INTERNAL PROGRAMME QUALITY REVIEW: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Review history

Version no	date	Revision description	Approved by
V 01	August 2018	Internal Quality Manual developed	Academic and University Councils
V 02	August 2019	Updated	Academic and University Councils
V 03	January 2020	IQA Policy	Academic and University Councils
V 04	August 2021	*Internal Quality Review: Guidelines and Procedures* developed in July, 2021	Academic and University Councils
V5	August 2024	*Internal Quality Review: Guidelines and Procedures* developed in July, 2024	Academic and University Councils

INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW (IQR): GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

1.OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

Internal Quality Review (IQR) is the process adopted by the University to formally review, on a five-year cycle, its programme quality. Following the formal review, there is an *Internal Quality Review (IQR)* to monitor progress of programmes against actions/issues raised through the review process.

II. PROGRAMME QUALITY

1.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of an *Internal Quality Review (IQR)* of academic programmes is to assure that there is an effective and responsible management of their quality and accreditation standards of programme provisions, and the evidence of a commitment to continuous development and enhancement.

1.2 Organization of Quality Review and Panel

The Internal Quality Review (IQR) is organized by College with programme provision as per MQF Level accreditation standards, or by requirements of a professional body, since there may also be some additional requirements for the University to follow as prescribed by a professional body.

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

During the Internal Quality Review (IQR) 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 Quality Review (IQR) rest with the appropriate Dean of each College, or the nominee, or the Programme Coordinator. Normally, approximately six months prior to the event, a preliminary meeting is held with the QA, Academic Affairs, Registrar, relevant Faculty Program\Course Coordinators, the Dean of College, and key staff involved in preparing for the event where the Convener of the event is a QA Officer. The purposes of this preliminary meeting are:

− to clarify the review process.

− to confirm the content of the review (i.e., programmes to be reviewed).

− to confirm whether 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 Quality Review (IQR) event be combined with an accreditation event for a professional, or regulatory body.

1.3 IQR Procedures

1.3.1 QA confirms date of Internal Quality Review (IQR) in consultation with Programme Coordinators, Academic Affairs, Registrar, and co-ordinates preparation of *Internal Quality Review (IQR).*

1.3.2 Six months prior to event, QA, Academic Affairs, and Registrar meet with the Dean or the nominee, Programme Leaders, and key staff.

1.3.3 The Provost prepares the Rationale and Composition of Review Panel and forwards it to Academic Council for approval 6 months prior to the IQA event.

1.3.4 College prepares *Analytical Data*, and course documentation in accordance with University and quality standards, as appropriate, in liaison with QA. Consultation takes place as appropriate with students and support departments.

1.3.5 Dean or Programme Coordinator ensures copies of *Course/Program SAR* – Submission of all Program descriptors and Module Descriptors to the Review Panel.

1.3.6 The Review Panel undertakes the event and prepares Internal Quality Review (IQR) Report in 1 weeks' time after the event.

1.3.7 College prepares response to conditions and recommendations arising from the Report and submits it to Review Panel members not later than 3 days.

1.3.8 Chair of Review Panel advises of event outcomes and reports to the Academic Council accordingly.

1.3.9 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.

1.3.11 Dean, or the nominee, ensures completion of final documentation for submission to the experts of the regulatory or professional body.

1.3.12 Students, graduates and employers who participated in event receive copy of the report.

3. GUIDANCE

3.1. Planning and Scheduling of the Internal Quality Review (IQR) Event

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

The Internal Quality Review (IQR) event normally spans approximately two and a half days.

The program for the Internal Quality Review (IQR) event and the composition of the Review Panel are considered and approved at the meeting of the University /or Academic Council, where the President/ or the Provost decides the composition.

3.2 Review Panels

Panels for Internal Quality Review (IQR) events should consist of external and internal members appropriate to the nature of the programme under review, and the membership is selected ensuring wide spectrum of external advice and comments as possible.

An Internal Quality Review (IQR) 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-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 Programme Coordinator.

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 7 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 Programme/Course Documentation and Approval

Program\Course Coordinator checks the documentation has been produced according to University Regulations and guidelines. The Documentation Scrutineer ensures the course documentation is passed to the QA for approval.

QA is required to approve the following elements of the updated course documentation for all courses being submitted for review:
- **Course Aims and Objectives**
- **Programme and Course Learning Outcomes (PLOs and CLOs).**
- **Mapping of Course Learning Outcomes to Modules/Curriculum**
- **Teaching and Learning Methods and Strategies**
- **Course Assessment**
- **All Module Descriptors**
- **Reading List**

Supplementary items of documentation are made available to Panel members, where possible, in advance. Data and supplementary documentation for each programme/course is likely to include:
- **academic, technician and research staff.**
- **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 Course\Program Leader.
- **Course/Program Management Team Responses** from the last two sessions.
- **Annual Review documentation** covering the last two sessions (if applicable).
- Data relating to **Student Course and Module 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 enrolment, retention, and achievement**: for example, entry qualifications, student achievement rates, course completion rates (including research)
− **Graduate First Destination Statistics** (graduate, employment statistics) etc.
− **Reports of accreditation visits by national authority** 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**
− **Notes of College Academic Board meetings**
− **Notes of Curriculum Development Committee meetings**
− **Notes of Staff/Student Liaison meetings**
− **Staff CVs and publication lists.**
− **Schedule of Visiting Lecturers (***where appropriate***).**
− **Examples of Student Handbooks, 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 Support Departments (***where appropriate***).**
− **Programme/Course Review Reports/Self Assessment Reports**

3.4 Production of Review Documentation

The Internal Quality Review (IQR) 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 Quality Review (IQR) documents, producing them in an appropriate format. These are sent to the Panel members.

3.5 Outcomes of Internal Quality Review (IQR)

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 enhancement for each of the courses 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 courses, the Panel can make the judgment either to approve a course with recommendations, or to not approve a course. 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 Quality Review (IQR)

The College is required to produce a response to the conditions and recommendations arising from the Internal Quality Review (IQR) 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 Quality Review (IQR) event is prepared by the Review Panel and is structured around the sections of the *Internal Quality Review (IQR) Report*. After it has been approved by all members of the Panel the Confirmed Report is made available on the QA's webpage (intranet).

A copy of the Confirmed Report is also forwarded to students, graduates and employers who participated in the event.

3.8 Evaluation of Process

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

HOW TO WRITE INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW (IQR) REPORT

SECTION 1 - OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

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

Typical content will include:

Part 1.1   The programmes/course(s) being reviewed and their location within the academic structure of the University, i.e., College, Curriculum Development Committee etc.

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

Part 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.

Programme/course developments should not be included in this section as these will be addressed in Section 2.

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

SECTION 2 - CRITICAL REVIEW OF PROGRAMME/COURSE PROVISION

Part 2.1   Aims of programme/course area

This should provide:
−   A brief statement of the aims of the programme/course area.
−   Demonstration of the relevance of programme/course 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.

Part 2.2   Programme/course developments

Highlight the key developments (and associated rationale) in the programme/course 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 enhancements should be highlighted where appropriate.

Each programme/course 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 course/program 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 programme/course drawing on the data and content.

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

Part 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 course/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, distance learning

−   work-based learning, where relevant.

−   equity and diversity, and wider access.

Part 2.4   Programme/Course 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 course validation.

For research degree provision, a brief explanation should be provided of how research 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.

Part 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 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 honors). Relevant data relating to wider access and equity and diversity should also be included.

Part 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 accommodation, 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.

Part 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, course/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.

Part 2.8   Research

This subsection should provide, for each programme/course 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.

Part 2.9   Scholarly Activity and Staff Development

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