

Document Title	Periodic Programme Review and Revalidation of QQI Programmes
Policy Area	Area 11: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review
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Applies to	<input checked="" 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), Quality and Qualifications Ireland
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1. PURPOSE

This document sets out the background and rationale underpinning the programme review and revalidation process for QQI. Its purpose is to explain the nature, process and outcomes associated with the process.

2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

This is applicable to QQI (HET – Higher Education & Training) programmes only.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. Context: Ongoing Monitoring & Periodic Review - QQI Programmes

Programme delivery is monitored in a way which allows for the identification of learner needs and the modification and adjustment of the programme and the delivery method, as appropriate. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of a programme is used as an opportunity to evaluate the programme with the benefit of the experience of programme delivery incorporating feedback from Tutors, learners and other relevant stakeholders. Such evidence is reflected in learner enrolment and programme completion rate data; learner, Tutor, employer and/or industry feedback and evaluations of the programme. Programme monitoring and review is taken as an opportunity to:

- Ensure that the programme remains appropriate, and to create a supportive and effective learning environment.
- Ensure that the programme achieves the objectives set for it and responds to the needs of learners and the changing needs of society.
- Review the learner workload.
- Review learner progression and completion rates.
- Review the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners.
- Inform updates of programme content; delivery modes; teaching and learning methods; learning supports and resources; and information provided to learners.
- Update third party, industry or other stakeholders relevant to the programme(s).
- Review quality assurance arrangements that are specific to that programme.

Regular programme monitoring (dealt with in QAP11-1) provides information for periodic programme review. The information collected is analysed and the programme adapted to ensure it is up to date. Revised programme specifications are published.

3.2. Aims of Programmatic Review

Programmatic Review aims to:

- Reflect on the objectives of ongoing monitoring activities.
- Ensure that a course of study is being provided effectively.

- Maintain academic standards.
- Offers learners a fair and reasonable opportunity to engage with the intended learning in an appropriate environment.

Furthermore, it works to assure that:

- The learning outcomes reflect up-to-date knowledge in the community of practice.
- The curriculum design and structure is effective.
- Contemporary best practice in student-centred learning is reflected in the teaching and assessment practices.
- There remains a demand for the programme.
- Graduates are able to secure employment in their field of qualification.
- Physical resourcing for the programme is available.
- The programme remains viable.

3.3. Revalidation of QQI Programmes

QQI programmes are always validated conditionally. Furthermore, all validation determinations are subject to a duration of enrolment condition. This is typically five years. The duration of enrolment is variable and defined to be the interval during which learners may be enrolled on the validated programme.

Revalidation is validation by QQI of a programme that has emerged or evolved from a programme that had been previously validated by QQI (the original programme may have reached a point where, for example, it needs to be substantially modified or updated such that the end result is a new programme). Revalidation is also required for any programme that is to continue to enrol learners following expiry of the duration of enrolment. It results in a validated programme, which is substantially based on the previously validated programme.

Preparations for revalidation are planned by SQT in consultation with QQI well in advance of the expiry of the specified period during which learners may be enrolled (duration of enrolment condition), to ensure continuity of offering to learners.

3.4. Scope of Programme Revalidation

Programme review allows for the significant modification of a programme. Where the outcome is the development of a new programme rather than the modification of an existing one. This must be addressed as a new validation in line with QAP3-1: Development and Validation of Programmes.

Permitted modifications within programme review include new minor awards, new exit awards, new electives and streams, new locations for programme delivery, new assessment strategies and new programme content, for example. If such modifications are proposed, upon completion of the review process, revalidation of the programme must be sought.

4. PROCEDURE FOR PROGRAMME REVIEW & REVALIDATION

The main stages in an application for revalidation are:

- I. Self-evaluation of the programme - SER (or suites of programmes as agreed by QQI).
- II. External peer review of the programme.
- III. Application to QQI for revalidation.
- IV. Confirmation of revalidation from QQI
- V. Publication of Expert Panel Report and SQT Response

The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs liaises with QQI in order to review and agree timelines and terms of reference for the programme review. This initial correspondence is made approx. 18 months prior to the last intake date for learners as specified in the programme validation certificate. The dates of the QQI Programme Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) meetings are considered when determining timelines.

4.1. Stage 1 – Self Evaluation (SER)

The key steps in formulating an SER are as follows:

Step 1: Formation of Programmatic Review Team: The self-evaluation is overseen by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and is undertaken by the Programme Director in collaboration with all Tutors involved in the delivery of the programme(s) under review.

Step 2: Agree Terms of Reference: Having agreed terms of reference of the review with QQI, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs develops a detailed project plan, which identifies timelines and key tasks to be completed. Regular review meetings and follow-ups are carried out to ensure that the timeline for the review process is met.

Step 3: Stakeholder Consultation: In order to successfully evaluate the programme and provide recommendations for continuous improvement, feedback from all relevant stakeholders is gathered. A range of appropriate data collection methodologies is utilised and a wide selection of stakeholders are consulted such as the following (list is not exhaustive):

- Current learners
- Graduates
- Programme Directors and Tutors
- Employers
- Relevant external organisations

Step 4: Review of Relevant Data: In addition to the data received from the consultation process in Step 3 above, additional data is also derived from the annual programme review reports, which contain information gathered during the on-going monitoring and review of programmes. The data is critically analysed to establish the extent to which the programme continues to meet the core QQI

validation criteria. The findings and recommendations of this review are presented to the relevant Programme Board prior to the completion of the SER.

Step 5: Development of SER: The self-evaluation report (SER) is compiled by the programmatic review team. The report is designed to provide the Expert Panel with an overview of developments over the five year period under review and to provide relevant information as specified by QQI. The final SER is presented to Academic Council for endorsement, prior to submission to QQI for review by the Expert Panel.

4.2. Stage 2: External Peer Review

The external phase of the review is referred to as a peer review and is carried out by an Expert Panel which is required to make an impartial judgement on the continued maintenance of the overall standard of the programme.

Step 1: Formation of Expert Panel: An Expert Panel is an independent (external) panel proposed to QQI for approval by SQT and comprises of experts from relevant fields of learning who are capable of making national and international comparisons, with regard to the programme(s) under review.

Step 2: Site Visit: The Expert Panel normally visits the provider to review necessary documentation and meet with relevant representatives. A detailed agenda for the visit is agreed between SQT and the Chair of the Expert Panel in advance. This agenda allows for meetings with Programme Leader(s) and Tutors, support staff, learners, graduates and employers. The agenda should also allow for private discussions of the panel and for review of further documentation and evidence not included in the SER. The Chairperson of the Expert Panel normally provides verbal feedback at the end of the visit, indicating overall conclusions, whether the panel will be recommending the programme(s) for further validation, and conditions and recommendations associated with same.

Step 3: Panel Report: The formal report of the Expert Panel is compiled by the Chairperson and is based on their combined review and evaluation of the SER and the panel visit. It will make a recommendation in respect of the continuing validation of the programme, including the duration of the revalidation recommended (not exceeding 5 years). The report includes proposed programme schedules and any conditions and recommendations associated with the continuing validation of the programme. SQT receives a copy of the panel report and is afforded the opportunity to check the factual accuracy of same before being finalised by the Chairperson of the Expert Panel.

Step 4: Decision by SQT: Following receipt of the report of the Expert Panel, SQT's Academic Council reviews the findings. A formal response to the QQI report and a supporting implementation plan is prepared by SQT. This plan addresses the findings and recommendations in both the SER and in the report of the Expert Panel.

4.3. Stage 3: Application to QQI for Revalidation

The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs submits the revalidation application to QQI. The application will comprise of the following documentation all of which use the appropriate QQI templates.

- A formal request for revalidation signed by the Managing Director.
- Evidence of Protection of Enrolled Learners [PEL] arrangements (if applicable).
- The terms of reference for the programme revalidation.
- The Self-Evaluation Report as referenced above.
- The report of the independent panel.
- The updated programme and supporting documentation.
- The applicable revalidation fees.

4.4. Stage 4: Confirmation of Revalidation from QQI

QQI delegates the formal validation decision to its Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC). The PAEC's decision is based on validation policy and criteria and informed by the following evidence:

- The Expert Panel report
- SQT's response
- The Expert Panel's reaction to the provider's response, if any
- A memorandum from the QQI executive on the context for and conduct of the process, noting any concerns or complaints expressed by the provider

4.5. Stage 5: Publication of Expert Panel Report and SQT Response

Following a successful validation decision, the Expert Panel report is published on the QQI and SQT websites.

5. 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.
Academic Council	As per agreed schedule	- Review of terms of reference and self-evaluation report. - Consideration of independent review of self-evaluation 'mock' event.
Programme Director	As per agreed schedule	- Ongoing monitoring of implementation of Programme Improvement Plan.

6. 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