to ensure students have access to support finding work	Programme leader and Careers Service	01/10/20
	3. Timetable specific careers events for the final year students	Programme leader and Careers Service	01/10/20
<b>Faculty Quality Committee Report</b>	Confirmation of completion of actions	Date	00/00/00
	Any actions still outstanding	Date	00/00/00
	1. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx		
	2. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx		

## Section 7: Periodic Programme Review

What is the purpose of Periodic Programme Review?

Periodic Programme Review (PPR) supports section 5 of the *National Accreditation Framework*, and represents the third section of the *Academic Programme Review Policy*. Along with Annual Programme Monitoring (APM), PPR should ensure that “Academic programmes are consistent with the institution’s mission and are regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.”

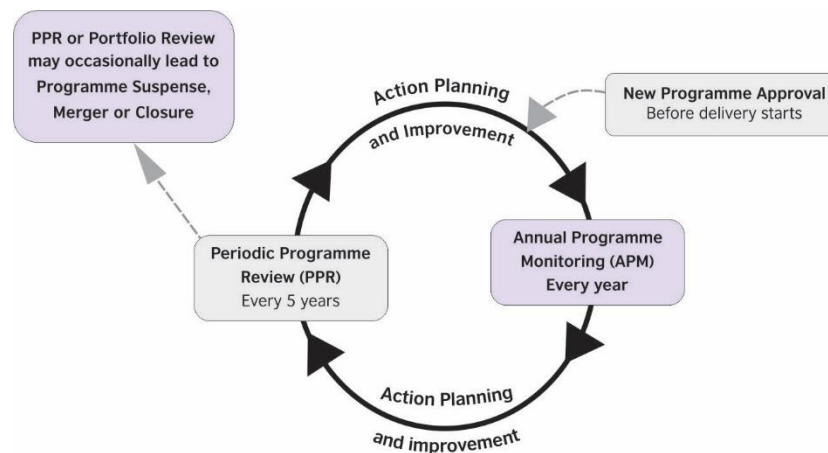


Figure 7: The position of PPR in the quality cycle.

The function of PPR is to:

- conduct a detailed review of each programme every five years;
- enable the Faculty and University to confirm that the programme is still aligned with the University Strategy;
- enable the University and MoHE to decide whether there is and will continue to be a market need and a student demand for the programme for the next five years;
- enable the Faculty and University to confirm that the programme is still aligned with the programme description and intended learning outcomes;
- enable the University and MoHE to confirm that the programme meets the required standards and remains fit for purpose;
- enable the Faculty and University to confirm that the action points from the previous Periodic Programme Review and Annual Programme Monitoring action plans have been implemented;
- review the quality of the student learning and assessment experience;



- identify required actions to address any weaknesses in the programme and to improve the student learning experience and their employment outcomes;
- confirm that the physical and staffing resources are adequate to enable the programme to continue to be delivered;
- enhance the teaching skills and assessment practices of the programme teams.

### APM and PPR – what is the difference?

APM and PPR are different but complementary processes. APM (Section 4) is an annual opportunity for the teaching staff in the department to reflect on the programmes they are delivering in order to continually enhance the quality of those programmes.

By contrast, PPR is undertaken by a Panel representing the wider University. Its remit is broader and it looks in detail at the development and performance of a programme over several years. PPR considers the wider portfolio of the University and the role of individual programmes within this. PPR is an opportunity to undertake a detailed review of a programme and potentially propose major changes in order to enhance the quality of the programme and the learning experience for students.

PPR may also identify the need to suspend, merge or close a programme in the event that it is not aligned with the University strategy, serving the needs of the market, potentially duplicates provision elsewhere in the University or offers a poor student experience.

The following summarise the key differences between APM and PPR.

**Table 7: Difference between APM and PPR**

	<b>APM</b>	<b>PPR</b>
Frequency	Annually	Every five years
Conducted by	Head of Department and Faculty QAC	Panel appointed by VCAA
Focus	Self-Reflection and continuous improvement	Strategic and developmental
Outputs	Local report and action plan	Panel report for IQAC, action plan from department in response to the review. Also escalated to MoHE

PPR will always build upon the work undertaken by APM, and part of the evidence that the PPR Panel will consider will be the previous APM reports and the implementation of those action plans by the department. This allows the PPR Panel to identify the actions that the department has been taking locally to enhance its programme(s) and the student experience. It also allows the Panel to identify where there are longer term issues and consider what actions may be necessary at University level.

## Overview of the Periodic Programme Review Process

As with APM, PPR involves the completion of a Form (there is a template at the end of this section of the handbook) and the bringing together of evidence including data on student recruitment and progression and student and staff feedback. The PPR process requires the establishment of a Panel which will initially review the documentation. The Panel will then come together for a Review Day to discuss the documentation and conduct meetings with staff and students from the department.

The outcomes of the process are a review report and the creation of an action plan which can be monitored through the subsequent APMs to ensure that the issues and areas of enhancement identified through the PPR are fully addressed.

### Indicative Time Scale for PPR

- i) VCAA identifies programme to be reviewed, notifies the Head of Department and appoints the Panel
- ii) 2 months for Head of Department and colleagues to complete the PPR Form
- iii) 1 month for the Panel to read the documentation and make initial comments
- iv) 4 Review Meeting Days held over a period of 3 weeks
- v) 1 month for the Panel to complete the Form and submit to IQAC
- vi) 2 months for Head of Department and programme team to draft and submit the Action Plan

### When, who and how?

All academic programmes should undergo a PPR every five years. As PPR is a relatively new process and there may be a large number of programmes to review, institutions should focus their initial review schedule on programmes which have been running for longer than 5 years. Institutions may wish to identify the programmes which have been running for the longest, and apply PPR to these programmes, working from the oldest to the newest. An institution should aim to review 20% of programmes each calendar year. The Head of Quality of the University has an important role in overseeing the planning for PPR and the implementation of the process.

A VCAA may trigger an 'Out of Cycle' review of a programme where concerns have been raised, or where there is specific need to review provision more urgently. An "out of cycle" review may also be proposed to the VCAA by programme leaders or faculty deans, as they are more familiar with the issues at the programme level.

Where a new programme has been created and approved, this would be subject to Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) every year. A PPR would then be undertaken when the programme reached its 5<sup>th</sup> year of operation, unless an Out of Cycle review is triggered on the basis of concerns raised regarding the programme. In the year when the PPR is undertaken, the department would not normally undertake an APM as well.

### In the department

The Head of Department for the department that delivers the programme is responsible for ensuring that the PPR form is completed and relevant evidence is provided for the Panel. There are many other colleagues that would need to be involved in the drafting of the form. This would include:

- Heads of department or staff from other departments that contribute to the programme at the faculty level;
- Academic staff, module leaders and other teachers who deliver the programme;
- Professional Services, administration and technical staff;
- Students, for the purposes of gathering feedback;
- Other central University administration to provide data, where this is available.

The Head of Department is responsible for co-ordinating the contributions of these colleagues to produce the final PPR form for consideration by the Panel. This should be done within two months of the notification that the PPR is to take place.

### **PPR Panel**

A PPR Panel is appointed by the Chancellor or VCAA. The Panel for a PPR will consist of:

- VCAA where possible, who shall be Chair. If not, the VCAA will nominate a Chair with appropriate seniority and independence from outside the faculty;
- Member of Institutional Quality Assurance Committee (IQAC);
- Member of Curriculum Committee (CC);
- 3 Senior Academic members, who are independent of the department under review, ensuring:
  - A disciplinary spread
  - Experience in learning and teaching, not necessarily linked to overall seniority or length of service
  - Experience and authority to conduct interviews
  - Prior experience of APM and PPR where possible
- Student member (from programme under review)

The Panel should also have a Secretary, to provide logistical support to the Panel and take notes of the meetings as part of the formal record. The Secretary may be the Head, or a member of the Quality Assurance Division or a member of administrative staff from the VCAA's office. The Secretary is not a member of the Panel.

See Section 3 of this Handbook – Preparing for Quality - for details on training and preparing for PPR Panel events.

Universities should establish their PPR Panels in one of two ways: either a PPR Committee with a fixed membership, with the PPR members always being selected from that group or by training a wider group of staff from across the University to spread the load of undertaking PPRs. This will help to widen the understanding of quality assurance and the PPR process, but does create potential issues of consistency between panels.

During the PPR Review Meeting Days the Panel will discuss the information provided in the PPR form and undertake interviews with:

- Head of Department;
- Teaching Staff;
- Current students and alumni;
- Employers (where possible).

### The PPR Form

There is a standard PPR form, as set out below, that should be completed by the Head of the Department. Although the Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that the form is completed, there will be a number of other colleagues (as noted above) who need to contribute to completing the document. The Head of Department should establish a small committee (3 – 5 members) in the department to help with the collection of the data and completion of the form. This will help to spread the workload and also ensure that other members of the department are involved in the process.

The completed form and associated documentary evidence should be submitted to the University at least 3 weeks before the review to allow Panel members to review and consider them before the Panel meeting.

Where possible, members of the PPR Panel should observe a Student-Staff Committee meeting, and a Curriculum or QA Meeting within the department to gather additional information for the PPR.

## Periodic Programme Review Template

**Process: the Department should complete each section of this form and then the Panel should confirm/comment on each section and identify any recommendations**

**Table 8: PPR Template**

PPR Form section	Guidance notes
<b>Date of Review</b> <b>Date of Previous Review</b>	<i>Where there has been no previous PPR, this does not need to be completed.</i>
<b>Department</b>	<i>Where multiple departments contribute to a single programme, specify which is the lead department (the department which makes the award) and which are the contributing departments.</i>
<b>Faculty</b>	
<b>Head of Department:</b>	<i>Head of the Department that makes the award.</i>
<b>Panel Members:</b>	<i>Confirmed by secretary to Academic Council.</i>
<b>1 Title of Programme</b>  <b>Type of Provision:</b> Undergraduate/taught postgraduate	
<b>2 Alignment with the educational plan and strategic mission of the institution/faculty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Include a link to the institutional and faculty strategy documents, where possible.</i></li> <li>• <i>One programme does not have to support every aspect of a University or Faculty Strategy.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b>	<i>To be completed by the Panel, following the Panel review day</i>
<b>3 Good Practice</b> (any specific areas of good practice to note):	<p><i>Report good practice from the past 3 years. Some suggested areas include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Innovation in Learning and Teaching</i></li> <li>• <i>Assessment and Feedback to Students</i></li> <li>• <i>Quality Assurance and Enhancement processes</i></li> <li>• <i>Use of Learning Resources – physical resources, Library, IT, VLE.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Actions taken to make the best use of available resources</i></li> <li>- <i>Any innovations in the use of resources</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Actions taken to support student recruitment</i></li> <li>• <i>Actions taken to support student retention, progression and Successful Completion</i></li> <li>• <i>Actions taken to support student employability and career skills</i></li> <li>• <i>Departmental actions to support staff development and engagement</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<p><i>Aspects of good practice with potential for wider application within the University.</i>  <i>Identify issues that require University level action.</i></p> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews</i></p>
<p><b>4 Update on the action points from the last periodic review &amp; confirmation of completion/ progress made</b> <i>(list all the action points and add a time scale if not yet complete)</i></p> <p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Typically presented as a table listing the actions agreed in previous review, timescales agreed, whether these have been completed and, if not, an explanation for this</i></li> <li>• <i>Where a PPR has been completed previously, include agreed action plan with confirmation of actions taken or challenges experienced</i></li> <li>• <i>Where a PPR has not been undertaken previously for the programme, comment on any actions which have arisen from any previous review processes. This may include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Teaching Assessment Review</i></li> <li>- <i>Annual Action Plan</i></li> <li>- <i>Departmental Review</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews</i></p>
<p><b>5 Update on the action points from the last set of APM reports &amp; confirmation of completion / progress made</b> <i>(list all the action points from annual monitoring since the last periodic review and add a time scale if not yet complete)</i></p> <p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Include and comment on all APM action plans from the last 5 years and whether these have been successfully implemented.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews</i></p>
<p><b>6 Student Progression</b> <i>(proportion of students successfully completing each year and number of graduates)</i></p>	<p><b>Potential data sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Minimum of 3 years of data for the number of students that successfully move from each year of the programme to the next (student numbers and %)</i></li> <li>• <i>Minimum of 3 years of data for the number of students graduating each year – link back to the number of students that started in that cohort to identify the % of students who started the programme that subsequently graduated</i></li> <li>• <i>Distinction between the number of students that did not complete a year/graduate to establish:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Academic failure, Course transfer, Withdrawal (reasons)?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Module level data – pass rates, evidence of performance in individual assessment types</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<p><b>Issues for consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any significant change in student recruitment, progression rates, graduation rates or student retention (positive or negative) between academic years</li> <li>Impact of recent changes or innovations (positive or negative)</li> <li>Reflect upon data and issues – potential additional data sources to refine issues may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student feedback</li> <li>Staff feedback</li> <li>Analysis of student performance in individual modules or projects</li> <li>Analysis of individual assessment performance</li> <li>Outcome of Curriculum Review</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Aspects of good practice with potential for wider application Identify issues that require Departmental or University level action</p> <p>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews</p>
<p><b>7 Employability</b> (proportion of graduates entering employment each year)</p> <p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<p><b>Potential data sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any departmentally or University held records on student employment or further study</li> <li>Alumni</li> <li>Number of students attending Careers events (Departmentally or centrally organised)</li> <li>Number of assessments related to transferable skills (cv writing, interview skills, presentations, project management)</li> <li>Student feedback relating to employability content in programmes</li> <li>Number of students undertaken internships</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues for consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trends</li> <li>Number of students in graduate level jobs</li> <li>Number of students in jobs relating to their discipline (where relevant)</li> <li>Feedback from students on employability content</li> <li>Strategies for enhancing employability</li> <li>Impact of actions already taken (positive or negative)</li> <li>Alignment of employability content with the needs of employers</li> </ul> <p>Aspects of good practice with potential for wider application. Identify issues that require University level action.</p> <p>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews.</p>



<p><b>8 Student Feedback</b> (for example meetings with students, the results of student questionnaires or student committees)</p> <p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<p><i>Potential data sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student questionnaires, individual or cohort meetings, Student-Staff Committees, % completion of surveys</li> </ul> <p><i>Issues for consideration:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align with headings used in student questionnaires (teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support etc)</li> <li>• Identify issues raised by students, reflect and describe approach taken in department to address issues raised</li> <li>• Strategies to enhance student engagement with questionnaires</li> <li>• Strategies to feed back to students on the impact of feedback</li> </ul> <p><i>Aspects of good practice with potential for wider application. Identify issues that require University level action.</i></p> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews</i></p>
<p><b>9 Alumni Feedback</b> (for example, feedback from alumni regarding the value of the programme and benefit for their current employment)</p> <p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<p><i>Potential data sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback obtained from alumni via questionnaires or direct contact</li> </ul> <p><i>Issues for consideration:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on the parts of the programme that alumni felt were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- particularly useful to support their current role</li> <li>- particularly useful to help them secure employment</li> <li>- could be expanded or built upon</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Potential opportunities for alumni to contribute to the programme (guest lectures, sharing experience of employment, areas of focus for students)</li> </ul> <p><i>Aspects of good practice with potential for wider application. Identify issues that require University level action</i></p> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews</i></p>
<p><b>10 Lecturer Feedback &amp; Improvement of teaching quality</b> (meeting with lecturers, lecturer development processes)</p>	<p><i>Potential data sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff feedback questionnaires, interviews, staff development completion rates</li> <li>• Feedback from students on quality of feedback from tutors, Student-Staff Committee minutes, alumni feedback</li> </ul> <p><i>Issues for consideration:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any issues raised through feedback</li> <li>• Strategies to enhance staff engagement with staff development opportunities</li> </ul>

<p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Departmental strategies for enhancing teaching quality and consistency</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Aspects of good practice with potential for wider application. Identify issues that require University level action.</i></p> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews.</i></p>
<p><b>11 Employer feedback</b> (for example, feedback from employers regarding the skills of the graduates and their suitability for employment)</p> <p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<p><i>Data sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Wherever possible: Employer feedback questionnaire, Interviews with employers, Alumni feedback</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Issues for consideration:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do programmes deliver the skills desired or needed by employers, and proposals for enhancement</i></li> <li>• <i>Further opportunities for engagement with employers:</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Aspects of good practice with potential for wider application. Identify issues that require University level action.</i></p> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews</i></p>
<p><b>12 Physical &amp; Virtual Learning Resources</b> (comment on the learning resources available and any specific needs)</p> <p><b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b></p>	<p><i>Data sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Specific to programme but may include quality of:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Teaching spaces, Student private study space, Student access to IT facilities, Laboratories</i></li> <li>- <i>Library and virtual learning resources</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Issues for consideration:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Whether current practice is making best use of available resources</i></li> <li>• <i>Shortcomings in resources that may require escalation to the University</i></li> <li>• <i>Support for teaching innovation (physical resources)</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Aspects of good practice with potential for wider application. Identify issues that require University level action</i></p> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews</i></p>
<p><b>13 Staff Resources</b> (comment on the number of academic and support staff and the level of qualification)</p>	<p><i>Data sources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Summary data on, numbers and level of academic staff, qualifications held, clerical, administrative and technical staff contributing to programme</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Issues for consideration:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Structure and resilience of staffing base to deliver the programme</i></li> </ul>

<b>Panel Commentary and recommendations:</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for staff development or requirements to escalate to the University</li> <li>• Progress of staff working towards higher qualifications, and any support needs</li> </ul> <p><i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews.</i></p>																						
<b>13 Panel Conclusion and Summary of Action Points for the Department, with time scale</b>		<i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews.</i>																						
<b>14 Recommendations for the University</b>		<i>To be completed by the Panel, following meetings and interviews.</i>																						
<b>15 Response by the Department to the recommendations</b> <i>(for example how the department will address the recommendations and by when)</i>		<p><i>Written response with action plan attached. Action Plan in standard format of:</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Issue</th> <th>Action</th> <th>Accountable Officer</th> <th>Timescale</th> <th>Progress to date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Issue	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescale	Progress to date	1.					2.					3.				
Issue	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescale	Progress to date																				
1.																								
2.																								
3.																								
<b>Date of report</b>	<b>Date</b>																							
<b>Approved by the Faculty Dean</b>	<b>Date</b>																							
<b>Approved by QAC</b>	<b>Date</b>																							
<b>Approved by University Academic Council</b>	<b>Date</b>																							

### Panel review of evidence

When the Panel has received the PPR Form and supporting evidence, the Panel Chair will allocate areas of responsibility to the members. These will broadly align with the topics within the PPR form, but certain areas may be grouped together. The Panel Chair will agree the allocation of roles to Panel members, the following is provided as a guide only.

Area	Potential Panel member allocation
Strategic management and Portfolio	Chair
Effective Action Planning	IQAC member
Student Feedback and Experience	Academic member
Student progression and completion	IQAC or CC member
Staff resources and staff development	Academic Member
Employability, alumni and employer feedback	Academic Member or CC member

Panels should consider whether to allocate a specific area of responsibility to student members, depending on the issues that have been raised through the PPR form.

### Panel Review Meeting Days

PPR Panel meetings usually take place over the Review Meeting Days. These days should be close together, so that the whole process is completed within three weeks and the same Panel membership is used for all of the meetings.

The Panel Review Meeting Days could be organised as follows:

Day 1:

The Review Panel will meet to

- confirm the process for conducting the PPR;
- discuss specific issues that the members have identified from the PPR form;
- start to complete the panel commentary on the form based on the documentary evidence provided;
- agree the themes that the Panel wishes to explore in the meetings with the department.

Day 2

- Interview with Head of Department responsible for programme (could include Heads of contributing departments if required)
- Interview with members of teaching staff

Day 3

- Interview with students and alumni
- Interview with Employers

Day 4

- Meeting of the Panel to agree outcomes and conclusions

Organising PPRs, collating and circulating evidence, arranging interviews and taking notes in those interviews is an important role for the Panel Secretary.

A guide to effective questioning in a PPR is included in the appendix to this section.

### What does the Panel produce?

At the end of the PPR Review Day the Panel should have reviewed all of the evidence and outputs of the interviews and reached a series of conclusions. The Panel will complete the commentaries for each section of the PPR form, and draft the conclusion which summarises the comments in the PPR form to focus on:

- Overall quality of teaching and learning environment and the achievement of intended learning outcomes;
- Areas of good practice for wider dissemination;
- Areas where ongoing monitoring or review may be required;
- Ongoing value, viability and sustainability of a programme. A PPR Panel has the authority to recommend to the University that a programme be suspended, withdrawn or merged with one or more other programmes.

As part of this process, the Panel will also confirm a list of the following areas to highlight, for the department or the University to address:

1. Requirements that must be addressed in a specific timescale. These should be issues that it is within the power of the department to resolve.
2. Requests to the University – these are requirements to be escalated to the VCAA, VCAF or Chancellor. These are likely to be issues that are not within the power of the department to resolve, for example around resourcing or overall portfolio management.
3. Recommendations – these are suggestions for improvement that are not mandatory.

### What happens once the report is submitted?

The form completed by the Panel will be submitted to the Institutional Quality Assurance Committee (IQAC). Once the report is approved the Head of Department will be required to produce an action plan in response to the issues raised. The action plan should be submitted to the IQAC which will be responsible for approving the proposed actions and agreeing how these should be monitored.

The action plans arising from a PPR will be reported on as part of the report for subsequent APMs, particularly if an issue will take a number of years to solve.

The report and outcomes should be shared widely within the department, including with students.

The IQAC is responsible for producing a summary of all PPR activity and outputs for submission to the MoHE on an annual basis. In the event of the Panel recommending suspension, merger, or closure of the programme, the main report should be shared to the MoHE for the final approval.

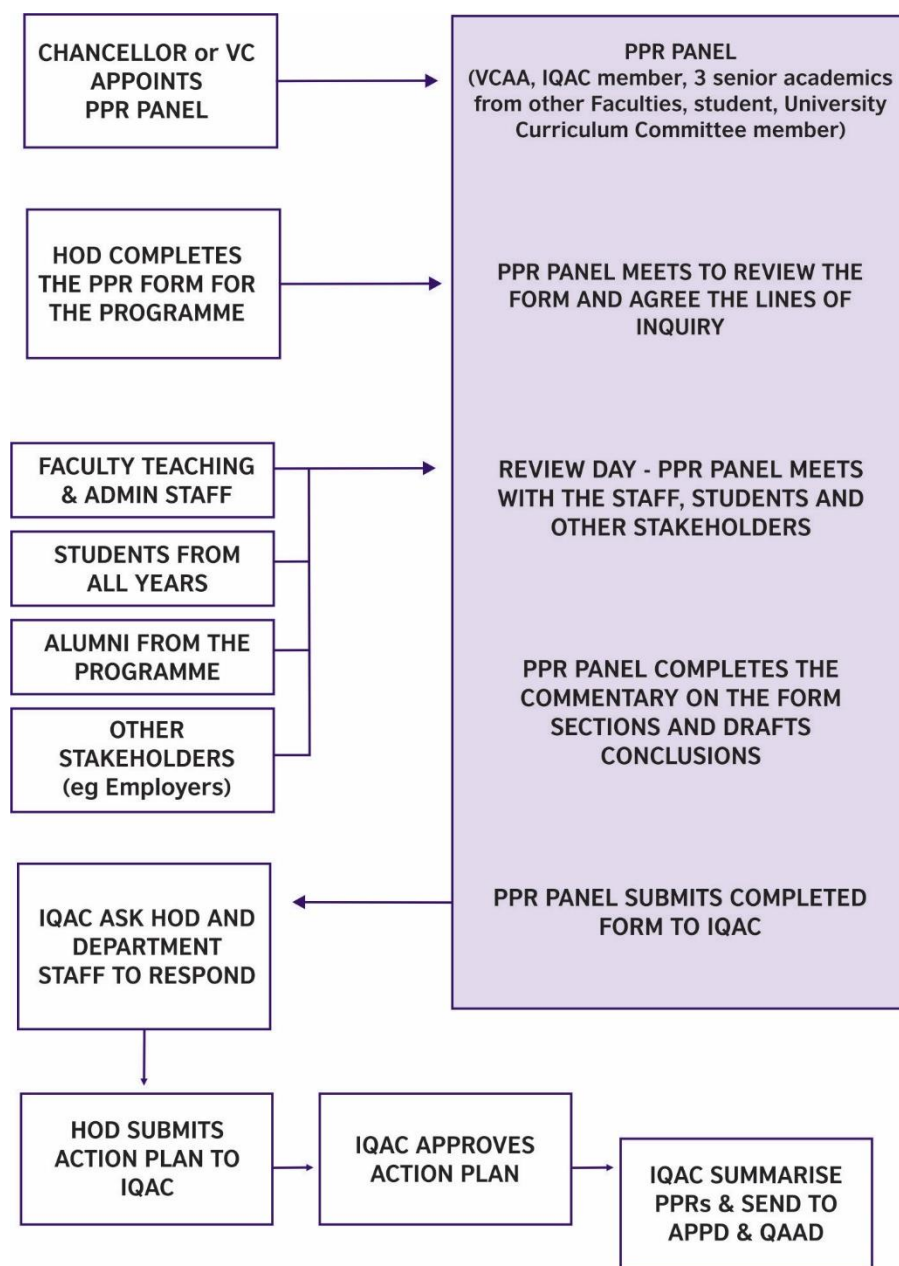


Figure 8: Periodic Programme Review Process

### Appendix 1 – Sample Questions for PPR Review Day

The purpose of the questions is to find out more detail regarding the operation of the programme and the experience of the staff and students. The approach should therefore be objective and polite. It is also important that the questions are 'open' rather than 'closed' questions: closed questions are ones to which an answer is 'yes' or 'no', whereas open questions require an expression of view and explanation. As such, open questions provide much more useful information. If you use closed questions, you should ask for an explanation for the response.

The questions below are only general indicators of the types of question. The Panel should ask broad questions like these but also focus in on any specific strengths or weaknesses that need exploring.

### **Head of Department**

- What is your overall view of how well the programme is running?
- What are the strengths of the programme?/ In what ways is it working well?
- What areas of the programme need developing?/ What aspects of the programme are not working so well?
- How would you like to see the programme develop over the next five years? Are there significant changes that you would like to make?
- In what ways should the University give you more support in delivering an effective programme?

### **Staff**

- What is your overall view of how well the programme is running?
- What are the strengths of the programme?/ In what ways is it working well?
- What areas of the programme need developing?/ What aspects of the programme are not working so well?
- In what ways can the University help you develop as a teacher? – e.g. training in teaching practice?

### **Students**

- To what extent has your experience matched up with your expectations?
- Would you recommend your programme to a prospective student? If Yes, what is it about the programme that you like and value? If No, what are the features of the programme that you don't like?
- In what ways are you supported (academic or pastoral) to help you to succeed on your programme?
- Do you know what you need to do to be successful on your programme?
- Do you receive helpful feedback on your work?
- Do you feel you have sufficient access to resources – e.g. IT, Library etc?
- Does the Department respond to your feedback from surveys etc? – please give some examples

### **Alumni**

- Would you recommend the programme to a prospective student? If Yes, what is it about the programme that you liked and value? If No, what are the features of the programme that you didn't like?
- Has what you learnt on the programme helped you in developing your career? Please give some examples.
- In what ways could the programme be developed to help students starting out on their career?



## **Other Stakeholders – e.g. employers**

- Why do you employ the graduates from this programme?
- What are the strengths of the students who come to you from having taken the programme?
- Are there aspects of the programme that could be improved to make the graduates more employable?

## **endix 2 – Case Study 1 – Herat University**

### **PPR at Herat University**

In 2017, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs of Herat University, made a 5 year plan to review all 50 academic programmes during this five-year cycle plan based on the PPR policy and guidelines. The initial plan divided all the graduate programmes into 5 groups of 10 programmes for 5 years (10 academic programmes for each year).

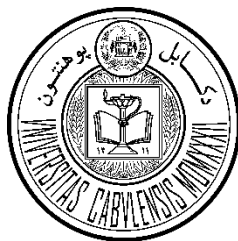
In early 2017, before developing the 5 year plan, 2 academic programmes were reviewed in the piloting phase to see the challenges and achievements and report to QAAD and MoHE for developing and finalizing the PPR policy. These two programmes (one from the Economics Faculty and the other from the Fine Arts Faculty) were reviewed by the PPR panel and their reports were approved by IQAC and University Academic Council and were sent to the MoHE.

In 2018, based on the PPR 5 year plan, 10 academic programmes were selected to be reviewed by the panel by the end of 2018. Two NTT (National Training Team) members and the VCCA, who were trained in conducting APM and PPR, trained other faculties and PPR panels running a series of workshops for the university leadership, heads of department, members of IQAC and sub-QAC as well as administrative staff and student representatives on how to conduct APM and PPR. The Head of Quality Assurance Department then ran separate detailed workshops for all PPR panels to be able to run PPR and develop PPR reports. Each panel consisted of six members (faculty dean, member of quality assurance committee, two senior academic members from other faculties, and two student representatives - one male and one female).

Because of all other workload and the fact that Herat University was undergoing Self-assessment and QAAD peer reviewing process, out of 10 academic programmes, only 6 academic programmes could be reviewed during that year and their reports were finalized and sent to MoHE.

In the following year, the 5 year plan was revised to make it more tangible and applicable. In this year, 3 more programmes were added to the 4 previous programmes from 2018 to be reviewed periodically. All the 7 programmes were reviewed by the panel and their PPR reports have been developed and shared to IQAC for further processing and reviewing.

## Case Study 2: PPR Action Planning at Kabul University



**Kabul University**  
**Academic Affairs Office**  
**PPR Action Plan of the Nominated Academic Programs**  
**2019**

**Table 9: PPR Action Planning**

No	Activities	Responsible Person/s	Starting Date	Outcome	Ending Date
1	Review and evaluate the APM reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VCAA</li> <li>HoDs</li> <li>QAC Members</li> </ul>	Apr. 8	To collect enough information about the programs	Apr. 18
2	Establishing the Panel Committee	VCAA and Academic Members of the faculties	Apr.15	To evaluate and recognize the problems and weaknesses	Apr. 25
3	Collecting data by the Panel committee through different data collection tools	Members of the Panel Committee	Apr. 27	To collect reliable data in order to make right decisions	May. 27
4	Providing reports based on the outcomes	Members of the Panel Committee	June 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To Provide suggestions</li> <li>To present and provide necessary comments</li> </ul>	June 15
5	Submitting the reports to QAC at KU	Members of the Panel Committee	June 20	To evaluate the reports and make decisions	June 30
6	Reviewing and evaluating the reports	Deans of the nominated Faculties, HoDs, and QAC members	July 1	To document each issue deeply	July 15
7	Making the Action Plan based on the suggested issues or points	Heads of the nominated departments	Aug. 1	To manage and take possible steps for each suggested issue	Aug. 15

8	Providing the final Report and presenting it to Academic Council of the faculties and then presenting the report to the Academic Council at Kabul University	Deans of the nominated Faculties, HoDs, and members of Academic Council	Based on the fixed schedules of the mentioned councils	To follow the legal procedure and to confirm the reports by the members of the Academic Council at KU	Based on the fixed schedules of the mentioned councils
9	Sending the final Reports and necessary documents to the MoHE	The Chancellor of QA at MoHE and the responsible ones	It will be sent after completing the 8 <sup>th</sup> step	To receive and get the desired outcomes	Depends to the Chancellor of QA at MoHE and the responsible ones

## Section 8: Programme Level Changes

In certain circumstances, a PPR panel, the Academic Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (AM&ED) or the Ministry of Higher Education may recommend that programmes are in need of a major change. This may be for one of these reasons, or similar large scale issues:

- Two or more programmes are found to share large numbers of modules or a large amount of overlapping content, which is both inefficient and confusing for students on the programmes.
- A market review for the programme (or review of student intake) has revealed that there is low or decreasing interest in the programme.
- The programme is found not to be serving the needs of employers or students.
- Problems have been found with the programme that are so serious that the programme cannot be offered to students unless and until they are fixed.

If the recommendation has come from a PPR panel, then it will recommend one of the following to the University IQAC. If the University then confirms the recommendations, they will be passed on to the Ministry via the PPR form:

- **Merger:** a recommendation to merge two or more programmes into one, more focused/efficient programme.
- **Suspension:** a recommendation to pause the recruitment of students to the programme so that major revisions or enhancements can take place, or potentially for a further detailed review to take place.
- **Closure:** a recommendation to close the programme to new students, and not permit any further applications.

The Ministry will consider each recommendation and provide approval where appropriate. It is important to note that in the case of suspension or closure, existing programmes won't simply

cease: they will be closed to new student enrolments for a period, or permanently in the case of closure, but existing students on the programme will need to be supported to complete their studies.

In some circumstances, the AM&ED or the Ministry might decide that a programme level change is necessary, even if the PPR report does not recommend merger, suspension or closure. This may be because they disagree with the conclusion of the PPR report, or because they have information at a national level that affects the viability of the programme. The Ministry will then instruct the university to take action.

If a merger or closure decision is a difficult or contentious one, the Ministry may form an independent body (drawn from cogent institutions/departments) to consider and oversee the merger or closure.

For each of the three processes, we will look at the possible reasons for each, the process to go through once the change has been approved, and the challenges that then might arise for institutions, staff and students.

## Merger

### Reasons to merge programmes:

- Low student numbers / graduating students.
- High similarity between programmes (eg more than 60% content match), particularly identical or very similar programmes offered by different faculties.
- Not meeting market needs.
- No, or very few, opportunities for alumni in their field of study.
- Lack of clarity for students or employers on the purpose or distinctiveness of each programme
- Low staff numbers in Faculty.

### Process:

1. PPR panel recommend merger; University Academic Council approves; IQAC apply for merger to MoHE.
2. Staff from both programmes create a programme specification for the new merged programme, based on PPR panel recommendations.
3. Remove old programmes from catalogue for new student enrolments. Students still on the old programmes continue to study ('run out' the programme) until graduation.
4. Approval of the new merged programme through New Programme Approval and confirmation by the Ministry.
5. Offer the new merged programme to new applicants.

## **Challenges:**

### *For the institution:*

The Institution, Faculty or Department may not be willing to suggest or accept a merger, for financial, staffing or status reasons.

The loss of a particular programme might weaken the institution's reputation or place in the market.

### *Solutions:*

To provide an independent view in contentious situations, an independent group of peers (not involved in the merged programmes, and could be either internal to or outside the University, depending on the delicacy of the situation) should be formed to investigate and then manage any resulting merger.

### *For staff:*

Staff in any of the departments affected by the merger may be worried about the future of their role, and any financial implications for their department.

### *Solutions:*

In public universities of course, staff will not lose their jobs: but they may be faced with having to move away from their areas of knowledge or interest. Targeted, sensitive retraining and professional development programmes can help to mitigate this problem and provide staff with the skills and support needed to teach on the new or a different programme.

### *For students:*

No new students would be recruited onto the existing programme. The By-Law states that the programme should be delivered until the current students have completed their programme.

## **A note for private universities**

Although the process and some of the challenges will be similar to public universities, the private universities will have different challenges to deal with. In particular:

- Investors in the university might have an interest in keeping a particular programme running (in which case a review involving the investors will be needed, and clear statements and marketing may be needed to maintain public trust).
- Staff in private universities may be worried about losing their jobs (careful management of staff and their contract terms will be needed, and retraining opportunities considered where possible).
- Other departments in the institution may be worried about their own future if they see other departments closed and staff losing their positions (the university will need to manage the process and public relations carefully).
- Resourcing may be an issue to support the new merged programme, or existing resource – such as labs or equipment - may no longer be needed (look to make partnering arrangements with other private universities to share buildings/labs/students).
- Solution: Refer to the Private HEIs By-law

## Suspension

### Reasons to suspend programmes:

- Not aligning to University strategic plan.
- Not enough capacity to run the programme (for example, a significant number of staff might be abroad studying or may have retired).
- Not meeting market needs, or not recruiting enough students.
- Lack of clarity for students or employers on the purpose or distinctiveness of the programme.
- Facilities out of date and unable to support the programme (eg laboratories or other teaching space).

### Process:

1. PPR panel recommends suspension; University Academic Council approves; IQAC apply for suspension to MoHE.
2. Current students 'run out' the programme, but no new students are recruited. If all students have graduated from a suspended programme, then the programme moves to suspension automatically.
3. The Department/Faculty/ University undertake improvements to the programme (build up capacity, resources, enhance programme etc.).
4. To bring a programme back from suspension, IQAC reapply to MoHE and provide evidence that the programme has been improved sufficiently. Directorate of Academic Monitoring and Evaluation /MoHE will review and approve or require further work.
5. If the programme remains suspended for its normal graduating length (usually 4 years) without the necessary improvements, it will automatically move to closure.

### Challenges:

#### *For the institution:*

The cost and process of developing physical resources (such as updating labs, building new rooms etc.) may be very difficult and/or slow, including internal purchasing approval of even small items.

The availability and suitability of current staff resource might also be inadequate to redevelop the programme.

Related to both staffing and physical resource, what should the time for suspension (and hence redevelopment time) be? Should it overlap with run-out of the existing students, or wait until there are no students before redeveloping?

There may be problems in restarting a suspended programme.

#### *Solutions:*

Public universities can apply to MoHE for more resource (human, physical) if a real need is shown. Resource might also be available through more creative use of existing resource, or by sharing resource with other local universities (such as lab share).

Decisions on when and how long to suspend should factor in the workload and availability of current staff (balancing run-out teaching, staff retraining and programme development effort).

The institution should be willing to close a programme, if redevelopment seems impossible or unlikely to be approved.

The revised programme will need to be advertised and positioned to students and employers much like a new programme: don't rely on existing marketing or employer links if the programme has been significantly altered.

#### *For staff:*

It may be difficult to keep staff engaged in teaching existing students during the run-out, particularly if staff numbers are low, some staff are currently undertaking PhD or Master programmes abroad, and/or if staff are also involved in redevelopment.

Recruitment of new staff suitable to fill a resource gap might be problematic (such as a low availability of staff in the subject area or with PhDs).

#### *Solutions:*

No new students will be recruited to the programme during redevelopment, and so teaching and admin loads will lessen each year, to allow for increasing emphasis on retraining and development work.

As a stop-gap, Masters programmes could recruit retired or part-time teachers to meet staffing requirements.

#### *For students:*

Students currently on the programme may be worried about its continuation, and its value in the market.

#### *Solutions:*

A programme must be taught as described for as long as there are students registered on it. The University might also want to reassure students about the validity of the existing programme, such as through links with employers or careers sessions.

### **A note for private higher education institutions**

Although the process and some of the challenges will be similar to public universities, the private universities hold an advantage in some areas:

- Universities can be very dynamic: investors can build new labs or buildings, update existing equipment, hire new staff, etc.
- Universities might also find it easier to share resources with other private universities through the use of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).

## **Closure**

### **Reasons to close programmes:**

- Lack of sufficient resources (human, physical, virtual).
- Not meeting market needs, or not attracting enough students.



- No, or very few, opportunities for alumni in their field of study.
- Performing poorly to a point where suspension will not improve the situation (in other words, the resources and expertise required to improve the programme are not available).
- A programme that has been suspended does not make the required changes after two years.

Note that it may be better to suspend or merge a programme first, in order to see whether redevelopment might provide the answer, with closure then following if that is unsuccessful.

### **Process:**

1. PPR panel recommends closure; University Academic Council approves; IQAC apply for closure to MoHE. OR the Directorate of Academic Monitoring and Evaluation directly recommends closure based on their own findings aside from a PPR.
2. Current students 'run out' the programme, but no new students are recruited, and the programme is removed from the catalogue.
3. Once all students have graduated from the programme, then the programme moves to closure immediately.
4. The University makes any changes necessary to departments and staffing in the affected area, providing retraining opportunities where necessary to allow the staff to teach on other programmes.

### **Challenges:**

#### *For the institution:*

The Institution, Faculty or Department may not be willing to suggest or accept a closure, for financial, staffing or status reasons.

The loss of a particular programme might weaken the institution's reputation or place in the market.

#### *Solutions:*

To provide an independent view in contentious situations, an independent group of peers (not involved in the merged programmes and could be either internal to or outside the University, depending on the delicacy of the situation) should be formed to investigate and then manage any resulting closure.

The institution (or independent steering group) should develop a clear plan/timeline to close the programme. Take time to properly close it and ensure current students can graduate. There can be no sudden closure.

#### *For staff:*

Staff in any of the departments affected by the closure may be worried about the future of their role, and any financial implications for their department. As a result, it may be difficult to keep staff engaged in teaching existing students during the run-out.

#### *Solutions:*

In public universities of course, staff will not lose their jobs: but they may be faced with having to move away from their areas of knowledge or interest. Targeted, sensitive retraining and professional development programmes can help to mitigate this problem and provide staff with the skills and support needed to teach on a different programme.

Universities may seek to retrain staff in broadly related disciplines through a funded Masters programme (eg. BA Sociology to BA Political Science), or to transfer staff to another related department or Faculty. Transfer to other local Universities who are still running similar programmes might also be an option.

Teaching and admin loads for the run-out programme will lessen each year, to allow for increasing emphasis on retraining and staff development work, and possible assimilation to another department and/or programme.

*For students:*

Students currently on the programme may be worried about its continuation, and its value in the market.

*Solutions:*

A programme must be taught as described for as long as there are students registered on it. The University might also want to reassure students about the validity of the existing programme, such as through links with employers or careers sessions, or the offer of automatic or reduced places on a Masters programme.

Allow a further year to allow any students who fail, a chance to retake a module or year.

In extreme cases (for instance when staff or resources are no longer available to complete the programme), develop links with other local Universities, to continue students' study.

## **Private Universities**

For private universities the issues relating to closure are of a different nature and require different solutions.

*Solutions:*

Refer to the Private HEIs By-law

*Institution:*

There may be a risk to the reputation of the institution, its branding and public relations.

There is a potential risk of not having the six Faculties or programmes required for University status.

*Solutions:*

To mitigate the both risks, apply for a new programme to replace the closed one. The Ministry is likely to approve a new programme where an older, non-performing programme is closed. Note also that for an interim period after a programme closure, institutions cannot lose their university status on the basis of the six programmes rule.

Promote the closure as a positive change, to keep the University focused on society needs, and use this as a basis for marketing and retaining the institution's focus and branding.

*Students:*

The loss of annual student intake to a programme has a financial and reputation implication.

Alumni of the programme may lose trust with the University if the programme they studied is removed.

*Solutions:*

Develop a new programme to cover the financial loss of the closed programme. If approved at the same time, the new income will replace the old gradually through run-out.

Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with another private university, for the students to complete their programme there, and for alumni to connect with programme leads.

*Staff:*

Staff may be faced with a loss of job, or fears for job security may cause staff to resign before running out the programme to search for other employment.

There may be a knock-on effect on staff in other programmes, for fears of job security.

*Solutions:*

Develop and promote a capacity building programme: to help staff to retrain in other disciplines.

Develop relationships with other private Universities, for transfer of staff within the same discipline.

### Implications for the Quality Process

Once a major programme change has taken place in an institution, any resulting new or changed programmes or departments will need to be brought into the quality cycle as quickly as possible.

For revised or newly merged programmes, ensure that an APM takes place from the first year after students are admitted to the programme; and that a PPR is undertaken after the programme has reached its fifth year of operation.

### Case Study: Suspension and Merger of History and Geography at a Public University

The Faculty of Social Science was established at a public university in 2014 with History and Geography departments. In the first year, there were only 3 lecturers with BA degrees hired for these two new departments to teach and run other academic work. They were supported by History and Geography departments of the Education Faculty and hiring other teaching staff on a contract basis.

The initial plan was to hire more academic staff for both departments each year until there were enough teaching staff. But due to several issues, this plan did not happen and the departments could not hire any new staff in the following years. At the same time, the new Higher Education Law required all academic staff with BA level to pursue their education to higher levels in a few years in order to continue teaching. All 3 lecturers of the History and Geography departments applied for their MA scholarships. This made the condition worse. Almost none of the teaching and other academic plans were being implemented efficiently at these departments because of a lack of human resources. The Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs appointed a PPR panel to review both History and Geography departments in the Education and Social Science faculties to see if there was a possibility of merging these four departments into two departments and solve the resource problem.

The PPR process began and both faculties (Social Science and Education) and all four departments (History and Geography) in these two faculties were informed officially to perform an assessment based on the PPR policy and guidelines, and to prepare the preliminary reports for the PPR panel. The PPR Panel consisted of senior academic staff and IQAC members (as defined in the PPR guidelines). The panel reviewed the PPR reports, ran interviews with academic staff of all four departments, students, alumni and some employers, and added their comments in each section. The PPR panel's initial recommendation was to merge the History and Geography departments of the Social Science faculty with the History and Geography departments of the Education Faculty.

The Social Science faculty responded to the PPR panel's recommendations and proposed a new solution to the panel. They noted that the merger of the program might not be the best option, since that would leave only one department in the Social Science faculty, and require both departments to make some changes in their mission and specifications. After more meetings and discussions with both faculties, the PPR panel recommended the suspension of both History and Geography departments of the Social Science faculty for two years. During these two years, their lecturers would obtain MA degrees, the university would hire new academic staff and both departments would work to develop their new mission and specification to avoid similarities with similar departments at Education Faculty. The History department of the Social Science faculty would run a needs assessment to consider changing the department's name and mission to a new non-graduating department of "Contemporary History" supporting all courses in "Contemporary history of Afghanistan" which is a general mandatory course for all disciplines at the university. The Geography department in the Social Science faculty considered changing its name and mission to focus on Human Geography, different from that of Education Faculty which focuses on Natural Geography.

The PPR final report and recommendation for a two year suspension of both the History and Geography departments of the Social Science faculty was approved by IQAC, University Academic Council, and sent to MoHE where it was also approved. The departments were suspended and no newer students were introduced in the following years of 2019 and 2020. They

are still suspended and are focusing on implementation of their improvement plans. Two new academic staff have been hired for these departments, the needs assessment for new departments of “Contemporary History” and “Human Geography” is running and the current academic staff are studying for MAs in Iran and Russia and will be back by end of 2020.

By the end of the suspension period, both departments are required to have completed their

## Section 9: Implementing quality processes

The previous chapters in this handbook have described the quality cycle and explained how to establish and implement each of the processes.

When you have implemented APM and PPR for the first time, you will be able to plan how to embed the whole quality cycle within the department. This chapter focuses on how to ensure that quality processes become part of “business as usual”.

### Institutional Quality Timetable

The first round of APMs and PPRs took place as the quality processes were setting up. As things mature and once all departments have had at least one APM, IQAC should work to develop a standard timetable for the institution, so that:

- Every programme has an APM each year at around the same time (to help to manage workloads, share data collection effort and identify common issues across the institution). For larger institutions, dates may be staggered by Faculty to ease the central administrative load.
- Each programme undergoes a PPR every five years, and PPRs in each year are staggered to ease the administrative burden.
- The meetings and activities of FQAC and IQAC are arranged to coincide with this timetable.

### Departmental Quality Timetable

Alongside the institutional timetable, departments will also need to develop their own annual timetable, for:

- Gathering and analysing data at the point of collection, ready to feed into APM and/or PPR (see *data collection* below).
- Compiling and completing the APM for each programme on which the department makes the award, each year.
- Implementing and monitoring action plans between each APM (normally through existing module or course team meetings).
- Delivering regular annual training (see *staff development* below).

### Staff Development

Section 3 describes the development of a *briefing and training plan*. Each department should develop this training plan as a regular annual programme. Normally this will be formed of:

- a) Sessions for academic and administrative staff about the quality process, APM, PPR and data collection/analysis: these can be offered as a **rolling annual programme**, so that staff can attend any session before their involvement in a particular process. Over time existing staff will gain experience, training will only be needed for new staff, and the programme can be shortened.
- b) Sessions for students, employers and others relating to a specific APM or PPR. This training is needed once for each APM or PPR, and the staff and students involved will be different each time.

In both cases, building up a set of standard briefing and training sessions and resources that can be used by any facilitator with any group, would be the most efficient way to 'normalise' briefing and training in quality processes.

### **Panel Membership**

There will be certain members who will always be needed for PPR panels (such as the Dean, IQAC members etc.) and whilst they won't need retraining each time, a process for training or mentoring new Deans, IQAC members etc will need to be in place (most efficiently as part of an overall induction processes to those roles).

The academic panel members are often the most difficult to find, and so it is best to build up and train a *pool of panel members* drawn from different departments who will have had training and experience of being on a PPR panel. This will reduce the need to train all panel members each time a PPR runs and will also increase the overall expertise in the institution (and hence improve overall quality) over time.

### **Process Development**

After running the first few APMs and PPRs, the IQAC and FQAC should review the forms, documents and processes to identify any useful changes, and develop resources to make the processes easier. This might include:

- Adjustments to the information provided within the APM and PPR forms, to help guide staff to provide the right information (and remove any non-useful information) in the future.
- A standard PPR panel agenda.
- Guidance notes for panel members, for the head of department, and for any other key roles in the process.
- Process diagrams and methods for administrative staff, to enable efficient gathering of material for APM and PPR.

### **Data Collection**

The collection, analysis and use of data are the aspects most likely to take time to build up in each department. As noted in sections 3 and 4, the first few APMs and PPRs will be using whatever data is currently available. Over time, you will identify additional data that needs to be collected, and will need to find a way to do so.

To make this process as easy and useful as possible:

- Amend or build on existing processes, such as student module feedback or annual questionnaires, or meetings and reports from employers. Some example questions are included in the resources section of this handbook, but these are intended as a guide.

Where you already have local feedback processes in place use or adapt your existing ones.

- Work with other departments and the faculty (the FQAC) to identify useful data sources and develop these together for the benefit of the faculty.
- Where data sources are not available, work with the institution (the IQAC) to develop and build them, for the benefit of all faculties.
- If the institution is not able to access or collect data locally, and feel that the data would be useful to many institutions, they can raise this at Ministry level.

## Section 10: Glossary of terms used in the handbook

*The following definitions can be read alongside the Glossary of Terms in the APR Policy. Some of the definitions are repeated/expanded, to provide clarity for NTTs.*

**action plan:** in quality terms, an action plan is the set of structured, timed actions coming out of APM and PPR processes. Action plans describe what needs to be done to improve the academic programme, who is responsible for doing it and by what date.

**alumni:** students who have previously graduated from the programme.

**award:** the degree or other qualification that is awarded to the student upon completion of the programme.

**completion:** the point at which a student has met all of the requirements to be awarded their degree. *Completion rate* refers to the proportion of students who have achieved their award in a given year.

**department:** an organizational unit that delivers one or more modules that contribute to a programme. Some departments may *award* a programme; other departments provide modules to a programme but have no awarding status.

**closure:** the process of closing an academic programme, including 'teaching out' students on the programme and removing it from the University's catalogue.

**curriculum:** the planned learning experiences of the students studying a program. These include the intended learning outcomes, subject material, learning and teaching methods and assessment framework. *Curriculum* is different from a *programme*, as a *programme* defines the formal requirements to achieve the award.

**enhancement:** see *quality enhancement*.

**enrolment:** the number of new students starting a programme in a given year.

**level:** the year of study, e.g. year 1, year 2, year 3, year 4.

**learning aims:** what the programme team plan to deliver in terms of teaching the module/programme



**learning outcomes:** short statements that make it clear to students what they are expected to achieve and be able to demonstrate as a result of completing a module and/or programme.

**merger:** the process of merging two or more academic programmes together into a single new programme, normally to remove overlap and provide greater efficiency.

**module:** a unit of study with defined learning outcomes, that contributes to a programme and award.

**monitoring:** checking the status or progress of something. This normally applies to monitoring the progress with action plans or to data such as student enrollments, progression, satisfaction scores etc.

**pastoral support:** support provided by the university for students around non-academic issues (such as family, financial or medical problems).

**programme:** the formal requirements that lead to an academic *award*. A programme normally requires a set of specific modules to be studied and is defined by a set of learning outcomes.

**progression:** the number of students in a given year that meet the academic requirements to move to their next year of study (*level*).

**quality:** fit for purpose; of a good standard.

**quality assurance:** processes to monitor, review and report on the quality of all aspects of the operation of the HEI.

**quality cycle:** a description of how quality approval and enhancement form a circle of improvement: issues and improvements arising from APMs are solved through action planning, then checked by subsequent APMs and PPR. This process continues as student and society needs change so that there is continuous improvement over time.

**quality enhancement:** the implementation of improvements recommended by quality assurance, in order to improve the quality of the student learning experience

**recruitment:** the process of attracting and enrolling students to study a programme.

**retention:** the number of students who remain on a programme. Retention rates are reduced by students who fail academically or withdraw for non-academic reasons.

**standards:** the definition of the academic level students need to achieve to pass a module, a year or to gain an award.

**suspension:** the process of pausing an academic programme, normally to allow improvements to be made before being re-opened for students.

**teaching out:** the process of ensuring that students can complete their programme when that programme is due to be suspended, merged or closed. The programme runs as normal for those students until they have all graduated.

**withdrawal:** the number of students who voluntarily leave the programme for personal or other reasons.



