

University of Cambridge logo

Document cover sheet

Title	Framework for Managing Accreditation Visits by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
Purpose	To provide a structured approach to preparing for, managing, and responding to accreditation visits by PSRBs
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Framework for Managing Accreditation Visits by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

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Context

The University offers twenty-three courses, including nine Triposes, which are accredited by thirty-two PSRBs. The Education Quality & Policy Office (EQPO) maintains a register of accredited courses, monitors accreditation visit dates and reviews, collates, and reports PSRB outcomes to the Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee (ASEC).

It is now proposed that the University adopts a framework for managing accreditation visits which will strengthen institutional oversight of accreditation matters and provide better support to departments, as well as bringing Cambridge into line with sector practices.¹

To note: Many departments have managed relationships with their PSRBs successfully for years. This framework is not intended to disrupt established practices but to provide guidance for first-time or less experienced staff and function as a checklist for those responsible for submissions and visits. EQPO will provide additional support to departments that require it.

1. Introduction

This framework provides a structured approach to preparing for, managing, and responding to accreditation visits by PSRBs. EQPO Liaison Officers will contact departments at the beginning of the academic year in which a visit is due to work through the checklist below and provide guidance where needed.

2. Pre-Visit Preparation

2.1 Familiarity with Accreditation Requirements

- Ensure all staff involved in the visit are provided with PSRB standards, guidelines, and criteria relevant to the course.

¹ QAA, July 2024 [How Higher Education Providers Work With Professional Bodies](#)

- Identify any changes to accreditation expectations since the last visit.

2.2 Team Roles and Responsibilities

- Assign a lead coordinator for the accreditation process.
- Define roles for academic and professional services staff, and students (if appropriate).

2.3 Document Compilation

- **Self-Evaluation Report/Submission:** The submission should provide a comprehensive analysis of how the course meets accreditation criteria, point-by-point.
 - **Evidence** to show criteria has been met should be detailed enough to demonstrate compliance, and may include the following: course handbooks and programme specifications, descriptions of competency standards and the links between the course curriculum, assessment and learning outcomes, NSS and local student feedback and external examiner reports.
 - **Feedback** from previous visits must be thoroughly addressed, detailing the actions taken in response to recommendations and providing justifications if no action has been possible.

3. Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Academic and Professional Services Staff

- Hold a briefing session to align staff with accreditation goals and any specific duties they are required to fulfil during the visit. Discuss how evidence should be presented and the appropriate way to respond to queries.

3.2 Student Representation

- Ensure students are aware of the visit and provide guidance on how they might discuss their experiences in a way that reflects the course's strengths.

3.3 Industry and Employers

- Highlight partnerships with employers or industry professionals, including endorsements, collaborations, or guest lectures. Where appropriate, they may also be invited to provide comments or participate in interviews.

4. Visit Logistics

4.1 Scheduling and Agenda

- As appropriate to the specific requirements of the PSRB visit, it is usual to include a brief welcome by the Head of Department or other senior staff member, in which the course's vision, strengths, and key developments are outlined. Interviews with academic and professional services staff, students, and any external stakeholders should be arranged, as well as a tour of the facilities.

- College personnel should be included here if possible and the possibility of the welcome meeting taking place within a college should be explored.
- Be prepared to change the schedule quickly if the visitors wish and ensure everyone is aware of that possibility.

4.2 Facility Preparation

- Ensure that teaching spaces, labs, and other facilities are clean, tidy, well-prepared, and accessible, with clear evidence that health and safety is a priority, and relevant guidelines are being followed.

4.3 Hospitality and Communication

- It is good practice to assign a primary point of contact for the visiting team to manage any unexpected issues or requests, and to arrange meeting rooms, refreshments, and clear break periods.

5. Post-Visit

5.1 De-brief

- Organise a debrief session with staff to pinpoint any areas of concern that became apparent during the visit and to plan for forwarding any additional evidence or information required by the PSRB team.

5.2 Action Plan Development

- Have a clear and realistic timeline for action after receipt of the PSRB report, including an initial letter of acknowledgement and (if necessary) follow-up communications detailing how outstanding issues will be addressed.

6. Role of the Education Quality & Policy Office

6.1 Strategic Oversight

- **Policy Alignment:** Ensure that PSRB requirements can be accommodated within university policies and processes.
- **Institutional Memory:** Maintain comprehensive records of accreditation visits, including submissions, reports, conditions, and recommendations.
- **Risk Identification:** Proactively identify potential risks or areas of non-compliance and address them in advance of the visit.
- **GBEC Liaison:** All PSRB submissions and reports to be approved at GBEC. GBEC may also ask for updates at a specified time (usually 12 months) after the initial visit to assess progress on meeting recommendations made in the PSRB report.

6.2 Pre-Visit Support

- **Oversight:** EQPO must be kept informed of at each stage of interaction with a PSRB, including during visit preparation
- **Policy Guidance:** Provide detailed advice on university policies and their alignment with PSRB standards. Ensure the collegiate nature of Cambridge and the resulting advantages are clearly defined in the submission.
- **Document Review:** Review the submission and evidence files to ensure they meet required standards and provide constructive feedback

6.3 Post-Visit Support

- **Feedback Analysis and Follow Up:** Collaborate with the department to analyse feedback, and areas for improvement, and advise on the creation of a comprehensive action plan to address recommendations or conditions outlined by the PSRB.