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) 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.

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 measures 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, together with the metrics analysed within the ACR/APR process, meets SFC expectations regarding assuring the quality and standard of our teaching provision without Schools having to provide additional information.

Schools and ITR Panels are expected to draw upon the evidence contained in the processes above during the ITR review process, utilising both the Critical Analysis submission and the related evidence provided.

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 information pertaining to the ITR is stored. Within the School folders on the SharePoint site, the following is also stored:

     i.   ACR/APR/EER and responses thereto;
     ii.   PSRB reports and responses;
     iii.   past ITR submission, reports and 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 to inform the focus of the Panel Visit.

4.3   ITR Panel

The Panel Chair will normally 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, nominated by each School and 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 approved by the Vice-Principal (Education) as part of their approval of 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 education issues and priorities.

4.4   School submission

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

     i.   An <u>evidence-based</u> **Critical Analysis (CA)**. The CA allows the School's particular contexts to be set out clearly and should have a clear focus on (i) enhancement and (ii) reflection on effectiveness throughout.
     ii.   **Curriculum Map(s)**. These should detail how programmes align with the 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 will be provided with a selection of information from the repository but will be expected to focus on the Critical Analysis documentation. 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 Meetings

Approximately two weeks before the main Panel visit, an Agreement of Themes meeting (1h duration) will be held. During this meeting, the Panel Chair will consult with the other internal panellists to identify a number of key themes for discussion during the Panel visit. External panellists are welcome to submit their thoughts in writing to the Clerk prior to the meeting. Key questions will be highlighted to provide context to these themes. Following this meeting, 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 Education (DoE), School Administration Manager (SAM) and others if requested by the School and/or Chair, to inform the School of the identified themes for exploration at the Panel visit.

4.6   Panel Visit

Panel Visits will normally take place in person on campus over the course of two or three days. Suitable accommodation needs to be provided within the School for the duration of the visit; it is the responsibility of the School to organise this, and for arranging catering during the visit. The aim will be to follow up on key themes identified by Panel from the Critical Analysis submission and lead discussion with key stakeholders as detailed below.

The Panel will hold a minimum of 6 meetings:

i.   QA session with Head of School, Director of Education, 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.   Enhancement-focused discussion with students from a variety of levels of study and modes of engagement (1.5h)
v.   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 informed by a small number of key questions. The aim of the PPS is to inform the creation of the Action Plan for the School to take forward.
vi.   Final closing session with HoS, School DoE and others as requested by Head of School/Chair, to provide a summary of the ITR and an outline of actions likely to be noted in the action plan.

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 ITR process as a whole
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 annual follow-up reports

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

4.8   ITR timeline

Milestone	Indicative timeline
School is contacted by Academic Services to initiate the planning of the ITR	6 months before
Initial meeting with Panel Chair and Clerk, Head of School, Director of Education and School Admin Manager to explain process and information required	4 months before
School is provided with a draft schedule for comment	2 months before
Critical Analysis is submitted to the Panel	1 month before
Agreement of Themes meeting attended by internal panellists	2 weeks before
Meeting with Panel Chair and Clerk, Head of School, Director of Education and School Admin Manager to confirm themes for discussion during the Panel visit	1 week before
ITR report is sent to School for factual accuracy check and input on suggested action plan	2 weeks after
ITR report is finalised and sent to Panel, School, Professional Services Leads, and Clerk to QAC for inclusion on the next meeting agenda of the Committee	4 weeks after

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