

Substantive Change Report by Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Register Committee

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Date 2016-10-19

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Decision of:	19/10/2016
Report received on:	22/08/2016
Agency registered since:	2013-10-23
Last external review report:	July 2013
Registered until:	31/07/2018
Absented themselves from decision-making:	
Attachments:	1. Substantive Change Report and Annex 2. Request for further information of 07/09/2016

The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 22 August 2016 and additional information presented in the annexed 'Introduction to International Quality Review'.

To form a comprehensive view on this activity, the Register Committee requested (see attached: request of 07/09/2016) and received from QAA the 'International Quality Review Handbook', which is made available to successful applicant institutions. The document complements the public 'Introduction to International Quality Review' with descriptions about QAA's new review process in greater detail.

The Register Committee took note of the newly established International Quality Review (IQR) for non-UK colleges and universities, developed by QAA in March 2016.

The Register Committee welcomed the information provided as to how the new procedure developed by QAA addresses the ESG 2015.

Given its early stages, the next external review of QAA should further address this activity in light of the actual experience. In particular, the review should consider the current practice of making the "International Quality Review Handbook" available to successful applicants only, how the follow-up processes for reviewed higher education institutions are organised, and how the outcomes of these reviews feed into the agency's thematic analyses and internal quality assurance processes.

Subject: Substantive Change Report: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK**From:** "f.crozier@qaa.ac.uk" <form_engine@fs22.formsite.com>**Date:** 22/08/2016 17:01**To:** substantive-changes@eqar.eu

Reference #	10112832
Status	Complete
Login Username	
Login Email	
Agency #1 *	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK
Expiry date #1 *	31/07/2018
Contact #1 *	Fiona Crozier, Head of International
Phone #1 *	+44 1452 557091
Email #1 *	
Other organisations? *	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed? *	No
B. Has the organisational structure changed? *	No
C.i. Are there new types of activities? *	Yes
C.ii. Are there changes in existing activities? *	No
C.iii. Have some or all existing activities been discontinued? *	No
Description new/changed *	<p>We are reporting on the introduction of International Quality Review (IQR). Whilst this is a new activity in that it is only available to institutions outside of the UK, nonetheless it has been developed based on the considerable experience of institutional review that QAA has amassed over the last 19 years. Since the introduction of the ESG, QAA has ensured that its review methodologies adhere to the standards and guidelines as evidenced by its very successful ENQA review in 2013. IQR is no exception to this and takes the ESG as its starting point.</p> <p>i. IQR builds on work carried out internationally by QAA at the request of overseas higher education institutions wishing to be reviewed by the agency. It offers institutions worldwide the opportunity to demonstrate that they meet the ESG. External stakeholders from UK institutions and also experienced reviewers commented on the method before it was finalised.</p> <p>ii. The key criteria are the ESG part one. These appear on Page 1 of the 'Introduction to IQR'</p>

document. ESG 1.1-1.10 are core and all decisions are made against each of these 10 standards. The method is one of international review and thus was developed with the ESG at its centre. Consistency is ensured by adhering to the 10 standards in part one for all IQR reviews.

iii. QAA appoints its reviewers for all methods via a selection process and provides full training. The first training session for IQR reviewers has taken place. The section on review team members is set out on page 9 of the IQR Handbook. Each IQR review team will be made up of a UK reviewer, an international reviewer and a student.

iv. A site visit by the review team and a QAA officer is part of every IQR review.

v. All IQR reports are published on QAA's website. Reports include an overall conclusion and recommendations. The institution is expected to draft an action plan in response to the recommendations.

vi. As this review is focused on international institutions, the follow up process to the review differs slightly from domestic reviews. The same procedure for agreeing the finalised report is used (i.e. the institution can correct factual error); the institution is then asked to draft an action plan and is informed that QAA will provide opportunities for further development through continuing professional development programmes and the International Quality Assurance Programme. The institution will be informed that the action plan would form the basis of any further review that it may undertake once the outcome of the current review process has expired. Any conditions set for a successful review are monitored by QAA and evidence that they have been fulfilled must be provided before the institution is allowed to publish the IQR graphic on its website.

vii. All institutions undergoing IQR have access to QAA's 'Complaints and reconsiderations' process.

viii. IQR has just begun; in time, the outcomes of the reports and the experience of offering the reviews will feed into the agency's processes for thematic analysis and internal QA.

File #1 [IQR-Introduction.pdf \(6280k\)](#)

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Referrer <https://eqar.eu/register/reporting-and-renewal/substantive-change-report.html>



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International Quality Review

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Introduction

About this guide

International Quality Review (IQR) is a new service that enables institutions worldwide to demonstrate that they meet European standards for quality assurance in higher education. IQR has been developed, and is conducted by, the UK's national quality agency, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

This guide explains the key features of IQR. Note that the term 'we' refers to QAA and 'you' refers to an institution applying for, or undergoing, IQR.

About QAA

QAA is a well established and trusted agency with two decades of experience. It is a full member of both the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

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Standards for IQR

IQR tests whether an institution meets the 10 European standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ENQA, 2015), often known as the ‘European Standards and Guidelines’ (ESG).

The 10 European standards

- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance**
- 1.2 Design and approval of programmes**
- 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment**
- 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**
- 1.5 Teaching staff**
- 1.6 Learning resources and student support**
- 1.7 Information management**
- 1.8 Public information**
- 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes**
- 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance**

For the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg

During an IQR we consider how an institution’s policies and processes help it to meet each standard. Further details about how we do this are given in the full handbook for IQR, which is provided to successful applicant institutions.

The three main stages of IQR

Application

You apply and submit initial information. We assess your application and determine whether you are eligible for IQR.



Scoping

We visit you to gather information and answer any questions you may have. This enables both you and us to decide whether to proceed with IQR. If we recommend that you proceed, and you wish to do so, we then agree a schedule of dates.



Review

We appoint the review team and you prepare a self-evaluation document (SED) and supporting evidence, which you submit 12 weeks in advance of the review visit. The review team analyses these to plan what questions they need to ask and whom they need to meet. They visit your institution to evaluate whether you meet the 10 European standards. Their findings are published, and you respond to this report in an action plan. If you are successful, you are able to use the IQR Graphic.



People involved in the review

We appoint someone as your main point of contact, known as the QAA officer. Likewise, we ask you to appoint a facilitator who will be our main point of contact at your institution.

The QAA officer manages the review, including liaising with you, scheduling visits, briefing participants, recording discussions and drafting the report. He or she also attends the review visit and ensures that correct procedures are followed.

The facilitator ensures effective communication between you and our review team, providing further information and reducing the possibility of misunderstandings.

The lead student representative (LSR) is an optional additional voluntary role. The LSR is appointed by the students to represent their perspective. The LSR may identify students for us to meet, and may coordinate a student submission which expresses students' views on their learning experience and involvement in quality assurance.

The review team

We appoint a review team of three people to carry out the review stage of IQR. They are known as 'peer' reviewers, meaning that they have relevant experience in the higher education sector.

One of them will have held a senior post at a UK higher education institution; another at a non-UK institution. The third reviewer will be a current or recent student. All reviewers are fully trained and briefed. We will notify you in advance of the review team's members, enabling you to let us know of any potential conflicts of interest before we finalise the appointments.

The review team is responsible for evaluating whether you meet the 10 European standards. It does this through analysing documents submitted in advance, and by pursuing lines of inquiry during the review visit.

The role of students

Students play an essential role in IQR, providing valuable insights based on their current or recent experiences of higher education. Our review teams always include a student reviewer. Your students may optionally appoint a lead student representative (LSR). Students are encouraged to: express their views through a questionnaire, meet the review team, contribute to the student submission, and help develop the action plan after the review.

Application stage

Your application should include a brief overview of the institution, the arrangements for delivering higher education, and a list of the programmes on offer. We decide whether you are eligible on the basis of whether you:

- can guarantee that the review can be conducted in the English language
- are officially recognised as a higher education provider in your home country
- have informed your national quality assurance authority, or other agency or ministry as appropriate, of your application for IQR
- have been operating for at least three years and have recruited at least three cohorts of students, at least one of which has graduated
- are financially viable and sustainable
- have the legal right to use the infrastructure, main facilities and resources of the premises in which you deliver higher education
- offer higher education as a significant proportion of your provision.

We also conduct a risk assessment before deciding to proceed.

Scoping stage

If you pass our eligibility screening and decide to go ahead, we undertake a scoping visit to your institution. This is a chance for you to learn more about IQR, and it enables us to determine whether your institution is suitable to proceed.

In advance we will ask for more evidence about your governance and management structures, your use of external expertise and reference points, and any arrangements you have with other institutions to accredit your courses. If you provide courses that lead to a qualification from a separate university or other degree-awarding body, we will ask you to provide details, including how the responsibilities are distributed.

After the scoping visit we notify you in writing of whether we recommend you to proceed, giving reasons, and advise you of the length of the review visit (if relevant). If we do not recommend a full review we will indicate what needs to change.

Review stage

This is the most detailed stage of the IQR, lasting about six months. We announce the membership of the review team and agree with you a date for the review visit. The QAA officer provides general guidance to help you prepare but is not allowed to act as a consultant on the detailed information you submit.

About 12 weeks before the visit (which lasts two to four days) you submit a self-evaluation document (SED) and supporting evidence. The review team analyses these and visits your institution at the appointed time.

We write to you about a week after the review visit to state our findings. We follow this up with a draft report three weeks later. You respond with any factual corrections, and we subsequently publish the formal report of the IQR on our website around nine weeks after the review visit. You respond with an action plan around eight weeks after that, at which point the IQR is complete.

Documentation

The review team looks at a range of relevant documentation. Your SED and supporting evidence are central to the review, together with any information provided by students (student submission).

The SED describes and evaluates systems and activities that enable you to meet the 10 European standards, covering how quality assurance is managed and monitored, how it could be further improved, and what external reference points are used. Each standard should be addressed in a separate section, supported by clearly cited evidence.

Desk-based analysis

The review team begins by undertaking a desk-based analysis of all the documentation. In doing so, they may request further information or evidence. They will be looking for indications that quality assurance monitoring:

- is systematic and uses management information and benchmarks
- involves students, as appropriate (and other relevant roles/organisations)
- identifies strengths and leads to improvements in procedures or practices.

They will also seek evidence that you provide students with sufficient support to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes for their courses.

Having analysed the documentation, the review team holds a meeting to discuss its requirements for the review visit. The QAA officer agrees arrangements with you, including the length of the visit, whom the review team wishes to meet, and the main lines of enquiry.

Review visit

The review visit lasts two to four days. We will inform the appropriate national government ministry or agency about it and will seek their advice about local context and regulations.

The review team of three people considers whether you meet each of the 10 standards for IQR, taking account of the local context and applicable reference points. They will meet the head of the institution, students and academic and support staff. They may also ask to meet recent graduates, employers of your graduates, and representatives of any partner institutions. Some meetings may be by video conference or teleconference.

The review team decides whether, in relation to each standard, your institutional policies, procedures and systems are clear, transparent, appropriate, fair and relevant, systematically applied and consistently operated, and whether they enable you to be confident (and assure others) that you meet the standard.

On the last day of the visit the review team agrees its findings, which consist of:

- the overall conclusion
- a decision in relation to each of the 10 European standards
- any recommendations for improvement
- any features of good practice.

Findings

We write to you about a week after the review to announce our findings.

The overall conclusion is expressed as one of the following:

The institution meets all the standards for International Quality Review

If you meet all standards outright, the report is finalised and we publish it on our website. Your subsequent publication of an action plan marks successful completion of the review.

The institution meets all the standards for International Quality Review subject to specific conditions

If you do not meet one (or at most) two of the standards in full, the review team may set specific conditions, fulfilment of which (within specified timescales) could lead to you meeting all the standards and achieving a successful review outcome. Such conditions will only be set if the team thinks that QAA can verify their fulfilment through desk-based analysis of further evidence and, if necessary, a phone/video call.

The institution does not meet the standards for International Quality Review

If you do not meet the standards this means an unsuccessful outcome of IQR. We send you the draft report. If you decide to appeal you may do so through our formal appeals process. We will not publish the report, disclose its contents, or consider the action plan while an appeal is pending or under consideration. Where an appeal is unsuccessful the report will be published promptly.

Recommendations are graded either as 'advisable' (more serious) or 'desirable' (less serious), with a suggested time limit within which they should be addressed.

You are invited to correct any factual errors. The next steps depend on what overall conclusion has been reached.

Report

About four weeks after the review visit, we send you our draft report setting out the key findings and containing an evaluation on each standard. You have a chance to respond within three weeks, to correct any errors. We publish the final report on our website. You can also make it available via your own media outlets.

Action plan


Once we have published the IQR report you are expected to draw up an action plan in consultation with students, and publish this on your website. It explains how you will address any recommendations and sets out plans to build on the good practice. If we have set conditions for meeting the standards, your action plan also, crucially, explains how these will be fulfilled.

After publishing their action plan, successful institutions will be able to announce that:

‘[The institution] has received a successful International Quality Review from the UK’s Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) undertaken in [Month Year], in acknowledgement that at the time of review [the institution] met the standards set out by QAA’s review process.’

IQR Graphic

Successful institutions will also be issued with an IQR Graphic that indicates the date on which the institution completed the review.



“Our QAA review has contributed so much. We are the first higher education institution in Asia to have an international review, and this has attracted a lot of interest across mainland China.”

Lei Heong lok, President, Macau Polytechnic Institute

Further information

To find out more about International Quality Review, and to apply:

www.qaa.ac.uk/iqr

QAA1528 – Mar 16

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Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK (QAA)

Ms Fiona Crozier

– via email –

Brussels, 07 September 2016

Substantive Change Report – Further Information Request

Dear Fiona,

We wish to thank you for the Substantive Change Report 22 August 2016. Your report is currently being reviewed by two rapporteurs before it is brought to the attention of the entire EQAR Register Committee.

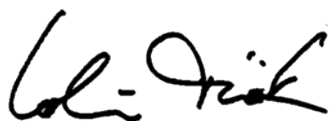
In order to prepare consideration by the Committee, we would be obliged if you could provide the rapporteurs with the International Quality Review (IQR) handbook.

According to your report and Introduction to IQR, the handbook includes further description about the review process and it can thus be relevant to form a comprehensive view on QAA's new activity.

We kindly ask you for a reply by **18 September 2016**. Please inform us if any difficulties arise in meeting this deadline.

I shall be at your disposal if you have any further questions or inquiries.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin Tück".

Colin Tück
(Director)

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