

## **BENEFITS OF A POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW**

A Program Review enables a program and its staff to identify strengths and weaknesses of a program, and to know where to intervene to make effective and sustainable, continuous improvements. It brings internal benefits to the program and the staff, and external benefits to the students and the reputation of the institution.

A Program Review enables leaders and staff involved in the program to formulate, clarify and articulate its mission, vision, goals, objectives and its relation to those of the Faculty and the university, including their intended student learning outcomes, their scholarly accomplishments, and the leadership and management of the program. It enables staff to conduct systematic inquiry into the nature and impact of their work as academics and teachers. It enables staff to receive feedback on the program and to take action as a consequence of the feedback, setting collective priorities, and disseminating good practice. Program review enables evidence-based decision-making and leadership to be cultivated and implemented. It identifies needs and resources, and it promotes action planning. It develops the staff's abilities to monitor and evaluate themselves, each other, students and the program.

A Program Review enables program members to develop a systematic, rigorous mentality/mindset towards, and way of looking at, planning, delivering and evaluating a program and their own and others' work, and to do this methodically, collaboratively and collegially. It develops collaborative and collegial practices and improves morale. It is part of the ongoing professional development of the staff and, indeed, enhances the professionalism of the staff through regulation, self-regulation, and self-organized program development.

Program Review leads to continuous improvement of programs, staff and students. Continuous improvement is both the medium and outcome of Program Review.

A Program Review is a collaborative exercise, and one of its benefits is a consensus on program goals, objectives and intended outcomes, such that there is a common benchmark set of criteria for planning and evaluating the program. It also enables staff to identify the unique and/or distinctive features of the program, and this can help it to position itself for student and staff recruitment and orientation (which, indeed, is also useful for Human Resource Managers and Personnel Officers), and for publicity, identify what the program stands for and where it is going. Indeed, in working toward the consensus, staff will be involved in examining best practice in its own and other, similar programs.

Program Review is data-driven, and, amongst the data set, are student outcomes. Program review can help staff to understand the processes that led to the

outcomes, so that these can be improved where necessary, i.e. the Program Review has a clear formative agenda.

Program Review can also be used in the presentation of proposals for research applications and grants, as some grant applications require applicants to provide information on institutional or organizational capability and capacity; program reviews can provide a useful source of information here.

For accountability purposes, Program review enables the Faculty and university to know and to understand the distinctive strengths, accomplishments, needs, and future plans of the program. In turn, this enables the Faculty/university to offer support, identify areas of common interest in the Faculty, to link individual members of staff or entire Faculties with relevant resources on- and off-campus, and to meet identified resource needs.

Program Review is designed to ensure consistency, reliability and excellence in meeting the demands of fitness *of* purpose and fitness *for* purpose, and in a timely fashion ('right first time'). It ensures that the program is aligned not only to its own aims, objectives and intended learning outcomes, but also that, these, in turn, are aligned to the strategic direction of the Faculty and the university. It indicates where the program in practice is, and is not, matched to the program's intentions. It improves the quality of the program, the work of the staff and students, the learning and achievement of the intended outcomes of the program.

A Program Review enhances communication and within a program and its members, it improves morale and a sense of working towards a common aim of the best performance and operation of the program, by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the program.

Program review also enhances the reputation of the institution as well as the program, and it meets external demands for demonstrating quality, quality assurance and quality enhancement.

Quality enhancement is the act of taking planned steps to bring about continuous improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning experiences of students.

One of the effects of program review is to compile thorough and complete documentation of a program, such that new members of staff can understand, and, indeed fit into, a new program with maximum ease and minimum time; this can be useful if staff turnover is an issue.