



# Peer Review

Each programme goes through a Peer Review every 6 years, which is set up as a dialogue with experts and peers. The purpose of the Peer Review is to gather substantial feedback on e.g. profiling, content, structure and end level of the programme.

The purpose of a Peer Review

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# The purpose of a Peer Review

The goal of the Peer Review is to gather the experts' **feedback** on the programme's profile, curriculum and graduation standards. The emphasis lies on a **constructive dialogue** between representatives of the programme and internal and external experts within the field in question.

During the review the programme's plans for the future are also discussed. Therefore, in preparation of the Peer Review, the course council evaluates its Strategic Plan (which objectives have been met, which actions are ongoing, which priorities have changed,...) and, if relevant, makes adjustments for the following 3 years. The evaluation and possible adjustments will be presented during the Peer Review.

The Peer Review does not result in a judgement, but in a report with recommendations, which the course council can use to adjust its course of action.

In coordination with Education & Student Affairs, course councils can choose to be reviewed by an external quality assurance or accreditation organisation. In this case, the quality cycle still applies to the programme, with the external review replacing the Peer Review.



VUB's quality cycle:  
a Peer Review every 6 years

## Preparations

### At least 4 months in advance:

- the **course council** suggests several **dates** to plan the Peer Review. These are moments during which the expected delegation of the programme (including students) is able to be present. Education & Student Affairs (OS) will then select one of the days or make another suggestion.
- the **course council** compiles a **list of potential panel members** that comply with the [criteria of independence](#). The list includes 6 names for external professors, 3 names for VUB-professors (ZAP) from another programme and 3 names for representatives from the work field. The list is to be sent to OS. An additional check to avoid any conflicts of interest follows, after which OS takes care of contacting the potential panel members.

### At least 1 month in advance:

- The Student Council appoints a student to take part in the panel.

- OS sends the panel composition for approval to the Academic Council for approval.

### At least 2 weeks in advance:

- the **course council** sends the expected delegation to OS. The programme should be represented by at least half of the ZAP-members of the course council and by at least 3 students for each bachelor and master programme.

### At least 1 week in advance:

- the **course council** prepares a presentation and sends it to OS at least 1 week prior to the Peer Review. The presentation starts by clarifying the vision and profile of the programme(s) and includes a SWOT-analysis, and evaluation of the Strategic Plan and possible adjustments. Input from quality assurance tools is a valuable source for these analyses. The presentation should not last longer than 30 minutes.
- In preparation of the review, the panel members receive documentation gathered by OS, including at least: learning outcomes, the curriculum, fact sheets, the Strategic Plan, the programme matrix, the report of the previous Peer Review, the programme's presentation and, for master programmes, several master theses.

## Criteria for panel members

The professors and the representative of the workfield taking part in the panel must be independent, meaning they are not actively involved in teaching-related activities within the programme(s) under review:

- Panel members have not taught any courses in the programme(s) in the 5 years prior to the Peer Review;
- Panel members have not been member of the course council in the 5 years prior to the Peer Review;
- Panel members occasionally teaching a guest lecture, are allowed;
- Research collaborations, such as co-authorship and co-supervision of master and PhD theses, are allowed;
- The workfield representative may be an alumnus of the programme under review, but needs to have sufficient professional experience (e.g. not having just graduated);
- The workfield representative may not be affiliated to the VUB as researcher nor as lecturer;

- Panel members may not be married to or cohabitating with members of the course council;
- Panel members may not have a personal relation nor kinship of first or second degree to members of the course council.

*Translated from the 'Kader Peer Review & Intern Opvolggesprek'*

## **Practicalities**

### **Practical organisation**

OS is the liaison with the panel members. The practical organisation (room reservations, catering,...) is also done by OS.

### **The course of the Peer Review**

1. Separate preliminary meeting of the panel
2. Presentation by the course council (max. 30 min.)
3. Discussion lead by the panel, based on their preparation and the items addressed by the course council (2 hours)
4. Discussion between panel and students only (max. 30 min.)
5. Separate debrief of the panel

### **Duration**

The plenary discussion for 1 programme or for a bachelor and subsequent master programme lasts about 2 hours, not including the programme's presentation. The panel will afterwards talk with the students for max. 30 minutes. The representatives of the course council are required to be present for approx. 2,5 hours. The students representing the programme(s) are required to be present for 3 hours.

## **Participants**

## Representation of the programme(s)

In light of a far-reaching quality culture in our institution, all members of the course council are welcome to take part in the discussion, including the Dean. The minimum delegation, however, consists of a representative participation of the course council, including professors, assistants and students. At least half of the professors, eligible to vote in the course council, should be present. Other members of the teaching staff, not members of the course council, can be invited, as well as part-time lecturers and research professors active in teaching activities.

## Students

Students are **key stakeholders** and their participation is therefore essential. **At least 3 students from each bachelor or master programme** should be present (student representatives of the course council supplemented by students from the programmes).

It is recommended to organise a focus group discussion with students prior to a Peer Review, to gather their insights for e.g. the SWOT-analysis and priorities.

## Panel members

The panel consists of 5 members, from within the VUB as well as external peers.

4 panel members are shortlisted by the course council (4 months prior to the Peer Review):

- 1 ZAP-member from a different programme of the VUB
- 2 professors from a related domain from another institution, within or without Belgium
- 1 representative from the workfield (may be an alumnus)

The fifth member is a student from another programme at the VUB, appointed by the Student Council.

Panel members are [independent](#), meaning they are not actively involved in teaching activities in any of the programmes under review.

## Education & Student Affairs

The head of office Educational Support (Onderwijsondersteuning) supervises the process and moderates the discussion. The quality assurance advisor of the

programme is also present and drafts the report. They are not members of the panel.

## **Follow-up**

### **1. Report**

The quality assurance advisor writes a report, conveying the main elements of the discussion and the concluding recommendations of the panel.

The panel reviews the report for approval. At the latest 15 working days after the panel's approval, the report is sent to the course council and the Dean. Factual inaccuracies may be reported and will be corrected. The final report is then filed in the programme portfolio.

### **2.a. Update Strategic Plan**

Within 2 months of receiving the final report of the Peer Review, the course council discusses the panel's recommendations. Within 4 months of receiving the final report, the course council updates its Strategic Plan, if relevant.

### **2.b. Update Public Information**

The quality assurance advisor draws up an adapted [Public Information](#), based on the panel's recommendations, the Strategic Plan, etc. Within 4 months of receiving the final report, the updated PI should be discussed and approved by the course council (for example at the same time of approving updates to the Strategic Plan).

## **3. Education Quality Council**

All this leads to the dossier prepared for the [Education Quality Council](#). The report of the Peer Review, the updated Strategic Plan, the updated PI are all included in this dossier. Approx. 6 months after the Peer Review, the Education Quality Council, mandated by the Academic Council, comes to a formal decision on the programme's quality and management. This formal conclusion ("borgingsbesluit" in Dutch) reflects the strategic and managerial competence of the course council and is described as 'Good', 'Satisfactory with recommendations' or 'Insufficient'.

## Guidelines & Calendar

More detailed guidelines for the Peer Review are defined in the "Kader Peer Review en Intern Opvolggesprek", presently only available in Dutch.

The Calendar indicates for each course council when a Peer Review should be planned.

### More details?



Kader Peer Review & Intern Opvolggesprek (in Dutch)



Calendar Peer Review & Follow-up Meeting



Kwaliteitshandboek Onderwijs (in Dutch)

In need of additional support? Contact your programme's [quality assurance advisor](#).