

# Procedures for the Review of Collaborative Research Programmes not Owned by Departments

---

## Introduction

1. This procedure applies to those collaborative research programmes which are not “owned” by a specific academic department<sup>1</sup> within Imperial College London but are instead established at university or faculty level with students placed in a number of departments.
2. Responsibility for overall management of these programmes lies with the relevant Joint Management Committee. The academic lead for the programme at Imperial is responsible, in consultation with the International Office where appropriate for the day-to-day management of their programme and will play a role in maintaining and ensuring standards, as well as championing the degree. As these programmes are not owned by a particular department within the university, they are not adequately covered by Imperial’s review procedures for departmental research degree provision. Therefore, this procedure has been developed in order to describe the process for the monitoring and review of these types of collaborative research programmes.

## Review

3. Reviews of these programmes will be scheduled by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee in consultation with the relevant Joint Management Committee<sup>2</sup>. Where a partner is planning to review the programme through their own quality assurance mechanisms, this will be taken into consideration when planning Imperial’s review schedule. There are three methods for reviewing collaborative research programmes not owned by departments:
  - a. Annual Review: conducted by the Joint Management Committee and overseen by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC);
  - b. Precept Review (midway through the periodic review cycle): conducted by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee;
  - c. Periodic Review (every 5 years): conducted by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee.

## Annual Review

4. The Joint Management Committee for each programme will meet at least annually to discuss student progress, welfare and the quality assurance of the programme, amongst other items.

---

<sup>1</sup> The word “department,” which is used throughout this document, may apply to departments, centres, schools or institutes as appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> Further details about the role and membership of Joint Management Committees can be found on the Collaborative Provision webpage.

## Procedure

Procedures for the review of collaborative research programmes not owned by departments

Members of the Joint Management Committee will include representatives from all partners involved in the programme. Minutes of these meetings will be submitted to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee, and will help to inform precept and periodic review. In order to disseminate good practice more widely across the university, the Joint Degree Programme Committee will also receive minutes of Joint Management Committees and will also be provided with copies of the periodic review and precept review reports for information.

The items that the Joint Management Committee will consider, at least on an annual basis, will include the following items:

- a. Details of students registered on the programme and their progress;
- b. an updated list of academic staff at both institutions with responsibility for the supervision of research students on the programme;
- c. general issues relating to the management of the programme and the partnership;
- d. student welfare and overall experience. This would normally include consideration of the results of student surveys and other forms of student feedback; periodic and precept review reports and if applicable, follow-up actions to be taken as a result of either review;
- e. items of good practice that should be highlighted to the participating institutions' quality assurance committees;
- f. consideration of the reports of any site visits that have taken place since the last meeting<sup>3</sup>; and
- g. marketing material used to advertise the programme along with any other overarching programme material to ensure it is up to date.

## Precept Review

5. Imperial's research degree precepts can be downloaded at the following link:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/research-programmes/>

6. Precept reviews are a paper-based review of a research programme's compliance with the precepts. These reviews take place, normally midway through the periodic review cycle i.e. every two to three years. The academic lead is requested to submit documentation demonstrating how the programme complies with the prescribed precepts. The precept review aims to highlight examples of good practice, and where problems are identified, offer solutions.

7. The precept review procedure is as follows:

- i. In order to enable the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee to effectively scrutinise a research programme's compliance with the precepts, the academic lead is asked to complete a precept review form<sup>4</sup>. The form should be submitted to the

---

<sup>3</sup> The frequency of site visits required will be determined at the time of partner approval.

<sup>4</sup> Available to download at the following link:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschools/qualityassurance/researchdegrees/researchreviewforms>

**Procedure**

Procedures for the review of collaborative research programmes not owned by departments

PRQC along with the following documentation (all submissions should be anonymised in terms of student names):

- A copy of the joint/collaborative degree programme postgraduate student handbook/material;
  - Copies of examiners' reports for all students who commenced their study following the completion of the last precept/periodic review;
  - First destination statistics for students who completed during the previous three years;
  - Procedures for the appointment of research thesis examiners;
  - A breakdown of completion rates for full-time and part-time students who commenced their studies following the completion of the last precept/periodic review, and provide an explanation if the completion rate has fallen below 70%;
  - Figures for the percentage of students who have transferred within the 12 month deadline during the previous three years;
  - Details of any special cases made [for admissions or during registration] during the previous three years.
- ii. Once the completed precept review form and all supplementary information (to be confirmed by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team) has been received, the documentation is normally sent to an academic member of the PRQC who is not affiliated to the programme under review. This person will hence forth be known as 'the reviewer'.
- iii. The reviewer will evaluate the material provided and complete a reviewer's comment form indicating whether, in their opinion, the programme complies with each of the precepts. The outcome for each precept will be given as 'compliant' or 'non-compliant'. Where a precept is considered to be non-compliant but the reviewer is confident that action is being taken to remedy the situation, the reviewer may suggest an outcome of "working towards compliance" for the precept concerned. The reviewer will also make a judgement as to whether or not they consider the programme to be compliant with the precepts overall (taking into account of compliance with each individual precept). If "non-compliant", the reviewer may wish to comment on whether there are appropriate procedures in place to achieve the objectives of the precept concerned.
- iv. Once the reviewer has completed their appraisal, their assessment and comments are forwarded to the academic lead for a response.
- v. The completed precept review form, reviewer's comment form, and the response to the reviewer's assessment will then be considered by the PRQC. The committee may wish to add to the reviewer's comments, and will make the final decision as to the

programme's overall compliance with the precepts by choosing one of the following outcomes:

**Compliant:** the outcomes are compliant with each of the prescribed precepts; or,

**Working towards compliance:** does not comply with one or more precepts but is taking action to ensure compliancy; or

**Non-compliant:** does not comply with one or more precepts and action is not yet being taken to ensure compliancy.

- vi. The academic lead will be informed of the overall outcome and of any recommendations made in response to the review.
- vii. A programme that is **compliant** in all the precepts will be reviewed two to three years later as part of the periodic review process. However, the PRQC reserves the right to follow up minor issues raised during the precept review prior to the next periodic review and will continue to monitor items such as submission rates, progression statistics and external examiner nominations, on an annual basis via the Joint Management Committee.
- viii. A programme that is **non-compliant** in one or more precepts, or overall, will normally be reviewed again in the following year. A programme that is found to be **working towards compliance** overall will be asked to report on progress made to ensure compliance of the precepts concerned, typically the following year, but would not normally be subject to a full precept review.
- ix. In all cases, the PRQC will confirm the nature of the follow-up required and when the academic lead will be expected to respond to and address the concerns of the committee. The outcomes of this process are reported to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and the Senate.

## Periodic Review

8. The purpose of the periodic review is to ensure that:

- The university maintains academic standards and enhances the quality of research degree training that it provides to its students on these particular programmes;
- A judgement is made regarding compliance with Imperial's collaborative precepts for higher degree registration;
- External reference points, for example the National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), the Office for Students, the Quality Assurance Agency and other external references have been taken into consideration;
- Through regular and systematic processes of review and feedback from students, developmental action is taken to introduce improvements to the programme, to build on existing strengths and to correct identified weaknesses;

## Procedure

Procedures for the review of collaborative research programmes not owned by departments

- The success of the programme is monitored, to identify areas of good practice and to ensure that areas of weakness are identified and addressed;
  - To ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for student welfare and that mechanisms are in place to monitor and review this provision;
  - Students progress smoothly through each stage of registration and that appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and supporting student progress are in place;
  - The programme is exposed to external scrutiny to ensure transparency of processes, to confirm standards and to ensure that provision remains current and valid.
9. A periodic review panel will have an internal Chair. This person would normally be a Dean, Academic Deputy Director of the Early Career Researcher Institute (ECRI) (provided that they are not directly involved with the programme under review) or other senior member of university academic staff who is not a member of the Joint Management Committee, and should be someone of standing who has knowledge of quality assurance procedures. There will also be one other internal assessor – typically this will be a Director of Postgraduate Studies (DPS) who is not associated with the programme(s) under review. If appropriate, the member(s) of staff who carried out the most recent site visit(s) to all relevant partners will be invited to act as a member of the panel.
10. There will also be two external assessors. Typically there will be academic staff from other higher education institutions in the UK, experts from industry or business, staff from appropriate overseas universities or sometimes educationalists.
11. The Registry will advise the academic lead(s) when a periodic review of their programme(s) is due. The academic lead(s) will be asked to coordinate and collate the production of the periodic review documentation and to provide the names and contact details of possible external assessors to approach. The suggested external assessors should not have acted as Imperial taught course external examiners within the last five academic years. Where possible, it is good practice to recommend external assessors from different institutions. The PRQC Chair will make the final decision as to which of the suggested externals should be asked to act as panel members and will also select the internal panel members.
12. The academic lead(s) should submit the package of documentation to the Registry three weeks prior to the review visit. Table 1 provides details of the documentation that is required and who should take responsibility for each item. The Registry will provide those items for which they are responsible to the academic lead no later than four weeks prior to the review so that this can be incorporated into the submission. It is suggested that the academic lead follows this structure when collating the submission and that all submissions should be anonymised in terms of student names. In cases where more than one programme is being reviewed, the information should be provided for each programme.

**Table 1: Items to be included within Periodic Review submission**

	Description	Responsibility
--	-------------	----------------

**Procedure**

Procedures for the review of collaborative research programmes not owned by departments

1.	A brief introduction to the programme(s) and a description of the partnership including management and monitoring structures. The statement should also provide information on how the programme(s) reflects university (and where appropriate Faculty) strategies for research degree training. The academic lead should also indicate what year the programme(s) was first established.	Academic Lead
2.	A copy of the current partnership agreement for each programme under review	Registry
3.	Copies of the minutes of the Joint Management Committee meetings for the past 3 years for each programme under review.	Registry / Academic Lead
4.	An evaluation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effectiveness of procedures for maintaining and enhancing the quality of research degree training provision and academic standards;</li> <li>the effectiveness of procedures for monitoring and enhancing student welfare;</li> <li>how the research degree training provided by the programme meets the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ); the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and any other external reference points.</li> </ul>	Academic Lead
5.	A list of students and their supervisors (please note that list will not be anonymised) on the programme(s) for the last 5 years.	Registry
6.	A list of Higher Degree awards for the last five years. The academic lead is asked to provide a brief analysis of these results, if appropriate.	Registry Academic Lead
7.	Student feedback outlining the current views of the student body and encompassing comments on the resources available and research facilities for each programme under review.	Academic Lead to coordinate with students
8.	A description of how feedback is obtained from students on the overall programme(s) and how they are informed of action taken as a result of their feedback.	Academic Lead
9.	A completed collaborative precept review form including all supplementary documentation (as listed in section 2.3.4 (i) of this document) for each programme under review.	Academic Lead
10.	A copy of the previous collaborative precept review form(s), response and any other follow-up action taken as a result of the review. This will include extracts from the minutes of the PRQC meeting where the previous precept review(s) was discussed. The academic lead does not need to provide the supplementary documentation associated with this review.	Registry
11.	The Senate report and any follow-up action taken as a result of the previous periodic review.	Registry
12.	If applicable, a statement which provides details of how any e-learning provision is monitored for each programme under review.	Academic Lead
13.	Details of any programme level skills training or other events provided to students for each programme under review.	Academic Lead

**Procedure**

Procedures for the review of collaborative research programmes not owned by departments

14.	Availability of resources at each partner institution (including space, equipment, the library and computing provision).  The latest formal site visit report(s) should be included in this section.	Academic Lead
15.	The academic lead may wish to submit a statement about other items they wish to discuss with the review panel.	Academic Lead

13. The material is sent to the internal Chair and assessors appointed for the periodic review who are free to request additional information or clarification.
14. Arrangements are made for the assessors to visit Imperial, normally over one day, for discussions with staff and students of the programme(s).
15. Each member of the periodic review panel will be asked to submit an individual report, based on their impressions gained from the documentation and discussions during the visit, with any recommendations thought appropriate, normally within one month of their visit to the university. Panel members will also be invited to comment on compliance with each of the precepts for each programme under review. Upon receipt of the panel members' reports, the internal Chair will be asked to complete a reviewer's comment form and make an overall assessment of the programme(s)' compliance with the precepts. In addition to this, the Chair will provide a summary of all reports and provide any additional comments they wish to make in respect of those items listed below. The Chair is also requested to highlight any good practice for dissemination across the university.
16. Assessors are invited to formulate their reports in light of the following questions and comments and if more than one programme is under review, to make it clear which comment applies to which programme:
  - i. Does the strategy for development of the research programme and its educational objectives reflect and support the university and, where applicable, faculty strategies for education and research?
  - ii. How is student feedback used to enhance the programme? Are students informed of actions taken as a result of their feedback?
  - iii. Please comment on the programme level mechanisms in place for monitoring and supporting students.
  - iv. Please comment on the pastoral care of students, academic support and overall student experience.
  - v. Please comment on the programme's compliance with each of the collaborative precepts.
  - vi. Please highlight any items of good practice that could be disseminated throughout the university.
  - vii. Please make recommendations/suggestions for improvement

**Procedure**

Procedures for the review of collaborative research programmes not owned by departments

- viii. Please make any additional comments/observations not covered by the points above.
17. Each review panel member's report, plus the internal Chair's summary report and completed reviewer's comment form (which will include the panel's overall recommendation as to the programme(s)' compliance with the precepts), are made available to the academic lead(s) and Internal Office as appropriate, for consideration. Copies of the report are also given to the Provost. The academic lead(s) will be asked to prepare a response to the outcome of the periodic review and to the overall assessment of compliance with the precepts.
  18. The periodic review panel reports and response will be submitted to the PRQC, to which the academic lead(s) and their chosen senior colleagues are invited, together with at least one student representative from each programme under review (who was present at the review if possible). The internal Chair or their nominee will also be invited to present the findings of the panel. A representative of the International Office will also be invited to attend, where appropriate.
  19. The PRQC will make a final decision as to the programme(s)' compliance with the precepts and will submit a report on its review to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and the Senate.
  20. The academic lead(s) will be required to provide a report, outlining action taken to address any recommendations, highlighted by periodic review panel members, to the PRQC mid-cycle, normally every two to three years, unless the findings of the periodic review indicate that earlier follow up is required.
  21. The outcomes of periodic reviews will inform the Education and Student Experience Committee's strategic review of partnerships.

## Document Control

<b>Document title:</b>	Procedures for the Review of Collaborative Research Programmes not Owned by Departments		
<b>Version:</b>	1	<b>Date:</b>	November 2011
<b>Location:</b>	R:\7.Quality Assurance\3. Policy Framework\8. Collaborative Provision\Collaborative Provision\Procedure for Review of Collab Research Not Owned by Depts		
<b>Initially approved by and date:</b>	Senate November 2011		
<b>Version approved by and date:</b>	n/a		
<b>Version effective from:</b>	November 2011		
<b>Originator:</b>	Quality Assurance and Enhancement team		
<b>Contact for queries:</b>	Assistant Registrar (Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation)		
<b>Cross References:</b>	Precepts review procedure		
<b>Notes and latest changes:</b>	Terminology updated and formatting changes made on 14 March 2016  Updated June 2025 to meet new brand standard and refer to Early Career Researcher Institute and Education and Student Experience Committee		