



QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2016 V6.3

Section 3: Enhancement Led Internal Subject Review

Contents

3.	ENHANCEMENT-LED INTERNAL SUBJECT REVIEW	14
3.1	Introduction	14
3.2	Characteristics	14
3.3	Scope	14
3.4	Process	15
3.5	The Self-Evaluation Document	15
3.6	The Review Event	16
3.7	Before the Review Event	17
3.8	Event Structure	17
3.9	The Review Report	18
3.10	Follow-up Action	18
Appendix 3(a)	Self Evaluation	19
Appendix 3(b)	Appointment of Panel Members	24

3. ENHANCEMENT-LED INTERNAL SUBJECT REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The following sections describe a framework for the Enhancement-led Internal Subject Review (ELISR) process. The process will follow a five-year cycle and will normally take place at subject level¹. As far as is possible, the programme approval/review process will be subsumed within ELISR. The Department of Academic Quality and Development will be responsible for the organisation and facilitation of the review process. A working definition of the broad meaning of enhancement in this context is given in Appendix 3(a). This chapter takes account of the SFC guidance to higher education on quality updated in 2012.

3.2 Characteristics²

Reviews will:

- encourage dialogue on areas which can be enhanced and in which quality might be improved, identify excellence in practice, and promote evaluation and critical reflection on practice
- take full account of student feedback and report on partnership working
- articulate the student voice
- take account of and report performance statistics supplied by Strategy and Planning
- provide a mechanism for professional dialogue around the practice of teaching and learning
- provide an objective review of provision, based on an understanding of national and international good practice
- take full account of benchmarks and the QAA Quality Code³ and, where appropriate, the requirements of professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies
- take full account of the Strategy 2020, SfL and the SEF
- take full account of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
- consider the effectiveness of annual monitoring arrangements and follow-up actions
- consider the impact of central and school-based student support activities in promoting engagement and enhancing the student experience.

3.3 Scope

- the student experience and quality of student engagement
- impact of provision at all levels
- analysis and reporting on performance data such as admission, retention, progression and achievement, completion statistics, RPL, articulation, NSS, ISB
- QAA Enhancement Themes

¹ The exceptions being the Graduate School and Academic Development, which will be reviewed as single entities.

² As required by Scottish Funding Council, revised in August 2012.

³ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code>

- CPD activity resulting in enhanced professional reputation such as Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) qualification of staff including HEA recognition at Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow, and Principal Fellow levels
- research-student supervision
- the extent to which research/scholarly/professional activity informs the curriculum
- collaborative provision with internal and external stakeholders including PSRBs (professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies)
- impact of central and school-based student support
- impact of professional services
- international students on and off campus
- any other provision leading to the award of credit.

3.4 Process

- production of a timeline for the review; School and Academic Quality Team
- preparation of a self-evaluation document by the area being reviewed
- collation of documentation
- review event
- production of a review report
- Submission of report to Academic Quality Team including response to requirements and recommendations for approval via LTSC and one-year-on review of action plan to gauge progress

3.5 The Self-Evaluation Document

The self-evaluation document is a statement, which demonstrates that the subject discipline has undertaken robust self-evaluation in a constructively self-critical manner. The self-evaluation process should promote dialogue on areas in which quality might be improved, identify good practice for dissemination across the institution and should encourage and support critical reflection on practice.

The following should be considered:

- the appropriateness of the academic standards set for its provision
- the effectiveness of annual monitoring including feedback and performance data reflecting on the outcomes of monitoring
- data gathering, analysing and using student feedback, progression data, performance indicators, and other data such as NSS results
- the effectiveness of the curriculum in delivering the aims and the intended outcomes of the provision
- the effectiveness of assessment in measuring attainment of the intended outcomes
- the extent to which the intended standards and outcomes are achieved by students
- the level and quality of student engagement and partnership working at programme, department, and school level
- the quality of the learning opportunities provided for students
- the success of the School's quality enhancement and assurance strategy
- the success of the School in implementing the SfL and the SEF
- the extent to which research/scholarly/professional activity informs the curriculum
- the effectiveness of research-student supervision

- the international student experience both on and off campus
- the effectiveness of central⁴ and school-based support in enhancing the student experience
- the effectiveness of professional development and CPD strategies.

Self-evaluation should discuss both the strengths of the provision and areas where enhancement and improvement is necessary, as perceived by the staff and students of the School. The document is an opportunity for the School, through the process of evaluation, to demonstrate how the strengths of the provision identified in previous subject reviews or accreditation events have been built upon, and how any areas for enhancement and improvement identified have been addressed. **Where areas for enhancement remain, plans for addressing these via the School's enhancement plan should be summarised.** Reference points for the evaluation will include benchmark statements, the QAA Quality Code⁵, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework⁶, and the requirements of professional, statutory bodies and regulatory bodies. Further guidelines on the content of the self-evaluation documentation are given in Appendix 3(b).

The student representatives on the School Boards, Programme Boards and Student Staff Consultative Groups, reflecting the SFC (2012) guidelines, should be fully engaged in the review process and given adequate opportunity to comment on the final draft of the document before it is submitted to the Department of Academic Quality and Development. To ensure that the student voice is represented, their views should be woven into the narrative where appropriate. The QEA Strategy supports the updated SFC guidance to widen the scope and understanding of student engagement in quality, signalling a shift from encouragement to expectation.

3.6 The Review Event

The time taken for the review event will be determined by the extent of the provision being reviewed but will normally last at least two days and no longer than five.

An appropriate senior academic from GCU will chair the review.

Review Panels:

- must include cross-Department/School representation
- must normally include appropriate academic and professional external peers and other stakeholders (as appropriate)
- must include student representation
- must include a member from Student Support Services
- may include other groups as appropriate to the subject area.

Care must be taken to ensure that a sufficient number of externals with the appropriate breadth of experience are appointed to the Panel to adequately cover the subject provision in the timeframe available.

The criteria for the selection of reviewers are given in Appendix 3(b).

⁴ This includes the Registry, Student Support Services, the Library, Information Support Services, Marketing and Communications, Academic Quality and Development, Admissions and Enquiry Service, Finance Office, and the Graduate School.

⁵ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code>

⁶ <http://scqf.org.uk/the-framework/>

3.7 Before the Review Event

The ELISR should be confirmed with the Academic Quality Team at the academic session prior to the event. **Six weeks** before the event a draft document is submitted to the Academic Quality Team and **four weeks** before the document and a draft timetable is issued to the Panel. **Two weeks** before the event the final timetable is circulated to the Panel. The Chair of the Panel, in conjunction with the Department of Academic Quality and Development will confirm the final timetable for the process at least **three weeks** prior to the review.

The **Department Lead for Learning, Teaching and Quality** will be the point of contact within the School throughout the preparation for the Review. The ADLTQ will agree at the outset with the Academic Quality Team the timeline for the ELISR process.

Panel members must submit any comments they may have, including requests to see any additional documentation during the event, to the Department of Academic Quality and Development at least **two weeks** prior to the review.

The documentation (from the last three academic sessions) provided for the event will include:

- External Examiners' reports
- Student Staff Consultative Group minutes
- annual programme analyses
- annual report on monitoring quality enhancement and assurance of programmes
- quality enhancement section of School Plans
- performance data supplied by Strategy and Planning
- programme specifications
- Programme Handbooks.

3.8 Event Structure

The length of the event will be determined by the extent of the provision being reviewed and the extent of any approval and review activity subsumed within the process. The structure of each event is determined after consultation between the Department of Academic Quality and Development, the Chair and the School.

The review event will seek to assess the claims made in the self-evaluation document. The principle means of assessment testing shall be in meetings with staff, students, and recent graduates and in the review of any additional documentation requested.

Where programme approval/review is subsumed within the ELISR process, the documentation specified in Appendix 4(c) and/or Appendix 6(a) will require to be submitted to the Department of Academic Quality and Enhancement at the same time as the self-evaluation document. The role of the Programme Approval/Review Panel will be to evaluate the programme provision and communicate their conclusions to the main ELISR Panel to inform their overall evaluation of the subject provision being presented for review. **If the two processes are scheduled to run concurrently the School and associated Panels will follow the timeline detailed above.**

In the event that the ELISR process contains no programme approval or review activity, the process will concentrate solely on the evaluation of the subject provision.

3.9 The Review Report

The draft report on the ELISR will be circulated to panel members for comment before being passed to the School (*normally within twenty working days*) for comment on factual accuracy. The School will be given *five working days* to comment, at which point the status of the report is confirmed (in providing comment on factual accuracy, it is recommended that consultation should take place with all relevant stakeholders involved in the subject provision).

The review report will provide a short summary of the proceedings confirming the appropriateness of the School self-evaluation. The report will also identify areas of good practice and areas which require enhancement.

In the event that the area being reviewed disputes any of the contents of the report, the dispute will be referred in the first instance to the Director of the Department of Academic Quality and Development. If a resolution is not possible, the matter will be referred to the DVC Academic and APPC.

3.10 Follow-up Action

Four weeks after confirmation of the event report the School will be required to produce a response in the form of an enhancement plan which will be initially considered and approved by the Chair of the Panel and may be circulated to the ELISR Panel if deemed appropriate. Any enhancement plans required by support departments will be included as an Appendix. Any actions requiring University level consideration will be considered by the Academic Policy Committee (APPC). The report and associated enhancement plan will then be considered and approved by the Learning and Teaching Subcommittee (LTSC) on behalf of the APPC and Senate. In the event of any serious issues arising from the report, APPC will draw these issues to the attention of Senate.

The conclusions of the report and the action plan must be made available to the students within the subject provision reviewed via GCU Learn.

One year on from the review, the Chair of the Panel, a representative from the Department of Academic Quality and Development, the Head of Department, and the Dean of School will review progress on the approved action plan. (LTSC will be informed at that stage if there are any problems with action plan implementation). Further follow-up will take place after **twelve months** and thereafter (two years and onwards) the progress of the action plan will be monitored through the annual report on monitoring of the Quality Enhancement and Assurance of programmes and school planning process.

SELF-EVALUATION

1. Introduction

Self-evaluation should discuss both the strengths of the provision and areas where enhancement is necessary, as perceived by the School. The self-evaluation document is an opportunity for the School to demonstrate how the strengths of the provision identified in previous subject reviews or accreditation events have been built upon and how any areas for improvement identified have been addressed.

Where areas for improvement remain, plans for addressing these via the annual report on monitoring, Quality Enhancement and Assurance of programmes should be summarised.

Self-evaluation documents should commence with a general introduction on the range of the provision being reviewed. However, a flexible approach should be taken when preparing and presenting self-evaluation documents to accommodate the range and potential complexity of subject provision. For example, some areas may well contain very large numbers of programmes, some programmes may comprise complex modular schemes and some subjects may be aggregated for review purposes.

Where large numbers of programmes are included under a subject heading, or where a subject category contains more than one discrete discipline, it may be sensible to evaluate discrete programmes or groups of related programmes separately. Where this is done, the broad structure indicated below should still be used, but the self-evaluation should be presented as a coherent package.

Where subject provision is offered within a wider interdisciplinary or interprofessional framework, general information about the framework and the main pathways within any modular structure should be included in an annex to the self-evaluation.

A School may choose to nominate a group of subjects to be reviewed together if they are linked through options or pathways available within a modular structure. In this case, an introductory overview of the approach to the provision as a whole may be appropriate.

The content of the self-evaluation document is described in detail below.

2. Overall Aims of the Subject Provision⁷

There must be a clear statement of the overall aims of the subject provision which will reflect the distinctive mission and overarching philosophy of the School and align with Strategy 2020. This will be used by reviewers to assess whether provision achieves its broad purposes. The statement of aims will be reproduced at the start of the subject review report.

⁷ Annexes should contain factual information about the subject provision, including a Programme Specification for each programme in the subject(s) under review, and any information about relevant modular structures or partnership arrangements.

3. Evaluation of the Subject Provision⁸

3.1 Learning Outcomes

The first part of the evaluation should address the appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes in relation to the overall aims of the provision, relevant subject benchmark statements, and other external reference points. The evaluation should discuss the effectiveness of measures to ensure that staff and students have a clear understanding of the aims and intended outcomes of programmes.

Assessment of students should be valid and reliable, and the award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes⁹.

3.2 Curricula and Assessment

The evaluation, referenced to the national level¹⁰ should review the effectiveness of the content and design of the curricula in enabling the intended outcomes of programmes to be achieved. Specific issues include:

- academic and intellectual progression within the curriculum
- appropriateness of content in relation to the level of the award
- inclusion of recent developments in the subject
- reflection of best practice in pedagogy
- the creativity of assessment.

The evaluation should review the effectiveness of student assessment in measuring achievement of the intended outcomes of programmes, in particular:

- enabling students to demonstrate achievement
- discriminating between different categories of performance
- promoting student learning (especially through formative assessment).

3.3 Quality of Learning Opportunities

The evaluation should review the effectiveness of teaching and learning, in relation to programme aims and curriculum content, and referenced to the appropriate Quality Code Chapter, the SfL, and the SEF. Examples are provided below:

- range and appropriateness of learning and teaching methods employed, referenced to the Quality Code (B3)¹¹, GCU Strategy 2020, SfL, SEF
- level and nature of assessment, referenced to the Quality Code (B6)¹²
- level and quality of student engagement, referenced to the Quality Code (B5)¹³, SfL, SEF
- partnership working, referenced to the Quality Code (B5)²⁹
- quality and provision of both physical and digital approaches, referenced to the Quality Code (B3)²⁷

⁸ The evaluation should indicate where the supporting evidence may be found.

⁹ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B1.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality>

¹¹ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality>

¹¹ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B3.pdf>

¹² <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B6.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B5.pdf>

- strategies for staff development to enhance teaching performance
- student support, referenced to the Quality Code (B4)¹⁴, SfL, SEF
- identification of good practice
- areas for enhancement, referenced to the Quality Code (B5), SfL, SEF
- student workload, referenced to the Quality Code (B6).

The evaluation should review student progression. When considering the effectiveness of strategies of academic support, and the extent to which they take account of the ability profile of the student intake in relation to the aims of the programmes, the following issues should be discussed:

- recruitment and induction of students
- identification of, and action on, any special learning needs
- feedback to students on their progress
- overall academic guidance and supervision
- support for learning

The evaluation should review the adequacy of learning resources and the effectiveness of their utilisation. In particular, the evaluation should demonstrate a strategic approach to linking resources to intended programme outcomes. Reviewers will be interested not only in physical resources, but also in digital provision and the effective use of human resources through such things as induction, mentoring, and CPD for staff.

3.4 Maintenance and Enhancement of Standards and Quality

There should be an evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures taken to maintain and enhance the quality and standards of provision. Reviewers will be particularly interested in the effectiveness of evaluation and the use of quantitative data and qualitative feedback in a strategy of enhancement and continuous improvement. The data will be the set used for programme monitoring and should include analysis of performance statistics such as admission, retention, completion, employability, NSS, and ISB, as well as any other relevant measure.

3.5 Quality Enhancement Planning

This section will examine the success of quality enhancement planning within the School, with particular reference to the enhancement plans created as part of the annual monitoring process and School enhancement planning.

3.6 GCU Strategy 2020, Digital Strategy, Strategy for Learning, Common Good Attributes and GCU Values and Behaviours

This section will examine the success of the School in implementing the University Strategy 2020, SFL priorities, **Digital Strategy, Common Good Attributes** and embedding the **GCU Values and Behaviours**.

3.7 Research, Scholarly and Professional Activities

This section will evaluate the extent to which research, scholarly and professional activities underpin the curriculum.

¹⁴ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B4.pdf>

3.8 Research Student Supervision

This section will evaluate the success of research student supervision within the School, with reference to University policy, completion rates, and time taken to complete.

3.9 Student Engagement and the Student Experience in the School

This section will evaluate the level and quality of student engagement in relation to the overall student experience in the School.

Feedback from students is an integral part of the process of engagement with students and the evaluation should review the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms, in particular:

- Student engagement strategies
- Informal and organised dialogue between lecturers and students
- partnership working
- Student and staff interaction at lectures, tutorials, seminars, or practical classes
- Module Feedback
- Student Staff Consultative Groups (SSCG)
- Student representation on Programme and School Boards
- Student representation on University-level committees
- Feedback on modules via the University's VLE
- Student involvement in the review.

This section should also examine the overall student experience in the School, including:

- Induction and transition, including articulation and RPL
- **The fulfilment for the common good attributes (appendix 2(a))**
- Approaches to employability and career development
- Student engagement
- Engagement in School-wide activities
- Extent to which students identify with and engage with the School processes
- NSS and ISB feedback.

3.10 International Student Experience (on and off campus and including transnational education)

This section will evaluate the student experience specifically for international and transnational students, and will include:

- Support for students, including any extended induction support for international students, and other social activities organised by the School
- Support for transnational students and equivalence of the student experience
- Pre-sessional activities and participation in formal study programmes, e.g. English language preparation
- Internationalisation of curriculum¹⁵ and use of the SfL/SEF to meet the needs of international and transnational students
- Feedback from ISB to underpin enhancement and strategies for engagement
- Flexibility in transnational delivery modes

¹⁵ See Appendix 4(h).

- adoption of inclusive pedagogies which fully embrace strengths of international and transnational student cohorts
- Specific staff development activities, e.g. focussing on culture awareness and sensitivity
- Liaison with the International Office and Student Experience Directorate

N.B. Chapter 10 provides further information on this area of working.

3.11 Effectiveness of central and School-based support in enhancing the student experience

This section should describe the provision of support within the School from all sources, analyse the effectiveness of the provision and suggest where improvements should be made. Professional and student support services should be represented on the Panel but consideration should also be given to the impact of these services on the department or discipline.

GUIDELINES FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF PANEL MEMBERS FOR ENHANCEMENT-LED INTERNAL SUBJECT REVIEW, PROGRAMME APPROVAL OR PROGRAMME REVIEW EVENTS

1. Introduction

In determining an appropriately-balanced membership, account will be taken of the nature and aims of the review, the subject content, the level, the relevant experience of internal members and any particular factors which might apply to an individual programme proposal.

2. The Chair

The Chair of an event will normally be a Dean, or an academic member of a School Management Group. Where appropriate, for example in joint events with another organisation, or with a professional, statutory or regulatory body, or where a specific area of expertise may be of value, the Chair may in exceptional circumstances be assumed by an external member or by another member of staff.

3. External Panel Members

External members will be subject experts. One external member will normally have recent experience of the needs of industry, commerce, public service, or the professions in relation to the subject area.

In order to ensure impartiality, no member may have a close association with the subject area. Examples of those with a close association are given below:

- members of staff of affiliated or associate colleges of GCU or who are currently teaching elsewhere on a programme leading to a GCU award
- former members of staff who, within the last five years, have been employed within GCU or one of its associated or affiliate colleges, or who have taught on a programme elsewhere leading to a GCU award
- External Examiners on the programme (or subject area) under consideration or review or on another programme in the same cognate area, or who have served in this capacity within the last five years (including newly-nominated External Examiners who have been nominated as Examiners but have not yet carried out any assessment)
- lay members of the University Court, or anyone who has been a lay Court member in the last three years
- close relatives or friends of staff employed by GCU within the subject area or programme under consideration

Individuals with a close connection to any area of the University must declare this in advance. A decision will be made by the Department of Academic Quality and Development on the appropriateness or otherwise of the individual's involvement.

There should be no more than one external member of staff from any one institution on a panel.

The same external member should not be used so frequently that his/her familiarity with the University might prejudice objective judgement.

The appointment regulations of professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies must also be taken into account in the case of joint approval/review events.

4. Internal Panel Members

Internal panel members will be appointed on the basis of their knowledge and expertise of academic quality enhancement and assurance procedures or of other specific areas of the University's work, such as teaching and learning, digital learning, work-based learning, assessment regulations, or flexible entry (Recognition of Prior Learning).

Any member of academic staff (full-time, part-time, permanent, or temporary) may act as an internal panel member provided he or she is not involved in the delivery, design, or management of any part of the provision being considered. Panel members may be nominated from **another School or a separate Department within the School**.

NB. Interschool representation is acceptable provided the panel member is from another cognate area. This means that the Panel can access and be guided by a member of academic staff who has specialist school based knowledge. This can be useful when dealing with questions around professionally regulated Programmes and School based issues that require further explanation or clarification.

5. Student¹⁶

The student member of the Panel will be an individual who has been involved in quality processes within the sector. The 'student' role may be undertaken by an individual who has graduated within the last two years. Training and support to student reviewers will be provided by the GCU Students' Association and SPARQS.

6. Student Support Services¹⁷

The role of the representative from Student Support Services will be, in particular, to comment on the adequacy and use of learning and support resources within the subject area being reviewed.

¹⁶ For ELISR panels only.

¹⁷ For ELISR panels only.