

**Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP)**

**Role and Responsibilities of Academic Reviewer**

**The Role of the Academic Reviewer (AR)**

1. The role of the Academic Reviewer (AR) is to act as the academic link between the University and a validated partner within a designated curriculum area. The AR will also support the OUVP Senior Quality and Partnerships Manager (SQPM) or Quality and Partnerships Manager (QPM) with the development and monitoring of the partnership and engage in enhancement activities with the partner as appropriate.
2. The AR will normally be a member of academic staff at the OU, an OU Associate Lecturer or an OU Emeritus professor.
3. Each curriculum area within each partner institution will be assigned an AR matched on the basis of cognate subject expertise and broader interests. Where an institution has more than one validated programme in the subject area in question, it will be more effective and appropriate for AR engagement to focus on a cluster of validated programmes, with ARs engaging at departmental or Faculty level, rather than at individual programme level. Where there are ARs working in more than one curriculum area, it is the institutional SQPM’s responsibility to ensure that there is coordination across areas and that activities do not overlap or conflict.
4. The maximum number of AR days per annum for each curriculum area would not normally exceed 5 days for UK partners. Further time for travel will be allocated for overseas institutions. OUVP will monitor AR allocations and ensure that ARs working across more than one partner are not overburdened.
5. OUVP will provide induction and training for new ARs and facilitate opportunities for ARs to share stories/good practice and raise questions and discuss partnership issues.
6. ARs should reference the University’s *Handbook for Validated Awards*in discussion with partners: <https://www.open.ac.uk/about/validation-partnerships/about-ou-validation>. SQPMs can provide further support on processes.

**Key areas of responsibility**

***Core activities***

* Liaising with the relevant institutional OUVP SQPM or QPM to agree an annual plan of activities with the partner within the number of allocated days
* Once an annual agenda of activities has been agreed, pro-actively liaising directly with the partner to agree dates and arrangements for engagement
* Meeting students yearly to identify opportunities for continuing enhancement of the student experience and provide a brief summary of discussions in an annual report – see Annex 3. Where there is Professional Statutory Recognised Body (PSRB) accreditation of an OU validated award, ARs may also be asked to discuss with students’ other areas of the student’s experience, such as their understanding and access to information about Health and Safety regulations, whistleblowing policies etc.
* Attending at least one meeting per year with the programme team – either attendance at a Programme Committee or programme team meeting or other curriculum related event (this might consist of a ‘post Exam Board review day’ or a Curriculum Planning day)
* Contributing to the annual monitoring process/institutional programme monitoring process of the partnership by providing a timely annual report (aligned to annual monitoring deadlines) as well as regular updates to the SQPM, particularly where issues of concern have been identified – see Annex 3
* \*Appraising and approving External Examiner nominations
* \*Approving staff CVs and person specifications for new academic staff within the curriculum area to confirm continuing suitability of programme teams
* \*Approving ‘major’ modifications to validated programmes within the curriculum area

*\*as appropriate, not necessarily annual activities*

1. ARs are contracted to fulfil core activities as a minimal level of engagement.

***Additional monitoring activities***

1. The need for further AR engagement, in addition to the core activities, will be assessed by OUVP on a risk basis following the annual planning process and particularly where concerns have been identified through OUVP institutional review or programme validation; external examiner or students’ comments; the Partner’s own evaluation in annual monitoring. Other factors that may influence a higher level of interaction include:
* whether it is a new or established programme
* any special arrangements that are in place as a result of, for example, the Partner’s or the OU’s response to external review or inspection by other agencies (including a PSRB).
1. Examples of additional activities may include:
* Monitoring the appropriateness of the partner’s internal moderation of marking or the sample moderation of assessments
* Reviewing learning resources and systems for student support and guidance
* Attendance at Ethics Committees at partners and/or advice on ethics to ensure that appropriate protocols are being applied
* Observing peer review of teaching at partners
* \*Observing exam boards/subject boards to ensure the smooth operation of the boards
* Contributing to the OUVP Annual Monitoring Working Group

*\*a pre-requisite for this will be familiarity with the OU regulations for validated awards*

***Development and enhancement activities***

1. Academic Reviewers may also provide academic advice and guidance to partners according to developmental needs. This will be agreed through the annual planning process and will form part of the AR’s agreed annual day allocation.
2. Examples of development activities may include:
* Providing or participating in staff development events or activities for partners in relation to e.g. curriculum development, assessment feedback, teaching and learning
* Supporting partners to meet the requirements of other accrediting agencies, or Professional Statutory Recognised Bodies (PSRB) e.g. GDC, HCPC and Ofsted
* Advising partners during preparation for and following institutional review, re/validations, and helping them to meet conditions and recommendations
* Advising partners on any new academic developments – e.g. new awards, venturing into postgraduate level provision etc.
* Facilitating discussions between the partner and the OU in relation to the feasibility of research collaboration or collaborative curriculum development.
* Providing subject benchmarking information to partners and advice on new sector developments or requirements.
* Sharing good academic practice with partner colleagues
* Contributing to subject network development

Last Review April 2023



**ANNEX 1**

**Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP)**

**Benefits of the Academic Reviewer role (ARs)**

*For ARs and Faculties, the role:*

* Provides valuable staff development and networking opportunities
* Provides opportunities to demonstrate influence beyond the OU and contribute towards HEA Senior or Principal fellowship applications
* Provides opportunities for sharing good practice with academic peers both within partners and the OU
* Provides opportunities for interacting with a diverse student body
* Provides potential opportunities for collaborative scholarship, research or curriculum development
* Provides an income stream for the faculty
* Widens experience of the UK and international HE systems
* Carries equal weighting to external examining duties in the consideration of promotion cases

*For OUVP and partners, the AR role:*

* Strengthens and enhances the partnership between the OU and its validated partnerships
* Contributes to the ongoing maintenance and development of the partnership
* Contributes to the ongoing monitoring and review of validated programmes
* Contributes to programme development and the approval of major changes to programmes
* Provides opportunities for quality enhancement and staff development within partner institutions
* Provides an additional means of ensuring that the student voice within partners is heard by the University on a regular basis



**ANNEX 2**

**Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP)**

**Academic Reviewer (AR) role - FAQs**

1. **How are ARs appointed?**

ARs are appointed by the University. They are nominated by their Faculty, usually through the advice of the respective Associate Dean. Once the appointment is agreed, it is confirmed by letter from OUVP to the AR concerned and to the Partner with which s/he will be working.

1. **How are ARs reimbursed?**

OUVP has agreed arrangements for Faculties to be reimbursed for AR time. OUVP will reimburse faculties quarterly for time spent engaged in AR activity. The amount will be calculated based on a total number of days. It is therefore important to keep a record of the dates and duration of any AR activity completed. Faculties will then invoice OUVP.

1. **What OUVP processes does the AR need to be aware of?**

OUVP’s quality assurance processes for partner institutions consist of:

*Institutional approval or review***:** the process by which an institution’s arrangements for the development, delivery and quality assurance of validated programmes is approved.

*Programme validation or revalidation***:** the process by which the University assures itself that Partner programmes submitted for validation for an OU validated award are comparable to similar programmes in UK HE, meet OU expectations, and can be appropriately supported, delivered and quality assured so that students have a high-quality experience.

*Annual monitoring***:** the process by which the partner reports each year to the OU, and the University offers feedback, on the effectiveness of its own arrangements for the quality assurance and enhancement of validated programmes.

*Subject overview reports*: regular overview of validated provision by subject area within each faculty

1. **Is the AR role a monitoring or enhancement role?**

Both. The role involves core monitoring activities and a development role to assure and enhance the quality of the student experience (see role descriptor). It is important that ARs understand that their role is to support the outcomes of the validation panels and external examiners.

1. **How is the annual agenda of AR activities for each partner agreed?**

SQPMs will meet with their institutional contacts in Partners at the beginning of the academic year to agree a programme of proposed engagements for ARs in that institution over the coming year. Wherever possible, ARs will be invited to contribute to this meeting (through teleconference or consultation by email or telephone prior to the meeting). Following the planning meetings, SQPMs will confirm with ARs and the Partner the nature of the interactions expected over the session.

1. **How are AR meetings and visits to partners arranged?**

Once an annual agenda of activity has been agreed for the partner, the AR is expected to liaise directly with the partner to arrange meetings and other interactions. SQPMs may accompany new ARs on their first visit to a partner. Except for overseas institutions, ARs will be expected to book their own travel and claim expenses from OUVP.

1. **What are the reporting and communication lines with OUVP?**

ARs are expected to liaise regularly with the SQPMs, particularly where issues of concern have been identified, and use these interactions to review agreed activity and negotiate and plan any changes throughout the year. ARs are also required to submit an annual report to OUVP on the activities they have undertaken. This report will inform annual monitoring and will be shared with the Partner, which is expected to submit it and reflect on it as part of their annual monitoring return.

1. **What induction will be provided for the role?**

OUVP provide training and induction for new ARs via an online compulsory training pod cast. <https://www.open.ac.uk/about/validation-partnerships/supporting-information/academic-reviewers>. SQPMs will also provide briefing on individual partners

1. **What opportunities will there be for ARs to network with other ARs?**

OUVP will organise regular networking events for ARs and other opportunities across faculties for ARs to share stories and good practice; allow them to raise questions and discuss issues.

1. **Stepping down from the AR role**

If it becomes necessary to step down from a role as Academic Reviewer, it is important to advise the Faculty liaison and the Senior Quality and Partnerships Manager for the relevant institution. Three months’ notice is requested as this will allow time for a replacement to be sought.



**ANNEX 3**

**Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP)**

**ACADEMIC REVIEWER REPORT TEMPLATE**

Academic Reviewers are required to submit a report (using this template) upon completion of the year's planned interactions with the institution. For standard academic calendars, the deadline date for submission **is 1st June.**

These reports should be sent by e-mail to the administrative team at OUVP (ouvp-admin@open.ac.uk).

The completed report will be copied to the institution by OUVP, to enable the institution to reflect on the engagement as part of their Annual Monitoring exercise. It will then be submitted as part of the Annual Monitoring documentation.

*(Please type in the grey boxes)*

**INSTITUTION:**

**SUBJECT AREA:**

**NAME OF ACADEMIC REVIEWER:**

**YEAR OF ENGAGEMENT:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Number of days of activity undertaken with the institution:**       |
| **Outline any academic support provided to the institution during the year:**      |
| **Where appropriate, please comment on specific aspects of the institution’s provision with a particular focus on quality assurance and the student experience:**      |
| **Please comment on meeting(s) with students. In particular, you might cover the following aspects of the learning experience – tuition quality, advice and guidance, and other aspects of support, published information, and student engagement in quality processes.**       |
| **Identify any opportunities within the institution, or jointly with The Open University, for continuing development and enhancement:**      |
| **Please add any other comments not covered above:**      |

**Signature:**

**Date:**