INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW: THEMATIC REVIEW OF STUDENT-FACING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES POLICY & PROCEDURE

Version No.	Description	Author	Approval	Effective Date
1.0	A policy and procedure for the Thematic Review of student-facing professional services	Education Enhancement	Senate	From 2020 onwards

Version 1.0

INTRODUCTION

1. Thematic Review of Student-facing Professional Services, hereafter referred to as Thematic Review, is a quality enhancement and assurance process and is designed to be holistic and forward-looking. Approaches within the institution are reviewed, and best practice and emerging initiatives across the sector inform discussions.

2. The purpose of Thematic Review is to evaluate the provision for students around themes in order to ensure the University is providing high-quality support to students. It is also intended as a means of identifying connectivity across the institution and potential opportunities for further enhancement and alignment of provision. The review process is driven by self-evaluation and reflection, with an enhancement-led approach.

3. Thematic Review is one of the ways we support our Strategic Plan objective to deliver "an outstanding and distinctive student experience with high-quality student support throughout the learner journey".[1] Thematic Review is one of the quality review and monitoring mechanisms within our Quality Assurance Framework and review themes are selected in response to a range of factors, in accordance with the University's Education Strategy. Thematic Review sits alongside our existing Internal Review: Policy Procedure and Guidelines[2] for Schools and Departments. These are collectively referred to as Institution-led Review and serve as our commitment to an enhancement-led approach to managing the quality of the student experience, in accordance with the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework.[3]

4. Thematic Review aligns with the Scottish Funding Council guidance to higher education institutions on quality which states that "all services contributing to the student experience should be reviewed as part of an institution's approach".[4] Thematic Review contributes to our delivery of the Quality Assurance Agency requirement as stated in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education to have "sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience".[5]

5. This is a policy of Senate, implementation of which is delegated to Education Strategy Committee (ESC). ESC oversees the Thematic Review process and approves the selection of themes. Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) receives reports and considers outcomes in the context of its responsibilities for the oversight of Institution Led Review processes of learning and teaching. QAC reports findings to ESC. ESC may refer outcomes to other strategic committees, as appropriate. Student representation is ensured through the University of Strathclyde's Students' Association (Strath Union) membership on Senate, ESC and QAC. More information on Senate and related committees can be found on our University Committees web page.[6]

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[1] https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/1newwebsite/documents/Download_the_Strategic_Plan_2015_-_2020.pdf, p11
[2] https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/cs/gmap/academicaffairs/policies/Internal_Review_Policy_Procedure_and_Guidelines_2015_Final_TESTA_additions_v2_docx.pdf
[3] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/quality-enhancement-framework
[4] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcgd112017/SFCGD112017-SFC-guidance-HE-institutions-quality.pdf, para.37, p11
[5] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code, p3
[6] https://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/universitygovernance/committees/senate/

6. This Policy & Procedure sets out the University of Strathclyde's approach to Thematic Review, with guidance and templates available in the Thematic Review Handbook.

PRINCIPLES OF REVIEW

7. The overall aims of Thematic Review are:
    i. To ensure that the delivery of student support is aligned with the University's strategic priorities within the University's framework for managing academic quality;
    ii. To make recommendations to the University's Quality Assurance Committee on the enhancement of the provision and/or processes under review;
    iii. To evaluate the effectiveness of provision in supporting demand, and in supporting students' needs;
    iv. To identify opportunities for continuing improvement and enhancing the student experience;
    v. To identify actions and/or support required at institutional level;
    vi. To facilitate closer collaboration between professional service areas and services delivered through Schools, Departments and Faculties;
    vii. To identify examples of good practice;
    viii. To monitor actions taken based on the recommendations from the review.

DEFINITIONS

8. For the purposes of this Policy, the terminology in the table below is used to avoid extending the length of this document unnecessarily:

Term	Meaning
Department	Academic department, school, faculty or service, such as Accommodation, Library or IT Services for example
Education Strategy Committee (ESC)	The committee with delegated responsibility from Senate for the University's strategic educational priorities
Enhancement Themes	QAA Scotland's national agenda for enhancement
Lead Service	The Professional Service/department that the theme most closely aligns to
Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)	The committee with delegated responsibility from Senate for the University's Quality Assurance and Academic Standards
Professional Services	Services that engage with students outside of their standard academic interactions, including support provision within all professional service Directorates, and the non-academic support within Faculties and Departments
Reflective Analysis (RA)	Submission from the Thematic Review Lead that describes and reflects on the institutional approach to the theme under review
Strath Union	The trading name of the University of Strathclyde's Students' Association

Supporting Evidence	Submitted with the Reflective Analysis, this will vary depending on the theme, but can include information such as team structures, annual reports, engagement data, presentations, policies, action plans etc	

ROLES

9. The following table sets out the list of roles involved with thematic review, and their responsibilities:

Role	Function	Authority
Thematic Review Lead	Director (or nominated Head of Service) that relates most closely to the theme for the review	A leading role in the preparation for the review, overseeing the production of the Reflective Analysis submission and selecting colleagues to contribute
Thematic Review Contributors	Heads of the services (or nominated deputies) which have relevance to the theme for the review	Contributing to and collaborating with colleagues to produce elements of the Reflective Analysis submission and supporting information
Thematic Review Panel Convenor	Deputy Associate Principal of Learning & Teaching	Critically reviewing the Reflective Analysis submission, working with panel colleagues to devise the agenda for the review, chairing the review panel and contributing to the commendations, recommendations and report
Internal Panel Members	Two colleagues (one academic and one professional services) to sit on the review panel	Critically reviewing the Reflective Analysis submission, attending the review panel and contributing to the thematic review commendations, recommendations and report
External Panel Member(s)	A minimum of one colleague from an external Higher Education (HE) institution to sit on the review panel	Critically reviewing the Reflective Analysis submission, attending the review panel and contributing to the thematic review commendations, recommendations and report
Representation from the student body	Student representative	Critically reviewing the Reflective Analysis submission, attending the review panel and contributing to the thematic review commendations, recommendations and report
Thematic Review Coordinating Reviewer	Colleague from Education Enhancement	Provides guidance to all involved in the thematic review process, organising briefing meetings with relevant colleagues, assisting with logistical preparations for the Reflective Analysis submission and responsible for the timely production of the draft report and dissemination of the final report.

SCOPE

10. This Policy & Procedure applies to all student-facing professional services, whether they are based in the faculties or in the professional services directorates.

11. Thematic Review considers provision for students. Provision for staff is out of scope.

PROCEDURE

12. Selection of themes is driven through consultation with stakeholders and the key education committees (QAC & ESC). Theme proposals will emanate from the following sources:
    i. common themes emerging from Internal Reviews;
    ii. common themes identified in Faculty Annual Reports;
    iii. responses to internal and/or external drivers;
    iv. consideration of institutional risks and opportunities;
    v. matters arising through Annual Plans and meetings of the committees of ESC;
    vi. key themes raised in student surveys.

13. Selection of Review Panel members is undertaken by the Deputy Associate Principal of Learning & Teaching, the Convenor of Education Strategy Committee and the Director of Education Enhancement. Where possible, Panel members will be selected because they have professional experience and knowledge in the theme under review. Panel members will not be drawn from the professional or faculty services under review. Panel constitution is approved through Quality Assurance Committee and endorsed by Education Strategy Committee.

14. The approach to the review will depend on the theme under review, however the following guiding principles apply to all reviews:
    i. Balance – all stakeholders are given equal opportunity to contribute to the review and the review panel will consider all submissions fairly and appropriately;
    ii. Efficiency – straightforward processes are used, with duplication of effort avoided;
    iii. Transparency – communications will be clear and timely, with a collaborative approach to information-sharing adopted.

PROCEDURAL STEPS

15. Thematic Review procedure can be identified as three distinct phases: Preparation, Review and Outcomes.

Phase 1 – Preparation (4-5 Months)

16. Following confirmation of the theme by Education Strategy Committee, the Thematic Review Lead, and other senior colleagues as appropriate, will meet with the Thematic Review Manager to consider the remit and scope of the review. A timeline for the review will be considered, as well as individuals/groups to be included in the review, and the

documentation to support the review. The approach to the review will also be considered, and the schedule of the review will be agreed.

17. A short Reflective Analysis (RA) report will be produced by the Thematic Review Lead, in partnership with colleagues from other related areas and with support from Education Enhancement. The Reflective Analysis report will:
    i.   provide a reflective evaluation and analysis of the provision, aligned to the theme of the review;
    ii.   consider the key issues for the review;
    iii. assess the processes and systems in place, as they relate to the review theme;
    iv.   provide supporting evidentiary information.

18. The RA is a useful exercise and of benefit to those involved in the process. The report will append supporting evidentiary information, for example any relevant data that is available at the time of the review, such as results of student feedback surveys, annual reports and service user data. Guidance on the preparation of the RA (including a template) and selection of supporting information is available in the Thematic Review Handbook. The report should be submitted to the Thematic Review Manager by the deadline set by ESC, usually two months before the review is due to take place. This allows time for the Thematic Review Manager to undertake an initial review of the RA and supporting evidence and liaise with the Lead Service to clarify any points of detail.

19. In parallel with the RA preparation, Education Enhancement will provide support with the administration of the review, for example finding suitable reviewers for the panel and assisting with practical arrangements around preparing for the review. Colleagues from stakeholder services will be advised of the review dates as soon as they are arranged in order to protect availability.

20. The Review Panel will receive the RA and supporting information six weeks in advance of the review meeting to enable them to engage with the submission and plan the agenda for the review. The Review Panel Convenor will provide an agenda for the review three weeks in advance of the review date, in discussion with the remainder of the Panel where possible.

Phase 2 – Review (One to Two Days)

21. The Review event will be structured around a series of meetings, focussed on the remit of the review and informed by the contents of the Reflective Analysis. A template for the review event timetable is included in the Thematic Review Handbook. The review event timetable will indicate which Review Panel member will lead each meeting, as well as the types of colleagues and/or students that would be invited to each meeting.

22. The Review event will take between one and two days depending on the scope of the theme being explored as well as the number of meetings the panel wishes to conduct.

23. Invitations to stakeholders to attend meetings will be sent out by the Thematic Review Manager. Appropriate catering will be arranged for the event.

24. At the conclusion of the Review event, the Thematic Review Panel Convenor will feed back initial comments to stakeholders.

Phase 3 – Outcomes (1-2 months)

25. The Review Panel will discuss their commendations and any recommendations, following which Education Enhancement will draft the outcome report within two weeks for the panel to approve. The outcome report will include evidence for the recommendations and commendations to explain why a process or service is being highlighted.

26. Panel members are required to give feedback on the report within two weeks, and shortly afterwards the final draft will be issued.

27. A final draft will be circulated to the Thematic Review Lead and appropriate Senior Executive Lead for the Professional Service to check the report for accuracy, and have two weeks to flag any necessary corrections. After the matters of accuracy have been addressed the Review Panel Convenor will submit the final report to the Thematic Review Lead.

28. The Thematic Review Lead and key Stakeholders will be invited to respond to the recommendations from the report, in order to indicate any actions taken or planned. Their responses will be included for consideration at QAC and ESC.

29. The Thematic Review outcome report will be shared at Quality Assurance Committee for discussion and reported to Education Strategy Committee for information. QAC committee members will consider the recommendations, related follow-up actions and the impact on the student experience. The Committees will also comment on good practice identified within the report and identify methods by which this can be shared with a wider audience.

FOLLOW-ON MONITORING

30. Recommendations and actions from the review will be monitored through a structured process:
    i.   Six months after the date of the report of the review, the areas remitted with actions will submit a Stage 1 Progress Report to QAC for comment, approval and feedback.
    ii.   Twelve months after the date of the report of the review, a Stage Two Progress Report will be submitted by the review area and will be considered by Quality Assurance Committee and reported to Education Strategy Committee for information.
    iii. Any outstanding recommendations and actions will be reviewed, with deadlines proposed for completion to be agreed. At this point, Quality Assurance Committee will decide whether to formally close the review or whether it requires a further progress report within a specified timeframe.

31. Review topics may be revisited for further review at the discretion of the University. This will be determined through the procedure outlined in paragraph 12 of this policy.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Thematic Review Handbook contains additional information as follows:

Section	Subject	Owner
Section A	Procedure Flowchart (including reporting lines)	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section B	Expected Timelines	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section C	Thematic Review Framework	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section D	Guidance for producing the Reflective Analysis (including template)	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section E	Guidance for selection of Supporting Evidence for review	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section F	Review Panel Terms of Reference & Constitution	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section G	Review Schedule Template and example schedule	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section H	Review Meeting Agenda Template and example questions	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section I	Review Panel Report Template	Education Enhancement (LL)
Section J	Report of Action Taken in Response to Recommendations Template	Education Enhancement (LL)