1. Introduction

Internal Teaching Review (ITR) is the University of Aberdeen’s version of periodic review, a requirement of all Scottish HEIs as part of the Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland)’s Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF). The QEF was developed by the QAA in conjunction with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and adherence to its requirements is a condition of SFC grant.

2. Aims

In accordance with Scottish Funding Council (SFC) guidance\(^1\), the primary purpose of an Internal Teaching Review is to:

i. provide assurance regarding the quality and standard of our teaching provision

ii. promote dialogue in areas where quality could be improved

iii. identify good practice for dissemination

iv. encourage and support critical reflection on current practice

v. programme revalidation.

3. Background

The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) already has institutional oversight of Quality Assurance (QA) via a range of different monitoring processes throughout the year. Issues are identified and fed back to Schools, and Schools respond in subsequent submissions and in responses to External Examiners’ reports. Current QA checks are:

i. Annual Course Review (ACR),

ii. Annual Programme Review (APR), feeding into programme revalidation

iii. External Examiner Reports (EER).

iv. Course and programme approval through SENAS, which ensures School adherence to institutional process, adherence to SCQF requirements and alignment with subject benchmark statements

v. Consideration of the outcomes of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body reviews (PSRBs).

QAC thus has oversight of any issues with provision, and remedial actions are put in place to address any issues that might occur as they arise.

The School Planning process led by the senior Vice-Principal reviews a range of metrics with associated action planning on a quarterly basis with the Senior Management Team (SMT). This includes all relevant QA metrics together with benchmarking data such as degree classification, retention, admission and recruitment. Inclusion of this data and analysis within the ITR process would, together with the metrics analysed within the ACR/APR process, meet SFC expectations regarding assuring the quality and standard of our teaching provision without Schools having to provide additional information.

\(^1\) circular SFC/14/2012

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Schools, in their submission, and ITR Panels, in their consideration and judgements, are expected to draw upon the evidence contained in the processes above during the ITR review process.

4. Programme Re-validation

4.1 Programme revalidation is based upon the annual programme reviews for the period covered by a School’s ITR.

4.2 The aims of Programme Revalidation are:-
- to ensure that the aims and learning outcomes of a programme are up-to-date and reflect developments in the subject, including, where appropriate, the relevant national subject benchmark statements;
- to ascertain whether the design, delivery and assessment of a programme and its constituent courses are appropriate to allow a programme’s aims and learning outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated;
- to ensure that the academic standards achieved by students are appropriate and consistent and that the associated awards are in accord with the national qualifications framework;
- to ensure that the quality of the learning experience gives all students the opportunity to achieve the highest possible standards of the associated award;
- to confirm that the programme specification reflects accurately the requirements of the programme and identifies the general skills, knowledge and attributes that those who complete the programme successfully will be able to demonstrate.

5. ITR Process

5.1 ITRs are normally conducted at School level, not per Discipline area.

5.2 ITR SharePoint site

An ITR repository for each School has been created in SharePoint into which all QA information pertaining to the School is stored, including:
- ACR/APR/EER and responses thereto;
- PSRB reports and responses;
- past ITR submission, reports and one-year follow up reports;

The School ITR submission will be added to this repository. Internal academic members of the panel will be given access to this repository; external panel members and student panel members will receive this information electronically.

In effect, this creates an advance information set, which the ITR Panel can access and review as necessary, and use to inform the focus of the Panel Visit.

5.3 ITR Panel

The Panel convener will be an independent member of the QAC, i.e. not the QAC member whose responsibility it is to review the QA documentation annually. This gives a fresh perspective on the School’s teaching and learning provision. The other internal panel members will normally be drawn from the academic members of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate committees, one from each committee. These academics will have a key role in overseeing teaching and learning provision in their own Schools and therefore have a good knowledge of their School’s strengths and weaknesses which

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they can bring into panel discussions. The panel will also contain student representation, drawn from School Conveners external to the School being reviewed.

This model of panel membership allows the greatest dissemination of good practice between Schools, and ensures Panel members bring knowledge of institutional T&L issues and priorities.

5.4 School submission

Schools, following consultation with both staff and students, must submit:

i. An evidence-based Critical Analysis (CA). The CA allows the Schools’ particular contexts to be set out clearly, and have a clear focus on (i) enhancement and (ii) reflection on effectiveness throughout.

ii. Curriculum Map – where appropriate detailing how programmes address Subject Benchmark Statements and have changed in line with revised statements. How and which programmes should submit curriculum maps will be discussed at the pre-Panel visit meeting with the School (see below).

Submission should be electronic, via memory stick to be uploaded to the repository, allowing extra evidence to be submitted as appropriate. External panel members should have access to the information in the repository but will be expected to focus on the Critical Analysis. From the submission and the additional information in the repository, the Panel will be able to ‘tick off’ many aspects of Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

Schools do not have to duplicate information that they have responded to elsewhere. The Critical Analysis should reflect on information already provided in the ITR repository.

5.5 Pre-Panel Visit

Approximately two weeks prior to the main Panel visit there will be a pre-Panel visit (1-2h) with the Convenor, Clerk, Head of School (HoS), School Director of Teaching (DoT), and others if requested by the School and/or Convenor, to discuss emerging themes for exploring at the Panel visit.

5.6 Panel Visit

Panel Visits will normally take place over two days. The aim will be to follow up on key themes identified by Panel from submission and discussions with the School are the pre-panel visit.

The Panel will hold 5 meetings:

i. QA session with Head of School, DoT, Director of Research (DoR), a selection of programme leaders and course coordinators, School Admin Officers (1.5h). The people invited to this session will vary depending on the QA issues identified by the panel.

ii. Enhancement-focused discussion with students – UG (1h) and PGT/PGR (1h); may be split into discipline areas if necessary and led by the External Panel members.

iii. Enhancement discussion with staff (range of staff depending on themes being discussed); in multi-discipline Schools this may be discipline-specific and led by the External Panel members (2h)

iv. Pedagogic Partnership Session (combined staff and students) (2-3h). The aim of this meeting will be to produce a jointly-agreed Action Plan for the School to take forward.

v. Final wash-up session with HoS, School DoT and others as requested by Head of School/Convenor.
5.7 Report

The outcome will be a report consisting of two parts; Part A will be a QAC report identifying the QA findings, highlighting good practice, commending initiatives worthy of sharing across the institution or which might be considered institution or sector leading, and highlighting areas for development. Part B will consist of a jointly-devised action plan. The one year follow up report will consist of an update on progress on the action plan.

The report and action will be considered by the QAC and posted to the ITR web pages.

5.8 ITR timeline

i. Six-eight months prior to ITR Panel visit, Convenor and Clerk meet with HoS, School DOT, and School Admin Officer (SAO) to explain process and information required.

ii. Submission deadline two months prior to ITR Panel visit

iii. Four weeks prior to the visit, a pre-meeting of the panel will be convened to discuss the submission and highlight areas for possible discussion at the Panel visit

iv. Two weeks prior to ITR Panel visit, Convenor and Clerk meet HoS and School DOT to identify three main themes for discussion at Panel visit

v. One week prior to the ITR Panel Visit, School will receive a draft Schedule with individuals with whom the Panel would like to meet