



# Postgraduate Research Degrees

## Periodic Review

## Policy and Policy Guidance

## Introduction

The Postgraduate Research Degrees Periodic Review Policy and Policy Guidance was developed by Quality and Academic Standards and the Doctoral Academy.

The Policy provides the minimum standards expected of the periodic review process, whilst the Policy Guidance describes the operational processes necessary to implement the Policy.

The Postgraduate Research Degrees Periodic Review Policy was approved for inclusion into the University of Dundee’s Quality Framework in December 2022 by the Quality and Academic Standards Committee.

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## Periodic Review Policy

### POLCY: PART A

#### 1.0 Overview

Periodic Review (PR) is the periodic (normally every 6 years) appraisal of the quality and validity of research degree provision leading to specified University of Dundee qualifications.

In addition to being the formal mechanism for the re-approval of our research degree provision it is a developmental process that aims to promote enhancement by assisting staff to:

- evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of research degree provision over the recent past;
- reflect on how the research degree provision could be improved for the future; and
- plan and implement changes.

#### 2.0 Aim

The aim of the periodic review is to:

- ensure that our Research degree provision is in compliance with the University's [Research Degrees Quality Code, policy statements, regulations, and guidance](#) and also the regulatory requirements set out by the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#) through the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), and the [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)](#);
- to identify and promote the sharing of good practice that could be relevant to other programmes in the University; and
- to consider changes to provision which will enhance the postgraduate researcher experience as well as the experience of the staff that support them.

#### 3.0 Scope

The scope of the periodic review includes:

- SCQF Level 12 Doctoral degrees such as Doctor of Philosophy PhD, Doctor of Philosophy by Publication, Doctor of Medicine MD;
- SCQF Level 11 degrees by research such as Master of Philosophy MPhil, Master of Laws by Research LLM, Master of Accountancy by Research MAcc, Master of Dental Science by Research MDSc, Master of Science by Research MSc, Master of Letters by Research MLitt, Master of Fine Art by Research MFA, Master of Design by Research MDes;
- the postgraduate researcher lifecycle from recruitment, admission, progression reviews, final award, to graduate destination.
- the postgraduate researcher experience;
- the research environment and resources available to support both postgraduate researcher and supervisors; and
- training and development for both postgraduate researchers and research supervisors.

The scope of the periodic review excludes:

- the review will be carried out at School level and therefore the Periodic Review Board members are not required to have knowledge of the specific areas of research being undertaken within the School. It is important that External Experts have experience of, and involvement in, research provision, particularly supervision, and engagement in the broader discipline area;
- any taught elements of SCQF Levels 11/12 degrees that are covered by our Periodic Programme Review policy for our Taught provision;
- Professional Doctorate as these will be revisited after the dedicated periodic review in 2024; and
- Doctorate of Business Administration (pending).

## POLICY: PART B

### 1.0 Schedule

1.1 Reviews will be conducted every 5-6 years, and the review period will be the previous 5-6 years or the period since the last Periodic Review, in accordance with a schedule determined by Quality and Academic Standards.

1.2 A School may be subject to more frequent interim reviews if significant issues are raised during the mandatory periodic review and/or where there have been significant changes to the structure and delivery of its postgraduate research degree provision.

1.3 Liaising with the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup), the School is responsible for planning and organising the review.

### 2.0 Reflective Analysis

2.1 The responsibility of preparing the Reflective Analysis will be determined by the Dean of the School that is being reviewed.

2.2 The Reflective Analysis should reflect on the operation and performance of the Schools postgraduate research degree provision over the defined 5–6 year review period and a forward plan for its ongoing enhancement. The Reflective Analysis should include commentary on good practice and the identification of areas of development in relation to:

- Provision of information is clear and accessible to prospective students, current postgraduate researchers, and staff.
- The research environment is supportive and inclusive for all research students.
- Supervisors are appropriately skilled and supported.
- Postgraduate researchers are afforded opportunities for professional development.
- Progression monitoring is clearly defined and operated.
- Higher education providers offer clear guidance and processes on assessment for research degrees.

2.3 Specific and standardised data reports provided by Professional Services should be submitted with the Reflective Analysis and the School Review team should provide commentary on these reports within the Reflective Analysis.

### 3.0 Periodic Review Board Membership

3.1 Board members require knowledge of the 'in-scope' elements of the review. Suggested membership:

- a Convener (the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee will nominate either an Associate Dean of Research or Associate Dean of Quality and Academic Standards);
- External Expert(s) with sound knowledge of the postgraduate researcher journey and research supervision;
- School Expert(s) external to the School with sound knowledge of postgraduate research student journey and postgraduate researcher supervision;
- a representative from Professional Services; and
- a postgraduate researcher representative, from a different School, who is a member of the Doctoral Academy Forum.

3.2 The Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup) will appoint a review secretary who will be responsible for co-ordinating and administering the Review event and producing the review report.

3.3 The School will be responsible for appointing the Periodic Review Board members (other than the Convener) in agreement with the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup).

### 4.0 Appointment of External Experts

4.1 External Expert(s) should be recruited from other higher education institution(s). They should have sound knowledge and experience of UK quality standards and have responsibility for postgraduate research degree provision at their institution, in one of the disciplines that will be subject to review.

4.2 The External Expert(s) should not have participated in the Schools viva process for the previous 2 years (either as an internal or external examiner).

4.3 It is usual practice for Schools Postgraduate Research Lead (PGR Lead) informally to approach the proposed external expert(s) to ascertain their willingness to serve in this role.

4.4 Responsibility for formally approving suitable nominees to the role of External Expert rests with the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee or their nominee.

## 5.0 Appointment of Critical Friend

5.1 It is strongly recommended, but optional, that Schools appoint a Critical Friend to support the School Review team through the periodic review process and to act as an interface between the Periodic Review Board and the School/discipline/research team(s).

## 6.0 Periodic Review Event

6.1 The length of the Periodic Review will be determined by the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup) but it would normally be expected to take place over a day. A preliminary meeting of the Periodic Review Board members will take place prior to the Review Event to finalise the agenda and themes for exploration at the review event. Exceptions to this may be made where complex provision of degrees are being considered (longer review event) or where the School's postgraduate researcher population is very small (shorter review event).

6.2 As part of the review event the Periodic Review Board meets with three separate School panels:

- a. Postgraduate researchers and graduates;
- b. Postgraduate Research Lead, Research degree supervisors and research degree administrators; and
- c. the School Executive Group.

6.3 Membership of these School panels is decided by the School. Panel (a) should consist of postgraduate researchers, and graduates only — no staff members should be in attendance. Panel (b) should not include members of panel (c) and vice versa. The Schools Postgraduate Research Lead should normally be part of panel (b).

6.4 The meeting with the School Executive Group should include at minimum the Dean, the Associate Dean Research, the Associate Dean Quality and Academic Standards and the School Manager. Other members of the School Executive Group should be included as relevant, for example if the provision is part of a collaborative partnership

6.5 All costs associated with the Periodic Review Board and event should be met by the relevant School.

External members of Periodic Review Boards should be:

- paid for their time and contribution, the recommended fee is £500
- reimbursed for all reasonable expenses associated with travel, subsistence, and accommodation in line with University policy.

6.6 Postgraduate researcher panel members should be reimbursed for their expenses if they are required to travel for the sole purpose of participating in the event.

6.7 Costs associated with the Periodic Review such as production of the Reflective Analysis and facilitation of site visits are also met by the School and should be considered in the development of collaborative arrangements.

6.8 In agreement with the School, the Director of the Doctoral Academy, and the Convener, the Review Event can be conducted in-person or online.

## 7.0 Periodic Review Outcome

7.1 Following the meetings with the panels, the Periodic Review Board will arrive at a formal conclusion; approved, approved with areas for development, approved with suggestions, not approved. The Board will also consider any areas of good practice, development/enhancement. Feedback will then be given to the School at the last meeting of the Review Event.

7.2 Within 6 weeks of the Periodic Review Event the School will compose an Action Plan detailing how it will address any 'recommendations' made by the Periodic Review Board. The proposed School Action Plan will be considered at the next meeting of the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup). The School will have one year to update the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee and Quality and Academic Standards Committee of their Action Plan progress.

7.3 A formal report is drafted by the secretary to the Board, agreed by the Periodic Review Board members, confirmed for factual accuracy by the School and then submitted to the School Office for appropriate dissemination within the School.

7.4 Reports should be discussed at School Boards (or designated subcommittees). Reports are also considered by the Quality and Academic Standards Committee and Postgraduate Research Sub-committee, where the formal approval of the Schools provision re-approval takes place. The reports will inform the Quality and Academic Standards Committee annual report to the Scottish Funding Council.

[End]

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## Periodic Review Policy Guidance

The Policy Guidance describes the operational processes necessary to implement the Policy.

### POLICY GUIDANCE: PART A

#### 1.0 Overview

The University processes for Periodic Review have been designed to align with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), especially with regard to [Monitoring and Evaluation](#) and [Research Degrees](#) advice and guidance, and with the [Scottish Funding Council's Guidance to Higher Education Institutions on Quality](#). Periodic Review applies to all provision leading to an academic award of the University including access, undergraduate, postgraduate (taught and research) and collaborative awards.

The process of Periodic Review involves four main stages:

1. evaluation, consultation and planning, and the development of the Reflective Analysis which will start a Periodic Review approximately 6-12 months prior to the Periodic Review event;
2. consideration by a Periodic Review Board;
3. implementation and review of planned changes; and
4. action-planning and follow-up reporting.

It is intended that Periodic Reviews are carried out in a spirit of open, collegiate discussion with the overarching aim of enhancement. They are not audits of past performance, but rather opportunities for transparent and meaningful reflection and for the development of forward planning to ensure that our research degrees are fresh, current and effective in providing a first-class learning experience for our postgraduate researchers and to equip them for success as Master's by Research and Doctoral graduates.

A Reflective Analysis, which includes an evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the research degree provision and a forward plan, is created as part of the process. This is expected to take into account previous annual reviews and development plans, and it should inform School operational plans, research supervision development and other quality enhancement activities such as annual Learning and Teaching Enhancement Reports, and the University's reporting to the Scottish Funding Council and Quality Assurance Agency. The production of the Reflective Analysis involves a structured and documented reflection by the School(s) on delivering their research degree provision. Guidance on the development of the Reflective Analysis is provided in Part B.

A Periodic Review Board is appointed to review submitted documents, including the Reflective Analysis, annexes and other supporting information/material. The Board meets with the following groups to discuss their views and experiences:

- Postgraduate researchers and graduates;
- Postgraduate Research Lead, Research degree supervisors and research degree administrators; and
- School Executive Group

To ensure objectivity, the Periodic Review Board comprises members who are entirely external to the School. The Board is convened by an Associate Dean (Research or Quality and Academic Standards) from a different School and includes at least one External Expert who should have sound knowledge and experience of UK quality standards and have responsibility for postgraduate research degree provision at their institution, in one of the disciplines that will be subject to review. Member(s) of University of Dundee academic staff with research supervision experience. A Postgraduate researcher representative from a different School and a member of Professional Services staff.

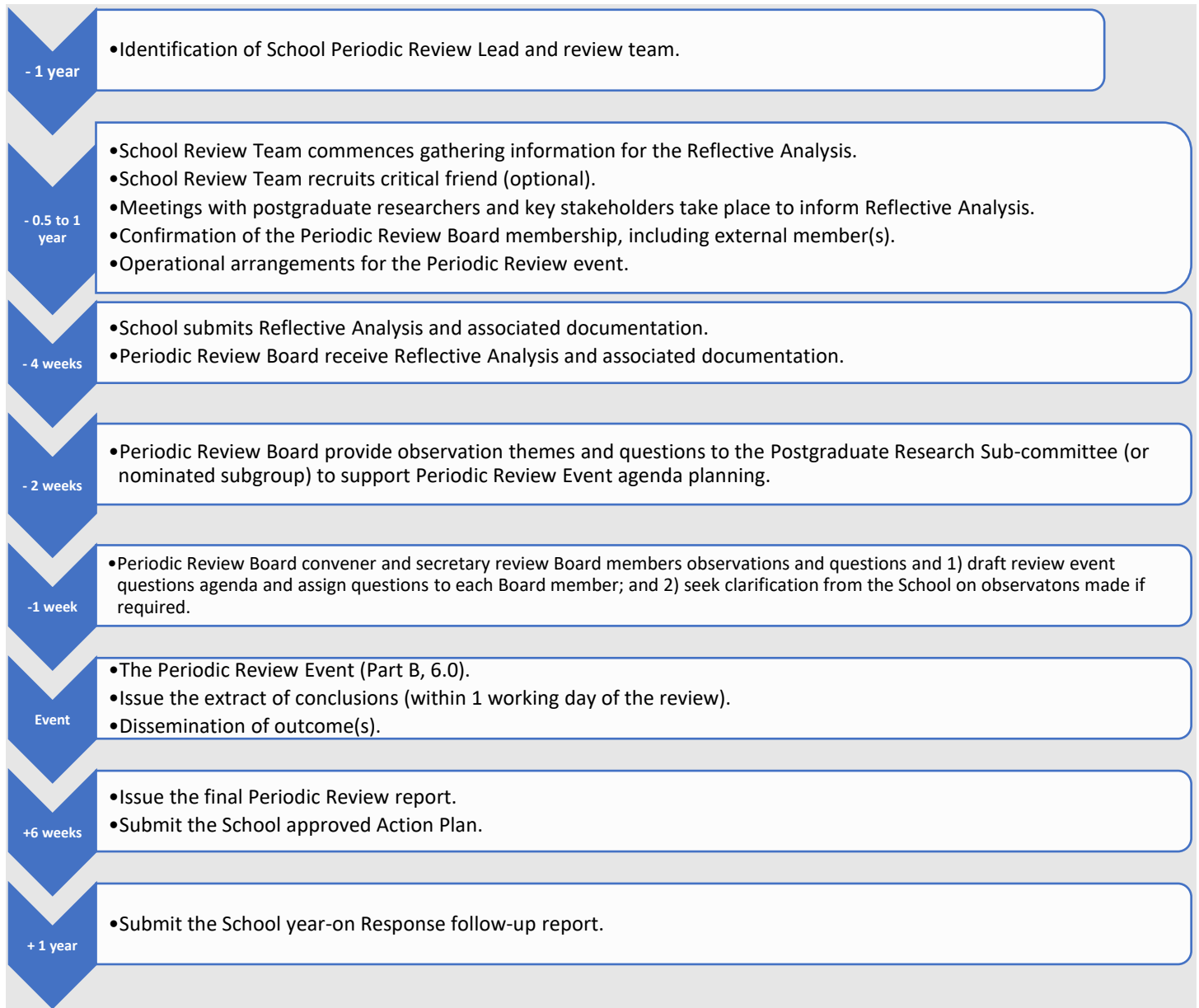
Following consideration of the Reflective Analysis, annexes and other supporting information, and the discussions with postgraduate researchers, graduates and staff, the Periodic Review Board agrees on a formal report. The report will set out recommendations, commendations, and any matters that require consideration at University-level.

Periodic Review Board reports are considered by School Boards (or designated subcommittees) and at the University's Quality and Academic Standards Committee (QASC) (or designated subcommittees). An annual report on the University's Periodic Reviews is submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and is also considered by the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee and Quality and Academic Standards Committee in relation to significant development/enhancement issues and good practice that has been identified for research degree provision. The Periodic Review reports are also considered by QAA Scotland as part

of their annual visit, and form a key part of the information provided for the [Enhancement-Led Institutional Review \(ELIR\)](#) process which takes place every five years.

The University's Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or designated subgroup) will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the policy and related procedures and guidance. Any exceptions to this Policy should be agreed in advance with the Director of Quality and Academic Standards.

Below is a timeline and outline of the Periodic Review process:



Associate Deans (Research and Quality & Academic Standards) and relevant Research/Quality & Academic Standards Administrative leads are encouraged to work together to develop a School-level plan that outlines the timelines for each Periodic Review.



## 2.0 Aim

The aim of the periodic review is to:

- ensure that our Research degree provision is in compliance with the University's [Research Degrees Quality Code, policy statements, regulations, and guidance](#) and also the regulatory requirements set out by the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\) in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), and the [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)](#);
- to identify and promote the sharing of good practice that could be relevant to other Schools in the University; and
- to consider changes to provision which will enhance the postgraduate researcher experience as well as the experience of the staff that support them.

## 3.0 Scope

Periodic Review should evaluate both quality and standards, in particular, the following aspects:

- enhancement of the research degree provision;
- enhancement of the postgraduate researcher experience, including pastoral and development aspects of the postgraduate researcher experience;
- enhancement of supervision and support;
- enhancement of the research environment;
- enhancement of the organisation and management of the research degree provision; and
- academic standards.

The reflection and evaluation of the Periodic Review will lead to the planning for the future operation of the School's research degree provision.

## POLICY GUIDANCE: PART B

### 1.0 Schedule

Periodic Reviews will be conducted every 5-6 years in accordance with a schedule determined by Quality and Academic Standards with each Schools Associate Dean (Research).

A School may be subject to more frequent interim reviews if significant issues are raised during a Periodic Review and/or where there have been significant changes to the structure and delivery of its postgraduate research degree provision.

Liaising with the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup), the School is responsible for planning and organising the review.

### 2.0 Reflective Analysis

Development of the Reflective Analysis requires detailed review and discussion by the Schools' nominated Periodic Review team with the following stakeholders;

- Postgraduate researchers
- Research degree supervisors
- Library and Learning Centre
- Alumni
- Employers (if applicable)
- Placement providers (where applicable)

The Strategic Intelligence Unit will provide standard data set for the Reflective Analysis.

The School Executive Group should allocate responsibility for the evaluation process to the relevant members of the Periodic Review team and administration staff in enough time to allow for the advance preparation required. The overall process should be as inclusive as possible, involving discussions at School Board(s) (or designated subcommittee) and Student-Staff Liaison Committees, and ensuring involvement of postgraduate researchers and their representatives in the evaluation process.

Student/postgraduate researcher representatives could, for example, be involved with running focus groups to gather feedback on the research provision, with support from both the School President and DUSA. External advisers (e.g. external examiners, industrial board members, and employers) should also be consulted as part of the evaluation and consideration of forward plans.

The designated lead(s) for the Periodic Review must work with the relevant School Associate Dean (Research or Quality & Academic Standards) at the start of the process to agree on the overall approach.

As part of the evaluation, the School Review team must hold discussions with Professional Services that have a direct relationship to enhancement of academic support and the postgraduate researcher experience.

These discussions are separate from the gathering and analysis of data and form an integral part of the evaluation process in order to optimise the effectiveness of support provided by each service to the research provision and in particular to consider:

- how support for research degrees and postgraduate researchers could be improved for the future — involving actions by either or both the School and the support service.
- adequacy of support resources;
- the market brand attractiveness and potential of the brand (marketing);
- effectiveness of communication between the support service and staff and postgraduate researchers on the research degrees.

These discussions should include where possible:

- the Careers Service;
- the Academic Skills Centre (ASC);
- English for International Students (EIS);

- External Relations (Student Recruitment and Admissions, Marketing, Alumni);
- the Library and Learning Centre (LLC);
- Organisational and Professional Development (OPD)
- Digital and Technology Services;
- the Registry;
- Student Services;
- the Doctoral Academy team.

The outcomes from the discussions will inform the development of the Reflective Analysis, and a record of discussions and the outcomes should be included as an annex.

### 2.1 Developing the Reflective Analysis

In developing and constructing the Reflective Analysis the structure and guidance shown below should be followed. The School Review team are encouraged to be succinct and evaluative in their approach to developing the Reflective Analysis (should not exceed 15 pages in length), and there should be references to annexes or supplementary material rather than reproducing such material within the body of the Reflective Analysis.

A template with embedded guidance, which includes specific prompts for evaluation of the research degree provision and for forward planning, is shown below. Appropriate references to data and information should be included to evidence the conclusions drawn by the School review team.

#### **B1. Provision of information is clear and accessible to prospective students, current postgraduate researchers, and staff.**

*The QAA Research Degrees advice and guidance states that providers that have research degree awarding powers have specific regulations and codes of practice for research degrees that are clear, regularly reviewed, and accessible to research students and staff, including examiners. Responsibilities of research students and staff supervising, assessing, and supporting research students are clearly communicated.*

Describe and provide examples of how the School provides clear and accessible information to prospective students, current students, current postgraduate researchers, and staff.

In your response below, take into consideration the following:

- o approach to recruitment (recruitment, selection, and admission);
- o induction, research, and transferable skills training, professional and career development;
- o the promotion and marketing of Schools research degree provision.
- o the quality and accuracy of marketing materials produced by Schools, the Doctoral Academy, and the University.
- o the application processes.
- o the interview and selection process.
- o postgraduate researcher induction programmes delivered by Schools, the Doctoral Academy, and the University.
- o the accuracy and quality of induction materials.
- o skills appraisal activities.

#### **B2. The research environment is supportive and inclusive for all research students.**

*The QAA Research Degree advice and guidance states that providers accept research students into a sustainable, inclusive, and supportive research environment for undertaking and learning about research throughout the programme of study. The environment should support/facilitate research achievement, taking account of the diverse needs of research students.*

Describe and provide examples of how you ensure your School has a research environment that is supportive and inclusive for all research students.

In your response below, take into consideration the following:

- o research integrity and ethical consideration;
- o postgraduate researcher feedback and engagement activities;
- o mode of delivery (full-time, part-time, other);
- o collaborative/partnership provision with other HEIs;

- o Centres for Doctoral Training (also known as DTC or CDT) and Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP), industrial collaboration etc;
- o research community activity (both at School and University level).
- o how a vibrant and participatory research culture is facilitated allowing students the opportunity to interact with their peers, both at School and University level and with other research staff at the University.
- o the quality of physical resources available to students e.g. library, laboratories, common rooms (please also comment on the usage of these facilities).
- o any changes that have impacted on the research environment over the previous 5 years.
- o indicators of notable research outputs

**B3. Supervisors are appropriately skilled and supported.**

*The QAA Research Degree advice and guidance states that providers ensure that each student has an appropriately skilled and knowledgeable supervisory team, which includes a main supervisor as the key contact. Supervisors should be provided with sufficient time, support, and opportunities to develop and maintain their supervisory practice.*

Describe and provide examples of how the School reviews and monitors that Research Supervisors (Main and Secondary) are appropriately skills and supported in their duties.

In your response below, take into consideration the following:

- o postgraduate researcher and supervisor training and development.
- o the process for appointing supervision teams.
- o how the relationship between the supervision team and the student operates, including how communication, expectations and responsibilities are managed.
- o how supervisors are trained and how new supervisors are mentored.
- o how the Schools and University ensure that supervisors have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

**B4. Research students are afforded opportunities for professional development.**

*The QAA Research Degree advice and guidance states that providers ensure that research students are provided with appropriate opportunities to regularly reflect on and develop their personal, professional and research skills in consultation with their supervisory team.*

Describe and provide examples of how you ensure that students are afforded opportunities for professional development.

In your response below, take into consideration the following:

- o induction, research and transferable skills training, professional and career development.
- o postgraduate researcher employability.
- o the annual programme of training including the Researcher Development Programme and other development opportunities available for students.
- o the mechanisms in place to identify and review students' training needs.
- o development opportunities for supervisors and other members of research active staff.

**B5. Progression monitoring is clearly defined and operated.**

*The QAA Research Degree advice and guidance states that providers put in place clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and supporting research student progress and outcomes from admission to successful completion, including formal and explicit reviews of progress at different stages.*

Describe and provide examples of how you ensure that the Schools progression monitoring is clearly defined and managed.

In your response below, take into consideration the following:

- o thesis monitoring process (progress monitoring and reviews);
- o upgrade review (Transfer of Ordinance);
- o re-matriculation (annual progress review)

- o submission, examination and award;
- o the effectiveness of policies and procedures for the management of progress and review arrangements including student-supervisor meetings, early and late Stage Reviews and Progress Reviews.
- o the monitoring of student progress and completion rates.
- o any instances of unsatisfactory progress and the resulting action taken.

**B6. Higher education providers offer clear guidance and processes on assessment for research degrees.**

*The QAA Research Degree advice and guidance states that providers, recognising the underpinning principles applicable to all assessment (see also Assessment Theme), operate robust and clear procedures for assessing research degrees, taking into account the UK qualification descriptors and characteristic statements.*

Describe and provide examples of how you ensure that the Schools offers clear guidance to your students/postgraduate researchers, staff, and external examiners on assessment of your research degrees.

In your response below, take into consideration the following:

- o academic governance, administration, and staffing resources;
- o the responsibilities and effectiveness of the Schools Research committee, Postgraduate Research Sub-committee and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.
- o the implementation of regulations and the Research Degree Code of Practice.
- o examination arrangements.

**C1. References**

*Provide a list of the annexes, other supporting material and any external references. The annexes and other supporting material should accompany the Reflective Analysis.*

*Must include:*

*PRES Action Plans for periodic review period (if available)*

*PRES survey results for periodic review period (if available) to support the evaluation of the student experience over a range of areas.*

*Postgraduate Researcher Handbooks (last two years)*

The annexes should not be 'physically' appended to the primary Reflective Analysis document. They should, however, be available so that all reviewers can easily access the relevant data and supplementary information.

The QAA use general terminology throughout their documentation. The key below provides a University Dundee translation of their terminology.

QAA term	UoD equivalent
Research student	Postgraduate researcher
Programme of study	Research degree

**2.2 Additional supporting material for the Reflective Analysis**

The following documentation should also be available for reference by the Periodic Review Board in advance of the review event.

- all references cited in the Reflective Analysis (with the exception of any deemed by the Dean to be commercially confidential);
- postgraduate researcher handbook(s);
- the previous 5 years of annual review reports (or since the last periodic review) and relevant extracts of School Board (or designated subcommittee) minutes where issues arising from these have been discussed;
- the previous Periodic Review report (where applicable) and the School's year-on response to the report;
- any other materials deemed relevant by the Schools Review team;

Members of the Periodic Review Board are also at liberty to request from the School copies of any additional supporting information that they would like to see in advance of or during the review event. Where any such requests raise concerns in relation to data protection or commercial confidentiality, this information may be withheld with an appropriate explanation.

It is encouraged that all or parts of the documentation to support the Reflective Analysis are made available in electronic format with suitable access facilities.

### 2.3 Approval of the Reflective Analysis

On completion the Reflective Analysis and supporting documentation, the Reflective Analysis should be considered by the relevant School and confirmed as approved by the Associate Dean (Research or Quality and Academic Standards).

## 3.0 Periodic Review Board Membership

The Periodic Review Board includes University Academic staff member(s) external to the School, a postgraduate researcher representative, Professional Services staff and External Expert(s). A Critical Friend may be appointed by the School to engage with pre-meeting discussions of the Board and liaise with the School thereafter.

The Periodic Review Board discussions are managed by a convener who will be an Associate Dean (Research or Quality and Academic Standards) from outside the School, nominated by the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup). The convener is supported by a Periodic Review Board secretary, nominated by the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup). Periodic Review Board members should receive relevant documentation at least four weeks prior to the event.

Schools must agree the membership of the Periodic Review Boards with the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup) and Convener prior to finalising invitations. The Periodic Review Board must not include any individuals from within the School under review.

Membership will normally include:

Periodic Review Board Member	Description
1. A convener.	Nominated Associate Dean (Research or Quality & Academic Standards) from a different School
2. At least one member of academic staff with experience in postgraduate research supervision from a different School.	A member of academic staff with research supervision experience. A maximum of two members of academic staff participating in the review event is the norm.
3. One Postgraduate researcher from a different School who is a representative of the Doctoral Academy Forum.	Schools should liaise with the Doctoral Academy Forum to recruit a volunteer.
5. One representative from Professional Services.	The School should decide on which representative would be best able to contribute to the review process, according to the nature and needs of the research provision. Additional representation may be sought from other areas of Professional Services if required. The Director of the relevant service(s) should be consulted regarding an appropriate participant and their availability.
6. External Expert(s).	Two External Experts involved in the review is recommended with the maximum of three External Experts for Schools with larger postgraduate researcher population. For Schools with smaller postgraduate researcher populations, one External Expert is sufficient.

To ensure the validity of the Periodic Review Event outcomes, the quorum of the Review Board present at the Review Event must be at least:

- one member of academic staff with experience in postgraduate research supervision from a different School; and
- one Postgraduate researcher; and
- one representation from Professional Services; and
- one External Expert.

If the above quorum is not met, the Convener should not proceed with the review event and ask the School to reconvene the Review Event at a later date.

Following agreement on the membership with the convener and the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee, the host School for the event should contact the proposed members well in advance to agree availability.

At the invitation of the convener, observers may attend Periodic Review meetings, but they should not take part in discussions, unless specifically asked to do so by the convener.

The Director of the Doctoral Academy and Director of Quality and Academic Standards may attend Periodic Review events as an observer from time to time. This does not require the invitation of the convener.

#### 4.0 External Experts

The External Expert(s) should usually be an individual at another higher education institution and who has responsibility for postgraduate research degree provision, in one of the disciplines that will be subject to review.

The External Expert(s) should not have participated in the Schools viva process for the previous 2 years (either as an internal or external examiner).

It is usual practice for Schools Postgraduate Research Lead (PGR Lead) to informally approach the proposed External Expert to ascertain their willingness to serve in this role .

Responsibility for formally approving suitable nominees to the role of External Expert rests with the Chair of the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee.

#### 5.0 Appointment of Critical Friend

It is a strong recommendation, but not mandatory, that the School appoints a Critical Friend. The Critical Friend should be an experienced research degree supervisor. They should be involved in development meetings to provide constructive feedback and also to inform their own understanding of the research degree provision and the way that the Reflective Analysis was produced so that they can engage with the Periodic Review Board in a meaningful way. A key role of the Critical Friend is to provide feedback to the School Review team on the likely themes for discussion at the Periodic Review event in advance of the Periodic Review Board meetings. The principal purposes of the role of Critical Friend are to help to ensure a 'no surprises' outcome from Periodic Review events and to promote a reflective and evaluative approach to the process.

#### 6.0 Periodic Review Event

##### 6.1 Before the Periodic Review event

The School must ensure that members receive electronic copies of the documentation described below a minimum of four weeks prior to the Periodic Review Board event with an introductory letter/email explaining how to access all relevant information.

Organisational information:

- membership of the Periodic Review Board and panels;
- timetable for event, including locations, maps and directions; and
- for external members, an expenses claim form.

Reference documentation:

- information on the University Postgraduate Research Degree Periodic Review policy and guidance;

- a copy of the [Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland](#) and/or relevant excerpts from the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework;
- relevant QAA subject benchmark (where applicable); and
- the Reflective Analysis; and
- annexes and other supporting materials.

The convener will request preliminary written comments by Periodic Review Board members to be submitted normally two weeks prior to the Periodic Review event. The convener, with the support of the review administrator, will then prepare and finalise the agenda and themes for exploration at the event.

### *6.2 Model for the operation of the Periodic Review event*

A recommended model, which assumes a review lasting one and a half days, is described below.

1. **First pre-meeting of Periodic Review Board.** This will be held on the day before the meetings with the School panels. Here, members of the Board (and the Critical Friend) will be introduced. The Board members will give initial impressions of the submitted materials. Any prior interests or connection with the Schools research degree on the part of a Board member should be declared at the first meeting (for example, an External Expert having been an external examiner, or a postgraduate researcher representative having participated in the Schools research degree provision). The convener will then invite consideration of the areas for discussion that the Board members have indicated they would like to pursue with the different groups. Following the meeting the convener and Periodic Review Board secretary will finalise the collated themes. This may also be an opportunity for the Periodic Review Board to tour any relevant facilities including studios and labs.
2. **Second pre-meeting of Periodic Review Board.** This is held immediately before the meetings with the Schools panels on day two. The convener will present the areas to be pursued based on the previous day's discussions for agreement by the Board. It will be agreed who will lead on these issues during the meetings and the panels at which each issue will be discussed.
3. **Meetings with Schools panels.** The Periodic Review Board will normally meet with Schools postgraduate researchers and graduates first to gain an overall impression of the Schools research degree provision from the perspective of its postgraduate researchers.
4. **Third meeting of Periodic Review Board.** The Board discusses its decision and agrees on the wording of its conclusions. This should cover:
  - its recommendation to the University regarding the re-approval of the Schools research degree provision;
  - aspects of good practice that the Periodic Review Board wishes to highlight;
  - any areas for development associated with the recommendation;
  - any suggestions regarding the future enhancement of the research degree provision; and
  - any suggestions regarding the University's Periodic Review policy and procedure.
5. **Feedback from the Periodic Review Board to the School.** The convener conveys the decision of the Periodic Review Board to the relevant School staff. This is a reporting rather than a discussion meeting. The convener should describe the key points of the conclusions to the School staff, and then close the event, indicating approximately when the School can expect to receive the formal report. The School will normally be provided with a draft of the outcome within 24 hours after the event.

The format of the event should be agreed in advance with the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee.



Suggested Periodic Review event timetable:

### 1.5-day model

#### Day 1

14:00 – 16:00 Private Meeting of the Periodic Review Board: preliminary discussion and consideration of submitted comments and areas for discussion.

#### Day 2

09:00 – 10:00 Private Meeting of Periodic Review Board: finalise questions and allocate lead responsibility

10:15 – 11:30 Meeting with Postgraduate Researchers/Graduates

11:40 – 13:10 Meeting with Research Supervisors and Research Administrators

13:10 – 13:40 Lunch and Private meeting of the Review Board

13:45 – 14:45 Meeting with School Executive Staff

14:45 – 16:00 Private meeting of Periodic Review Board to reach decision and agree wording of recommendations

16:00 Feedback to School Staff

### 6.3 Suggested areas of focus for Periodic Review Board members

Suggestions on areas of particular focus for individual members are noted below. It is, however, emphasised that all members have both the authority and responsibility to comment on any aspect or issue.

#### Postgraduate researcher representative

In general, the postgraduate researcher member should read and comment on the documentation from a postgraduate researcher perspective and specifically:

- Focus on Postgraduate researcher experience
- Robustness/effectiveness of enhancement processes
- Transferable skills training

#### External discipline expert(s)

- current and advancing recognition and approaches to supervision
- relevant external reference points associated with the discipline — e.g. QAA Subject benchmark statement
- wider research environment and culture of the discipline(s)

#### University members of staff

- effectiveness of routine monitoring and progression;
- Supervisor training – accreditation, capacity
- approaches to equity, diversity and inclusion in the full PGR cycle

#### Professional Services staff

- efficiency and effectiveness in using central provision such as:  
the Doctoral Academy, the Library and Learning Centre, Student Services (Disability Services, Counselling Service, Academic Skills Centre, Careers Service etc.), Human Resources and Organisational Development (Organisational and Professional Development, and Health & Safety), Digital and Technology Services and External Relations.
- communications between Schools and central support units.

## 7.0 Periodic Review Outcome

### *7.1 Drafting of the Periodic Review Board Report*

The convener and Periodic Review Board secretary are responsible for preparing the report. They may invite individual members to prepare drafts of specific sections. Having drafted the report, the convener and Periodic Review Board secretary should circulate this to panel members for comment and suggestions for revision. Once the content has been agreed by the Periodic Review Board, the draft report should be submitted to the School to check its accuracy.

### *7.2 Content of the Periodic Review Board Report*

The Periodic Review Board report will contain a recommendation (Extract of Conclusion) regarding the future operation of the School's research degree provision. This recommendation and the decision of the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee cannot be appealed. This will be stated with reference to one of the following categories:

- **approved;**
- **approved with areas for development/enhancement to be addressed** (these are mandatory and there will be a set time limit, normally up to 12 months, for the areas for development to be addressed)
- **approved with suggestions** (whilst suggestions are advisory rather than mandatory, the Schools Review team must provide the School Board(s) (or designated subcommittee) with justifications if any suggestions are not taken forward); or
- **not approved** (in such a circumstance, the Periodic Review Board should note the reasons for making this judgement. In the unlikely event of a School's research degree provision being 'not approved' the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee will help the School work towards the expected requirements.

The Recommendations section will also contain a description of any areas for development/enhancement and suggestions, good practice identified and any other additional comments if required.

The finalised Periodic Review Board Report should normally be available for consideration by the School review team within 6-8 weeks of the Periodic Review event.

### *7.3 Submission of the final report*

Periodic Review Board Reports are considered by the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup), who will ensure that heads of Professional Services are informed about outcomes of the review process where relevant, consider any suggestions to the University and note good practice for further dissemination.

The Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup) will submit the agreed report to:

- relevant School staff, including the Dean, School Manager, Associate Deans (QAS and Research), the Postgraduate Research Lead; and
- the Quality and Academic Standards Committee.

### *7.4 Status of the Periodic Review Board Report and follow-up activity*

The status of the Periodic Review Board Report is that of a recommendation to the University on how to improve and enhance our research degree provision for our postgraduate researchers.

Schools are responsible for ensuring that the Periodic Review Board's recommendations relating to research degree provision are implemented.

The School will receive the report. An Action Plan should then be developed, normally by the Postgraduate Research Lead, in consultation with the Schools Review team and key School staff. The Action Plan should refer to all of the areas for development/enhancement and suggestions and provide an explanation if any of the suggestions are not being taken forward. The Action Plan will be submitted to the clerk of the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee 6 weeks after receipt of the Extract of Conclusion and considered at the next available Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (for approval) and Quality and Academic Standards Committee (for noting).

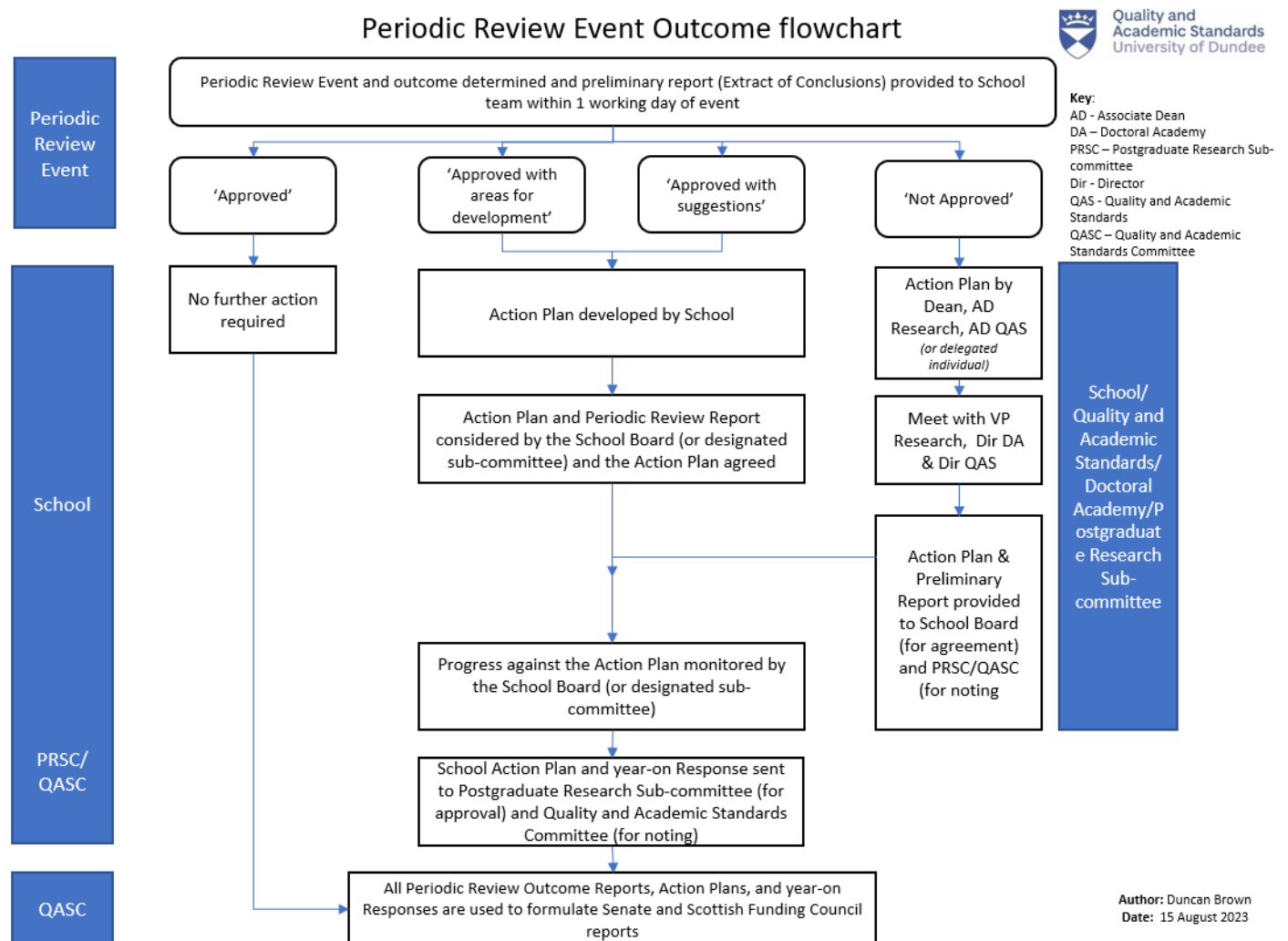
The School Board (or designated subcommittee) should receive the proposed Action Plan along with the Periodic Review Board Report. The School Board (or designated subcommittee) should consider the report and Action Plan. Where appropriate, actions

should be integrated with the School operational plan. Unless otherwise specified within the Periodic Review Board Report, areas for development/enhancement and suggestions should be addressed within one year of the Periodic Review event. Note that the Periodic Review Board may set timescales that are shorter than the maximum time of one year permitted by the University. The School Board (or designated subcommittee) should monitor progress on matters contained within the Periodic Review Board Report, with special attention to any areas for development that are mentioned.

The School Associate Dean (Research or Quality and Academic Standards) should arrange for a brief written report to be provided to the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee /Quality and Academic Standards one year after the review event to confirm that any areas for development from the Periodic Review Board Report have been addressed and describe the actions that were taken as a result of the Periodic Review Board Report.

The Director of Quality and Academic Standards prepares an annual report on Periodic Reviews for submission to the Scottish Funding Council, the University Court, the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Quality and Academic Standards Committee. This report includes a digest of significant development issues arising in reports as well as good practice that has been identified.

### 7.5 Overview of Review Outcome process



## 8.0 Responsibilities within the Periodic Review process

### *8.1 School Executive Groups have responsibility for:*

- nominating appropriate coordinating leads within the Schools Review team for each Periodic Review. Schools have confirmed that this type of quality assurance activity has been factored in to either an individual's role, or within working together time, or within scholarship/research time;

### *8.2 Associate Deans (Research and Quality & Academic Standards) have responsibility for:*

- ensuring that research degree provision is reviewed within the timeframe and schedule agreed by the Doctorial Academy Board;
- ensuring that appropriate input is sought from all relevant staff;
- ensuring that the processes described in this document are followed;
- ensuring that there is appropriate School oversight of the content and quality of the Reflective Analysis (e.g. through the School Quality and Academic Standards Committee) and final approval of the Reflective Analysis;
- ensuring that the Reflective Analysis is submitted to the clerk of the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee at least four weeks before the Periodic Review event;
- ensuring that the outcomes of Periodic Review events are communicated to relevant staff and postgraduate researchers;
- ensuring that any proposed enhancements to research degree provision recommended for approval by the Periodic Review Board are then formally approved through the normal University process;
- disseminating and celebrating good practice identified as part of the Periodic Review process within the School; and
- ensuring that areas for development/enhancement and suggestions from the Periodic Review Board are properly addressed and reported to the School Board (or designated subcommittee) and the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup) and Quality and Academic Standards Committee (for noting) within the required timeframe.

### *8.3 School Research Admin Leads/ Quality & Academic Standards Admin-leads have responsibility for:*

- confirming the membership of the Periodic Review Board with the Periodic Review Board convener and the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee, and liaising with the convener on the operational arrangements (see below);
- the operational arrangements for the Periodic Review event (including accommodation, travel expenses and fees for external subject experts, room bookings, and arranging the postgraduate researchers/graduate and staff groups for each meeting) and liaising with the Doctorial Academy to ensure that the proposed arrangements are properly communicated and mutually agreed;
- ensuring that relevant staff members, postgraduate researchers and graduates are available to engage with the Periodic Review event;
- identification of the date of the Periodic Review, taking into account local and national holidays, teaching timetables and other relevant activities.

### *8.4 The School Review team have responsibility for:*

- nominating a Critical Friend (if applicable) for the Periodic Review process;
- engaging postgraduate researchers in the development of the Reflective Analysis and the Periodic Review process;
- submitting the Reflective Analysis and associated document is submitted for review in accordance with the timeline indicated in this guidance document.

### *8.5 The Critical Friend (if appointed) has responsibility for:*

- supporting the School Review team to develop the Reflective Analysis by providing feedback, acting as a sounding board as data and information is evaluated,
- provide background information to the Periodic Review Board at their first meeting to support their understanding of the research degree provision context and resolve minor queries,
- provide insight to the School team as to the direction and focus of the discussion

### *8.6 Member of the Doctorial Academy Forum has responsibility for:*

- Liaising with DUSA
- acting as postgraduate researcher reviewers on Periodic Review Boards
- supporting any PGR representatives in the School to engage with the Periodic Review process.

- providing advice and guidance to Schools and their School Review team about approaches to engaging and consulting postgraduate researchers in the Periodic Review process

*8.7 The Doctoral Academy have responsibility for:*

- liaising with and advising School Associate Deans (Research) and Research/QAS Admin leads on the organisation and management of Periodic Review Boards and events;
- supporting Periodic Review Board conveners in their role;
- advising member of Doctoral Academy forum and other Board members on their roles and responsibilities;
- monitoring follow-up and reporting to the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee and Quality and Academic Standards Committee.

*8.8 Quality and Academic Standards have responsibility for:*

- managing the schedule of Periodic Reviews;
- clerking for Periodic Review Board events, including drafting the agenda and collating areas for discussion, providing draft reports for the convener, finalising reports and circulating the outcomes.

*8.9 The Postgraduate Research Sub-committee (or nominated subgroup) has responsibility for:*

- reviewing Periodic Review Board reports and identifying good practice and areas for development;
- formally re-approve the Schools research degree provision on behalf of Senate;
- reviewing School action-plans and responses to reports from Periodic Review Boards;
- review and approve year-on follow-up reports;
- consideration of an annual summary of Periodic Review reports to further aid identification of areas for ongoing enhancement and dissemination of good practice.

[End]

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