

INTERNAL AUDIT INTERVIEWS - BRIEFING DOCUMENT

1. Internal audits cover all the activities of the University's operations, resources, staff, services and responsibilities through an annual programme of work that is agreed between the University's Executive Team (UET), the [Audit Committee](#) and the Internal Auditors. From 1 August 2022, our University's internal audit service is currently provided by **Uniac**.
2. The University's internal audit function provides the Board of Governors (through the Audit Committee) and senior management with independent assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance arrangements; and value for money arrangements; as well as informing the Board's review of the effectiveness of internal controls.
3. Internal audits can highlight areas for improvement or enhancement with a dual aim to support the University in minimising risks of weaknesses or failure points. The audit results and findings can provide feedback to help clarify processes for department outsiders and future regulatory audits as well as supporting new developments.

Defining the scope

4. The internal auditors produce an annual audit plan based on discussions with UET and the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee then approves the annual plan once it had been agreed internally.
5. Each individual internal audit will have a defined scope which is set out in a **Terms of Reference** ("ToR") document. This document has been drafted by the internal auditors based on earlier conversations and the environment of the sector and current topical issues. This is then scrutinised by a UET Sponsor and key colleagues from the audited area. Once the ToR is agreed, this is approved by UET.
6. The ToR outlines:
 - The background to the audit.
 - Objectives, risks to the University and developmental aspirations.
 - A description of work to be undertaken in the audit.
 - A (non-exhaustive) list of key contacts to meet and documentation required.
 - The number of days (as defined in the annual plan) that the internal auditors will take to complete the review.
 - A timetable with indicative dates for meetings and reporting, for which the auditors measure their performance.
 - A forecast assurance rating provided by the UET Sponsor.

Fieldwork

7. Once the ToR is finalised and approved, the internal auditors will conduct fieldwork in the following ways:
 - The UET Sponsor (and any key parties) will attend an initial '**kick-off**' meeting to start the audit and to gain an outline understanding of the area being reviewed.
 - **Fieldwork** will include:
 - **Meetings** or 'interviews' held with internal members of staff.
 - The auditors reviewing **documentation/evidence** (NB. some documents may be required in advance of interviews).
 - The auditors may also undertake **testing** as necessary to verify findings, test systems, view demonstrations etc.
 - Sometimes the auditors may need to **follow up** with you after the meeting; this may be to review a document or piece of evidence discussed at the meeting or to discuss a particular topic in more detail. The auditor may ask you to send documentation following the meeting, or if anything additional is needed the auditor will instigate any follow up requirements with you/via the Regulatory Compliance & Assurance team.
 - The UET Sponsor, along with any key parties, will attend a debrief '**closure**' meeting to informally discuss the findings prior to the outcomes report being drafted in order to ensure the internal auditors have the correct understanding ahead of providing a draft report.

Tips on how to prepare for a face-to-face or telephone interview

8. *If you have been identified to attend a face-to-face or a telephone interview, you will be sent a meeting invitation. In order to fully brief attendees before attending a meeting, the Regulatory Compliance & Assurance team will send a copy of the approved ToR.*
9. *First, check everyone involved is up to date on the relevant processes, procedures and corresponding documentation; you may also need to be aware of relevant regulatory requirements or recent changes. Your procedures are going to be reviewed in depth; please ensure you have the most up to date copies and we suggest spending some time to think through any relevant processes in detail.*
10. *If you need to demonstrate a process, system or documentation at a meeting, it may be helpful to bring a tablet or laptop to enable you to explain in detail.*
11. *During the interview process, the auditors will lead the meeting by asking various questions around your role, process, specialised knowledge and relevant policies or supporting documentation. Aim to be receptive to lines of questioning from an internal auditor and this will help identify ways to more closely align your processes to high-quality standards, and thereby achieve continuous improvement goals.*

12. *Auditors are trained in conducting audits and aligning processes to regulatory requirements or industry standards to help processes achieve higher quality outcomes, and ultimately, produce higher quality reports and recommendations. This does not however mean they are experts in every area of business. Keeping this in mind can help you understand that the auditors' goal is to align your processes with a particular regulation or standard. They want you to be compliant, but your assistance and collaboration may be necessary to align our University and local practices. Only you (and your team) are experts on your actual business areas.*

Reporting findings

13. After the fieldwork and any follow up, the auditors will draft a report of their findings. This is discussed with the UET Sponsor who will assess the recommendations and overall assurance level. When the auditors and management are in agreement, the UET Sponsor will provide a 'management response' to each recommendation; this will include a short text response, assigning a specific colleague who will be responsible for implementing the recommendation, and a timescale for this to be met. The agreed report is then approved by UET. Each final report is then presented to the next meeting of the Audit Committee.

Following up on recommendations

14. In advance of each quarterly meeting of the Audit Committee, the Regulatory Compliance & Assurance team will follow up on recommendations that are due/overdue with the recommendation 'owner' that was assigned in the final report. Evidence and a narrative on the progress is often required in order to demonstrate that the recommendation is in progress or has been completely implemented. Progress on recommendations is reported to each meeting of the Audit Committee.

15. When a recommendation is considered to be implemented, the Regulatory Compliance & Assurance team will provide relevant details and evidence to the internal auditors on behalf of the owner. The internal auditor will then confirm that the response satisfies the original recommendation, and that the recommendation is formally closed. On occasion, recommendations may be superseded and closed; confirmation of this will be provided to recommendation owners as applicable.

Further support

16. If you have any concerns or queries that you would like to talk through in relation to the above, please contact Holly Lewis or Alison Kennell by emailing Governance@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.