4 Academic Review
Review Meetings: Hints and Tips

This document provides members of a Review Team with some hints and tips as to how they might prepare for and conduct review meetings.

Private Team Meetings

Key Themes

The very first private Team meeting should be used to identify key themes for discussion throughout the day, bearing in mind that these may change as the meetings progress:

- Start with issues relating to the student experience, as the student meetings are first.
- If there is time, then move on to quality and standards, in preparation for the meetings with staff.

Agenda

Agree the key themes to form an agenda for each of the meetings (approximately 6-8 per hour) and agree in advance:

- the lines of questioning under each of the themes
- who will ask the questions (giving all members an opportunity to ask).

Reflect; Prepare

Further private team meetings should be used to: reflect upon meetings just held; plan for meetings ahead; discuss progress towards reaching overall conclusions.

Meetings with Students and Staff

Introductions

For all meetings, start with:

> ➢ Brief introductions
> ➢ The purpose of the meeting
> ➢ Key themes to be discussed
> ➢ An explanation that discussions are confidential
> ➢ An explanation that time is tight; there may be a need to move on

Be positive

For meetings with staff always start on a positive note, rather than informing them that issues were raised by students etc…… Experience has shown that this is the best way to elicit information. For example:

"We've met with students who provided some excellent feedback on their programme of study. A number of topics were discussed which we'd like to discuss with you"

Dialogue

Create a dialogue with students and staff, using the agreed questions as a basis for the discussions.   The **structure** and **tone** of questioning is important for creating an open and honest dialogue, in a non-confrontational manner. For example:

Policies and Practices

Avoid asking specifically about an issue.

Focus on policy, process and practice and try to tease out information relating to an issue.

Eg, let's assume assessment feedback is raised as an issue by students:

> ➢ *What policies/procedures exist for providing feedback on assessment?*
> ➢ *Do you experience any problems implementing these?*

	If more information is needed, a more direct question might be necessary, but by then the team will have a better understanding of the process and the staff will be feeling more at ease and open to discussions.
Leading questions	**A**void asking leading questions, for example: | ✗ *"Do you find the quality of teaching is good, or just that it varies?"* ***This could be replaced by:*** ✓ *"We'd like to hear your views about the teaching of your courses".*	✗ *"Are you research active, or do you find it difficult because of your teaching workload?"* ***This could be replaced by:*** ✓ *"How do you ensure the content of your teaching material remains up to date and relevant?"*
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Closed questions	**A**void asking closed questions unless seeking confirmation of factual accuracy.
Multiple questions	**A**void asking more than one question in the same sentence, eg: | ✗ *Could you tell us how you provide feedback on your courses, if you feel that your comments are being considered, and how you hear back what has been done as a result of your feedback?*
---	 *Multiple questioning often arises through a need to fill a gap of silence; once the question has been asked, pause and allow people to gather their thoughts.*
Bad feedback	**A**void asking for bad feedback as this assumes that there is some. For example: | ✗ *"So, tell us what your worst experiences on your programme of study have been so far"* ***The question could be replaced by:*** ✓ *"How could your experiences so far have been improved?"*

Confidentiality Anonymity	**A**ll discussions should be treated as confidential. **M**aintain anonymity – *challenging when numbers are small.* **W**hen raising issues heard earlier, keep it general (process focused) and be careful not to quote the specific issue, particularly if it can identify someone. **A** similar approach should be taken when writing the report.
Key Issues	**C**oncentrate on key issues. Time is short – avoid digressing and engaging in detailed discussions about topics that are not essential, despite how interesting they might be.
Areas of Concern	**P**robe on areas of concern, even if the issues were not initially identified and agreed upon as key themes. Deviate only with the chair's permission.
Make Progress	**K**eep discussions brief and factual. Once sufficient information has been received, or if further discussion would not change the position, move on, and if necessary make a note that there is an issue which needs addressing; a recommendation can be made. **I**t may be necessary to cut short discussions to move on to the next topic.
Timings	**A**llow at least five minutes at the end of each meeting for the reviewees to ask questions or raise anything relevant. **F**inish on time!

Feedback Meeting: Management Team

An opportunity to thank all contributors and participants.

Outcomes

To feed back:

> ➢ Overall conclusions
> ➢ Formal recommendations for action
> ➢ University recommendations

To inform:

> ➢ whether 'other recommendations' have also been made, which will be detailed within the report *(time should not be spent going through these recommendations);*
> ➢ that the report should be with the School within approximately three weeks.