

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Pakistan

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PREE

Draft Document-04

# Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE)

A Handbook for Internal and External Quality Assurance at Programme Level

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PSG-2023

Unlocking the Potential for Transforming Higher Education



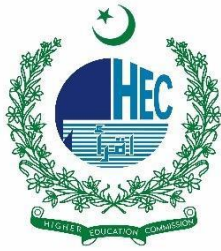
A Draft Policy developed in consultation with QAA-UK

04

Draft Policy for the Review of Academic Programmes



Higher Education Commission, Pakistan



# **A Handbook for Internal and External Quality Assurance at Programme Level: Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE)**

The Revamped Quality Assurance (QA) Framework (PSG-2023), a collaborative effort between QAA UK and QAA Pakistan. This framework, developed through extensive consultations with key stakeholders such as Vice-Chancellors, Faculty, Directors of Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs), and Students from 22 diverse Public and Private Universities across different regions and institutional types, addresses both global best practices and local contextual challenges.

The framework not only integrates international QA standards but also incorporates localized solutions to address unique challenges faced by higher education institutions in Pakistan. By contextualizing global best practices within the local landscape, the framework offers tailored solutions that cater to the specific needs and nuances of the Pakistani higher education sector. This approach fosters a dynamic quality assurance mechanism that not only adheres to international benchmarks but also navigates through regional intricacies.

The collective insights garnered from extensive consultations have played a crucial role in bridging the gap between global ideals and local realities. As a result, the Revamped QA Framework embodies a holistic approach that aligns international benchmarks with the diverse challenges faced by Pakistani universities. This comprehensive framework underscores the commitment to continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence in higher education, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of quality and accountability across the sector.

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**Section 1:**  
**Guidelines for Self Programme Review**  
**for Effectiveness and Enhancement**  
**(PREE for IQA)**

## **Section 1.1: Overview of Self Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE for IQA - Programme self-assessment)**

Programme internal quality assurance is overseen by the programme internal review and accreditation of programmes and the institutional quality assessment and effectiveness office (IQAE). Higher education institutions are encouraged to develop a 'quality culture' as a central institutional focus at all levels. It should be an integral part of academic practices and should promote development of an enabling learning environment for students.

For internal quality assurance, programmes are expected to undertake a routine Self Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE for IQA) against the PREE Standards as required in the Quality Assurance Framework.

PREE for IQA orientates around a programme self-assessment. Each academic programme shall conduct a self-assessment to evaluate the programme's performance against the PREE Standards as outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework.

IQAE is responsible for overseeing the department's planning, coordinating and follow-up on the self-assessment activities. IQAE delivers a set of briefings to ensure that each department understands its role in managing its programme's self-assessment, and that all stakeholders understand their role in the self-assessment process. IQAE provides each department with a set of procedures and a template for the self-assessment for dissemination to each programme and agrees a schedule for completion with each head of department.

Each department organises each programme within the department to conduct a self-assessment that evaluates the programme performance in the last academic year. Programme self-assesses itself against the PREE Standards, using the template disseminated to them by their department.

This evaluation should be supported by reference to evidence and culminate in an action plan to address any issues identified in the self-assessment and plans to capitalise on any good practice. Following the routine self-assessment, programme-level action plans are monitored by IQAE and departmental self-assessment by IQC.

Following IQC and Vice-Chancellor/Rector sign-off, IQAE uses the programme and departmental self-assessments as part of the annual self-assessment process and contribute to the development of the institutional self-assessment document.

## **Section 1.2: Programme self-assessment process**

The steps of programme internal quality assurance (programme self-assessment) are illustrated below.

Step 1: The IQAE office initiates the self-assessment one semester prior to the end of the assessment cycle through the Vice Chancellor/Rector's Office in which the programme is offered. However, if the programme is undergoing the self-assessment for the first time, the department will be given one academic year for preparation.

Step 2: Upon receiving the initiation letter the department shall form a programme team (PT) for each programme. The programme team shall comprise two to three faculty members of the assessed programme covering areas of specialisation of that programme.

Step 3: The programme team will be responsible for preparing a self-assessment report (SAR) about the programme under consideration over a period of one semester. They will be the contact group during the assessment period.

Step 4: The department shall submit the SAR to the IQAE office through the concerned Dean. The IQAE office reviews the SAR within one month to ensure that all applicable Precepts and Standards are addressed and it is prepared according to the required format.

Step 5: The Vice Chancellor/Rector/Head of Institute forms a programme assessment team (AT) in consultation with the IQAE recommendations within one month. The AT comprises two to three faculty members from within or outside the university. The AT must have at least one external expert in the area of the assessed programme. The IQAE office plans and schedules the AT visit period in coordination with the department that is offering the programme. The AT assesses each self-assessment, taking on board comments from students and other stakeholders, and identifies opportunities for the dissemination of good practice and common challenges.

Step 6: The AT conducts the assessment, submits a report and presents its findings in an exit meeting that shall be attended by the IQAE office, Dean, PT and faculty members.

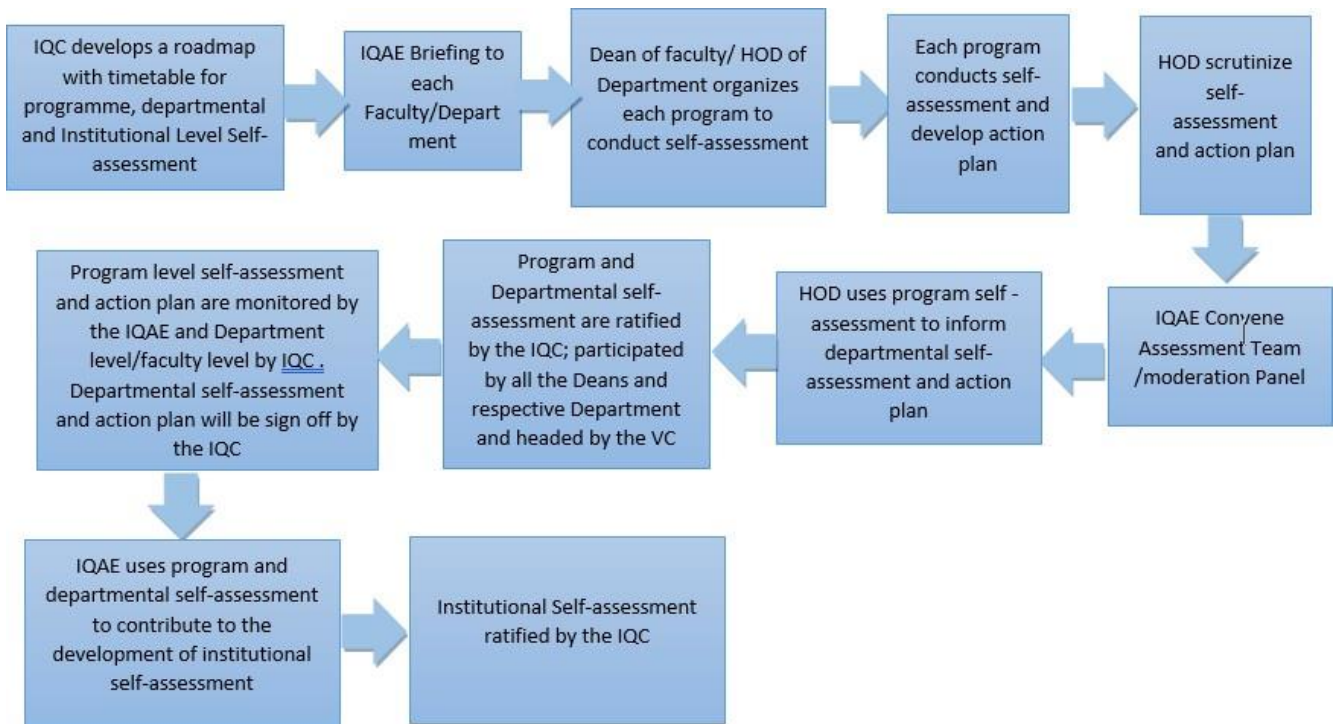
Step 7: The IQAE office shall submit an executive summary on the AT findings to the Vice Chancellor/Rector/Head of Institute.

Step 8: The department shall prepare and submit an implementation plan to the IQAE office based on the AT findings. The plan must include AT findings and the corrective actions to be taken, assignment of responsibility and a time frame for such actions. A format for preparing a summary of the implementation plan can be found in [Annex 1](#).

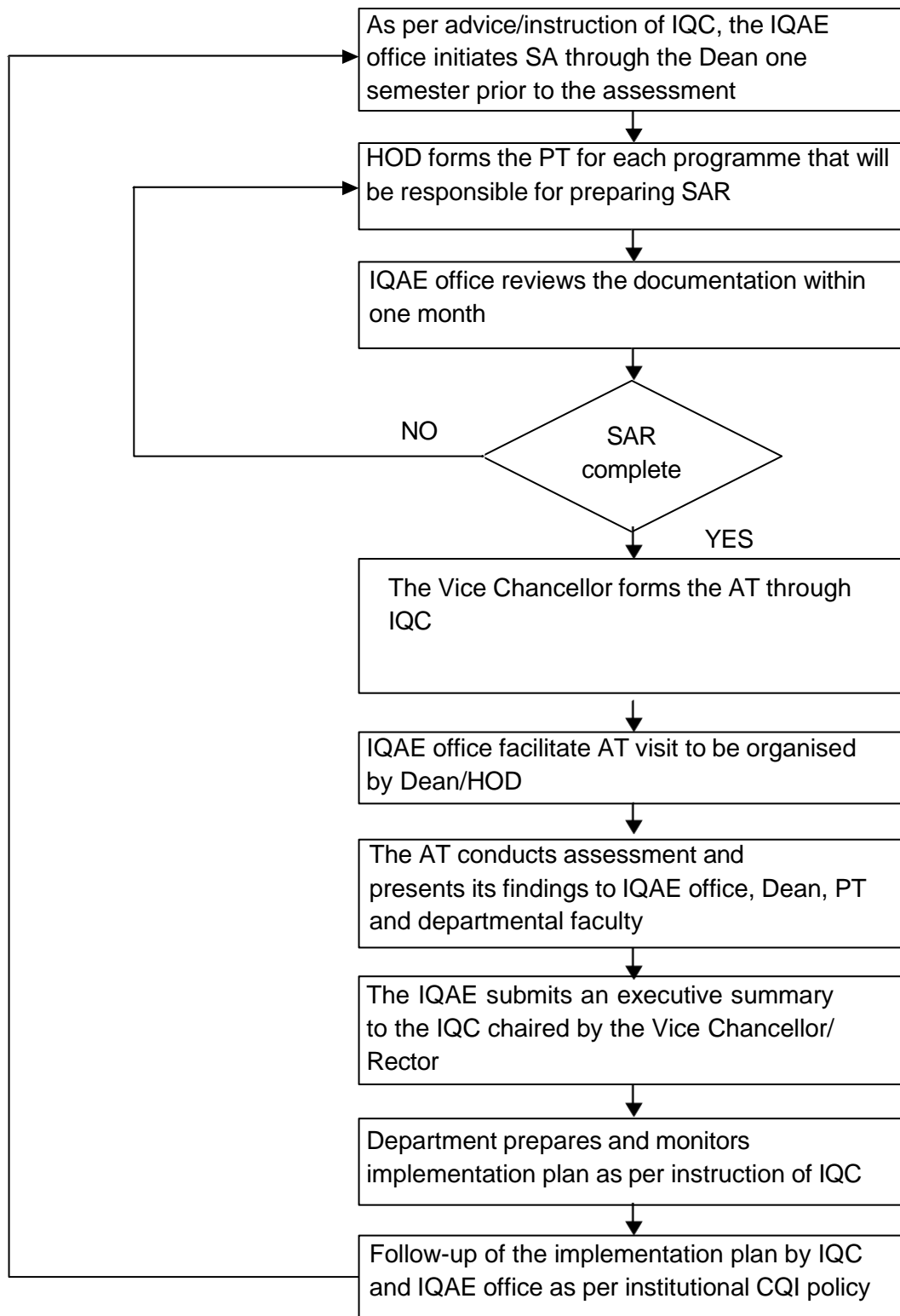
Step 9: The IQAE office shall follow up on the implementation plan to ensure departments are adhering to the implementation plan. The academic department shall inform IQAE each time a corrective action is implemented. The IQAE office shall review the implementation plan once a semester to assess the progress of implementation. The review template for IQAE use is in [Annex 1](#).

**Figure 1: Programme self-assessment procedure in relation to programme self-assessment**

**Self-assessment operation flowchart**

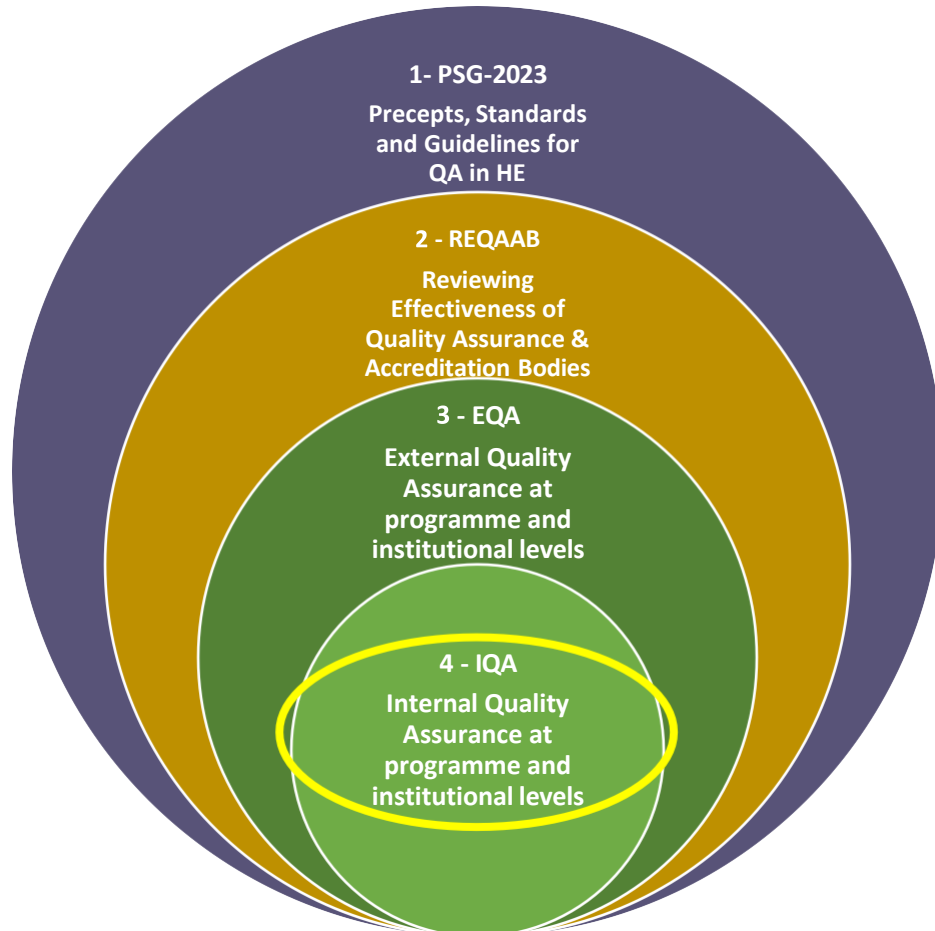






## Section 1.3: Programme self-assessment criteria and sources of information

The Quality Assurance Framework below is divided into four parts. Part 4 of the Quality Assurance Framework is concerned with Internal Quality Assurance and is subdivided into **programme-level quality assurance** and **institutional level quality assurance**.



**Figure 2: The Quality Assurance Framework**

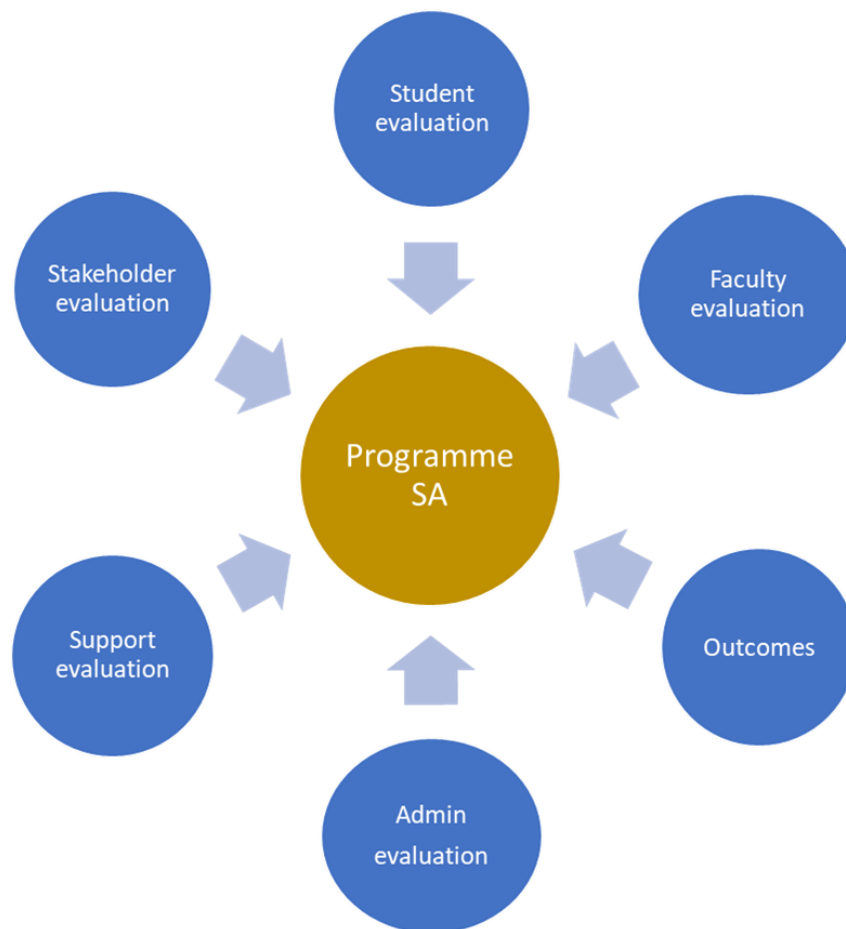
**Programme-level quality assurance** is concerned with the PREE Standards set out in the Quality Assurance Framework, against which each institution is required to align.

The PREE Standards as set out in the Quality Assurance Framework are as follows. Higher education institutions are expected to use all PREE Standards in framing its programmes' approaches to quality assurance.

- Standard 1: Programme mission, objectives and outcomes
- Standard 2: Curriculum design and organisation
- Standard 3: Subject-specific facilities
- Standard 4: Student advising and counselling
- Standard 5: Teaching faculty/staff
- Standard 6: Institutional policies and process control
- Standard 7: Institutional support and facilities
- Standard 8: Institutional general requirements

Detailed information about the Standards, including what a higher education programme should do to meet each of the Standards and how to do so, as well as a contextual statement to explain the reasoning behind each Standard, are provided in [Annex 2](#).

A wide range of information should be considered in the programme self-assessment (SA). The evaluations from support, administration and managerial areas, as well as feedback from students, faculties and other stakeholders such as external examiners and employers, should feed into the programme self-assessment. In summary, all information included in the Figure below should be considered in developing the programme SA document.



**Figure 3: Information to consider for the programme SA**

### **Section 1.4: A suggested structure of the programme self-assessment document**

The programme self-assessment document should first set out the context in which the programme is operating, briefly describe the provision under review, and make the panel aware of any recent (major) changes and their implications for safeguarding academic Standards and the student academic experience. Where relevant, details of the institution's relationships with affiliated colleges should also be provided. The programme self-assessment document should then go on to outline how the programme meets each of the PREE Standards in the Quality Assurance Framework.

## Section 1: Brief description

The description should cover:

- the institution's mission and ethos
- recent major changes since the last self-assessment
- implications of changes, challenges, strategic aims or priorities for safeguarding academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities
- details of the external reference points, other than the Qualifications Framework, which the institution is required to consider (for example, the requirements of accreditation councils and other professional bodies).

## Section 2: The track record in managing quality and standards

Briefly describe the institution and programme team's background and experience in managing quality and standards, including reference to the outcomes of previous external and internal review activities and the institution's responses. Where relevant, describe how the recommendations from the last external and internal reviews have been addressed, or if not addressed, what justification could be provided, and how good practice identified has been built on. Refer to any action plans that have been produced as a result of reviews.

## Section 3: Standards

The PREE Standards in the Quality Assurance Framework apply to this area. Please refer to [Annex 2](#) for the detailed description of each Standard and the expectations that underpin it. An institution under review should comment on each Standard separately, focusing on:

- what the programme does to meet the standard
- how it is done
- why the programme does it that way
- how well the programme performs
- how the programme evaluates what it does
- how the programme will enhance what it does.

The university should reference the evidence that is used to give assurance that these Standards are being met and that the area is managed effectively, as well as any relevant data that can be used for benchmarking. The evidence for this section should include a representative sample of programme and periodic accreditations, as well as the university's response to those accreditation reports, where applicable.

It is vital that the self-assessment identifies the evidence that illustrates or substantiates the evaluation. The same key pieces of evidence can be used in several different parts of the self-assessment. It will be difficult to complete the review without including the following sets of information:

- policy, procedures and guidance on quality assurance and enhancement
- a diagram of the structure of the main committees which are responsible for the assurance of quality and standards; this should indicate both central and local (that department or similar) committees
- minutes of central quality assurance committees for the two academic years prior to the review
- overview reports (for example, periodic accreditation report) where these have a bearing on the assurance of quality and standards for the two years prior to the review.

**Section 2:**

**Guidelines for  
External Programme Review for  
Effectiveness and Enhancement  
(PREE for EQA)**

## Section 2.1: Overview of External Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE for EQA)

### Introduction

External Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE for EQA) is the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) principal review method for reviewing the quality of programmes at graduate levels (Level 7 and 8) in Pakistan. QAA will undertake Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement to inform students and the wider public as to whether the programmes of study set and maintain the standards of academic awards at the required level and whether the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and continually improved. Thus, PREE serves the twin purposes of providing accountability to students, employers and others with an interest in higher education, while at the same time encouraging improvement.

The purpose of this section of the handbook is to:

- state the scope of PREE for EQA
- set out the approach to be used
- give guidance to institutions and the programme teams preparing for, and taking part in, PREE for EQA.

This section of the handbook is intended primarily for programmes going through PREE for EQA. It is also intended for QAA review panels conducting PREE for EQA.

### Scope and coverage

PREE for EQA is concerned with programmes of study leading to awards at graduate Levels 7-8 within the [National Qualifications Framework of Pakistan](#).

PREE for EQA provides an opportunity in particular for evaluation of:

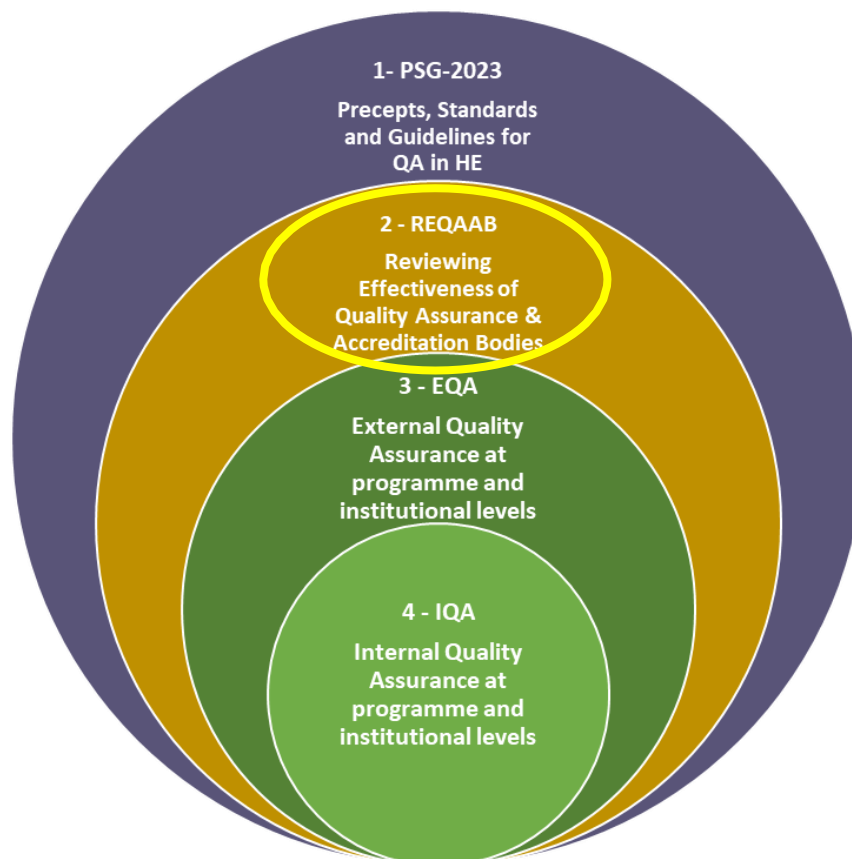
- subject standing and development, in the context of university strategy and sector norms and development
- the management of quality and standards in the provision offered within a subject area, including the maintenance of core documentation and the appropriate management of changes to provision
- academic standards and the maintenance of structures and processes designed for their support (including annual monitoring, unit and course reporting, and academic due process in the assessment and grading of student performance)
- the quality and the student-led enhancement of the learner experience and opportunity in the context of the university mission
- external engagement and benchmarking - with the self-assessment criteria and Standards, the Quality Assurance Framework, sector benchmarks, Accreditation Council criteria, employers, alumni and other external reference points that support the development and enhancement of provision and the learner experience
- the continuing currency and validity of courses in light of developments in research, professional and industry practice and pedagogy (including the use of technology in learning and teaching), changes in the external environment such as requirements of the Accreditation Council, and continued alignment with the university's strategy and mission
- whether students are attaining the intended learning outcomes and whether the assessment regime enables this to be appropriately demonstrated

- the quality of the learning experience in relation to particular student groups (identified by study mode, location or entry route, and protected characteristics), ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

PREE for EQA takes place every five years.

## Review criteria

The Quality Assurance Framework below is divided into four parts. Part 3 of the Quality Assurance Framework is concerned with external quality assurance and is subdivided into **programme-level quality assurance** and **institutional level quality assurance**.



**Figure 4: The Quality Assurance Framework**

**Programme-level quality assurance** is concerned with the PREE Standards set out in the Quality Assurance Framework, against which each programme is required to align. External Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement uses the PREE Standards as review criteria.

- Standard 1: Programme mission, objectives and outcomes
- Standard 2: Curriculum design and organisation
- Standard 3: Subject-specific facilities
- Standard 4: Student advising and counselling
- Standard 5: Teaching faculty/staff
- Standard 6: Institutional policies and process control
- Standard 7: Institutional support and facilities
- Standard 8: Institutional general requirements

PREE for EQA also considers criteria developed and published by the Accreditation Council to assess the ongoing vocational relevance and quality of programmes within a particular subject area. Accreditation Council criteria must be published and circulated to all appropriate programmes at least six months in advance of any periodic accreditation.

## **Review outcomes**

The outcomes of PREE for EQA are predicated on each programme in the subject area successfully meeting the PREE Standards and criteria developed and published by the Accreditation Council. Accordingly, the outcomes will be:

- approved
- approved with recommendations
- approved with conditions
- not approved.

Judgements will be supported by features of good practice and recommendations for improvement identified by the review panel. A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review panel, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision. Review panels also make recommendations where they agree that a programme should consider changing a process or a procedure in order to improve its alignment with a particular Precept. The wording of the recommendations will indicate the urgency with which the panel thinks each recommendation should be addressed. The institution's programme team will take notice of this when it constructs its action plan after the review.

Judgements will be made by a panel of peers by reference to the published PREE Standards set out in the Quality Assurance Framework. Judgements represent the reasonable conclusions that a review panel can come to, based on the evidence. How review panels determine their judgements are set out in [Annex 3](#).

The review report will capture the findings for each programme within the subject area under review. It will contain an executive summary to explain the findings to a lay audience.

The institution's programme team will respond to the findings of the report and develop an action plan to address any recommendations and aspects of good practice. The delivery and update of the action plan will be overseen by the Programme Quality Assessment and Effectiveness unit (IQAE).

If conditions are set, the institution must address the condition before further delivery of the provision takes place.

## **Section 2.2: Key roles and responsibilities of review panel**

### **Facilitators**

Institutions are invited to nominate a facilitator from the programme team. The facilitator will help to organise and ensure the smooth running of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement and improve the flow of information between the review panel and the institution/programme team. An effective working relationship between QAA and the facilitator should help to avoid misunderstandings.

In summary, the facilitator will carry out the following key roles:



- liaise with the QAA Officer to organise the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement
- during the on-site visit, provide the review panel with advice and guidance on the university and programme's approach and arrangements
- during the on-site visit, meet the QAA Officer and the Lead Student Representative (and possibly also members of the review panel) outside the formal meetings to provide or seek further clarification about particular questions or issues.

Further details about the role of the facilitator can be found in [Annex 4](#).

## **Student engagement in PREE for EQA**

Students play a critical role in the quality assessment of higher education. Given their current academic experience, students provide valuable insight for the review panel.

Students of the programme under review can input to the process by:

- nominating a Lead Student Representative, who is involved throughout the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement
- contributing their views through a student submission describing their academic experience and their experience of quality assurance, which is key evidence for the desk-based analysis
- participating in meetings during the on-site visit to advise the review panel of the programme's approach and arrangements
- working in partnership with the university to draw up and implement the action plan after the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement.

Further details about student engagement in the review can be found in [Annex 5](#).

## **Lead Student Representative**

This role allows students to play a central part throughout the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement.

The Lead Student Representative (LSR) will help to ensure smooth communication between the Student Council for Academic Learning & Enhancement (SCALE) - a student body to be constituted by the higher education institutions (HEIs) for getting their feedback into improving quality assurance mechanisms - the institution/programme team and QAA, and will normally oversee the production of a student submission. The university and LSR will also select the students that the review panel will meet, based on advice from QAA.

This role is voluntary. Where possible, the LSR should be appointed by the students themselves, with support from SCALE or similar student representative body or equivalent within the institution. The LSR may be a member of SCALE or representative of similar body but may not hold a senior staff position in the university. A job-share arrangement would be acceptable, as long as it is clear who the main point of contact is. However, the HEI has to have a fair procedure to select the LSR and, accordingly, nomination is sent to QAA. QAA may further develop guidelines for selection of LSRs if required.

The institution should offer as much operational and logistical support to the LSR as is feasible. In particular, institutions should share relevant information or data so that the student submission is well-informed and evidence-based.

In summary, the Lead Student Representative may carry out the following key roles, as per instruction of QAA:

- liaise with the facilitator throughout PREE for EQA to ensure smooth communication between SCALE or similar student body and the institution
- give feedback on PREE for EQA and its progress to the student body
- organise and oversee the preparation of the student submission
- assist with selecting students to meet the review panel
- ensure continuity of activity throughout the Review of Programme Performance and Enhancement
- facilitate comments from the student body on the draft PREE for EQA report
- work with the institution to develop and deliver its action plan, where there is an unsatisfactory judgement.

Further details about the role of the LSR can be found in [Annex 5](#), which will be revised by the QAA from time to time for smooth implementation in phase manner.

## **Reviewers and review panels**

Each review panel will normally consist of two reviewers, who are members or former members of academic staff from another institution in Pakistan. At least one reviewer should have particular expertise in specific curriculum areas, or from an international background, or a current employer or vocational expert. If possible, it is suggested to add a student reviewer for reviewing larger programmes of study.

Review panel members are selected on the basis of their experience in higher education and are expected to draw on this in their conclusions and evaluations about the management of quality and academic standards. The composition of each review panel will also take into consideration the reviewers' knowledge and experience of higher education provision with, or at, similar types of institution to the one under review.

QAA peer reviewers have current or recent senior-level expertise and experience in the management and/or delivery of higher education provision, including the management and/or administration of quality assurance arrangements.

Student reviewers are recruited from among students or sabbatical officers who have experience of participating, as a representative of students' interests, in contributing to the management of academic standards and/or quality. Student reviewers can act in this capacity for up to two years after graduating. First-year students cannot be considered for this role.

Training for review panel members is provided by QAA. All reviewers, including those who have taken part in previous review methods, must take part in training before they conduct a Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement. The purpose of the training is to ensure that all team members fully understand:

- the aims and objectives of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement
- the procedures involved
- their own roles and tasks
- QAA's expectations of them.

QAA also provides opportunities for continuing development of review panel members and operates procedures for managing reviewers' performance. The latter incorporates the views of institutions who have undergone Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement.

Further information about reviewer appointment, training and management is provided in [Annex 6](#).

## QAA Officer

The role of the QAA Officer is to guide the panel and the institution/programme team through all stages of PREE for EQA, ensuring that approved procedures are followed. The principal responsibilities of the QAA Officer are to:

- ensure compliance with the process set out in this handbook
- liaise with the facilitator about the schedule for the review programme
- confirm arrangements for the first review panel meeting and review visit(s)
- keep a record of all meetings relating to the review
- edit the review report and oversee its production.

### Section 2.3: Before and up to the on-site visit

This part of the handbook explains the activities that need to be carried out to prepare for the on-site visit.

#### Overview of timeline for activity before and up to the on-site visit

Standard timelines are given below. (The timeline for the period after the on-site visit is given in Section 5.) Please note that there may be unavoidable instances when activities need to take place over a shorter or longer time period. The deadlines in this timeline and procedure, process may also be amended to accommodate as per the convenience of QAA and/or any Pakistan public holidays/QAA closure days. The precise dates will be confirmed in writing by the QAA Officer when required.

**Table 1: Timeline for activity before the on-site visit**

Working weeks	Activity	Details
At least 15 weeks before the on-site visit	Initial contact for Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement activity	QAA will write to the institution about arrangements for the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement. Institution to confirm the facilitator and Lead Student Representative.
At least 11 weeks before the on-site visit	Institution/programme team briefings  Confirmation of on-site visit dates and review panel composition	QAA will identify, for each individual programme, the most appropriate approach to the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement.  QAA arranges a briefing for the institution and its programme team that would normally be virtual, but for some institutions will be face-to-face.  QAA will write to the institution to confirm the length of the on-site visit, the membership of the review panel, and the deadline for the programme submission, supporting evidence and student submission.
7 weeks before the on-site visit	Programme submission	Institution uploads programme and student submissions and supporting evidence.  Submissions demonstrate whether the programme has the capacity to meet all review criteria.
4 weeks before the on-site visit	Desk-based analysis	Reviewers, through a desk-based process, analyse the submissions and supporting evidence and identify:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• main areas for clarification/verification for the on-site visit, which will inform the programme for the visit</li> <li>• pre-visit questions for the institution/programme team to respond to with a statement and/or supporting evidence at the beginning of the on-site visit.</li> </ul>
3 weeks before the on-site visit	Virtual team meeting	<p>Review panel has a virtual team meeting to discuss the conclusions of the desk-based analysis, confirm agendas and finalise logistics in preparation for the visit.</p> <p>QAA Officer confirms with the institution the programme for the visit and the pre-visit questions for the institution's response by the morning of the on-site visit.</p>

### First contact with QAA

When a programme's PREE for EQA is due, QAA will contact its institution with regard to the scheduling of the PREE for EQA. At this stage QAA will also ask institutions to nominate their facilitator and Lead Student Representative.

QAA will confirm the date of the PREE for EQA, practical arrangements and the relevant deadlines.

Once the institution knows the on-site visit date, QAA expects the institution to disseminate that information to its students and tell them how they can engage with the process.

QAA will also confirm which QAA Officer will be coordinating the PREE for EQA and the administrative officer, based at QAA's headquarters, who will support it. Institutions are welcome to phone or email their Officer, should they have any questions. The QAA Officer can provide advice about the process but cannot act as a consultant for the preparation, nor comment on whether the quality assurance processes are appropriate or fit for purpose.

### QAA briefings

All institutions and their programme teams will receive a briefing before their on-site visit. At the briefing, QAA will discuss the structure of the PREE for EQA for the programme under review.

The briefing will include a discussion about preparing the programme submission, including the programme self-assessment document and supporting evidence. Further guidance about the structure and content of the programme submission is given in [Annex 7](#), which will be updated and amended as per requirements of QAA from time to time.

The briefing will also provide an important opportunity for QAA to liaise with the Lead Student Representative (LSR) about the student submission and how students will be selected to meet the panel. Student selection will be the responsibility of the LSR, but they may choose to work in conjunction with the facilitator, or with other student colleagues. Further guidance on the role of the LSR is given in [Annex 5](#), which will be updated and amended as per requirements of QAA from time to time.

The majority of institutions will receive individual virtual sessions (by phone or videoconference) with their dedicated QAA Officer, if and when required. For some institutions, QAA may decide that it would be more appropriate to hold a face-to-face briefing. QAA will give each institution further guidance about who should participate in the meeting. Circumstances where this might occur include:

- where the institution or its programme team has limited or no previous experience of a QAA review or has undergone unsuccessful QAA reviews previously (whether with or without revised judgements)
- where provision is complex or significant changes have occurred, including recent mergers.

The briefings (whether they are face-to-face or by email/phone/virtual) will give institutions the opportunity to ask any questions about the PREE for EQA that remain, to focus on questions specific to them. It will also enable the institution to talk directly to their dedicated QAA Officer managing the PREE for EQA.

After the briefings, the QAA Officer will be available by email and telephone to help clarify the process further with either the facilitator or the LSR.

### **On-site visit duration and review panel composition**

Following the briefing sessions, QAA will write to the institution to confirm the duration of the on-site visit and the review panel membership.

QAA will not usually give the institution information about the review panel members, unless a written request is submitted by the institution. However, QAA will share clear terms of reference (ToRs) with the review panel before taking them on board and request the reviewers to avoid participation if there is any real or potential conflict of interest. Similarly, if the institution or programme team sees a possibility of such a conflict of interest, it will inform QAA in writing and QAA will make a decision about the reviewers' selection.

### **Programme submission - Programme self-assessment document with supporting evidence**

The programme submission, including a programme self-assessment document supported by documentary evidence for the review, which should be tailored to match the nature of the programme under review, has three main functions:

- to give the review panel an overview of the programme, including its approach to managing quality and standards, and details of any relationships with degree-awarding bodies or awarding organisations and any other external reference points that the programme is required to consider
- to describe to the review panel the programme's approach to assuring the academic standards and quality of that provision
- to explain to the review panel how the programme knows that its approach on the programme is effective in meeting the review criteria (and other external reference points, where applicable), and how it could be further improved.

The programme self-assessment document is intended to be reflective, evaluative and focused on the areas of review. Guidance on how to structure the programme self-assessment document is provided in [Annex 7](#).

The programme self-assessment document must be accompanied by supporting documentation as evidence. The evidence should be carefully chosen to support the statement in the programme self-assessment document.

The institution will need to upload the programme submission (and student submission, where applicable), and accompanying evidence, seven weeks or as conveyed by QAA before the on-site visit. After that, the institution may be asked for additional information by the review panel following the QAA team's desk-based analysis of the programme submission. The review panel has two main opportunities to ask for additional evidence from the institution: after the first review panel meeting and at the review visit itself. The review panel will only ask for additional information that assists them in forming robust opinions on how review criteria will be met. Requests will be specific and proportionate.

## **Student submission**

The function of the student submission is to help the review panel understand what it is like to be a student at that programme, and how students' views are considered in the decision-making and quality assurance processes. The student submission is, therefore, an extremely important piece of evidence.

Guidance and support are available from QAA to those students who are responsible for producing the student submission to ensure that it is evidence based, addresses issues relevant to the review, and represents the views of students as widely as possible. For guidance about the content and use of the student submission, see [Annex 5](#).

## **Review panel desk-based analysis**

The review panel will begin its desk-based analysis of all the information as soon as the programme submission and student submission are uploaded. The purpose of the desk-based analysis is to enable reviewers to:

- identify which areas are sufficiently covered by the programme submission and which areas require further clarification/verification during the on-site visit
- identify additional evidence to be made available at the beginning of the on-site visit
- develop questions for the on-site visit
- identify people (roles) to meet during the visit.

To undertake the analysis, reviewers will:

- evaluate programme evidence against the review criteria
- analyse data relating to students' outcomes, completion rates and satisfaction where available, and information about institution/programme policies and practices.

Should the panel identify any gaps in the information or require further evidence about the issues they are pursuing, they will inform the QAA Officer.

## **Use of data in PREE**

Key metrics will be provided by QAA and used by the review panel throughout the PREE for EQA. This data set will be shared with the institution to aid discussions during the PREE for EQA.

Institutions that do not have sufficient data should include in the programme submission their own data relating to student recruitment, retention, progression and achievement for the higher education provision under review. It is helpful to provide this data covering three to

five years in order to demonstrate trends over time. QAA encourages institutions to consider their achievements and shortfalls against relevant nationally or internationally benchmarked data sets. Where such data sets exist, the institution submission should report against, reflect upon, and contextualise their results.

### **First review panel meeting**

As per guidelines of QAA, well before the on-site visit, preferably two weeks before, the review panel will hold a first review panel meeting in preparation for the visit. This takes place over half a day and does not involve the institution. It is the culmination of the desk-based analysis and allows the review panel to:

- discuss its analysis of the documentary evidence
- identify which areas have been sufficiently addressed
- confirm issues for further exploration at the on-site visit
- decide the programme of the visit and who to meet (only if a change is necessary to the existing standard schedule).

The review panel will decide on the duration of the visit according to what the desk-based analysis reveals both about the institution's track record in managing quality and standards and the extent to which it meets the applicable Standards and expectations. Where the desk-based analysis does not suggest a strong track record and/or indicates that several Standards may not be met (or the evidence provided is insufficient to demonstrate that the institution is meeting its responsibilities effectively), the review panel will need more time at the institution to talk to staff and students and analyse further evidence, in order to investigate its concerns thoroughly. A longer visit may also be required where the institution has particularly significant formal arrangements for working with others, including affiliated colleges, which the review panel needs to explore through a number of meetings with staff and/or students at partner organisations.

After the first review panel meeting, the review panel will inform the QAA Officer for coordination with the institution should they require any additional information. Accordingly, the QAA Officer sends the request for further information in the form of pre-visit questions, allowing the institution/programme team to respond with a statement and/or supporting evidence. This information should be made available at the beginning of the on-site visit. Requests for additional information will be strictly limited to what the review panel requires to complete its scrutiny, and the institution is entitled to ask for clarification on the purpose of any additional information requests so the most relevant information can be provided.

### **Section 2.4: The on-site visit**

The majority of on-site visits will take place in one day. In some cases, the length of the on-site visit may be two days. The decision to tailor the length of the on-site visit will be made by QAA and will be based on the size and complexity of the programme.

#### **On-site visit programme**

The activity undertaken during the on-site visit will not be the same for every programme but the review panel will ensure that its visit includes meetings with:

- senior staff, including the Dean of Faculty or Departmental Head
- academic and professional support staff
- employers and other key external stakeholders

- a representative group of students and alumni, to enable the review panel to gain first-hand information on students' experiences as learners and on their engagement with the institution's quality assurance and enhancement processes.

At the beginning of the review visit, the review panel will hold a meeting with the Dean of Faculty or Departmental Head which should highlight the institution's overall strategy for higher education and how the programme under review fits in alongside the other programmes offered by the institution, provides progression opportunities for students and addresses local skills needs. The head of the institution is welcome to attend the meeting with the review panel, but this is not obligatory. Thereafter, the activity carried out at the review may include contact with senior staff, academic and professional support staff (including staff from partner organisations where applicable), current students and recent graduates, and employers with which the institution has partnerships, observations of physical facilities and learning resources, and the virtual learning environment.

The review panel will ensure that its schedule includes meetings with students. This enables the panel to gain first-hand information on their experience as learners and on their engagement with the programme's quality assurance and enhancement processes, and involvement in the programme design, development and monitoring.

At the end of the review visit, the panel will hold a final meeting with selected senior staff, the facilitator and the lead student representative. This will not be a feedback meeting, but will be an opportunity for the panel to summarise the major lines of enquiry and issues that it has pursued (and may still be pursuing). The intention will be to give the university a final opportunity to offer clarification and/or present evidence that will help the panel come to secure review findings.

A sample review schedule is provided at [Annex 8](#).

### **On-site visit arrangements**

The facilitator will be responsible for arranging the necessary meetings, ensuring they start on time, and that the agreed participants attend. The review panel will be pleased to make use of video or teleconference facilities to meet people who may find it difficult to attend the institution's premises, such as distance-learning students, students studying in other campuses or alumni.

The review panel will hold meetings according to a schedule agreed in advance with the facilitator. The review panel will adhere strictly to the schedule, starting and finishing meetings on time. The schedule will also allow time for the review panel to have private team meetings where the panel can discuss and explore the review themes; the times of these private meetings must also be strictly observed. A protocol for review meetings is provided at [Annex 9](#).

Review activities at the visit, for example, observations of facilities and learning resources, will be carried out by at least two review panel members. Where the panel splits for an activity, there will be catch-up time afterwards so that all members of the panel have a shared understanding of what has been found.

The QAA Officer will be present during the on-site visit and take notes for all meetings with the institution. The QAA Officer will also chair all private meetings of the panel to ensure that judgements and the overall conclusion are securely based on evidence available and that each Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement is conducted consistently.

Although the facilitator and Lead Student Representative (LSR) will not be present with the review panel for its private meetings, the panel may have regular contact with the facilitator



and LSR at the beginning and/or end of the day, or when they are invited to clarify evidence or provide information. The facilitator and LSR should also suggest informal meetings if they want to alert the panel to information that might be useful.

Where the programmes have significant formal arrangements for working with a partner (for example, an affiliated college) the review panel may wish to meet staff and students from one or more of those organisations in person or by videoconference. These meetings will normally take place within the period of the on-site visit, unless there is good reason why this cannot happen (for instance, because the on-site visit coincides with another organisation's vacation period).

## **Making judgements**

After the final meeting with the institution, the review panel will meet with the QAA Officer to confirm the provisional judgements and agree any areas for development and/or features of good practice for the programme under review. This meeting will be private. Provisional judgements will not be immediately communicated to the institution.

The QAA Officer will chair this judgement meeting and will test the evidence base for the panel's findings. Judgements represent reasonable conclusions that a review panel is able to come to, based on evidence and time available.

The review panel meets to consider its findings in order to:

- agree any features of good practice that it wishes to highlight
- agree any recommendations for action by the institution's programme team
- decide on the judgements.

The criteria that review panels will use to determine their judgements are set out in [Annex 3](#).

## **Section 2.5: After the on-site visit**

This part of the handbook describes what happens after the on-site visit has ended.

### **Post on-site visit activity timeline**

Standard timelines are given below as an ideal sample; however, QAA may provide instructions with a timeline QAA deems best for report submission, keeping the existing capacity of the QAA in perspective. Please note that there may be unavoidable instances when activities need to take place over a shorter or longer time period. The deadlines in this timeline may also be amended to accommodate QAA requirements.

**Table 2: Post on-site visit activity timeline**

<b>Working weeks</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Week 0	Review visit.
Week +3	Moderation of findings.
Week +4	Draft report is sent to institution and Lead Student Representative for comments on factual accuracy. Relevant partner degree-awarding bodies or awarding organisations are copied in.

Week +6	Institution's programme team and Lead Student Representative provide comments on factual accuracy (incorporating any comments from awarding bodies or organisations) to QAA.
Week +8	QAA Officer considers corrections and produces final report.
Week +10	PREE for EQA report published on QAA's website.

## Review report

The PREE for EQA findings (judgements, areas for development and features of good practice) will be decided by the review panel as peer reviewers. The QAA Officer will ensure that the findings are backed by adequate and identifiable evidence, and that the PREE for EQA report provides information in a succinct and readily accessible form. For the purpose, if the QAA officer deems intervention is necessary, the same will be discussed with the review panel.

The report will be written as concisely as possible, while including enough detail along with a root cause analysis (RCA) of the issues and challenges identified during review and recommendations for a remedial action plan to address the findings, to be of maximum use to the programme under review. The report format should be in line with the direction or format given by the QAA. The report will contain an executive summary including a brief about the judgment reached to explain the findings to a lay audience. The structure of the report will follow the structure recommended for the programme's self-assessment document and the student submission as per QAA guidelines. The QAA Officer will coordinate the production of the review report.

QAA will retain editorial responsibility for the final report and will moderate findings to promote consistency. If required, the moderation process will be undertaken by an independent panel of QAA Officers who were not involved in the review of the programme. The purpose of this moderation process is to ensure that the judgements, across a range of institutions, are clearly articulated, evidence-based and consistent, and that areas for development and features of good practice are proportionate.

Four weeks after the end of the on-site visit, the institution will receive the moderated draft report, which will be copied to the relevant degree-awarding bodies or other awarding organisations. QAA will also copy in the Lead Student Representative and invite his or her comments, if required.

The institution should respond within two weeks, informing QAA of any errors in fact or interpretation in the report, including any comments by the Lead Student Representative. These errors must relate to the period before or at the on-site visit; the review panel will not amend the report to reflect changes or developments made by the institution after the on-site visit ended.

The Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement report will then be published on the QAA's website and the university will be requested to place it on their website as well.

## Action planning and sign-off

The institution's programme team will respond to the findings of the report and produce an action plan in response to PREE findings. The action plan should be signed off by the Dean of Faculty or Departmental Head, responding to the recommendations and setting out any plans to capitalise on any good practice identified. The programme team should either produce this jointly with student representatives, or representatives should be able to post

their own commentary on the action plan. Further guidance on how to produce an action plan can be found in [Annex 10](#).

The programme team will be expected to update the action plan annually, again in conjunction with student representatives, until actions have been completed. The Programme Quality Assessment and Effectiveness unit (IQAE) should support programmes to complete an action plan, monitoring their progress within agreed timescales and confirming that the actions taken have had a positive impact.

If conditions are set, the programme team must address the conditions before further programme delivery takes place. QAA will work with the institution to determine the level of intensity of any follow-up action required in view of having the judgements revised.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Implementation plan template for IQA

### Implementation plan summary

AT findings and recommendations	Intended corrective actions	Intended implementation period	Responsible body	Resources needed
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
Chairman's comment Name and signature				
Dean's comment Name and signature				
IQAE Office comment Name and signature				

### Status of corrective actions

AT findings and recommendations	Corrective actions	Status	Remarks
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
Chairman's comment Name and signature			
Dean's comment Name and signature			
IQAE Office comment Name and signature			

## **Annex 2: Standards and guidelines for Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE for IQA and EQA)**

The PREE Standards are listed below.

### **Standard 1: Programme mission, objectives and outcomes**

#### **Expectation:**

Each programme must have a mission, measurable objectives and expected outcomes for graduates. Outcomes include competency and tasks graduates are expected to perform after completing the programme. A strategic plan must be in place to achieve the programme objectives. The extent to which these objectives are achieved through continuous assessment and improvements must be demonstrated.

#### **Expectation outcome indicators (EOIs)**

The programme must have documented measurable objectives that support the institution mission statements.

- I Document the institution mission statements.
- II State programme objectives. Programme educational objectives are intended to be statements that describe the expected accomplishments of graduates during the first several years following graduation from the programme.
- III Describe how each objective is aligned with the institution mission statements.
- IV Outline the main elements of the strategic plan to achieve the programme objectives.
- V Provide for each objective how it was measured, when it was measured and improvements identified and made.

The programme must have documented outcomes for graduating students. It must be demonstrated that the outcomes support the programme objectives and that graduating students are capable of performing these outcomes.

- I Describe how the programme outcomes support the programme objectives.
- II Describe the means for assessing the extent to which graduates are performing the stated programme outcomes/learning objectives. This should be accomplished by the following:
  - i conducting a survey of graduating seniors every semester
  - ii conduct a survey of alumni every two years
  - iii conduct a survey of employers every two years
  - iv carefully designed questions asked during senior projects presentations; these questions should be related to programme outcomes
  - v outcomes examinations.
- III The data obtained from the above sources should be analysed and presented in the assessment report.
- IV It is recommended that the above surveys should be conducted, summarised and added to the self-assessment report. Departments should utilise the results of the surveys for improving the programme as soon as they are available.

The results of programme's accreditation and the extent to which they are used to improve the programme must be documented.

- I Describe the actions taken based on the results of periodic accreditation.
- II Describe major future programme improvements plans based on recent accreditation.

- III List strengths and weaknesses of the programme.
- IV List significant future development plans for the programme.

The department must assess its overall performance periodically using quantifiable measures.

- I Present student enrolments (undergraduate and graduate) during the last three years indicating percentages of honours students, student faculty ratio, average graduating grade point average per semester, average time for completing the undergraduate programme and attrition rate.
- II Indicate percentage of employers that are strongly satisfied with the performance of the department's graduates. Use employer surveys.
- III Indicate the median/average student evaluation for all modules and the percentage of faculty awarded excellence in teaching awards.
- IV Present performance measures for research activities. These include journal publications, funded projects, and conference publications per faculty per year and indicate the percentage of faculty awarded excellence in research awards.
- V Present performance measures for community services. This may include the number of short courses per year, workshops and seminars organised.
- VI Indicate faculty and students' satisfaction regarding the administrative services offered by the department. Use faculty and student surveys.

The department/programme must take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

- I Describe actions taken to involve students in the evaluation of teaching and learning.
- II Describe actions taken as a result of student evaluation.
- III Describe how actions are communicated to students.
- IV Describe actions taken to engage students in decision-making about the quality of their higher education.
- V Describe actions taken to recruit student members to appropriate deliberative committees.
- VI Describe training given to students to enable their participation in decision-making committees.
- VII Terms of reference of deliberative committees on which students sit.

### **Indicative evidence**

- Programme specification clarifying programme missions, objectives and outcomes
- Academic development plan clarifying how to develop programme structure, curriculums, and resources
- Analysis reports of the process adopted for development of mission and subsequent goals and periodic reviews of mission and goals
- Analysis reports of the process of application of these goals and coordination for implementation
- Review reports of processes adopted to disseminate the mission and goals to faculty, students and members of the governing body and efforts to maintain the institution's commitment to the mission among members of the institution

### **Guidelines**

Programme objectives must align with the educational philosophy and educational goals of the higher education institution, and steer programme development and operation.

Intended learning outcomes of the programme must specify students ultimate performance outcomes upon graduation so as to reflect the level of their cognitive and application skills, professional attitude and behaviour. The intended programme learning outcomes must align with the programme objectives and be objectively assessable to demonstrate attainment.

On the basis of its educational philosophy and educational goals, the higher education institution must set graduate attributes to specify personal qualities, generic skills and behaviour of graduates at different academic levels of the same higher education institution.

### **Further reading and QA resources**

## **Standard 2: Curriculum design and organisation**

### **Expectation**

The curriculum must be designed and organised to achieve the programme's objectives and outcomes. Also, module objectives must be in line with programme outcomes. The breakdown of the curriculum must satisfy the Standards specified in this section. Curriculum standards are specified in terms of credit hours of study.

### **Expectation outcome indicators (EOIs)**

- I The curriculum must be consistent and support the programme's documented objectives.
- II Theoretical background, problem analysis and solution must be stressed within the programme's core material.
- III The curriculum must satisfy the core requirements for the programme, as specified by the respective accreditation body.
- IV The curriculum must satisfy the major requirements for the programme as specified by HEC and the respective accreditation body/councils.
- V The curriculum must satisfy general education, arts, and professional and other discipline requirements for the programme, as specified by the respective accreditation body/council.
- VI Information technology components of the curriculum must be integrated throughout the programme.
- VII Oral and written communication skills of the student must be developed and applied in the programme.
- VIII Conduct feedback surveys each semester for each course from students and faculty.

### **Indicative evidence**

- Programme development policy
- Evidence of well-defined and coherent programme goals and objectives reflecting institutional mission, such as module specifications
- Evidence of the balance between theory and practice to achieve programme and institutional goals
- Mapping of programme specifications to national qualifications framework for higher education
- Defined student learning outcomes
- Graduate destinations



## Guidelines

The curriculum must be designed and organised to achieve the programme's objectives and outcomes. Also, module objectives must be in line with programme outcomes. The breakdown of the curriculum must satisfy the standards specified in this section. Curriculum standards are specified in terms of credit hours of study. A semester credit hour equals one class hour or two to three laboratory hours per week. The semester is approximately 15 weeks.

Provide the following information about the programme's curriculum:

- title of degree programme
- definition of credit hour
- degree plan: a flow-chart showing the prerequisite, core, and elective courses
- show curriculum breakdown in terms of mathematics and basic sciences, major requirements, social sciences and other requirements.

For each module in the programme that can be counted for credit, provide one to two pages specifying module title, module objectives and outcomes, catalogue description, textbook(s) and references, syllabus breakdown in lectures, computer usage, laboratory settings.

Content breakdown in credit hours (if applicable) as basic science, maths, engineering science, and design for engineering discipline, general education requirements, business requirements and major requirements for business studies and others.

Describe how the programme content (modules) meets the programme objectives. Describe how modules are applied and integrated throughout the programme.

Complete a matrix linking modules to programme outcomes. List the modules and tick against relevant outcomes.

## Further reading and QA resources

[Advice and Guidance \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk): Guidance on Course Design and Development, Enabling Student Achievement

## Standard 3: Subject-specific facilities

### Expectation

Subject-specific facilities must be adequately available and accessible to faculty members and students to support teaching and research activities.

### Expectation outcome indicators (EOIs)

Laboratory manuals/documentation/instructions for experiments must be available and readily accessible to department and students.

- I Describe the subject-specific facilities that are available for use in the programme under assessment.
- II Explain how students and departments have adequate and timely access to the manuals/documentation and instructions.
- III Benchmark with similar departments in reputable institutions to identify shortcomings in laboratories.

There must be adequate support for personnel for instruction and maintaining the laboratories.

- I Indicate for each laboratory: support personnel, level of support, nature and extent of instructional support.

The institution's computing infrastructure and facilities must be adequate to support the programme's objectives.

- I Describe how the computing facilities support the computing component of the programme.
- II Benchmark with similar departments in reputable institutions to identify shortcomings in computing infrastructure and facilities.

To meet this criterion the standards in this section must be satisfied. In addition, departments may benchmark with similar departments in reputable institutions to identify their shortcomings, if any.

### **Indicative evidence**

- Comprehensive analysis reports of subject-specific facilities accessible to students and other stakeholders
- Subject-specific facilities development procedure and plan
- Subject-specific facilities usage record
- Annual review reports of student involvement and satisfaction with the provided facilities with practicable recommendations for further improvement
- Student feedback on subject-specific facilities
- Video evidence of resources
- Print or electronic review reports of availability of required subject-specific facilities reflected through student handbooks, catalogues, newspapers

### **Guidelines**

For a good higher education experience, programmes of study provide a range of facilities to assist student learning. Facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context and subject requirement. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the facilities available to them.

### **Further reading and QA resources**

[Advice and Guidance \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk): Guidance on Learning and Teaching, Enabling Student Achievement

## **Standard 4: Student advising and counselling**

### **Expectation**

Students must have adequate support to complete the programme in a timely manner and must have ample opportunity to interact with their instructors and receive timely advice about programme requirements and career alternatives.

## **Expectation outcome indicators (EOIs)**

Modules must be offered with sufficient frequency and number for students to complete the programme in a timely manner.

- I Provide the department's strategy for module offerings.
- II Explain how often required modules are offered.
- III Explain how often elective modules are offered.
- IV Explain how required modules outside the department are managed to be offered in sufficient number and frequency.

Modules in the major area of study must be structured to ensure effective interaction between students, department and teaching assistants.

- I Describe how effective student/department interaction is achieved in modules taught by more than one person such as two members of the department, a department member and a teaching assistant or a lecturer.

Guidance on how to complete the programme must be available to all students and access to academic advising must be available to make module decisions and career choices.

- I Describe how students are informed about programme requirements.
- II Describe the advising system and indicate how its effectiveness is measured.
- III Describe the student counselling system and how students get professional counselling when needed.
- IV Indicate if students have access to professional counselling, when necessary.
- V Describe opportunities available for students to interact with practitioners, and to have membership in technical and professional societies.

## **Indicative evidence**

- Comprehensive analysis reports of student support services accessible to students and other stakeholders
- Student support procedures and records
- Review reports of student involvement and satisfaction with the provided advising and counselling services
- Periodic assessment reports of advising and counselling services with practicable recommendations for further improvement
- Student feedback on advising and counselling services
- Video evidence of resources
- Print or electronic review reports of availability of required students' advisory services reflected through student handbooks, catalogues, newspapers

## **Guidelines**

For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of support to assist student learning, including advising and counselling. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems and improving the quality of programmes of study.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.

Support activities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services, the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

### **Further reading and QA resources**

[Charter - Student Minds](#): The University Mental Health Charter

[Advice and Guidance \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#): Guidance on Enabling Student Achievement

## **Standard 5: Teaching faculty/staff**

### **Expectation**

Teaching faculty/staff must be current and active in their discipline and have the necessary technical depth and breadth to support the programme. There must be enough department members to provide continuity and stability, to cover the curriculum adequately and effectively, and to allow for scholarly activities.

### **Expectation outcome indicators (EOIs)**

There must be enough full-time teaching staff who are committed to the programme to provide adequate coverage of the programme areas/modules with continuity and stability. The interests and qualifications of all teaching staff must be sufficient to teach all modules, plan, modify and update modules and curricula. All teaching staff should have a level of competence that would normally be obtained through graduate work in the discipline. The majority of the teaching staff should hold a PhD in the discipline and/or vocational experience in their area of expertise.

- I Complete a table indicating programme areas and number of teaching staff in each area.
- II Each member of teaching staff should complete a CV.
- III The totality of teaching staff is sufficient to deliver the programme curriculum and objectives.
- IV Conduct feedback surveys each semester from students for evaluation of teaching and assessment.

Teaching staff must remain current in the discipline and sufficient time must be provided for scholarly activities and professional development. Also, effective programmes for staff development must be in place.

- I Describe the criteria for teaching staff to be deemed current in the discipline and based on these criteria and information in the teaching staff member's CV, what percentage of them is current. The criteria should be developed by the department.
- II Describe the means for ensuring that full-time teaching staff have sufficient time for scholarly and professional development.
- III Describe existing teaching staff development programmes at the departmental and institutional level. Demonstrate their effectiveness in achieving teaching staff development.

- IV Indicate how frequently faculty programmes are evaluated and if the evaluation results are used for improvement.

All teaching staff should be motivated and have job satisfaction to excel in their profession.

- I Describe programmes and processes in place for staff motivation.  
II Indicate how effective these programmes are.  
III Survey teaching staff to measure motivation and job satisfaction.

### **Indicative evidence**

- Documented institution and programme's practices for faculty appointment, tenure Precepts and procedures, supervision, promotion, evaluation for both regular/full-time, part-time, adjunct and other faculty members
- Dissemination of evaluation criteria and procedures, review reports of teaching effectiveness, analysis of faculty peer review reports for teaching and scholarship
- Records of productivity in scholarship of teaching and research in the creation of knowledge, consistent with the mission of the institution
- Analysis reports of correlation between faculty profile and performance and student learning outcomes

### **Guidelines**

The teacher's role is essential in creating a high-quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing.

Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. Such an environment:

- sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching
- offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff
- encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research
- encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.

### **Further reading and QA resources**

[Advice and Guidance \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk): Guidance on Learning and Teaching, Assessment

## **Standard 6: Institutional policies and process control**

### **Expectation**

The processes by which major functions are delivered must be in place, controlled, periodically reviewed, evaluated and continuously improved.

### **Expectation outcome indicators (EOIs)**

The process by which students are admitted to the programme must be based on quantitative and qualitative criteria and clearly documented.

- I This process must be periodically evaluated to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.
- II Describe the programme admission criteria at the institutional level or department if applicable.
- III Describe policy regarding programme/credit transfer.
- IV Indicate how frequently the admission criteria are evaluated and if the evaluation results are used to improve the process.

The process by which students are registered on the programme and monitoring of students' progress to ensure timely completion of the programme must be documented This process must be periodically evaluated to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

- I Describe how students are registered on the programme.
- II Describe how students' academic progress is monitored and how their programme of study is verified to adhere to the degree requirements.
- III Indicate how frequently the process of registration and monitoring are evaluated and if the evaluation results are used to improve the process.

The process of recruiting and retaining highly qualified department members must be in place and clearly documented. Also, processes and procedures for department evaluation, and promotion must be consistent with the institution mission statement. These processes must be periodically evaluated to ensure that they are meeting with their objectives.

- I Describe the process used to ensure that highly qualified teaching staff are recruited to the programme.
- II Indicate methods used to retain excellent teaching staff members.
- III Indicate how evaluation and promotion processes are in line with the institution mission statement.
- IV Indicate how frequently this process is evaluated and if the evaluation results are used to improve the process.

The process and procedures used to ensure that teaching and delivery of module material to the students emphasises active learning and that module learning outcomes are met. The process must be periodically evaluated to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

- I Describe the process and procedures used to ensure that teaching and delivery of module material is effective and focus on students learning.
- II Indicate how frequently this process is evaluated and if the evaluation results are used to improve the process.

The process that ensures that graduates have completed the requirements of the programme must be based on standards, and effective and clearly documented procedures. This process must be periodically evaluated to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

- I Describe the procedures used to ensure that graduates meet the programme requirements.
- II Describe when this procedure is evaluated and whether the results of this evaluation are used to improve the process.

Programmes produce information for external audiences about the learning opportunities they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

- I Mission, values and overall strategy are publicly available on the institution's website.
- II The process for application and admission to the programme of study is clearly described to prospective students.

- III Information is made available to prospective students to help them select their programme with an understanding of the academic environment in which they will be studying and the support that will be made available to them.

Programmes produce information for students about the learning opportunities they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

- I Information on the programme of study is made available to current students at the start of their programme and throughout their studies.
- II Programmes set out what they expect of current students and what current students can expect of the programme.
- III When students leave their programme of study, they are issued with a detailed record of their studies, which gives evidence to others of the students' achievement in their academic programme.

Programmes are managed to high ethical standards when dealing with faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders.

- I Programmes practice and exemplify the values and ethical principles articulated in the institution's mission and ethics policies.
- II Programmes safeguard the interests of students, faculty and staff.
- III Programmes ensure equality, diversity and inclusion.
- IV Programmes have a transparent approach to all communication, including academic integrity and complaints.

#### **Indicative evidence**

- Marketing strategy
- Admissions policy
- Progression policy
- Certification policy
- Evidence of support programmes and services for students to improve the achievement of their educational goals and expected learning outcomes
- Periodic review reports of information provided on financial aid programmes, scholarships and grants
- Evidence of utilisation of review reports of financial aid component to further improve these and to assure the public information-sharing
- Evidence of utilisation of review report results to further improve the policies of admission, retention, persistence, and so on
- Evidence of utilisation of attrition data and drop-out analysis reports to investigate the reasons and to improve the situation for these students
- Effective teaching and learning environments with appropriate resources
- Demonstration of electronic resources to support teaching and learning, for example, a virtual learning environment (VLE)
- Staff development programme and evidence of staff attendance
- Examples of scholarship activities that support teaching and learning
- Observation of teaching and learning procedure, results of observations and follow-up activities
- Programme and module handbooks
- Student support procedure and records
- Student tutorial procedure and associated records
- Student feedback on their learning experiences

## Guidelines

Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution and its programmes. It supports the development of a quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available.

The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. How the policy is implemented, monitored and revised is the institution's decision.

## Further reading and QA resources

[Advice and Guidance \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk): Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation

## Standard 7: Institutional support and facilities

### Expectation

The institution's support and the financial resources for the programme must be sufficient to provide an environment in which the programme can achieve its objectives and retain its strength. Also, the institutional facilities, including library, classrooms and offices, must be adequate to support the objective of the programme. To satisfy this criterion a number of standards must be met.

### Expectation outcome indicators (EOIs)

There must be sufficient support and financial resources to attract and retain high-quality teaching staff and provide the means for them to maintain competence as teachers and scholars.

- I Describe how the programme meets this standard. If it does not, explain the main causes and plans to rectify the situation.
- II Describe the level of adequacy of secretarial support, technical staff and office equipment.

There must be an appropriate number of high-quality graduate students, research assistants and PhD students.

- I Provide the number of graduate students, research assistants and PhD students for the last three years.
- II Provide the teacher:graduate student ratio for the last three years.

Financial resources must be provided to acquire and maintain library holdings, laboratories and computing facilities.

- I Describe the resources available for the library.
- II Describe the resources available for laboratories.
- III Describe the resources available for computing facilities.

The institution must have the infrastructure to support new trends in learning such as e-learning.



- I Describe infrastructure and facilities that support new trends in learning.
- II Indicate how adequate the facilities are.

The library must possess an up-to-date technical collection relevant to the programme and must be adequately staffed with professional personnel.

- I Describe the adequacy of the library's technical collection.
- II Describe the support rendered by the library.

Classrooms must be adequately equipped, and offices must be adequate to enable teaching staff to carry out their responsibilities.

- I Describe the adequacy of the classrooms.
- II Describe the adequacy of teaching staff offices.

### **Indicative evidence**

- Comprehensive analysis reports of student support services accessible to students and other stakeholders
- Mechanism for resolutions of student grievances and complaints
- Review reports of student involvement and satisfaction with the provided academic support services, co-curricular and extracurricular activities
- Periodic assessment reports of student support and advising services with practicable recommendations for further improvement
- Video evidence of resources
- Print or electronic review reports of availability of required students' support and advisory services reflected through student handbooks, catalogues, newspapers
- Review reports of programme resources, fund raising and grant activities
- Review of periodic reports of programme planning, assessment and budget
- Review reports of work of various programme committees dealing with resource acquiring, allocation or replacement, and so on
- Review reports of resource availability and allocation and linkage with planning cycle
- Review reports of transparency of the system of all kinds of contracts and agreements regarding resource acquiring and sharing
- Review reports of endowment policies and procedures, if any
- Review reports of resource management.

### **Guidelines**

For a good higher education experience, programmes provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

Support activities and facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context and subject requirements. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them.

In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences.

### Further reading and QA resources

[Advice and Guidance \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk): Guidance on Enabling Student Achievement

## Standard 8: Institutional general requirements

### Expectation

The institution ensures that research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic Precepts, standards and international best practices for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols, and which takes account of social and industrial needs. This environment offers students quality opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

### Expectation outcome indicators (EOIs)

#### A General principles

- I Full and part-time postgraduate research programmes will only be offered where students can be expected to meet the academic Precepts the institution has set for itself, which should reflect national expectations.
- II Regulations should be clearly defined, made readily available and be sufficiently comprehensive to cover the progression of research students from admission and registration through to final examination and award.
- III Regulations should be subject to regular review, at local and institutional level.
- IV Research should take account of regional, national and international social and industrial needs.

#### B The research environment

The institution should:

- I only offer research opportunities where students can be trained and supported within an environment that is supportive of research
- II make sure that all publicity materials associated with postgraduate research programmes are clear, accurate and of sufficient detail to inform student choice.

#### C The selection and admission of students

The institution should:

- I make sure that admissions procedures are clear and consistently applied
- II make sure that only appropriately qualified and/or prepared students are admitted onto research programmes
- III make sure that admissions decisions involve the judgment of more than one member of the institution's staff with relevant expertise
- IV make sure that admissions procedures promote equality of opportunity
- V make sure that the entitlements and responsibilities of a research student undertaking a postgraduate research programme at the institution are defined and communicated clearly.

## **D Student information and induction**

The institution should:

- I make sure that research students are provided with opportunities by the institution to enable them to commence their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment within which they will be working.

## **E The approval of research projects**

The institution should:

- I give adequate consideration to the feasibility of both full and part-time students undertaking and successfully completing a particular research project.

## **F Skills training**

The institution should:

- I make sure that research students have access to training sufficient to gain the skills they need to design and complete their programmes effectively and to help prepare themselves for their subsequent career.

## **G Supervision**

The institution should:

- I make sure that supervisors possess recognised subject expertise
- II make sure that supervisors have the necessary skills and experience to monitor, support and direct research students' work
- III make sure that research students receive support and direction sufficient to enable them to succeed in their studies
- IV make sure that the progress made by research students is consistently monitored and regularly communicated to the students.

## **H Assessment**

The institution should:

- I make sure that postgraduate research assessment processes are communicated clearly and fully to research students and supervisors
  - II postgraduate research assessment processes are clear and operated rigorously, fairly, reliably and consistently
- Feedback, complaints and appeals
- III make sure that mechanisms exist to enable open and constructive feedback to be provided by research students and their supervisors on the learning experience and support infrastructure
  - IV make sure that complaints and appeals procedures are fair, open and consistently applied, allowing students access to relevant information and an opportunity to present a case
  - V make sure that independent and formal procedures exist to deal swiftly with complaints from research students about the quality of the institution's learning and support provision
  - VI make sure that formal procedures exist to deal with any academic appeals made by postgraduate research students
  - VII make sure that the acceptable grounds for appeals are clearly defined.

## **I Evaluation**

The institution should:

- I make sure that the extent to which institutions are discharging their responsibilities for the Precepts of the research awards granted in their name, and for the quality of the education provided to enable research students to attain those Precepts, are regularly reviewed.

### **Indicative evidence**

#### **General principles**

The expectation for general principles might be evidenced by the institution's:

- institutional regulations.

#### **The research environment**

The expectation for the research environment might be evidenced by the institution's:

- information about what constitutes a successful community of academic staff and postgraduate students engaged in research
- information about the quality of supervision available, including the research skills of prospective supervisors
- information about the facilities and equipment that will be made available to research students
- information about what provision should be made available to develop research and employment-related skills
- information about access to academic and welfare support facilities
- information about the opportunities for effective student representation
- information about what implementation and monitoring mechanisms need to be applied where a project is undertaken in collaboration with another organisation.

#### **The selection and admission of students**

The expectation for the selection and admission of students might be evidenced by the institution's:

- information about how to ensure that suitably experienced and trained staff are used in the selection process
- information about how interviews with candidates might be used as part of the admissions process (including arrangements for assessing the suitability of candidates based overseas)
- information about the use, where a prospective student lacks a first degree and/or a taught postgraduate award, of alternative mechanisms for assessing student qualification and preparedness, reflecting professional or other work experience
- information about the use of references and other information in helping to assess the suitability of a candidate to undertake postgraduate research
- information about whether the prospective student has, or is likely to secure, the necessary financial support to undertake their studies
- information about the assurance of language proficiency, particularly where programmes involve work in a language other than the candidate's native language. The definition of minimum proficiency levels and the provision of in-house training should be considered
- information about the balance of responsibilities between staff in local units and central postgraduate administration

- information about the maintenance of confidentiality throughout the admissions process.

### **Student information and induction**

The expectation for student information and induction might be evidenced by the institution's:

- information about the institution and its postgraduate portfolio
- information about the challenges that will typically face research students during the course of their studies and where guidance may be sought in the event of difficulties
- information about the institution's registration, enrolment, appeals and complaints procedures, assessment requirements, and research degree regulations
- information about the facilities that will be made available to the student and the institution's learning support infrastructure
- information about relevant health and safety and other legislative information; information about student welfare
- information about supervision arrangements, including evaluation, monitoring and review procedures
- information about skills training programmes (both those available and those that may be required)
- information about the opportunities that exist for meeting other research students, faculty and staff; information about the opportunities that exist to develop scholarly competence and independence of mind; postgraduate research programmes
- information about the opportunities that exist to share experience and understanding beyond a research student's immediate study area.

### **The approval of research projects**

The expectation for the approval of research projects might be evidenced by the institution's:

- information about how to establish a clear project proposal and the objectives of the project
- information about the relationship between the approval of the research project by academic peers and the admission of the student to the postgraduate programme
- information about the skills, knowledge and aptitude required by student and supervisor for successful completion of the project
- information about the resources (including staffing and facilities) needed to support the research project and arrangements for monitoring the continued availability of such resources
- information about arrangements for support and monitoring of students' progress during extended periods of off-campus fieldwork or work in collaborating organisations.

### **Skills training**

The expectation for skills training might be evidenced by the institution's:

- information about how students are enabled to develop analytical and research skills, including the understanding of project design and research methodologies, appropriate to the subject and programme of study
- information about how students are enabled to develop general and employment-related skills, including, for example, interpersonal and teamworking skills; project management, information retrieval and database management, written and oral presentational skills, career planning and advice and intellectual property rights management

- information about how students are enabled to develop language support and academic writing skills
- information about how students are enabled to develop training and support for those researchers who may be involved in teaching and demonstrating activities.

### **Supervision**

The expectation for supervision might be evidenced by the institution's:

- information about the provision of training for supervisors and continuing faculty/staff development; information about the provision of a point of contact if a supervisory team is appointed
- information about alternative arrangements where the supervisor(s) is unavailable to act for a temporary or extended period
- information about arrangements that ensure that supervisors are not overloaded
- frameworks for regular supervisor/research student interaction, with a minimum frequency of (and responsibility for initiating) scheduled review meetings between the student, supervisor(s) and, if appropriate, other individuals
- arrangements that enable students to be introduced to other researchers (and appropriate academic bodies and societies) in their field
- information about routes for the research student and supervisor(s) to seek independent advice should communication links within the relationship break down
- information about how support is provided to the supervisor(s) where serious concerns of student ability or application to the study programme have been identified
- information about the nature and frequency of contact between the supervisor(s) and research student
- information about the nature and adequacy of monitoring reports (including their production and agreement, institutional review mechanisms and feedback arrangements)
- information about the mechanisms for advising research students if desired academic Precepts have not yet been, or are unlikely to be, achieved
- information about the provision of counselling and advisory services
- information about the transfer arrangements between registration categories
- information about the mechanisms by which decisions to suspend or terminate a research student's registration may be taken.

### **Assessment**

The expectation for assessment might be evidenced by the institution's:

- information about the form in which postgraduate research assessment regulations and information should be made available to their research students, faculty/staff and external examiners, and how they draw attention to any exceptions or additional requirements that apply
- information about the timing of the provision of such information
- information about the mechanisms used for communicating deadlines in respect of the submission of research project work
- information about the mechanisms used for communicating procedures relating to the nomination of examiners, the examination process (including any oral examination), the process and time taken to reach a decision and the potential outcomes of the assessment
- information about the mechanisms used for the identification and maintenance of Precepts of research student achievement

- information about procedures for the appointment of at least two examiners of a postgraduate research dissertation or thesis, of whom at least one should be external to the institution
- information about how to ensure that assessment is undertaken only by those individuals with relevant qualifications and experience and with a clear understanding of the task
- information about under what circumstances (if at all) a student's supervisor should be an examiner
- information about the avoidance of conflicts of interest between internal or external examiners and researchers who have had a substantial direct involvement in the research student's work or whose work is the focus of the research project
- information about how students declare that the material presented for examination is their own work and has not been submitted for any other award (and, where relevant, how it relates to a group project)
- information about communication to the student and any sponsor of assessment outcomes and any consequent procedures
- information about the mechanisms used to secure and promulgate feedback
- information about representation on institutional progress monitoring and decision-making bodies
- information that demonstrates that the appeals procedures are clear and well publicised and serve to protect the rights of all concerned
- information about what mechanisms are used to communicate appeals procedures, how students may lodge an appeal and how decisions are taken to grant an appeal hearing
- information about the constitution of an appeals panel, and the relation of its members to those involved in the original assessment decision, how records are maintained of an appeal hearing and the mechanisms for communicating the results of an appeal hearing to interested parties.

## **Evaluation**

The expectation for evaluation might be evidenced by:

- the time taken to submit these and other materials for assessment
- pass and fail rates
- feedback received from research students and employers
- career progression information relating to full and, where appropriate, part-time research students
- comments received from external examiners
- the extent to which institutional research training programmes meet the Precepts set for such provision by the institution
- feedback received from research students, employers, sponsors and any other external funders.

## **Guidelines**

This relates to higher education research in the specific context of research degrees and particular requirements for doctorates and research master's degrees. It refers to the research environment and the supervisory process which are distinct requirements of research degrees and enable higher education institutions to provide an effective student experience and maintain academic Precepts for research degrees.

## **Further reading and QA resources**

[Advice and Guidance \(gaa.ac.uk\)](http://gaa.ac.uk): Guidance on Research Degrees

### Annex 3: Judgement framework for PREE

The judgement matrix below shows how findings are determined by the review panel.

Approved	Approved with recommendations	Approved with conditions	Not approved
All review criteria have been met.	All, or nearly all, applicable Standards have been met.	Most review criteria have been met.	Several review criteria have not been met or there are major gaps in one or more of the review criteria.
	Standards not met do not, individually or collectively, present any serious risks to the quality of learning opportunities in the programme.	Standards not met do not present any serious risks to the quality of learning opportunities in the programme.  Some moderate risks may exist which, without action, could lead to serious problems over time with the quality of learning opportunities in the programme.	Standards not met present serious risk(s), individually or collectively, to the quality of learning opportunities in the programme and limited controls are in place to mitigate the risk. Consequences of inaction in some areas may be severe.



## Annex 4: The role of the facilitator

The institution is invited to appoint a facilitator to support the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement. The role of the facilitator is intended to improve the flow of information between the panel and the institution. It is envisaged that the facilitator will be a member of the institution's staff from the programme team.

The role of the facilitator is to:

- act as the primary contact for the QAA Officer during preparations for the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, including at the on-site visit
- act as the review panel's primary contact during the on-site visit
- provide advice and guidance to the panel on the institution submission and any supporting documentation
- provide advice and guidance to the panel on the institution's structures, policies, priorities and procedures
- keep an updated list of evidence to be presented to the review panel throughout the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, to be confirmed by the QAA Officer
- ensure that the institution has a good understanding of the matters raised by the review panel, thus contributing to the effectiveness of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, and to the subsequent enhancement of quality and standards within the institution
- meet the review panel at the panel's request during the on-site visit, in order to provide further guidance on sources of information and clarification of matters relating to the institution's structures, policies, priorities and procedures
- work with the Lead Student Representative (LSR) to ensure that the student representative body is informed of, and understands, the progress of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement
- work with the LSR to facilitate the sharing of data between the institution and the student body in order that the student submission may be well informed and evidenced.

The facilitator will not be present for the review panel's private meetings. However, the facilitator will have the opportunity for regular meetings, so that both the panel and the institution can seek further clarification outside of the formal meetings. This is intended to improve communication between the institution and the panel during the on-site visit and enable institutions to gain a better understanding of the areas being investigated.

The facilitator is permitted to observe any of the other meetings that the panel has apart from those with students. Where the facilitator is observing, they should not participate in discussion unless invited to do so by the review panel.

The facilitator should develop a working relationship with the LSR that is appropriate to the institution and to the organisation of the student body. It is anticipated that the LSR will be involved in the oversight and possibly the preparation of the student submission, and with selecting students to meet the review panel during the on-site visit.

In some institutions, it may be appropriate for the facilitator to support the LSR in ensuring that the student representative body is fully aware of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, its purpose and the students' role within it. Where appropriate, and in agreement with the LSR, the facilitator might also provide guidance and support to student representatives when preparing the student submission and for meetings with the review panel.

## **Appointment and briefing**

The person appointed as facilitator must possess:

- a good working knowledge of the institution's quality assurance arrangements against a set of baseline regulatory requirements, its approach to monitoring and review, and an appreciation of quality and standards matters
- knowledge and understanding of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement
- the ability to communicate clearly, build relationships and maintain confidentiality
- the ability to provide objective guidance and advice to the review panel.

## **Protocols**

Throughout the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, the role of the facilitator is to help the review panel come to a clear and accurate understanding of the programme's quality assessment arrangements to ensure that the programme is able to deliver a consistently high quality student academic experience and that academic standards are secure.

The role requires the facilitator to observe objectively, to communicate clearly with the panel where requested, and to establish effective relationships with the QAA Officer and the LSR. The facilitator should not act as an advocate for the institution. However, the facilitator may legitimately:

- bring additional information to the attention of the panel
- seek to correct factual inaccuracy
- assist the institution in understanding matters raised by the panel.

The review panel will decide how best to use the information provided by the facilitator.

The facilitator is not a member of the panel and will not make judgements about the provision. The facilitator must observe the same conventions of confidentiality as the review panel.

In particular, written material produced by panel members is confidential, and no information gained may be used in a manner that allows individuals to be identified. However, providing appropriate confidentiality is observed, the facilitator may make notes on discussions with the panel and report back to other staff, so that the institution has a good understanding of the matters raised by the panel at this stage in the process. This can contribute to the effectiveness of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, and to the subsequent enhancement of quality and standards within the institution.

The facilitator will not have access to QAA's electronic communication system for review panels. The review panel also has the right to ask the facilitator to disengage from the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement at any time, if they consider that there are conflicts of interest, or that the facilitator's presence will inhibit discussions.

## **Annex 5: Student engagement in PREE (including the student submission)**

### **Introduction**

Students are one of the main beneficiaries of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE) and are, therefore, central to the process. In every Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement there are many opportunities for students to inform and contribute to the review process. Students are likely to be involved together with the institution in preparations for review and may produce material for it. The review panel will meet a representative selection of students and will work with the LSR, and students are likely to be involved in responding to the review as the institution develops and seeks to implement the action plan.

Students are also a vital part of QAA's processes. All review panels are suggested to include a student. Student reviewers are full members of review panels, contributing in the same way as other members.

QAA will help to brief and support the LSR. Institutions must support the participation of their students' union and/or representatives in the review, providing training, advice and access to information.

### **The Lead Student Representative**

The role of the Lead Student Representative (LSR) is designed to allow student representatives to play a central part in the organisation of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement. The LSR will oversee the production of the student submission.

It is up to the student representative body to decide who should take on the role of the LSR. QAA recognises that this might be a challenge in itself, but suggest that the LSR might be an officer from the students' union, an appropriate member of a similar student representative body, a student drawn from the institution's established procedures for course representation, the Education Officer, or equivalent. Where there is no student representative body in existence, QAA would suggest that institutions seek volunteers from within the student body to fulfil this role. It is possible for the student to also hold a staff position; however, the LSR cannot hold a quality-related or senior staff position.

Not all institutions are resourced to be able to provide the level of engagement required of the LSR, so QAA will be flexible about the amount of time that the LSR should provide.

It would be acceptable if the LSR represented a job-share or team effort, as long as it was clear with whom QAA should communicate. In all cases, QAA would expect the institution to provide as much operational and logistical support to the LSR as is feasible in undertaking their role and, in particular, to ensure that any relevant information or data held by the institution is shared with the LSR to ensure that the student submission is well informed and evidence-based.

The LSR should normally be responsible for:

- receiving copies of key correspondence from QAA
- organising or overseeing the writing of the student submission
- selecting students to meet the review panel
- observing and/or participating in the students meeting(s) - see note below
- advising the review panel during the on-site visit, on request

- attending the final on-site visit meeting
- liaising internally with the facilitator to ensure smooth communication between the student body and the institution
- disseminating information about the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement to the student body
- giving the students' comments on the draft report
- coordinating the students' input into the institution's action plan.

The LSR is permitted to observe any of the meetings that the review panel has with students. This is entirely voluntary and there is no expectation that the LSR should attend. The LSR should not participate in the panel's discussions with students unless invited to do so by the review panel. The LSR is not permitted to attend meetings that the panel has with staff, other than the final meeting on the last day of the on-site visit.

QAA is committed to enabling students to contribute to its review processes. The principal vehicles for students to inform this process are the student submission and the LSR. However, it may not be possible in all institutions to identify an LSR and/or for the students to make a student submission. In these circumstances, we may need to consider an alternative way of allowing students to contribute their views directly to the review panel.

## **Student submission**

### **Guidance on producing a student submission**

The function of the student submission is to help the review panel understand what it is like to be a student at that institution, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes. Where the student submission indicates significant problems in the institution's assurance of standards and quality, this may lead the review panel to spend longer at the institution than it would do if the submission suggests the institution is managing its responsibilities effectively. The student submission is, therefore, an extremely important piece of evidence.

### **Format, length and content**

The student submission may take a variety of forms, for example video, interviews, focus group presentations, podcast, or a written student submission. The submission should be concise and should provide an explanation of the sources of evidence that informed its comments and conclusions.

The student submission must include a statement of how it has been compiled, its authorship, and the extent to which its contents have been shared with and endorsed by other students.

The student submission should represent the views of as wide a student constituency as possible. Existing information should be used, such as results from internal student surveys and recorded outcomes of meetings with staff and students, rather than conducting surveys especially for the student submission.

When gathering evidence for and structuring the student submission, it will be helpful if account is taken of the advice given to institutions for constructing the self-evaluation document. The authors of the student submission might particularly wish to focus on students' views on:

- how effectively the institution sets and maintains the academic standards of its awards (or maintains the academic standards of the awards set by its partner university)

- how effectively the institution manages the quality of students' learning opportunities
- how effectively the institution manages the quality of the information it provides about the higher education it offers
- the institution's plans to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Reviewers will also be interested to know students' views on the effectiveness of their institution's pedagogical approaches in ensuring that the combined input of teaching staff and students enables students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes.

The student submission should not name, or discuss the competence of, individual members of staff. It should not discuss personal grievances. It should also seek to avoid including comments from individual students who may not be well placed to speak as representatives of a wider group.

### **Submission delivery date**

The student submission should be posted to the QAA secure electronic site seven weeks before the on-site visit. QAA will confirm the precise date in correspondence with the institution. The student submission is uploaded at the same time as the institution submission.

### **Sharing the student submission with the institution**

Given the importance of the student submission in the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, in the interests of transparency and fairness it must be shared with the institution - at the latest when it is uploaded to the secure electronic site.

### **Meetings with students and alumni as part of PREE**

Student representatives will normally be part of each of the meetings or briefings in the preparatory part of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement. In addition, during the review visit, the review panel will meet with a representative range of students and alumni. The LSR normally helps to select students and alumni to meet the panel and to brief them on the nature of the review process and their role within it.

### **Continuity**

The Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement occurs over a period of several months. It is likely that both the institution and its students will have been preparing well before the start of the on-site visit, and will continue to be involved afterwards. QAA expects institutions to ensure that students are fully informed and involved in the process throughout. QAA expects that the student representative body and the institution will wish to develop a means for regularly exchanging information about quality assessment and improvement, not only so that student representatives are kept informed about the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, but also to support general engagement with the quality assessment processes of the institution.

Once the on-site visit is over, QAA will invite the LSR to provide comments on the draft report's factual accuracy.

The institution is required to produce an action plan to respond to the review's findings. It is expected that the student representative body will contribute to the writing of the action plan, and in its annual update. There will also be an opportunity for students to contribute to the follow-up of the action plan that QAA will carry out.

## **Annex 6: Appointment, training and management of reviewers for doing PREE**

External Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE for EQA) is carried out by teams of peer reviewers. Peers are staff with senior-level expertise in the management and/or delivery of higher education provision, or students with experience in representing students' interests. They are appointed by QAA and will be required to have the expertise listed below. There are no other restrictions on what types of staff or students may become reviewers.

The credibility of the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement depends in large measure upon the currency of the knowledge and experience of review panels. QAA's preference, therefore, is for staff and student reviewers to be employed by institutions or enrolled on a programme of study, respectively. However, currency of knowledge and experience is not lost as soon as employment or study comes to an end. Thus, QAA allows students to continue as reviewers for a limited time after they have left higher education, and will also consider self-nominations from former staff who can demonstrate a continuing engagement with academic standards and quality.

Reviewers are identified either from nominations by institutions or self-nominations, as follows.

- Staff reviewers currently working for an institution must be nominated by their employer, as an indication of the employer's willingness to support the reviewer's commitment to the review process. Self-nominations from staff who are employed by a university will not be accepted.
- Former staff may nominate themselves for consideration. To be eligible for consideration, and in addition to meeting the selection criteria set out below, former staff must demonstrate a continuing and meaningful engagement with the assurance of academic standards and quality beyond any involvement they may have with QAA. This engagement could be manifest in a consultancy role or a voluntary post, such as membership of an institution's governing body.
- Student reviewers may be nominated by an institution or by a recognised students' union or equivalent, or nominate themselves. Student reviewers must be enrolled on a higher education programme or be a sabbatical officer of a recognised students' association at the time of nomination. Student reviewers may continue as reviewers for up to two academic years after they finish their studies or term as a sabbatical officer. Student reviewers cannot hold senior staff positions at institutions.

### **Reviewer selection criteria**

The essential criteria for staff reviewers are:

- experience in managing and assuring academic standards and the quality of higher education provision in a senior academic or professional support capacity at organisational and/or faculty or school level
- cross-programme experience (beyond a department or subject area) in contributing to the management of academic standards and/or quality enhancement or participating as a representative of students' interests
- thorough understanding of the content, role and practical application of Part 1 of the Pakistan Quality Assurance Framework
- working knowledge of the diversity of the Pakistan higher education sector

- the ability to assimilate a large amount of disparate information and analyse it to form reliable, evidence-based conclusions
- the ability to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive matters
- excellent oral and written communication skills
- the ability to work with electronic and/or web-based communication systems effectively
- the ability to work effectively as part of a team
- the ability to adhere to agreed protocols, procedures and deadlines.

The desirable criteria for staff reviewers are:

- experience of participating as a chair, panel member, assessor or equivalent in the monitoring and periodic review process of their own and/or other institutions/programmes
- experience of assessing the achievements of students on higher education programmes at their own institution and/or other institutions (for example as an external examiner)
- expertise in specific subject areas.

The essential selection criteria for student reviewers are:

- experience of participating, as a representative of students' interests, in contributing to the management of academic standards and/or quality OR demonstrable interest in ensuring that the student interest is protected
- general awareness of the diversity of the higher education sector and of the arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement
- the ability to assimilate a large amount of disparate information and analyse it to form reliable, evidence-based conclusions
- the ability to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive matters
- excellent oral and written communication skills
- the ability to work with electronic and/or web-based communication systems effectively
- the ability to work effectively as part of a team
- the ability to adhere to agreed protocols, procedures and deadlines.

The desirable criteria for student reviewers are:

- experience of conducting audits, reviews, assessments, accreditations, investigations or similar activities in educational or non-educational settings
- experience of engagement with sector bodies, preferably with regard to student engagement activities.

In making the selection of reviewers, QAA tries to make sure that a wide range of different institutions are represented in the pool of reviewers, and that the pool reflects - in aggregate - sectoral, discipline, geographical, gender and ethnic balances.

Successful nominees are inducted and trained by QAA so that they are familiar with the aims, objectives and procedures of the review process, and their own role. Nominees are only appointed as reviewers once they have completed their training to the satisfaction of QAA.

## **Reviewer management**

Reviewers are appointed on the basis that they agree to undertake, if requested, three Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancements per academic year. The

appointment will be reviewed after each year, but may be extended beyond this period by mutual agreement and subject to satisfactory performance.

At the end of each Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, QAA asks reviewers to complete a standard evaluation form. The form invites feedback on the respondent's own performance and that of the other reviewers. The QAA Officer coordinating the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement also provides feedback on each reviewer. QAA shares the feedback generated with reviewers at regular intervals, to allow them to understand, and reflect on, the views of their peers. The feedback is anonymous; those receiving the feedback cannot see who has provided it.

Reviewers with particularly good feedback are invited to provide further information for use in training or dissemination to other reviewers. Reviewers with weaker feedback may be offered additional support and/or released from the reviewer pool, depending on the nature of the feedback and its prevalence.



## **Annex 7: Writing a programme self-assessment document**

This annex demonstrates an effective approach to structuring and writing a programme self-assessment document.

### **A suggested structure of the programme self-assessment document**

The programme self-assessment document should first set out the context in which the institution is operating, briefly describe the programme under review, and make the panel aware of any recent (major) changes and their implications for safeguarding academic standards and the student academic experience. The programme self-assessment document should then go on to outline how the programme meets each of the programme Precepts in Part 1 of the Quality Assurance Framework.

#### **Section 1: Brief description**

The description should cover:

- the institution's mission and ethos
- recent major changes since the last QAA review
- implications of changes, challenges, strategic aims or priorities for safeguarding academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities
- details of the external reference points, other than the Qualifications Framework, which the programme is required to consider (for example, the requirements of accreditation councils and other professional bodies).

#### **Section 2: The track record in managing quality and standards**

Briefly describe the programme team's background and experience in managing quality and standards, including reference to the outcomes of previous external and internal review activities and the programme's responses. Where relevant, describe how the recommendations from the last external and internal reviews have been addressed, and how good practice identified has been built on. Refer to any action plans that have been produced as a result of reviews.

#### **Section 3: Precepts**

The programme-level Precepts apply to this area. These are detailed in Annex 2. A programme should comment on each Standard separately, focusing on:

- what you do
- how you do it
- why you do it that way
- how well you do it
- how you know how well you do it.

The institution should reference the evidence that is used to give assurance that these Precepts are being met and that the area is managed effectively, as well as any relevant data that can be used for benchmarking.

It is not the responsibility of the review panel to seek out this evidence and the selection of evidence is at the institution's discretion.

The same key pieces of evidence can be used in several different parts of the self-assessment. The review panel will find it difficult to complete the review without access to the following sets of information:

- policy, procedures and guidance on quality assurance and enhancement
- a diagram of the structure of the main committees which are responsible for the assurance of quality and standards; this should indicate both central and local (that department or similar) committees
- minutes of central quality assurance committees for the two academic years prior to the review
- overview reports (for example, periodic accreditation report) where these have a bearing on the assurance of quality and standards for the two years prior to the review.

## **Drafting**

Circulating the draft programme self-assessment document to higher education staff (and, if appropriate, students and other stakeholders) for comment, widens the perspective and helps to keep colleagues informed and engaged in the process. Ideally, the document should be owned by many, but read as one voice.

## **Paragraphs**

It is important to make the programme self-assessment document as easily navigable as possible as it is used by the review panel throughout the review. To help in this we ask that institutions number each paragraph sequentially throughout the document. That is to say, do not start new paragraph numbers for each section.

## **Referencing evidence**

It is vital that the programme self-assessment document identifies the evidence that illustrates or substantiates the narrative.

In order for the review panel to be able to operate efficiently, both in advance and during the review visit, it is important to ensure that all evidence documents are clearly labelled and numbered.

It is equally important to ensure that each evidence document is clearly referenced to the appropriate text in the commentary using the same labelling and numbering system and providing paragraph numbers and dates of minutes as appropriate.

QAA will explain by email how the programme self-assessment document and supporting evidence should be uploaded to the secure electronic site. The QAA Officer will inform the institution of the date by which this must be done.

The table below shows the key technical points to consider when compiling the programme self-assessment document and supporting evidence.

**Table 3: Technical requirements for the programme submission**

Technical requirements for the programme submission	
Indicative limits	<p>The indicative length of the programme self-assessment document should be 40 pages. This will include any diagrams and charts.</p> <p>To ensure the submission is clear and legible for the review panel, the following guidelines on formatting must be adhered to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arial font, 11-point (minimum)</li> <li>• single-line spacing (minimum)</li> <li>• 2 cm margins (minimum).</li> </ul> <p>In support of the programme self-assessment document, we would expect to receive no more than 50 pieces of evidence for each Precept.</p>
Overall presentation	<p>The programme self-assessment document and supporting evidence should be supplied in a coherent structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all files together, with no subfolders or zipped files</li> <li>• documents clearly labelled numerically, beginning 001, 002, 003 and so on</li> <li>• ensure that each document has a unique reference number - do not number the same document with different numbers and submit it multiple times.</li> </ul>
File naming convention	<p>Only use alphanumeric characters (a-z and 0-9); for spaces use the underscore (_) and the hyphen (-).</p> <p>Do <b>not</b> use full stops and any other punctuation marks or symbols, as these will not upload successfully.</p>
File types to avoid	<p>Do <b>not</b> upload:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shortcut files (also known as .lnk and .url files)</li> <li>• temporary files beginning with a tilde (~)</li> <li>• administrative files such as thumbs.db and .DS_Store.</li> </ul>
<p>For technical assistance with uploading files, please contact the QAA Officer or QAA IT team.</p>	

## Annex 8: Sample schedule for the review visit

A typical schedule for a one-day programme review visit might look like this. The actual schedule will be determined by the review panel, in agreement with the programmes in the subject area under scrutiny.

Time	One-day example
08.00-09.00	Review panel arrival and meeting alone
09.00-10.00	<b>Meeting 1</b> with department heads, programme leaders, senior management staff
10.00-10.15	QAA team private meeting
10.15-11.15	<b>Meeting 2</b> with a representative group of students and alumni
11.15-11.30	QAA team private meeting
11.30-12.30	<b>Meeting 3</b> with representatives from programme teams who are responsible for the delivery of teaching and assessment
12.30-13.30	QAA team private meeting and working lunch
13.30-14.30	<b>Meeting 4</b> with a group of staff responsible for delivery of support services, for example academic support, library, IT, counselling, career services
14.30-14.45	QAA team private meeting
14.45-15.30	<b>Meeting 5</b> with employer and other key stakeholders
15.30-16.00	QAA team private meeting
16.00-17.00	<b>Meeting 6</b> - final meeting with department heads, programme leaders, the facilitator and LSR
17.00	<p><b>Review panel meets alone to agree key findings</b></p> <p>The key findings consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the overall judgement about whether the institution meets all review criteria</li> <li>• specific conditions</li> <li>• recommendations (and degree of urgency)</li> <li>• features of good practice</li> </ul>

## Annex 9: Meeting protocol for review visits

This annex sets out QAA's protocol for QAA review panel meetings with representatives of the institution undergoing the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE). The availability of time during a review is always limited and it is important the review panel can make best use of the available time in its meetings with staff and students, and other key stakeholders. We respectfully ask institutions undergoing PREE to abide by this protocol.

A schedule of meetings is agreed in advance of the review visit. Any suggested changes that are proposed during the review visit should be discussed between the QAA Officer and the facilitator at the earliest opportunity.

The people attending a meeting are agreed in advance with the institution. Any changes to personnel or students attending should be notified to the QAA Officer at the earliest opportunity.

Numbers attending meetings are limited. Experience tells us that smaller meetings are more effective than larger meetings. Meetings with staff are normally expected to include no more than 10 people plus the review panel. Student meetings normally involve no more than 12 students plus the review panel. This allows for more in-depth discussion and for all to take part.

Your institution is asked to provide a room for each meeting that can comfortably accommodate the number of people attending sitting at a table.

It is not usual for there to be presentations during meetings. Meetings are question and answer sessions. An exception may be made in the case of the first meeting the panel holds with your institution, but any presentation should be agreed in advance with the QAA Officer and should be brief (for example, 15 minutes).

All meetings during the review are led by QAA. Each meeting will be chaired on a rotational basis by a member of the review panel.

Meetings will start on time and will not be extended beyond the end time published in the review timetable. A meeting may finish earlier than the published end time.

Name plates should be provided for all meeting attendees, including the review panel. These should include name and job title, or course title in the case of students.

The QAA Officer (or their appointee) will keep the record of the meeting and will be the only person using a laptop.

No laptops or tablets should be used during in-person meetings. Mobile phones should be switched off prior to attending the meeting. This ensures that everyone's full attention is on the meeting.

Those attending a meeting should arrange to be available, uninterrupted, for the duration of the meeting and not leave the meeting except through illness, fire alarm or another emergency.

Staff of your institution should be briefed not to interrupt a meeting when it is in progress.

No food or drinks, other than water, should be served during the meeting. It is important that the review panel, institution staff and students should be able to concentrate on the meeting.

Staff and students should be encouraged to speak freely during meetings. The record of the meeting does not identify individuals, and neither will they be identified in the published report.

Meetings with students must not be attended by staff of your institution. If a student is also a member of staff, he or she should not attend meetings the review panel holds with students.

## Annex 10: Guidance on producing an action plan

### Guidance for closing the loop

#### Background

Following the Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement, the programme team will be expected to develop an action plan that addresses the areas for development and specified improvements identified. This action plan should be produced jointly with student representatives, or representatives should be able to post their own commentary on the action plan. This action plan should be signed off by the Departmental Head.

The programme team will be expected to update the action plan annually, again in conjunction with student representatives, until actions have been completed. The Programme Quality Assessment and Effectiveness unit (IQAE) should support programmes to complete an action plan, monitoring their progress within agreed timescales and confirming that the actions taken have had a positive impact.

An example of action plan is provided below, demonstrating what should be included in the action plan.

#### Example action plan

Recommendation or good practice	Action to be taken	Date for completion	Action by	Success indicators
Ensure that all higher education student representatives have access to training and ongoing support to ensure they can fulfil their roles effectively	Develop and implement a training programme and induction pack for higher education student representatives	Insert appropriate date	Senior Management Team	All new higher education student representatives receive an induction pack and undertake training prior to the first student-staff liaison meeting

#### What do we mean by these headings?

##### Recommendation or good practice

As identified by the review panel and contained in the review report.

##### Action to be taken

The programme team should state how it proposes to address each of the recommendations or good practice in this column. Actions should be specific, proportionate, measurable and targeted at the issue or problem identified by the review panel. Multiple actions may be required.

##### Date for completion

The institution should specify dates for when the actions proposed in the previous column will be completed within the timescale specified by the review panel. The more specific the action, the easier it will be to set a realistic target date. Multiple dates may be required for each part of the action.

**Action by**

The programme team should identify the person or committee with responsibility for ensuring that the action has been taken. If a person is responsible, the action plan should state their role rather than their name.

**Success indicators**

The programme team should identify how it will know - and how it will demonstrate - that a recommendation or good practice has been successfully addressed. Again, if there is a specific action and a clear date for completion, it will be easier to identify suitable success indicators.



## **Annex 11: Appeals against the outcome of a Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement**

### **What is an appeal?**

An appeal is a challenge by an institution against the findings of a Programme Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE).

Appeals are distinct from complaints. Complaints are an expression of dissatisfaction with services that QAA provides, or actions that QAA has taken. The appeals procedure is not designed to accommodate or consider complaints. Where a complaint is submitted with an appeal, it is stayed until the completion of the appeals procedure, in order that the investigation of the complaint does not prejudice, and is not seen to prejudice, the handling of the appeal.

### **Submission of appeals**

Appeals are submitted under QAA's Appeals Procedures. This is an internal process and does not require legal representation. Submissions are drafted by the appealing institution ('the institution') and are submitted to QAA.

Institutions have one week (five working days) from the receipt of the unpublished final report to indicate their intent to appeal. An appeal can only be lodged during the two-week submission window, which begins on receipt of the unpublished final report. Appeals can only be based on the unpublished final report. Appeals submitted at any other stage of the review process cannot be accepted.

All institutions are eligible to appeal against unsatisfactory judgements. For the purposes of PREE, unsatisfactory judgements are those which require follow-up action to complete the review, namely:

- approved with conditions
- not approved.

Differentiated judgements, as defined in the handbook above, may only be appealed to the extent that they are negative. It is not possible to appeal a positive judgement.

Institutions may choose not to appeal, in which case QAA will proceed to publish the review report on its website.

### **Grounds for appeal**

Appeals can be lodged on the grounds of Procedural Irregularity or New Material. 'Procedural Irregularity' refers to an irregularity in the conduct of the review such that the legitimacy of the decision(s) reached is/are called into question.

'New Material' refers to material that was in existence at the time the review panel made its judgement, which, had it been made available, would have influenced the judgements of the panel, and in relation to which the institution must provide a good reason<sup>1</sup> for it not having been provided to the review panel.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'good reason' for non-provision requirement under the ground of New Material will not be considered satisfied in cases that allege solely that the review panel did not specifically ask to see the New Material, or that the limitation on upload of documents restricted the provider's ability to present the New Material.

Grounds for appeal must be clearly articulated in the appeal submission and supported by documentary evidence where possible. Appeal reviewers will not have access to the original evidence upload, nor to the evidence base collated during the course of the review, and so supporting evidence on which an appellant institution wishes to rely must be submitted with the appeal. Evidence must be relevant and pertinent to the case for appeal. It is not acceptable to include unreferenced evidence, nor to submit multiple documents that have already been considered in the course of the review.

## Communication

When an institution submits an appeal, contact with any PREE reviewers and QAA Officers ceases immediately, and the institution's main contacts become the QAA Governance team. Other QAA staff and reviewers should not enter into any direct communication with the institution after the receipt of an appeal, and should forward any communication that they do receive to the QAA Governance team. The institution should make no attempt to contact QAA staff outwith the Governance team.

## Appeal reviewers

All appeal reviewers are assigned on the basis that they have no real or apparent conflict of interest that could affect their ability to consider the appeal impartially and are asked to confirm that they are not aware of any such conflict before they are appointed. QAA keeps a record of responses.

## Timeline of activity

The standard timeline for this part of the process is given in the table below. Please note that the deadlines in this timeline may be amended to accommodate QAA office closure, including Pakistan public holidays. The precise deadline for resolution of an appeal case will be confirmed in writing by QAA.

**Table 4: Timeline of follow-up activity and appeals**

Working weeks from on-site visit	Negative outcome (no appeal)	Negative outcome (appeal)
Week +1	Draft report is sent to institution and Lead Student Representative for comments on factual accuracy. Relevant partner degree-awarding bodies or awarding organisations are copied in.	
Week +3	Institution and Lead Student Representative provide comments on factual accuracy (incorporating any comments from awarding bodies or organisations) to QAA.	
Week +5	QAA Officer considers corrections and produces final report.  Confirmed judgements and final report sent to BAQA.	
Week +6 <b>Week 1</b>	Institution indicates intention not to appeal to the QAA Officer	Institution indicates intention to appeal to the QAA Officer

Week +7 <b>Week 3</b>	QAA publishes reports	Institution submits appeal and supporting evidence to QAA  Appeal process begins
Week +9 <b>Week 5</b>		Appeal reviewer is selected by QAA  Appeal reviewer decides whether the case should be rejected or referred for consideration to appeal panel
Week +10 <b>Week 6</b>		Institution informed of outcome of preliminary screening
Week +11 <b>Week 7</b>		Review panel submits its comments on the appeal
Week +12 <b>Week 8</b>		Appeal panel considers all evidence, including the review panel submission and reaches a collective decision
Week +13 <b>Week 9</b>		Appeal outcome reported to the institution by QAA
Week +15 <b>Week 11</b>		If the appeal is not upheld, QAA publishes the review report

## The appeals procedure in detail

### Appeal intent indication submitted - week 1, that is up to 5 working days

The institution indicates whether or not it intends to appeal an outcome by emailing the QAA Officer overseeing the review. QAA will not consider an expression of intent to appeal to be binding on the institution; if the institution decides, having indicated its intent, that it does not wish to appeal, or does not submit a valid appeal by the submission deadline, QAA will proceed to prepare the review report for publication.

### Appeal submitted - week 3

The institution submits an appeal along with supporting documentation to QAA's Head of Governance, within two weeks of the receipt of the unpublished final report.

The appeal submission must be made on the PREE Appeal Submission Form, and must be focused on the specific reason for appeal, including only directly relevant supporting documentation.

The Head of Governance will identify a suitable PREE appeal reviewer to undertake the preliminary screening of the appeal. This is a trained PREE reviewer who has not had any involvement to date in the particular institution's PREE.

The institution has the opportunity to notify QAA of any conflicts of interest that it reasonably considers any individual appeal reviewer to have at the time of submission. Appeal reviewers remain anonymous. Institutions may not request that particular appeal reviewers hear their case, nor attempt to influence the allocation of the appeal other than through the procedure for objections with the appeal submission.

### **Preliminary screening - week 5**

The Appeal Reviewer will undertake a preliminary consideration of the case. They will review the unpublished final report, the completed PREE Appeal Submission Form and associated evidence, and decide whether the case should be rejected or referred for consideration by an appeal panel.

The Appeal Reviewer will only reject an appeal where there is no realistic prospect of it being upheld. The purpose of this stage is to ensure that spurious and unsubstantiated appeals are rejected without the need for them to be fully considered. The threshold for referral is set low.

There is no appeal from, or review of, the Appeal Reviewer's decision. Where the Appeal Reviewer rejects an appeal, the Governance team will inform the institution in writing. The PREE Appeals Procedure will then end at this point. Where the Appeal Reviewer refers the appeal to a panel, the Governance team will inform the institution in writing.

### **Review panel response to the appeal - week 7**

Where an appeal is referred to a panel, the appeal submission is forwarded to the original review panel for their comment.

The review panel, led by a QAA Officer, will compile a collective response, which must also be submitted in standard format. A copy of the review panel's comments will be sent to the institution for information.

### **The panel hearing - week 8**

The appeal panel will consist of three trained reviewers, one of whom will act as Chair.

The hearing is normally conducted as a formal meeting, in person, attended by the panel members and a member of the Governance team, who will act as a clerk. The location and date of the hearing is never disclosed to the institution, nor to the review panel.

The panel will consider the unpublished final report, the completed PREE Appeal Submission Form and evidence, and the review panel's response and any appended evidence, and will seek to reach a decision on the case in one sitting. The panel will make a collective decision.

### **Appeal outcomes - week 9**

The Governance team will compile the outcomes of the appeal panel and will notify the institution explaining the outcomes and the reasons for the decision. This completes the appeal process.

## **January 2023**

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