HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC QUALITY

LEARNING AND TEACHING
BRIEFING PAPER 23 (VERSION 3)

DATE: FEBRUARY 2019
(reissue of April 2016 version)

THEMATIC REVIEW OF INSTITUION-WIDE LEARNING AND TEACHING ISSUES

Overview

Heriot-Watt University has a **three-part quality assurance process for periodic review**: Academic Review; Internal Audit; Academic-Related Review of Professional-Services. These are the responsibility of the University Committee for Quality and Standards.

Thematic Review is a **topic-led approach to institution-wide review of learning and teaching matters** which have been identified as key University priorities. Thematic Review has an **enhancement** focus and purpose.

The University Committee for Learning and Teaching is responsible for Thematic Review, and will determine both need and topics
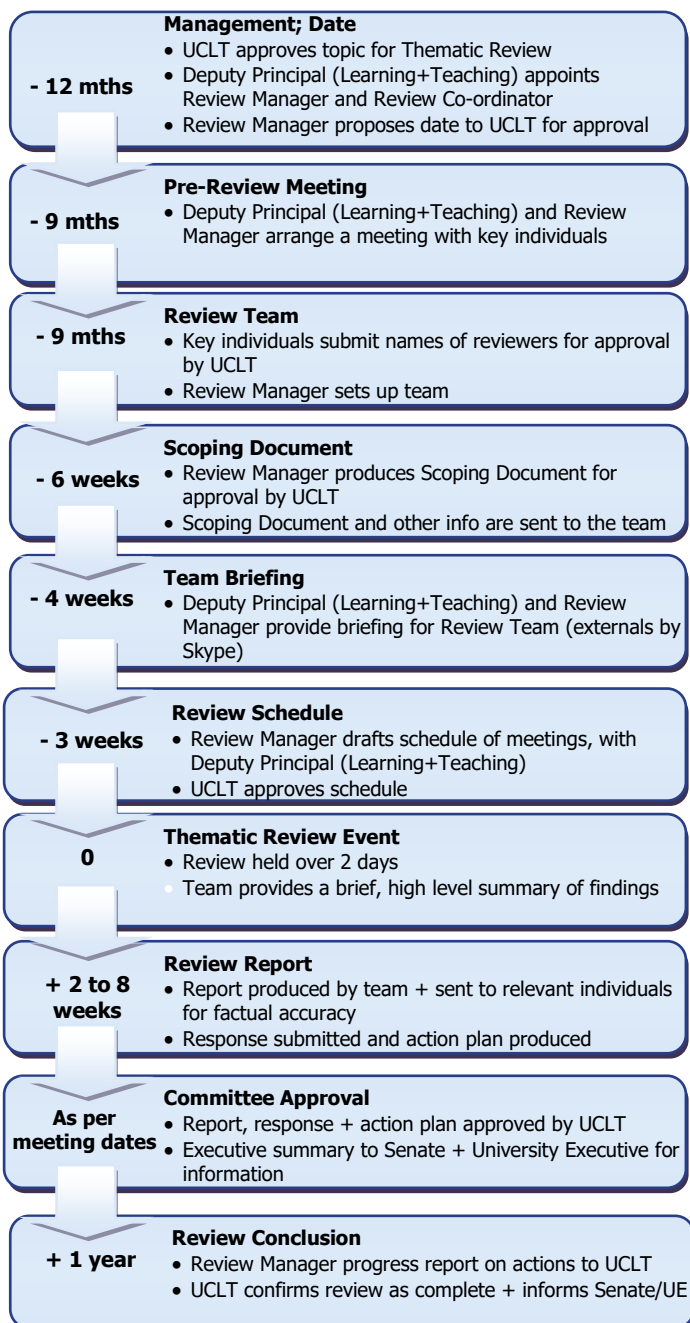
Thematic Review

The process for the Thematic Review of key institutional learning and teaching issues was introduced in 2015/16. The **Key Features** are:

- One topic per year within a 5-year programme;
- Aligned to institutional priorities for learning and teaching;
- Selected from analyses of institutional summaries of reports on quality assurance/enhancement activities;
- Enhancement-focused and forward-looking;
- Institution-wide (all locations and modes; all Schools and relevant Professional Services);
- Based on a Scoping Document (rather than a Reflective Analysis);
- Reviews internal approaches, and best practice and emerging initiatives across the sector;
- Aims to support and enhance the student learning experience;
- Identifies areas of positive practice and areas for development;
- Reports to University Committee for Learning and Teaching (UCLT); managed by Academic Quality.

The Thematic Review Process

The Thematic Review Process and Timeline:

- 12 mths — **Management; Date**
- UCLT approves topic for Thematic Review
- Deputy Principal (Learning+Teaching) appoints Review Manager and Review Co-ordinator
- Review Manager proposes date to UCLT for approval

- 9 mths — **Pre-Review Meeting**
- Deputy Principal (Learning+Teaching) and Review Manager arrange a meeting with key individuals

- 9 mths — **Review Team**
- Key individuals submit names of reviewers for approval by UCLT
- Review Manager sets up team

- 6 weeks — **Scoping Document**
- Review Manager produces Scoping Document for approval by UCLT
- Scoping Document and other info are sent to the team

- 4 weeks — **Team Briefing**
- Deputy Principal (Learning+Teaching) and Review Manager provide briefing for Review Team (externals by Skype)

- 3 weeks — **Review Schedule**
- Review Manager drafts schedule of meetings, with Deputy Principal (Learning+Teaching)
- UCLT approves schedule

0 — **Thematic Review Event**
- Review held over 2 days
- Team provides a brief, high level summary of findings

+ 2 to 8 weeks — **Review Report**
- Report produced by team + sent to relevant individuals for factual accuracy
- Response submitted and action plan produced

As per meeting dates — **Committee Approval**
- Report, response + action plan approved by UCLT
- Executive summary to Senate + University Executive for information

+ 1 year — **Review Conclusion**
- Review Manager progress report on actions to UCLT
- UCLT confirms review as complete + informs Senate/UE

References and Further Information
Thematic Review Handbook: https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/thematic-handbook.pdf

Learning and Teaching Policies and Procedures: https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality/learning-teaching/policy-bank.htm

Learning and Teaching Briefing Papers
This briefing paper has been produced by Academic Quality and is one of a series related to Learning and Teaching. The briefing papers aim to provide a concise, informative overview of key policies, and include links to relevant procedures and templates.