

Document Title	External Cyclical Review (QQI Institutional Review)
Policy Area	Area 11: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review
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Applies to	<input type="checkbox"/> All <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific (<i>External Cyclical Review is limited to QQI only.</i>)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff only <input type="checkbox"/> Learners only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff and Learners

Document Owner	Director of Quality & Academic Affairs
Approved by	Academic Council

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Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 - Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions, (2016) Quality and Qualifications Ireland
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1. PURPOSE

As a provider of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) awards, SQT is subject to external cyclical review, which is referred to as Institutional Review. This document sets out the procedure for such reviews which typically takes place at least once every seven (7) years.

2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

This applies to external reviews initiated by QQI.

3. DEFINITIONS

- **Cyclical Review** evaluates the effectiveness of institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and enhancing the quality of education, training, research and related services the institution provides. Such reviews are coordinated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and underpinned by the relevant sections of the 2012 Act.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

- The process is managed by QQI.
- The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is responsible for the internal project management of the review and acts as the key point of contact for communication with QQI. He/she also leads the development of the self-evaluation report.
- The Quality Committee oversees the evaluation of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures.
- The Academic Council maintains ultimate responsibility for the oversight of the process.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

SQT is subject to the external quality assurance requirements of QQI as outlined within the Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions (2016), Quality and Qualifications Ireland. The aim of such a review is to provide an independent external review of the institution's own internal quality assurance procedures.

SQT is fully committed to all such external reviews and recognise the importance of the review and the five specific measurable purposes as set out by QQI¹ as follows:

1. To encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience within institutions.
2. To provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management of quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.
3. To improve public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness.

¹ Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, (2016)

4. To support systems-level improvement of the quality of higher education.
5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.

6. PROCEDURE FOR EXTERNAL CYCLICAL REVIEW

A systematic process is in place for carrying out an External Cyclical Review. This is presented in Figure 1 and the requirements and responsibilities of each stage are detailed below.

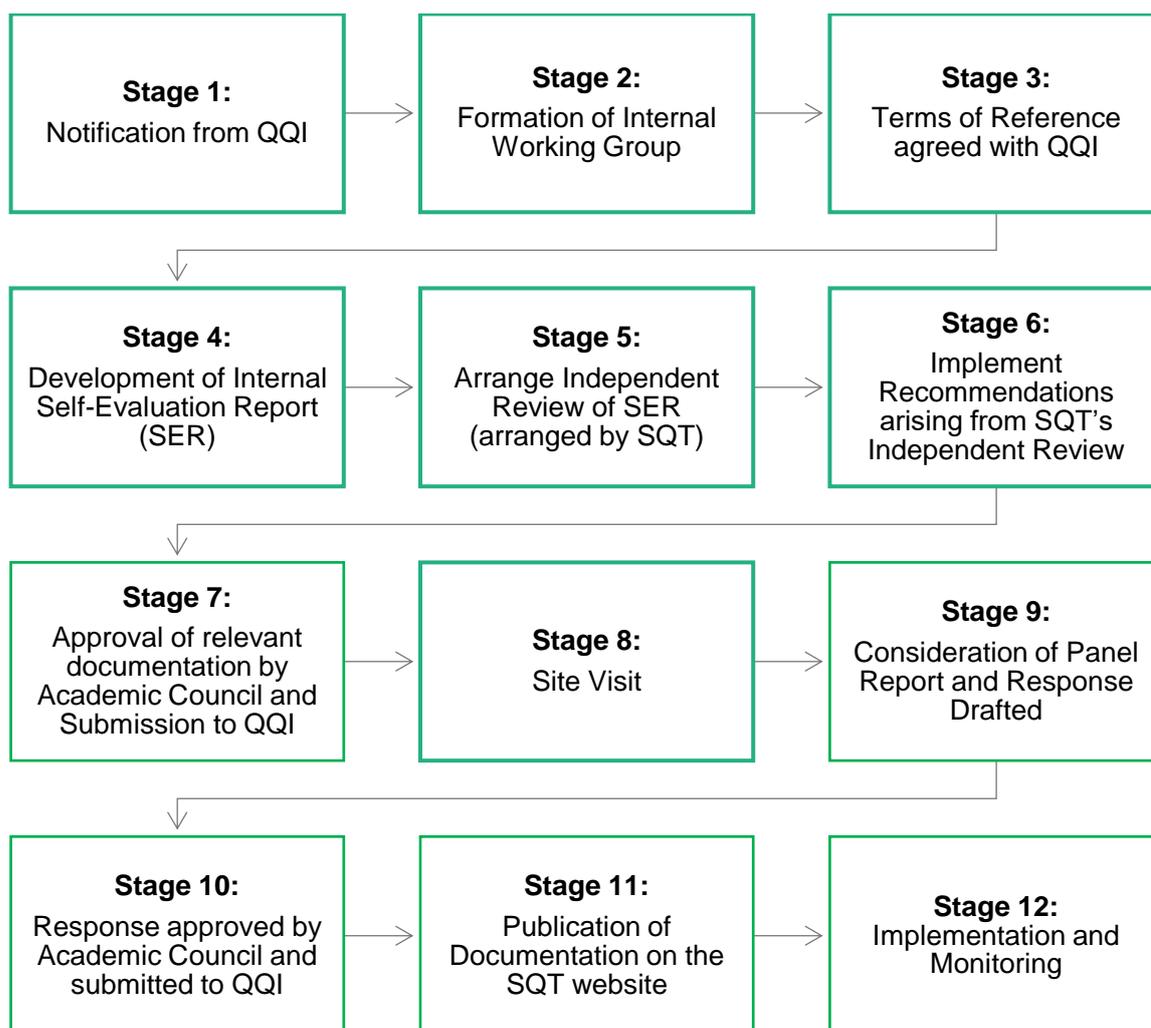


Figure 1: Process for External Cyclical Review

The following details the various stages to implement the process.

Stage 1: Notification from QQI

The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs liaises with QQI in order to confirm the timeframe for the review.

Stage 2: Formation of Internal Working Group

The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs establishes an internal working group to carry out the review process and communicates the timeframe of the review to the Academic Council and Quality Assurance Committee.

Stage 3: Terms of Reference agreed with QQI

The Senior Management Team, with Academic Council oversight, will agree the Terms of Reference for the review with QQI.

Stage 4: Development of Internal Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

The Self Evaluation Report (SER) is developed using appropriate templates and application forms provided by QQI. The key questions and lines of enquiry to be addressed are as follows and should inform the self-evaluation process:

- How have quality assurance procedures and reviews been implemented within the institution?
- How effective are the internal quality assurance procedures and reviews of the institution?
- Are the quality assurance procedures in keeping with European Standards and Guidelines?
- Are the quality assurance procedures in keeping with QQI policy and guidelines, or their equivalent?
- Who takes responsibility for quality and quality assurance across the institution?
- How transparent and accessible is reporting on quality assurance and quality?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?
- Are there effective innovations in quality enhancement and assurance?
- Is the learner experience in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- Are achievements in quality and quality assurance in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- How do achievements in quality and quality assurance measure up against the benchmarks and quality indicators identified by the institution?

Stage 5: Arrange Independent Review of SER (arranged by SQT)

The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs arranges for an independent review of the documentation prior to submission to QQI. This stage may also incorporate a 'mock' site visit, or this may be held at a later stage depending on the timing of the actual site visit.

Stage 6: Implement Recommendations arising from SQT's Independent Review

The report of the independent review group is considered and proposed changes are agreed and implemented to both the SER and relevant policies and procedures based on the outcomes of the report.

Stage 7: Approval of relevant documentation by Academic Council and Submission to QQI

The final documentation, comprising the self-evaluation and supporting materials together with the report of the independent review is submitted to Academic Council. Once approved the documentation is submitted to QQI.

Stage 8: Site Visit

QQI liaise with the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs regarding the logistics and management of the site visit.

Stage 9: Consideration of Panel Report and Response Drafted

Upon receipt of the panel report, the Senior Management Team considers recommendations and any required actions. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs proposes a draft response and action plan to the working group for consideration. Where required prior to response, actions are implemented.

Stage 10: Response approved by Academic Council and submitted to QQI

The Academic Council reviews and approves or amends and approves the proposed response and implementation plan. This may be an iterative process between the working group and Academic Council. Once the response is approved, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs submits the response to QQI.

Stage 11: Publication of Documentation on the SQT website

SQT receives formal confirmation of the outcome of the institutional review following completion of QQI governance processes. At this stage the final report is published on the SQT website.

Stage 12: Implementation and Monitoring

SQT provides a follow-up report to QQI one year after the approval of the implementation plan. This process is managed by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs with ultimate oversight from the Academic Council.

7. POLICY MONITORING

Responsibility	Frequency	Methods
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs – Document Update	Per QA audit schedule	Review of documentation as set out in QAP2-1: Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents.
Academic Council	As per agreed schedule for external review	Review of terms of reference and self-evaluation report. Consideration of independent review of self-evaluation ‘mock’ event.
QA Committee and Academic Council	As per agreed schedule for external review	Ongoing monitoring of implementation of Quality Improvement Plan.

8. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version No	Approval Date	Description of Revision	Originator	Approved By
2.0	14/12/18	Complete revision and new document format.	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council

