Academic Quality Framework

Faculty Review Process

**Approved by Academic Council
1st December 2021**

Table of Contents

Document Control Summary

Area	Document Information
Author	Academic Affairs
Owner	Academic Affairs
Reference number	QF - FRP - 01
Version	1
Status	Approved
Approved by / to be approved by	Academic Council
Approval date	01.12.2021
Document Classification	TU Dublin Internal/Wide

1. Context

1.1 It is University policy to carry out an internal cycle of Faculty Reviews on an ongoing basis for purposes of quality assurance and quality enhancement, as per relevant statutory obligations. Best practice guidelines require ongoing monitoring and periodic reviews of Faculties, including reviewing of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures, to ensure that they achieve their objectives and respond to the needs of students and society at large. The intention of such reviews is to lead to continuous improvement of designated activities, hence, any actions planned or taken as a result of the reviews are communicated to all stakeholders.

1.2 These procedures should be read in conjunction with the Management of the Quality Enhancement of Academic Programmes. Faculties should consult the Academic Affairs website for records of Annual Quality Reports (AQR) to QQI, outcomes of internal quality surveys, and the suite of current national and international best practice guidelines.

1.3 The rationale for Faculty Reviews embodies the requirements in international best practice and legislation requirements and regulatory guidelines.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this document is to outline the policies and procedures relating to the review of a TU Dublin Faculty.

2.2 The purpose of a Faculty Review is to:

- Ensure, through structured collation of evidence and critical reflections, that the Faculty can plan academic programme delivery, research and engagement activities across its constituent Schools and its strategic

development in a manner compatible with the Faculty (encompassing constituent Schools) and University objectives, and towards impactful contribution to the overall University Mission and Strategic Plan.

- Ensure that University policies, particularly those relating to the implementation of quality assurance and enhancement processes, are effective at Faculty level.

- Consider the Faculty's approach to engagement activities, including relationships with the professions, industry and public bodies, and its outreach and engagement with society and community.

- Benefit from objective critique from expert Review Panel members external to the Faculty, according it the opportunity for benchmarking with similar Faculties nationally and internationally.

- Ensure that the Faculty is contributing to the University performance targets and impacts in equality, diversity and inclusion.

3. Scope

Procedures covered in this document relate to quality review of Faculties in TU Dublin in order to ascertain:

3.1   Observance, effectiveness and rigour of internal quality assurance protocols within the Faculty under review.

3.2   Contribution of the Faculty under review to the strategic aims and initiatives of the University, and how they are objectively addressed and related performance is measured in the broad contexts of the University's thematic goals in the Strategic Plan.

4. Faculty Review Procedure

4.1 The TU Dublin cycle of internal reviews is proposed by Academic Affairs and agreed at Academic Council. It is intended that the Faculty Reviews will inform and contribute to the Institutional Review (CINNTE Reviews).

4.2 A Faculty Review shall be formally launched by each Faculty under guidance of Academic Affairs. Academic Affairs will write to the Faculty Dean at least 18 months prior to the Review Panel visit date, specifically requesting nomination of the external Review Panel members. The full Faculty Review process is shown in the flow chart in Section 10 of these procedures.

4.3 Panel composition will be determined per the University guidelines for such nominations as outlined under Section 5.1.

4.4 All communication with the nominated panel and panel members will be through Academic Affairs.

4.5 Academic Affairs will liaise with the selected panel nominees to confirm the composition of the final review team and to confirm availability and preferred review dates. Subsequently, Academic Affairs will liaise with the Faculty Dean (or nominee) to confirm suitable review dates aligned with the panel members' preferences.

5. Review Panel

5.1 Panel Composition and Member Nominations

The composition of a Faculty Review Panel will typically include a Chair, who will be a senior academic external to the University, a Vice-Chair, who will be a senior academic external to the Faculty and nominated members, which will include at least two members external to the University and two internal members from outside the Faculty being reviewed.

5.1.1. The Faculty under review shall establish a Faculty Review Coordination Committee (FRCC), from the ranks of its own academic and professional services staff. The FRCC will report to the Faculty Board.

5.1.2. The FRCC will also include student and/or graduate representation, to represent learning experiences in both undergraduate and postgraduate Faculty offerings, and apprenticeship and part-time programmes offerings across the Faculty. Students on the committee should be representative of the range of Schools, including considerations of equality and diversity of the inherent student population in Faculty's constituent Schools.

5.1.3. The FRCC shall identify External Experts[1] in the academic disciplines covered by the Faculty under review, including at least two members from relevant industry/professional practice. The proposed External Experts shall have demonstrated leadership experience in a University setting, industry or professional practice. Expertise shall adequately cover: Teaching, Learning and Assessment; Engagement; and Research.

5.1.4. Upon notification of the start of review planning process, the Faculty shall provide an external panel nominees shortlist as set out in the External Panel Member Nomination Form. Any conflicts of interest, current or previous associations between a proposed external panel member, and the Faculty under review must be declared in the initial review consultation process, as per requirement in the External Panel Member Nomination Form.

5.1.5. The External Panel Member Nomination Form shall provide sufficient background information/profile of the nominated external panel member to allow for an informed decision on final panel selection. Where profile or background information is not accessible on the internet or other open/public

---

[1] The number will be determined according to the range and diversity of elements of the Faculty under review. The number of TU Dublin members in the Review Panel shall not exceed the number of External Experts. Both the current and recent (within 5 years) external examiners of Faculty programmes shall not be eligible for this role.

information sources, Academic Affairs will contact the nominees directly to request CVs.

5.1.6.   Academic Affairs will consider the shortlist of the proposed reviewers in consultation with the Faculty Dean. If the Faculty to be reviewed does not provide nominees for the Review Panel by the agreed deadline, Academic Affairs will propose external members of the Review Panel.

5.1.7.   The nominations shall be considered, approved and selected by Academic Affairs and noted at the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (sub-committee of Academic Council).

5.1.8.   The Review Panel composition shall proactively account for gender balance and reflect the spirit of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

5.1.9.   A representative from Academic Affairs will attend the Review Panel meetings to provide advice and will draft the Faculty Review Report based on the inputs from the other Panel members.

5.2   Panel Objectives and Functions

5.2.1.   The overall objective of the Review Panel is to verify that the Faculty can plan and coordinate its academic programme delivery, research and engagement activities across the constituent Schools and its strategic development in a manner compatible with the Faculty objectives, while contributing to the overall University Mission and Strategic Plan. It is also intended to draw parity with best practice, and to make the necessary recommendations for performance enhancement where justified.

5.2.2.   The Review Panel will specifically evaluate:

- The alignment of the Faculty's Strategic Plan to the overall TU Dublin Strategic Plan.

- The Faculty's role and the impacts of its contribution to the agreed KPI's under [TU Dublin Strategic Intent](#) themes.

- The Faculty's approach to ensuring University policies, particularly those relating to the implementation of quality assurance and enhancement processes, are being implemented effectively at Faculty level.

- The organisation and management of external/civic engagement activities, including internationalisation.

- Intended roles and performance of the Faculty's linked and collaborative provisions, including synergy with other Faculties.

- The quality and management of research activities within the Faculty, including internal and external research partnerships, business spinouts and IP.

- The Faculty's approach to considering and acting on stakeholder feedback and student data, such as profile (including diversity), assessment, progression and graduation.

- The Faculty's approach to coordinated synergy in access, transfer and progression and new programme development by its Schools.

5.2.3. The Review Panel will be tasked with:

- Considering the Faculty Self-Evaluation Report (FSER), including any supporting information and onsite evidence as presented.

- Participation in the planned site-visit to the Faculty under review to scrutinise the evidence.

- Reviewing any other Faculty activities that contribute to meeting the strategic intents and student learning experience in the Faculty, per the FSER.

- Preparing an interim report specifying its findings and recommendations, communication of the same to the Faculty at the Exit Meeting.

- Finalising the Faculty Review Report that will provide the basis for the subsequent action plan emanating from the Faculty Review.

6. Review Documentation

6.1 Outline of Material Relevant to the Submission

6.1.1. The Faculty Self-Evaluation-Report (FSER) shall be the primary documentation to be submitted as part of the Faculty Review process.

6.1.2. Other supporting elements for the submission, which will vary by Faculty areas, may include (but are not limited to) the following information:

- Previous Faculty Review Report;

- School Review Reports;

- Overview of the Faculty staff profile;

- Faculty Strategic Plan, including its alignment to the overall TU Dublin Strategic Intent and University Compact with the HEA;

- Outcomes of relevant stakeholder consultation processes;

- Faculty profile comprising staff and student statistical information (e.g., disciplines, trends in applications, enrolment progression, completion, retention, etc.);

- List of programmes and associated professional, regulatory or accreditation status;

- Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan;

- Faculty Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies;

- Faculty organisation chart in the context of overall University structure;

- Current information on teaching and learning grants, research grants and other non-Exchequer income;

- Relevant budgetary information;

- Outline of processes for capturing, analysing and considering stakeholder feedback;

- Minutes of Faculty Board meetings and other relevant Academic Committees;

6.1.3. The supporting elements above are in no particular order. Some will be evidential support to the narrative in the FSER and will require submission to the Review Panel in advance of the visit or supplied in electronic format in agreed media or shared repository specific to the Faculty Review.

6.1.4. Other appropriate evidence to be available to the Review Panel during the site visit.

6.2   Structure and Contents of Faculty Self-Evaluation Report (FSER)

6.2.1   With a formative objective at its core, the FSER will provide self-critical evidence-based reflection of the Faculty's strengths, challenges and opportunities.

6.2.2   Overall, the FSER narrative will articulate the Faculty's approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement in its operations (including any linked or collaborative provisions); specifically, a critical self-reflection of the effectiveness of the key academic functions, roles and committees.

6.2.3   It is recommended that the FSER document should be no longer than 50 pages, allowing for additional appendices where necessary. Guidelines on the structure and context of the FSER are outlined in the indicative FSER Template. A standardised FSER is not envisaged due to the diversity of the Faculties in the University.

6.3   Consideration of Faculty Self-Evaluation Report by Faculty Board

6.3.1   Prior to forwarding of the FSER to Academic Affairs for the formal Review Panel process, the draft FSER will be considered by the Faculty Board and any matters arising will be reverted back to the FRCC for appropriate amendments. The final document will be forwarded to Academic Affairs to proceed to the review stage.

6.3.2   In order to approve progression to review stage, Faculty Board will ensure that:

- The FSER complies with the relevant academic quality review procedures.

- The outcomes of the previous Faculty Review were integrated into the Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan, and appropriately executed in the period covered by FSER.

7. Protocol for Faculty Review Site Visits

7.1 Pre-Visit Planning

7.1.1 Planning for the site-visit to the Faculty under review is central to successfully conducting a review. During the pre-visit planning, Academic Affairs will liaise closely with the FRCC. The objective is to develop and agree upon the steps and timelines for the review. The visit dates will be agreed upon during the pre-visit planning. A typical schedule for the site-visit will be 2 to 3 days (depending on the size and diversity in the Faculty). Academic Affairs may also seek inputs from the panel Chair during this planning stage.

7.1.2 Academic Affairs will be responsible for all contacts with the internal and external panel members regarding the review, including arrangements for travel and accommodation for external panel members, as may be required. However, the Faculty shall have allocated the necessary budget to cover the costs associated with participation of external panel members.

7.1.3 Academic Affairs will prepare the agenda and timetable for the review visit in consultation with the FRCC.

7.1.4 The Faculty under review will be responsible for organising the relevant staff and stakeholder inputs and meetings and arranging for access and visits to the relevant facilities and services. Stakeholders will include (but are not limited to) staff, students on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes within the Faculty, graduates from relevant programme pathways, and a selected range of employers of its graduates.

7.1.5 The FRCC will arrange for a pre-visit conference call for the Review Panel. This is intended to provide an opportunity for panel members to seek clarifications or further information related to the submitted FSER documentation.

7.2   Review Panel Visit

7.2.1   The itinerary of the Review Panel visit shall be arranged to accommodate the indicative Faculty Review Agenda and timetable from the pre-visit planning and as provided by Academic Affairs. The itinerary will describe headline items in the programme of work to be undertaken.

7.2.2   In order for the Review Panel visit to progress in an efficient and timely manner, the following facilities shall be provided by the Faculty under review:

- Meeting rooms to accommodate the expected diverse meetings such as with the Faculty management team and the FRCC (where necessary, a representative group of the academic, administrative and technical staff not on the FRCC may also be requested to join this meeting), current/continuing undergraduate and postgraduate students, graduates, employers and any other relevant stakeholders.

- The Faculty will arrange a meeting room where the Review Panel can meet privately, and which can be used for refreshments and lunch.

- If requested by the Panel Chair, the Faculty shall arrange for a guided tour for the panel members to the principal facilities and ancillary services/service points that relate to its programme.

7.2.3   The visit will end with an Exit Meeting, in which the panel will provide the indicative outcomes of the review exercise.

7.3   Exit Meeting

7.3.1   The Exit Meeting accords the Review Panel the opportunity to communicate their provisional findings to the Faculty Dean, Faculty Head of Teaching and Learning, and the Chair of the FRCC. The Panel Chair (or the nominated

external member of the Review Panel) will present their findings in the form of headlines/points covering salient observations, commendations, and recommendations for improvement.

7.3.2   The purpose of the Exit Meeting is to provide initial feedback, and to give points of clarification. It is not intended as a discussion of findings as they are at this point provisional, and may be amended following clarification and further evidence, post-visit discussion and reflections by panel members. The indicative period for receiving the Panel Report by the School under review will be communicated at this meeting.

7.3.3   In keeping with best practice, after the site visit, any contact between the Faculty under review and the Review Panel on any matters relating to the FSER, the concluded site visit, or the Faculty Review Report will be conducted through Academic Affairs.

8.   Faculty Review Report

8.1   Overall, quality reviews are expected to provide formative feedback to the Faculty. In particular, the review process outcomes are aimed at quality enhancement. Whereas the Faculty Review Report will be expected to draw substantially from the FSER in both structure and content, it will mainly pitch its commendations and recommendations purely from a critical review of the FSER. This will have been corroborated with evidence obtained both orally in the scheduled review meetings, and in direct observations during the panel visit.

8.2   The Panel Report will be prepared by the Review Panel as Peer Reviewers. Therefore, the FRCC should take cognisance that this has an important bearing on the selection of the Review Panel, specifically the External Experts on the panel.

8.3   It will be expected that, within two weeks after the site visit, the representative from Academic Affairs that attended the Review Panel meetings will have developed a draft report, with critical and well supported views and opinions of the Panel to validate its observations, commendations and recommendations.

8.4   The Review Panel and Academic Affairs will agree a timeline for finalisation of the report, sign-off and returning to the Academic Affairs. Typically, this will be within 6 weeks after the end of site visit (having accounted for any time period that may be required to consider additional evidence that would have been requested at the visit).

8.5   Once finalised, the Panel Report will be sent to the Faculty Dean to identify any factual errors, and if required, a brief response to recommendations and/or feedback to panel on the review process. The rejoinder will be limited to the report contents only, and this is not an opportunity to initiate any further dialogue on the Faculty Review.

8.6   Any minor editorial corrections will be completed in consultation with the Chair of the Review Panel. At this stage, any editorial aspect demanding more significant alteration to parts or sections of the draft report, and which arise from more considered reflection on the initial draft, will be considered exceptional. These may necessitate a coordinated resolution between Academic Affairs, and the Review Panel Chair with possible consultation with specific panel members.

8.7   All subsequent communication between Academic Affairs and the Faculty will be conducted through the Faculty Dean, or nominee.

8.8   To enable consistency in reporting, Academic Affairs will retain editorial responsibility for the final Faculty Review Report, which, when completed, will be forwarded to the Faculty Dean, University Registrar and the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

8.9   Completed Review Reports incorporating the associated action plans will be published on the TU Dublin Academic Affairs website, in accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

9.   Post-Review Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan

9.1   The Faculty will have developed an action plan within the FSER, which will have been updated to include additional actions to address the recommendations of the Review Panel.

9.2   Upon approval and publication of the Review Report, Academic Affairs will liaise with the reviewed Faculty to agree on the period/duration within which the actions will be completed and submitted.

9.3   When completed, the Faculty Board will submit the response to the Review Panel's report, including the updated action plan, to Academic Affairs and incorporates the actions into the Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan.

9.4   Academic Affairs will send a copy of the report to the Review Panel members, who may submit additional comments regarding the Faculty responses. The Faculty Review Report, the Faculty's responses, including the updated Faculty action plan, and any additional comments from the Panel members will be tabled at the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee for review and approval. The Faculty Dean will be expected to attend the committee meeting at which the documents are being considered, to speak to the Faculty's response and action plan, and to confirm that the Faculty Quality Enhancement Plan has been updated accordingly.

9.5   If the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee determines actions are required at a University level, it can add those actions to the University Quality Enhancement Plan (see Annual Academic Quality Enhancement Process).

9.6   Academic Affairs will formally arrange with the Faculty Dean for verification and sign-off of completion of the Faculty Review process, and final status reporting to the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and Academic Council for noting.

9.7   The final status report will be lodged into the Academic Affairs repository for feeding into the subsequent Institutional Review (QQI CINNTE Review).

9.8   The Faculty shall submit a Progress Report to the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee within one year after submission of their response to the Review Panel's report.

10.   Faculty Review Process Flow Chart