

Document Title	Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes and QA Framework
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>Ongoing monitoring is performed for all SQT programmes through appropriate mechanisms. External Peer 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
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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 - Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), et. al (2015), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions, 2016, QQI
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to support the ongoing monitoring and continuous enhancement of:

- I. Programmes including related services and activities (considered in Section 5 below)
- II. SQT's Quality Assurance Framework (considered in Section 6 below)

2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

- I. All SQT programmes are subject to ongoing monitoring to identify areas for change and inform incremental improvements to the programmes over time.
- II. As a QQI provider, SQT is subject to systematic oversight by QQI. This includes external monitoring activities such as peer review of programmes (Programmatic Review – QAP11-2) and the external review of the QA framework (Institutional Review – QAP11-3).
- III. NEBOSH undertake systematic audits of all programmes delivered by SQT.

3. BACKGROUND

SQT is committed to the ongoing self – monitoring and review of all of its activities. This provides the opportunity for reflection and considered improvements / actions, which ultimately lead to the enhancement of its provision and quality framework. Table 1 below sets out SQT's self – monitoring and self – evaluation process.

	Self – Monitoring	Self – Evaluation
Purpose:	Acts as an early warning system and identify areas of provision that are delivering quality and those that are not.	To explore, reflect and report on the effectiveness of programmes, services and the quality assurance system which supports them. In doing so, existing good practices is identified and maintained while areas needing improvement are identified and addressed.
Frequency:	Ongoing (e.g. weekly review of KPI's)	Periodic (e.g. 5 yearly programmatic review)
Focus:	Specific indicators (e.g. completion rates)	Broad scope (e.g. review of suite of programmes)
Implemented by:	Identifying a measure of quality appropriate to the area and which can be checked in monitoring such as benchmarks and/or KPI's such as learner satisfaction ratings, certification rates, relevance of outcomes to the market place, error levels etc.	In simple terms, the self-evaluation is undertaken through the following stages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreeing terms of reference - Completing a SER report - Review of SER and onsite review by an independent panel - Recommendations made by independent panel via a panel report - Improvement plan published, monitored and updated regularly
Outcome:	Where the measure indicates that quality is lacking, then remedial action is identified and taken. Self-monitoring can also identify areas of good practice and innovations	In the case of programme revalidation, the independent panel recommend to QQI whether the programme should be revalidated.

Table 1: Self-Monitoring vs Self-Evaluation

4. POLICY

All monitoring and self-evaluation activity is expected to identify areas for improvement and innovation. Figure 1 presents SQT's methodology for ongoing monitoring, periodic review and continuous improvement. It also incorporates the independent peer review mechanism adopted by external awarding bodies.

1. This process draws on information from a variety of sources through appropriate monitoring mechanisms as set out in 5.1 below.
2. Feedback and information collected informs a review by the relevant operational or academic unit. For example, feedback relating to programme content may be reviewed by the programme delivery team in the first instance and then by the Programme Board. However, feedback pertaining to a venue may be reviewed by the Operations Management Team initially and subsequently noted at the Programme Board.
3. The relevant review unit determines the necessary action required (e.g. corrective action, QA update, programme update etc.).
4. Actions are collated by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and are included in SQT's quality improvement plan documents (spreadsheets used to record actions and track/monitor their implementation). These are live documents which are continuously updated by the personnel responsible for implementing the action. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) with oversight from the Quality Committee and reports on this to the Academic Council. Relevant Programme Directors are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Programme Improvement Plan (PIP) and reports this to the Programme Board and Academic Council, where relevant.

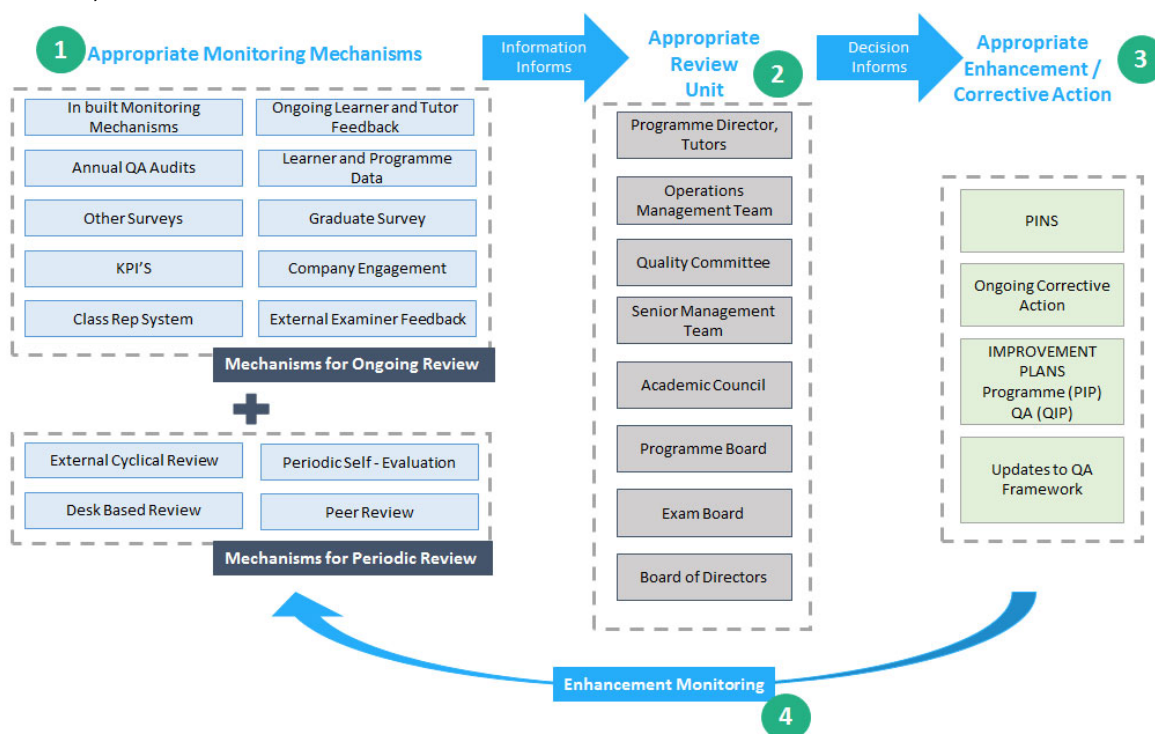


Figure 1: Ongoing Monitoring, Periodic Review and Continuous Improvement Cycle

5. ONGOING MONITORING & PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

5.1. Information Sources and Mechanisms for Effective Monitoring of Programmes

The on-going monitoring process draws on information from a variety of sources, including:

- I. Systematic **learner feedback** to include: -
 - a. Outcomes of course evaluation forms (CAFs) which are completed at the end of each course and the end of each bloc (if relevant)
 - b. Ad hoc / informal feedback
 - c. Feedback from learners via the class representative system and other channels such as discussions with Tutors or Course Administration Managers.
 - d. Graduate surveys
- II. Systematic **Tutor feedback** to include: -
 - a. Review of Tutor Reports which are completed at the end of each course and the end of each bloc (if relevant)
 - b. Ad hoc / informal feedback
 - c. Output of Tutor peer review activities
- III. **External stakeholders input** such as
 - a. Engagement with companies (management level)
 - b. Engagement with Course Organisers
 - c. Engagement with external bodies such as IBEC, Skillnets etc.
- IV. **Reports received** from External Examiners, Appeals Board or Disciplinary Committee.
- V. **KPI's** – SQT has developed a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess how its activities are achieving the organisations objectives and delivering on its overall strategy. The objective is for continued improvement in these metrics, and adverse variances offer an opportunity to investigate what initiatives need to be undertaken to improve quality
- VI. **Benchmarking data**- SQT uses benchmarking data such as performance statistics available within the QQI infographic portal.
- VII. **Review of Learner and programme data** – information such as registration numbers, completion rates, examination statistics etc.

5.2. Forums for Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

Information is gathered via a number of mechanisms as set out in 5.1. This information feeds into a number of forums such as

- Programme Boards facilitated by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
- Informal Tutor Correspondence
- Programme Team Meetings facilitated by the Programme Director

Table 2 below also provides a summary of the key evaluation methods, including the stakeholders involved, the frequency and the programme elements considered.

Evaluation Method	Stakeholder(s) Involved	Frequency	Programme Elements Reviewed
Learner Course Evaluation Forms	Learners	Interim and on completion of programme delivery	Items considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course objectives - Tutor delivery - Course materials provided - Training facilities - Provision of course information - Programme administration - Assessment (where relevant)
Tutor Course Evaluation Forms	Tutors	Interim and on completion of programme delivery	Items considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflection on programme delivery - Timing - Training facilities - Issues with learners - Support from SQT - Changes to programme documentation - Response to learner ratings
Programme Board Meeting	Programme Directors, Tutors, Director of Quality and Academic Affairs, Managing Director, Course Administration Manager and Learners	Annual or Biannual (QQI HET)	Items considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learner performance - External Examiner reports - Learner feedback - Tutor feedback - Feedback from other relevant stakeholders - Review of PINs (Performance Improvement Notifications) - Review of programme information provision
Informal Correspondence with Learners and Tutors	Learners and Tutors	On-going	All aspects of programme content and provision
Examination Board Meeting	Programme faculty, internal staff and External Examiner	Biannual	Items considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completion rates - Learner achievement - Statistics and trends with respect to assessment
External Examiner Reports	External Examiner	Three times per year	The report is developed using the following as headings: Evidence considered, Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes, (knowledge, skill, competence), Actual Attainment of Learners, Assessment Procedures, Trends
Company Course Organisers (In-house programmes)	In-house course organiser	On-going	Items included include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration, planning & organisation - Course delivery - Appropriateness of support materials provided
Management Meetings	SQT/MD and/or Programme Director, Company Management	As required	All aspects of programme content and provision.

Table 2: Programme Evaluation Mechanisms

5.3. Outcomes of Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

The on-going monitoring process may lead to:

- Normal day-to-day operational changes to the management and provision of the programme, as deemed necessary by the Programme Director, in consultation with the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.
- Proposed minor changes to the programme, and where deemed appropriate by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs in accordance with QAP3-2: Updating Programmes and Course Material.
- Reports to the Programme Board in relation to the performance of the programme.
- Ad hoc reports – where on-going monitoring gives rise to an academic issue which is urgent or of particular significance and pertains to a validated programme. In this case, consultations take place with the Chairperson of the Academic Council and a report is filed at its next meeting.
- Recommended changes to a policy or procedure.

5.4. Periodic Self-Evaluation & External Review of Programmes (QQI)

A core feature of self-evaluations is independent peer review. To lend credence to the self-evaluation process, findings of the internal self-evaluation review (SER) are supplemented by a review carried out by a panel of independent external reviewers with appropriate expertise. This panel is appointed by QQI for external cyclical review and by SQT for periodic programme evaluations. Panel members have access to the SER and other relevant documentation and is supplemented by a site visit, following which the panel generate and report on its own findings and recommendations. There are two types of self-evaluations required for QQI, specifically External Cyclical Review and Programme Review.

External Cyclical review provides an independent external review of the institution's own internal quality assurance procedures. Programme Review (known as Programmatic Review for QQI HET programmes) is the quality review process through which SQT conducts a critical evaluation of its QQI programmes, reviewing and assessing them under a defined set of criteria and allowing their further development in order to improve educational quality. The policy and procedure for programme review is set out in QAP11-2: Periodic Programme Review and Revalidation of Programmes.

5.5. Course Provider Audit (NEBOSH)

As an accredited NEBOSH provider, SQT are required to facilitate desk based monitoring activities, which are organised by NEBOSH. Such desktop audits provide a high-level documentary review of policies and procedures. All activity is managed internally by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs with the support of the Accreditation and Systems Manager. Proposed enhancements are considered by relevant Programme Directors, Tutors and internal management, as required, and result in an action plan which is submitted to NEBOSH for review. The outcome of such monitoring and resulting action plans are reported to the relevant Programme Board and Academic Council.

6. ONGOING MONITORING & PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

6.1. Ongoing Monitoring of the Quality Assurance Framework

The Quality Committee develops a QA Audit schedule for the review of the QA Framework. This schedule ensures that all eleven areas of the QA Framework are reviewed at least once in each two year period. Assigned staff with responsibility for specific areas are required to review the current policy, procedures, work instructions and guidelines relating to that area in the context of the outcomes of monitoring activities, feedback received from various stakeholders, issues that have arisen, or changes in external factors such as new policies and procedures in place by awarding bodies. The policy and procedure for Annual Internal Quality Audits is set out in QAP2-1: Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents.

6.2. External Cyclical Review of the Quality Assurance Framework (QQI)

As a provider of QQI awards, SQT is subject to cyclical external review, which is typically known as an Institutional Review. This process takes place at least once every seven years or as otherwise directed by QQI. The policy and procedure for External Cyclical Review has been informed by the Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions, 2016 (QQI). It is set out in QAP11-3: External Cyclical Review (Institutional Review).

7. POLICY MONITORING

Responsibility	Frequency	Methods
- Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Per QA audit schedule	- Review of documentation as set out in QAP2-1: Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents.
- Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Ongoing	- As per the mechanisms set out within the policy.

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