



**INTERNAL ACADEMIC QUALITY REVIEW:  
GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

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### Review history

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## Approval Proforma

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# **INTERNAL ACADEMIC QUALITY REVIEW: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

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# **INTERNAL ACADEMIC QUALITY REVIEW: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

## **1.OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE**

### **Internal Academic Quality Review**

The *Internal Academic Quality Review* is the process adopted by the University to formally review, on a five-year cycle, its major curriculum and study programme offerings. Following the formal review, there is an *Internal Academic Quality Review* to monitor progress against actions/issues raised through the review process.

The primary purpose of an *Internal Academic Quality Review* is to assure that there is effective and responsible management of the quality and standards of AUM study programme provision, and there is evidence of a commitment to continuous development and improvement.

The *Internal Academic Quality Review* is organized on a QA office basis with study programme provision as per MQF accreditation requirements, or by study programme by a professional body, since there may also be some additional requirements for the University to follow as prescribed by a professional body.

The Internal Academic Quality Review is conducted by a *Review Panel* (minimum 3 members) consisting of both internal and, if the university decides, external members (*industry or academic experts*). The internal membership also includes a representative of the University's student community.

During the Internal Academic Quality Review event, the Review Panel will have the opportunity to view supplementary material, inspect facilities, and meet with staff, present and former students, and employers.

Responsibility for preparing for an Internal Academic Quality Review rests with the appropriate Dean of each College, or the nominee, or the Study Programme Leader. Normally, approximately six months prior to the event, a preliminary meeting is held with the QA Office, Academic Affairs, Registrar, relevant Faculty Programme Leader, the Dean of College, and key staff involved in preparing for the event where the Convener of the event is a Dean. The purposes of this preliminary meeting are:

- to clarify the review process
- to confirm the content of the review (i.e., study programmes to be reviewed)
- to confirm whether study programme/course review will be conducted within the event
- to ensure that the Dean or nominee checks that the documentation meets the requirements of both the professional and regulatory body, should the Internal Academic Quality Review event be combined with an accreditation event for a professional, or regulatory body.

## **2. INTERNAL ACADEMIC QUALITY REVIEW PROCEDURE**

1. QA Office confirms date of Internal Academic Quality Review in consultation with the Provost, Deans, Study programme Leaders, Registrar, and co-ordinates preparation of *Internal Review*.
2. Six months prior to event, QA Officer, Academic Affairs Officer, and Registrar meet with the Dean or the nominee, Study programme Leader, and key staff.

3. The Provost prepares the Rationale and Composition of Review Panel and forwards it to Academic Council for approval 6 months prior to the Internal Academic Quality Review event (*Appendix 2*).
4. College prepares *Analytical Data*, and study programme documentation (*Appendix 3 Internal Academic Quality Review Documentation Evaluation Form*) in accordance with University and national authority requirements, as appropriate, in liaison with QA Office. Consultation takes place as appropriate with students and Support Departments.
5. Dean or Study programme Leader ensures copies of *Program Portfolio – Submission of all Program descriptors and Course Descriptors* to the Review Panel. (*Appendix 4 Internal Academic Quality Review Scrutiny Report*)
6. The Review Panel undertakes the event and prepares Internal Academic Quality Review Report in 2 weeks' time after the event.
7. College prepares response to conditions and recommendations arising from the Report and submits it to Review Panel members not later than 7 days.
8. Chair of Review Panel advises of event outcomes and reports to the Academic Council accordingly.
9. Confirmed Report uploaded on QA webpage (intranet only).
10. The response of the College will include a detailed improvement plan on how to deal with actions that need to be taken following the recommendations of the review.
11. Dean, or the nominee, ensures completion of final documentation in *Programme Information Database and Course Database*.

### **3. GUIDANCE**

#### **3.1. Planning and Scheduling of the Internal Academic Quality Review Event**

The Program of Internal Academic Quality Review is overseen by the University's Quality Assurance Office Director who ensures that all the proper procedures are applied in a timely manner. The *Internal Academic Quality Review Planning Sheet (Appendix 1)* serves as an agreed framework of timescales to be adhered to.

The Internal Academic Quality Review event normally spans approximately two or three days.

The program for the Internal Academic Quality Review event and the composition of the Review Panel are considered and approved at the meeting of the Academic Council, where the President and the Provost decide the composition and the QA Officer in consultation with the Provost and President.

#### **3.2 Review Panels**

Panels for Internal Academic Quality Review events should consist of external and internal members appropriate to the nature of the study programme under review, and the membership is selected in a way that ensures as wide as spectrum of external advice and comments as possible. (*Appendix 2 Review Panel Membership Proforma*)

The Internal Academic Quality Review Panel has the following minimum composition:

*Chair:* Appointed by the President. His/her role is to manage the event, ensure it is conducted in accordance with the University's requirements.

*Three or four internal members:* Internal members of staff appointed by the Provost and approved by the Academic Council. One of the internal members will normally be a Study programme Leader.

*One internal student member:* An enrolled student at the University appointed in liaison with the Student Union. The student will be from outside the host College, may be a part-time, full-time or distance learner and will normally have experience of representing students' interests at college or institutional level.

*One or two external members (if applicable):* External member must be an academic or represent the appropriate industry, profession, or commerce.

Three Review Panel members is the minimum, maximum 5 or 6 members is the composition for a Panel. It may be preferable to include more external academic/professional representation depending on the discipline(s) covered by the review.

### **3.3 Study programme/Course Documentation and Approval**

A Documentation Scrutineer (*Appendix 3 Documentation Evaluation Form*) (normally the relevant Program/Course Leader) checks that documentation has been produced according to University Regulations and Guidelines.

The Documentation Scrutineer ensures the study programme documentation is passed to the Chair of the Review Panel for final check. Documentation scrutiny and QA check is often undertaken in parallel. (*Appendix 4 Annual Internal Quality Review/AIQR Scrutiny Report*)

QA checks and confirms the following elements of the updated course documentation for all courses being submitted for review:

- **Study programme Aims (Detailed Study programme Descriptor)**
- **Study programme Learning Outcomes**
- **Mapping of Study programme Learning Outcomes to Courses**
- **Teaching and Learning Methods and Strategies**
- **Study programme Assessment**
- **All Course Descriptors**

#### **Reading List**

Supplementary items of documentation are made available to Panel members, where possible, in advance. Data and supplementary documentation for each study programme is likely to include:

- **academic, technician and research staff.**
- **study programme management** and a description of their integration within the overall College management structure
- **Summary of External Annual Reports** over the last three sessions, prepared by the Program Leader.
- **Program Management Team Responses** from the last two sessions.
- **Annual Review documentation** covering the last two sessions (if applicable).

- Data relating to **Student Study programme and Course Evaluation Questionnaires** (a sample from across the last two sessions)
- **Annual Student Experience Survey, Student Survey, Graduate Survey**: data on achievement and employability
- **Data on student enrollment, retention, and achievement**: for example, entry qualifications, student achievement rates, study programme completion rates (including research)
- **Graduate First Destination Statistics** (graduate, employment statistics) etc.
- **Reports of accreditation visits by PRB** (Public Regulatory Body) and an indication of how outcomes have been addressed.
- **Teaching Excellence** survey
- **Employer’s survey** (if applicable)

Documentation on collaborative arrangements:

- **Notes of University - Industry meetings (two sessions per year).**
- **Notes of College Academic Board meetings (two sessions per year).**
- **Notes of Curriculum Development Committee meetings (Course/Program Management Team) (two sessions per year).**
- **Notes of Staff/Student Liaison meetings (two sessions per year).**
- **Curriculum Development Committee’s Plans** (*where appropriate*).
- **Summary staff CVs and publication lists.** (*Appendix 5 Template of CV*)
- **Schedule of Visiting Lecturers** (*where appropriate*).
- **Examples of Student Handbooks, Study programme and Course Handbooks and any other course materials.**
- **Samples of student work/artefacts (for the purpose of demonstrating the range, and not for the purpose of confirming standards).**
- **Information provided by central Support Departments** (*where appropriate*).
- **Study programme Review Reports** (*published*)

### **3.4 Production of Review Documentation**

The Internal Academic Quality Review documentation is produced by the College concerned, with a good quality original being forwarded to the Graphics and Printing Department for production of the final documents. The Graphics and Printing Department uses these originals for photocopying the required number of Internal Academic Quality Review documents, producing them in an appropriate format. These are sent to the Panel members.

### **3.5 Outcomes of Internal Review**

The Review Panel will make one of the following judgments in respect of the assurance of quality and standards and of evidence of commitment to continuous development and improvement for each of the study programmes reviewed:



- Confidence, fulfils minimum standards
- No confidence, does not fulfil minimum standards

In reaching a judgment of “confidence” the Panel will have the opportunity to make recommendations. In reaching a judgment of ‘no’ confidence the Panel should clearly indicate the basis whereby this judgment has been reached and indicate to the University what steps could be taken to address this outcome.

In terms of the review of study programmes, the Panel can make the judgment either to approve a course with recommendations, or to not approve a study programme. In reaching the latter judgement, the Panel should clearly indicate the basis whereby this judgement has been reached.

### **3.6 College Response to Outcomes of Internal Academic Quality Review**

The College is required to produce a response to the conditions and recommendations arising from the Internal Academic Quality Review event. This must be sent to the Review Panel members for their consideration and/or approval.

The College Response should be set out in the following way:

- Each condition and recommendation should be re-stated, in bold, as it appears in the Confirmed Report of the event. Under each, the College should indicate how it will meet the condition or action on the recommendation.
- If the conditions require a re-write of some of the course documentation presented at the review, the relevant revised extracts should be attached as appendices to the response.

### **3.7 Review Report**

A formal report of each Internal Academic Quality Review event is prepared by the Review Panel and is structured around the sections of the *Internal Academic Quality Review Scrutiny Report (Appendix 6)*. After it has been approved by all members of the Panel the Confirmed Report is made available on the QA’s webpage.

### **3.8 Evaluation of Process**

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement of its quality assurance procedures, the University annually reviews the efficiency and effectiveness of the Internal Academic Quality Review process. To assist in this process, Panel members and the Dean involved in a specific Internal Academic Quality Review event are asked to complete a *Panel Member Questionnaire (Appendix 6)* or *Dean Questionnaire (Appendix 8 Dean Questionnaire)*, as appropriate.

## **4. HOW TO WRITE A GUIDELINES TO INTERNAL ACADEMIC QUALITY REVIEW REPORT**

### **SECTION 1 - OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT**

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief overview of study programme provision and relevant background information, before engaging with the more detailed content.

Typical content will include:

**1.1** The study programmes being reviewed and their location within the academic structure of the University, i.e., College, Curriculum Development Committee etc.

**1.2** Main issues arising from previous Reviews (Study programme/College/PRB) and subsequent actions taken.

**1.3** A brief description of significant developments/issues since the last review relating to the context of the subject and pertinent to the current review. This should be restricted to institutional and College developments, e.g., relocation to a new building, change in organizational structures, etc. Guidance on developments at an institutional level will be provided in the preliminary meeting.

*Study programme developments should not be included in this section as these will be addressed in Section 2.*

**1.4** Overview of the main source of evidence and benchmarks which will be used to inform the subsequent sections of the Analytical Account, e.g., Annual Program Review, External Examiner Annual Reports, MQF requirements, etc.

## **SECTION 2 - CRITICAL REVIEW OF STUDY PROGRAMME PROVISION**

In addition to including reference to the portfolio of evidence, cross reference should be made within the following subsections to supplementary documentation which will be available to the Panel. Where more than one study programme is being addressed within the Analytical Account, content common to all study programmes should be presented first, followed by course specific details.

*Subsections 2.2 – 2.9 inclusive should conclude with a brief evaluation of the current situation and an indication of planned further developments and enhancements.*

### **2.1 Aims of study programme area**

This should provide:

- A brief statement of the aims of the study programme area.
- Demonstration of the relevance of study programme aims to the University’s Mission and Vision.
- A brief description of how the subject engages with industry/professions to ensure the relevance and achievement of its aims.

### **2.2 Study programme developments**

Highlight the key developments (and associated rationale) in the study programme provision since the last review. Address changes/developments in respect of the following:

- capability, i.e., areas of expertise.
- capacity, i.e., faculty/staff complement.
- course provision, i.e., new course developments, course cessations and major subject content changes in continuing courses.
- research

The influence of relevant national/international developments/best practice underpinning these developments and/or proposed improvements should be highlighted where appropriate.

Each study programme for which review is sought should be considered the following information provided:

(a) A summary of the main issues arising at the last approval and actions taken in the light of these.

(b) A critical review of other developments to the study programme over the period since the previous review, *e.g., new awards, course structures etc.* This should include a rationale for the developments, *e.g., student feedback, compliance with the Malta Qualifications Frameworks (MQF) etc.,* and an evaluation of the success of these developments.

(c) A summary evaluation of the performance of the study programme drawing on the data and content.

(d) Discussion of, and rationale for, any changes incorporated within the study programme now being submitted for review. Where appropriate, there should be reference to any resourcing/development requirements.

### **2.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

This subsection should provide a critical appraisal of current teaching, learning and assessment practices, highlighting key developments, evidence of effectiveness and proposed future enhancements. Reference should be made, where relevant, to the influence on practice at study programme/subject level of university-wide strategies/initiatives for the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment. Topics for inclusion include:

- pedagogy and assessment practices/policies.
- modes of delivery, *e.g., online, face-to-face, blended*
- work-based learning, where relevant.
- equity and diversity, and wider access.

### **2.4 Study programme Standards**

This subsection should contain a critical review of key practices and developments designed to secure appropriate intended and output standards.

Intended standards for taught courses relate to *curriculum design and content* and so emphasis should be placed on highlighting the mechanisms for ensuring their appropriateness, along with supporting evidence to confirm the achievement of this. This would, therefore, relate to adherence to MFHEA requirements, Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF), PRB requirements, where relevant, influence of employers and features of and relevant outcomes from study programme validation.

For research degree provision, a brief explanation should be provided of how research study programmes are developed and approved.

Output standards relate to student achievement. Reference should be made to any developments designed to enhance consistency/security of standards. This could involve some cross-referencing to relevant aspects of Section 2.3.

### **2.5 Student Enrolment, Retention and Achievement**

This subsection should provide a critical appraisal of key performance data relating to the taught course portfolio over the period since the last review. This should include appropriate cross reference to changes in the course portfolio, *i.e.,* where analysis has led to course cessations, new course developments or significant course changes. Associated tabulated data for the study programme/course provision should include reference to entry profiles, Student

achievement rates, application to enrolment ratios, award profiles, first destination statistics, and comparability against national benchmarks (e.g., award of honours). Relevant data relating to wider access and equity and diversity should also be included.

## **2.6 Learning Infrastructure**

This subsection should provide a critical review and evaluation of the effectiveness of key developments and enhancements in respect of the learning infrastructure. The content of this section could be considered under two categories:

- resources and facilities at College and institutional level. This in turn would include reference to equipment, library services and provision, IT facilities and e-learning platforms.
- student support at college and institutional level. This would include reference to developments in the personal tutorial system, College learning resources, developments to central services, e.g., academic support services, tutoring, careers services, etc.

Appropriate liaison/consultation should take place with relevant staff in Support Departments in producing this subsection.

## **2.7 Student Evaluation of the Learning Experience**

This subsection should deal with two aspects of student evaluation:

- a critical review and evaluation of the key developments in enhancing the mechanisms for obtaining and responding to student feedback, e.g., development of evaluation questionnaires, program management, staff/student liaison mechanisms, student representative training, etc.
- the key issues arising from student evaluation, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. An indication should be given of key changes which are taking place because of this feedback and may well involve cross referencing to previous sections of the document.

Appropriate liaison/consultation should take place with students/student representatives in producing this subsection.

## **2.8 Research**

This subsection should provide, for each study programme within the Review, a critical review of research activity, including how the research underpins taught provision. In each case, this should conclude with the proposed research strategy for the next Review Period. Cross referencing should be made to the quantitative data. Associated tabulated data should be provided including e.g., number of research staff, research students, annual publications, research income etc.

## **2.9 Scholarly Activity and Staff Development**

This subsection should provide a critical review of scholarly activity and staff development pertinent to each study programme area. The underlying rationale for the strategies adopted should be discussed, along with proposed future strategies.