

Internal Teaching Review (ITR) Process and Procedures

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) guidance¹, 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.

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 the Curriculum Management System, which ensures School adherence to institutional process, 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.

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. ITR Process

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

4.2 ITR SharePoint site

An ITR repository for each School has been created in [Quality and Planning SharePoint site](#) into which all QA information pertaining to the School is stored, including:

- i. ACR/APR/EER and responses thereto;
- ii. PSRB reports and responses;
- iii. past ITR submission, reports and one-year follow up reports;
- iv. School Plan QA metrics and associated Action Plans.

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.

4.3 ITR Panel

The Panel Chair will be an independent member of the QAC, i.e. not the QAC member whose responsibility it is to review the School's 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 a pool of academic staff, approved annually by the Vice-Principal (Education). 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 they can bring into panel discussions. The panel will also contain student representation, drawn from School Conveners external to the School being reviewed, and a minimum of two External Subject Specialists (ESS). The ESS may come from a UK or overseas institution, from industry or from professional practice. The number of ESS must take account of the range and volume of provision to be reviewed and ensure that the full panel is able to bring a range of experience, perspectives and understanding to the process. It is normally expected that there will be one ESS for each group of cognate programmes within a School, and that a minimum of one ESS will be drawn from an institution or industry based outwith Scotland. Proposed ESS should be discussed with the Chair of QAC before sent for approval by the Vice-Principal (Education) who approves the full panel composition.

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.

4.4 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(s)** –detailing how programmes address Aberdeen Graduate Attributes and, *where appropriate*, Subject Benchmark Statements. Programmes required to submit curriculum maps will be discussed at the pre-Panel visit meeting with the School (see below).

Submission should be made via email, with one copy sent to the Clerk of the ITR and another 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.

4.5 Pre-Panel Visit

Approximately one week prior to the main Panel visit there will be a pre-Panel visit (1h duration) with the Panel

Chair, Clerk, Head of School (HoS), School Director of Teaching (DoT), and others if requested by the School and/or Chair, to discuss emerging themes for exploring at the Panel visit.

4.6 Panel Visit

Panel Visits will normally take place virtually, using Microsoft Teams, over the course of two or three 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 a minimum of 5 meetings:

- i. QA session with Head of School, Director of Teaching, Director of Research, School Admin Manager and others as required (1.5h).
- ii. Enhancement-focused discussion with academic staff, with the range of staff depending on themes being discussed (1.5h). Staff attending should be agreed between the Head of School and the ITR Clerk and Chair prior to the review.
- iii. Enhancement-focused discussion with support staff, including a range of administrative and technical staff from within the School (1.5h). In addition, staff from relevant Professional Services teams will be invited (Registry, Careers Service, Student Support).
- iv. Pedagogic Partnership Session, to include students and staff (excluding those present at the initial QA session) (2h). The aim of this meeting will be to have an open-ended discussion of challenges and potential solutions. The aim of the PPS is 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.

It may also be appropriate to hold additional sessions with students, ensuring coverage from all levels and methods of study. This will be determined by the panel.

4.7 Report

The outcome will be a report consisting of three parts:

- i. Part A gives the overall impressions of the teaching provision within the School, formed from the whole ITR process
- ii. Part B covers the outcome of various meetings with staff and students, focusing on the themes identified prior to and during the review
- iii. Part C details the School action plan which will form the basis of the one-year follow-up report

The one year follow up report will consist of an update on progress on the action plan. The report and subsequent actions will be considered by the QAC and posted to the institutional ITR web pages.

4.8 ITR timeline

- i. 4-6 months prior to ITR Panel visit, Chair and Clerk communicate with Head of School, School Director of Teaching and School Admin Manager to explain process and information required.
- ii. 4 weeks prior to ITR Panel visit, the School is expected to submit the ITR documentation. At this point, the School will receive a draft schedule for the review.
- iii. 2 weeks prior to the visit, a pre-meeting of the panel will be convened to discuss the submission and highlight areas for discussion at the virtual panel visit.
- iv. 1 week prior to ITR Panel visit, Chair and Clerk meet Head of School and School Director of Teaching to identify the main themes for discussion at the virtual panel visit.
- v. Within 4 weeks of the ITR virtual panel visit the *draft* report and action plan will be sent to the Head of School for the correction of factual inaccuracies (report) and for identifying individuals with responsibility for taking forward agreed targets (action plan). Schools will have two weeks to provide this feedback. Any suggested changes will be subject to the approval of the Panel Chair.

- vi. Within 8 weeks of the ITR panel visit, the final report and action plan will be sent to the Head of School.
- vii. The report action plan is submitted to the next meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee, for consideration. QAC will report to the University Education Committee on any issues of policy that impact beyond the School.
- viii. Schools are expected to provide a progress update to the action plan approximately 12 months from the date QAC has considered the Report. Exceptionally, QAC may request a response within a shorter timescale, if deemed appropriate. QAC will review the progress reports to ensure that the recommendations have been adequately addressed and reported, including evidence of dissemination of recommendations to students.

Full guidance to help Schools prepare for upcoming Internal Teaching Reviews is available to download from the [ITR pages](#) of the Academic Quality Handbook.