STRATEGIC TEACHING AND LEARNING REVIEW

Guide for External Panel Members

Contents

Strategic Teaching and Learning Review

Context

The University has recently reviewed and revised the quality assurance architecture for the approval, monitoring and review of its provision which created a risk-based, enhancement-led framework, developed in consultation with colleagues from across the institution. The new Programme Re-approval, Strategic Teaching and Learning Review (STLR), and Annual Programme Review (APR) processes were implemented from 2018/19.

Enhancing practice established by previous monitoring and review methodology, the revised processes provide for disaggregation between the monitoring and re-approval of programmes and the review of academic departments' teaching and learning. This allows for consideration of the operational (with a holistic review of programmes and the student experience), and the strategic (with consideration of academic departments' alignment with strategic objectives and planning processes).

Purpose of STLR

It is important to note that STLR is <u>not</u> a quality assurance procedure, but a strategic review and planning opportunity. Within the context of the new monitoring and review framework, APR provides assurance that quality and standards of provision are being maintained, Programme Re-approval ensures that the student experience remains secure over time, within a coherent scheme of study, and STLR provides academic departments an opportunity to pause and reflect on where they are, look at what's on the horizon, and consider their teaching and learning activities for the next 5 years.

STLR is primarily forward-focused and enhancement-led, providing a space for academic departments to hold discussions about not just *what* the department does (or wishes to do), but also *how* it does it, or might do it, in the future. It encompasses not just its academic provision and pedagogic approaches to delivery, but may also consider, for example, the resources it has to deliver that provision, the partners it works with, and how the research it undertakes informs its teaching and learning and vice versa.

Academic departments are aided in this process by an STLR Panel, which acts in an advisory capacity as a critical friend of the department's reflections, conclusions, and planned future actions; providing guidance on opportunities and a sense-check on stated ambitions, direction and preparedness.

The Review Schedule

Academic departments undergo STLR every five years. Where planned faculty or PSRB activities which are similar in scope or intent are identified, the Academic Quality Standards and Conduct (AQSC) unit will work with faculty and department colleagues to determine the extent to which those activities align with the principles of STLR. Where synergies are identified, STLR can be incorporated into, or draw from, those activities where possible.

Documentation for STLR

Academic departments produce a self-evaluation document (SED) of approx. 3000 words prior to the event as contextual information for the panel members and to provide a basis for discussions. The

SED should draw on monitoring and review activities completed during the period under review, such as annual review reports, external examiner reports, student feedback, outcomes of PSRB interventions, benchmarking data, survey results, etc. Academic departments are encouraged to seek the reflections of colleagues, students, alumni, and (where relevant) employers, to inform the SED.

There is no prescriptive approach to the preparation or format of the document. The SED should, however, include a reflection on the activity of the academic department, consideration of the alignment with departmental, faculty and/or institutional objectives, analysis of future direction(s) and opportunities, and proposed actions in response to these findings. Academic departments can use the SED as a means of seeking advice and guidance on how best to respond to potential threats and opportunities and to inform subsequent resource planning and portfolio development.

The SED will be distributed to the panel members at least 1 week prior to the event alongside a draft agenda that highlights any specific areas that the department would like the panel to respond to during discussion. In distributing the papers, panel members will be invited to provide any questions or points of interest that they would like to explore in the discussion in addition to any highlighted in the SED. The secretary to the STLR event will co-ordinate the distribution of papers and collation of responses. The panel Chair will provide a final opportunity to add to the agenda at the start of the event.

Panel Membership

Chaired by an Associate Dean (Teaching) from an alternate faculty to that of the department under review, the panel membership for each STLR will include:

- Two academic peers from other institutions (including at least one who is not an existing or recent External Examiner)

- Depending on the size of the department, 1 to 2 internal academic colleagues most relevant to the provision under review

and is likely to also include representatives from professional services relevant to the issues under discussion, for example,

- A colleague from Organisational and Educational Development, to consider teaching and learning practice and enhancement and professional development needs

- A colleague from Information Systems and Services, to consider digital enablers and technology requirements

- A colleague from Library Services, to consider resource and support requirements

- A colleague from the Careers Service to advise on employability within the curriculum

- A faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager or Academic Quality and Standards Manager from AQSC to act as secretary for the event.

It is for the academic department to determine the composition of the panel, within the parameters set out above, taking account of the context of their SED, and the advice and guidance they are seeking. For example, if an academic department is keen to establish or expand its use of digitally enabled teaching and learning, it may wish for a colleague from the Learning Technology Team as a

member of the panel, or if a department's ambition is to expand into a new discipline area, an appropriate external advisor would be selected to provide guidance on how best to do that.

The Conversation

Typically the review event will be held over the course of one day (or 1.5 days for larger departments), however the extent of discussions will depend largely on the departmental context, the SED and, where applicable, the requirements of any evaluation activity that is acting as a proxy for the STLR process (professional body reaccreditation, for example).

The review event should be held in the spirit of collegiality, with the emphasis on guidance, support and enhancement. It is anticipated that the panel event will provide an opportunity for open and honest investigation of opportunities for the academic department under review. Discussions should include how current departmental staffing expertise and interests align with teaching requirements for the future, and what resource and development support the department may require to deliver their ambitions.

The panel's role in the conversation is to act as a critical friend, providing a sense-check on the department's findings as set out in the SED and from discussions, and to provide advice and guidance as necessary.

Your experience of the broader HE sector will be a valuable contribution to the discussion as an external panel member. In particular, your perception of, and insights into, the department's assessment of challenges and opportunities and responses to them as set out within the SED and through the discussion provides a crucial check and balance for the process.

The Outcome

There is no judgement taken on an academic department as a result of an STLR, but an output of the event will be an outcome report written by the academic department under review. This report summarises the department's plans for its teaching and learning provision over the next 3 - 5 years, indicating any portfolio changes and/or resource and support requirements and accompanied by an action plan.

Where identified as a particular need, the department may also wish to prepare a bid for resource for the next planning round, using the STLR event and the panel discussion as supporting evidence.

The outputs of all STLRs within an academic year will be submitted to Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) for report alongside an institutional summary report. These will also inform the annual review prepared by AQSC for submission to Audit Committee and Council.

In addition, the panel event provides a valuable opportunity for Professional Services to identify and plan for support requests from departments in the coming years, and it is anticipated the event will also provide opportunities to highlight and share effective practice amongst the wider University community, both in terms of current teaching and learning practice, and proposals for future provision.

Travel and Accommodation

Lancaster University values the contributions made to its monitoring and review activity from external colleagues, and aims to ensure that your participation in the process runs as smoothly as possible.

Once a date for the panel event has been confirmed, you will be invited to provide details of any travel and accommodation requirements that you have in order to attend the event. Any specific requirements you may have should also be highlighted at this point, and we will ensure that these are in place for you on arrival.

Fees and Expenses

The University pays a flat fee of £450 for attending an STLR event and will reimburse any additional expenses in line with University policy.

In order to process your fee, we will need to appoint you as an employee of Lancaster University for a short while. This involves a formal, but simple, application process.

Once a date for the event is confirmed, we will contact you to inform you of the application process and to provide a link to the online application system. We will then be in touch again to provide an engagement form, which sets out the terms of your employment with us – in this case participation in the STLR event. To comply with employment legislation, we require you to sign the engagement form and return it along with a copy of your passport, or other documentation which proves your right to work in the UK.

Once this application process is complete, we will be able to process your fee and any expenses that you wish to claim for. Note that by completing this employment application process prior to the event we will be able to process your payment with minimum delays afterwards.