Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Review of Reviews

Results of the QQI Survey on Reviews

December 2014

CONTENTS

1 | Introduction

This is a report about the survey on reviews conducted by QQI in summer 2014. The purpose of the survey was to build on the momentum offered by the publication of the Review of Reviews Report[1], by asking for the views of stakeholders on key questions posed in the Report, to prepare the way for the development of policies, guidelines, criteria and procedures for reviews and to inform and promote discourse about reviews.

In their report, the Review of Reviews Team set out some key questions in relation to the purposes, models and forms of reviews. In the view of the Team, answering these key questions would lead QQI closer to the attainment of a reviews policy and approach that would be in keeping with the Irish higher education system. The Review of Reviews Team posed the following questions:

What is the review intended to achieve and why, in general?
What impacts are sought?

What are the specific desired outcomes?
What systemic changes to Irish HE is it hoped that the institutional review (IR) will encourage and why?
What systemic improvements to Irish higher education institutions (HEIs) are being sought through IR?

What parameters must be included within the design in order to meet the basic compliance requirements?

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1 The Review of Reviews Report is available at http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Review_of_Reviews_Report.pdf

What audiences are intended to be reached?

What outputs are required for them?

*What input resources are available and required (both within and outside the institutions)
to undertake the reviews?*

What will a successful institutional review process look like?

Review models determine the scope, features and judgements to be attained by reviews. The Team posited four separate but interrelated review models: accountability; extended accountability; enhancement; and comprehensive.

Finally, the Team also set out the options of three review forms. Review forms vary in terms of the group of institutions each would cover, the composition of the review teams and the nature of the reviews' outcomes. The three review forms set out by the Team were: whole sector; core and sub-sector; and sub-sector only.

This survey was devised to progress QQI's understanding of the views of HEIs and other stakeholders in relation to these three key areas (purpose; review model; review form). The specific objectives of the survey were:

» to capture the views of higher education providers and other stakeholders in relation to the perceived purposes, outcomes and impacts of reviews;

» to consult with stakeholders on their preferences in relation to the review model and form options presented in the Review of Reviews Report; and

» to gain an understanding of the institutional inputs and resources required for reviews to better inform planning and policy.

2 | Methodology

The survey questions were devised based on the questions posed by the Review of Reviews Report as well as some additional questions relating to reviews in general. Two similar but separate surveys were devised: survey 1 was designed for higher education institutions (HEIs); survey 2 for other stakeholders in higher education. The questions are set out in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: **Survey questions**

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	OTHER STAKEHOLDERS
	QUESTION 1 What is your general response to the findings set out in the report?
QUESTION 1 What should external review achieve in general?	QUESTION 2 What should external review achieve in general?
QUESTION 2 What are the specific outcomes for external review? *For the state? For stakeholders, especially learners? For institutions?*	QUESTION 3 What are the specific outcomes and benefits of external review for your organisation and stakeholders?
QUESTION 3 What unique impacts can be achieved through external review that cannot be achieved through other internal evaluation procedures and external evaluation procedures such as validation, programmatic review, dialogue meetings and monitoring?	
QUESTION 4 What systemic changes and improvements can be brought about through external review?	QUESTION 4 What systemic changes and improvements can be brought about through external review?

QUESTION 5
What are the audiences for external review and what do they require from external review?

QUESTION 6
What resources are available and required in your institution to undertake external review?

QUESTION 7
What is your general view of the review models which have been set out?

QUESTION 8
Which review model would be most appropriate for your institution?

QUESTION 9
Do you think the same review model should be used across all higher education institutions?

QUESTION 10
What is your general view of the review forms which have been set out?

QUESTION 11
Do you think the same review form should be used across all higher education institutions?

QUESTION 12
Which review form would be most appropriate for your institution?

Any additional comments?

QUESTION 5
What are the audiences for external review and what do they require from external review?

QUESTION 6
Which review model best meets your needs and expectations of external review?

QUESTION 7
Do you think the same review model should be used across all higher education institutions?

Any additional comments?

SURVEY 1 - HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Twelve questions were posed to capture the views of higher education institutions and an option for providing additional comments was included. One hundred and seventeen individuals in 64 higher education institutions were asked to participate (see Appendix 1 for a list of higher education institutions contacted). A total of 24 individuals responded. This gives an institutional response rate of 20.5%. Ten responses were from the Designated Awarding Bodies sector (including representatives from eight institutions), seven responses were from separate Institutes of Technology and seven responses were received from individuals in voluntary higher education providers.

SURVEY 2 - OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Seven questions were posed to capture the views of stakeholders in education and an option for providing additional comments was included. Forty three individuals in a range of stakeholder organisations were asked to participate (see Appendix 1 for a list of the organisations contacted). A total number of five individuals responded, giving a response rate of 12%.

Both surveys were posted online and an email with an accompanying message was sent to notify individuals. The survey was made available from 18 July until 17 September 2014. During the period when the survey was available online, reminder emails were issued every fortnight. The majority of responses were recorded and tabulated online. Three responses were received directly by email.

3 | Results

3.1   Purposes of reviews

QUESTION

What should external review achieve in general?

Detailed and extensive comments were received in relation to this question. Based on the responses, the comments were grouped by themes emerging in the responses, as well as the frequency with which they occurred. The themes and the rate at which they occurred in responses are presented in Figure 1. The most frequently cited purpose of reviews related to quality assurance (QA) culture and enhancement i.e. to review the extent to which institutions promote a culture of quality and enhancement.

The top three themes account for over half of the comments, with compliance as the second most frequently occurring purpose and public confidence, information and reputation ranked third of the eight themes identified.

FIGURE 1: The purposes of external review

|		
●	19%	QA culture and enhancement
●	17%	Compliance
●	15%	Public confidence, information and reputation
●	10%	Good governance, strategy, planning, direction
●	10%	Institution-level QA
●	9%	Independent evidence-based external evaluation
●	9%	Comparison and benchmarking
●	7%	Systems-level QA
●	4%	Other
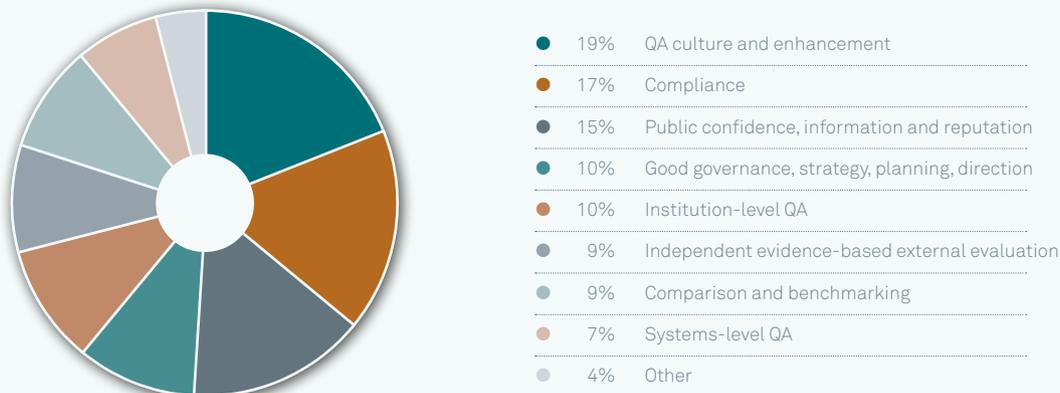
3.2 Outcomes of reviews

QUESTIONS

What are the specific outcomes for external review?

For the state? For stakeholders, especially learners? For institutions?

What are the specific outcomes and benefits of external review for your organisation and stakeholders?

The frequency of comments relating to each stakeholder group was tabulated. These are presented in Figure 2. Respondents commented most frequently on the outcomes of reviews for their own institution, accounting for nearly one third of comments, while a quarter of comments related to the outcomes of reviews for the state. Comments on the kinds of outcomes for different stakeholder groups were also collated under the stakeholder group headings. These are set out in Table 2 (tables 2 to 8 are available in Appendix 2).

FIGURE 2: Outcomes of reviews for stakeholders

●	32%	Institution-individual
●	25%	State
●	22%	Learners
●	12%	System
●	9%	Other stakeholders
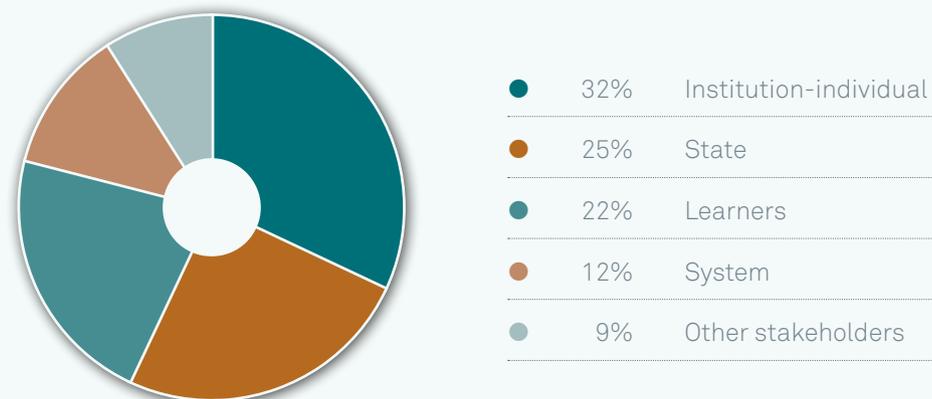
3.3 Impacts of reviews

What unique impacts can be achieved through external review that cannot be achieved through other internal evaluation procedures and external evaluation procedures such as validation, programmatic review, dialogue meetings and monitoring?

This question was only posed to higher education institutions as it requires detailed experience and understanding of the review process. A range of impacts were set out by respondents. There was a great deal of overlap in the comments made and they merged around three key themes:

> » an all-embracing, institution-wide impact;
>
> » a broader perspective with the potential for comparability with other similar organisations; and
>
> » an independent perspective from outside the institution.

Given the breadth and variety of different comments provided, individual comments were also analysed for content and key phrases. The key words that were most prevalent in the responses were:

» *Integrated*	» *Holistic*	» *Broader view of the sector*
» *Greater than the sum of the parts*	» *Impartial*	» *Longer-term trends*
» *Exceptional event*	» *Range of expertise*	» *Formal recognition*
» *Focus on longer term*	» *Fresh insight*	» *Sounding board*
» *Institution-wide*	» *Governance*	» *Themes*
» *Dissemination of good practice*		

3.4 Systemic change

What systemic changes and improvements can be brought about through external review?

When the comments were analysed and organised along key themes, the following four key themes for systemic change emerged:

- » best practice;
- » revision of policy and change;
- » transparency, information and sharing; and
- » quality and better processes.

Specific comments relating to these are set out in Table 3 (Appendix 2).

3.5 Audiences for reviews

What are the audiences for external review and what do they require from external review?

A long listing of potential audiences for reviews was provided in the responses. The full range of audiences identified by respondents is set out in Table 4 (see Appendix 2). Despite the wide range of audiences identified, it was clear that most of the comments about the requirements of reviews centred on six key audiences:

» HEI staff, management and governance;

» HEI students;

» employers;

» public;

» state bodies and regulators;

» other HEIs.

Table 5 (see Appendix 2) lists these audiences along with the expected requirements set out by respondents. It also provides a summary of the requirements for all other audiences (listed as 'others').

Responses were also provided about the nature and presentation of information required about reviews. Several responses referenced that different audiences would require different information. Responses indicated that information should be detailed, accessible, evidence-based and objective, consistent, expressing confidence, recognising diversity, internationally relevant, and balanced between commendations and recommendations.

Responses also indicated that review reports should be publicly accessible, preferably published on each institution's website and should balance considerations of clarity with the need to provide sufficient detail for institutions to act upon them.

3.6   Resources for reviews

What resources are available and required in your institution to undertake external review?

This question was posed to higher education institutions only. Some respondents wondered about the purpose of the inclusion of this question in the survey. Comments made with respect to resources were grouped into key themes and are presented in Table 6 (see Appendix 2).

3.7   Review models

QUESTIONS

What is your general view of the review models which have been set out?
Which review model would be most appropriate for your institution?
Do you think the same review model should be used across all higher education institutions?
Which review model best meets your (stakeholders) needs and expectations of external review?

Four possible review models were set out in the Review of Reviews Report: accountability; extended accountability; enhancement; and comprehensive.

The questions in the surveys were based on the key issues and variables set out in the Review of Reviews Report. Responses to the questions were recorded and grouped into general comments or comments specific to each review model.

Comments about the usefulness of multiple review models were also received. All comments are recorded in Table 7 (see Appendix 2). Institutions and stakeholders were asked to select the most appropriate model for review. The results are presented in Figure 3. Most respondents favoured the models that incorporated an enhancement dimension (comprehensive and enhancement-only). Respondents acknowledged that these were the more resource-intensive models. They were also asked to identify whether the same model should be used for all institutions. Figure 4 sets out the responses in relation to this. Over half of respondents (59%) disagree with using the same review model for all institutions. Many respondents commented that the comprehensive and enhancement models may be more appropriate for providers with more mature and developed QA systems.

FIGURE 3: **Which review model is most appropriate?**

●	38%	Comprehensive (Accountability and Enhancement)
●	31%	Enhancement
●	14%	Extended Accountability
●	7%	Basic Accountability
●	10%	More information needed
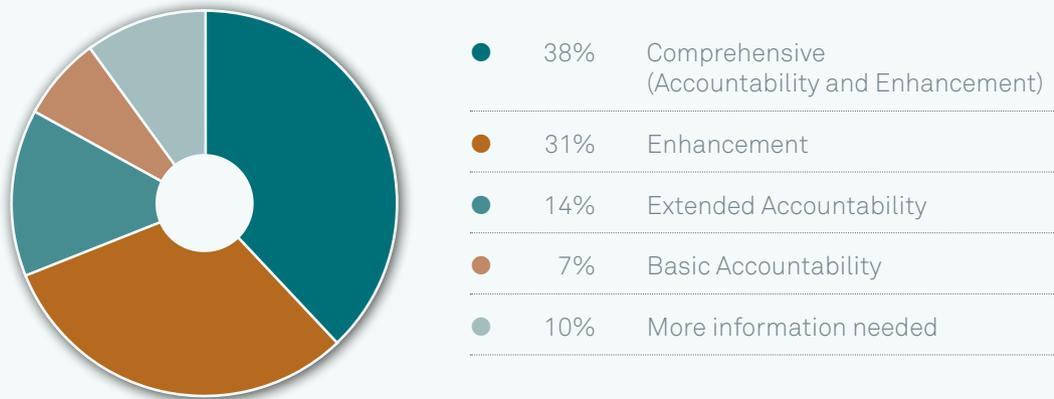
FIGURE 4: **Should the same review model be used for all HE institutions?**

No	59%	●
Yes	41%	●
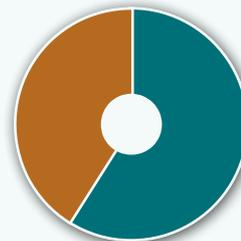
3.8 Review forms

What is your general view of the review forms which have been set out?
Do you think the same review form should be used across all higher education institutions?
Which review form would be most appropriate for your institution?

The Review of Reviews Report set out three review forms for consideration and selection. These were: whole-sector; core and sub-sector; sub-sector only.

Institutions were asked for their general views on review forms (see Table 8, Appendix 2); the review form that would be most appropriate for their own institution (Figure 5); and whether the same review form should be used for all institutions (Figure 6). Over half of respondents felt the sub-sector specific review form was most appropriate for their own institution and a third favoured a mixed approach. Two thirds of respondents were against using the same review form across all higher education institutions.

FIGURE 5: **Which review form is most appropriate?**

- 58%   Sub-Sector Specific
- 34%   Mixed
- 8%   Whole Sector
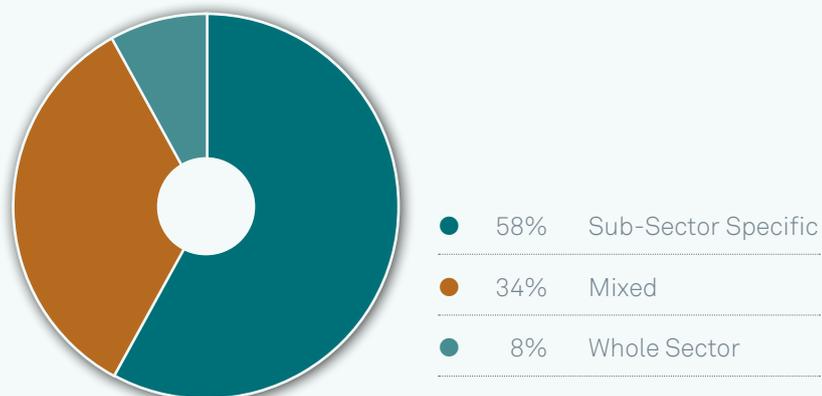
FIGURE 6: **Should the same review form be used for all HE institutions?**

- 67%   No
- 33%   Yes
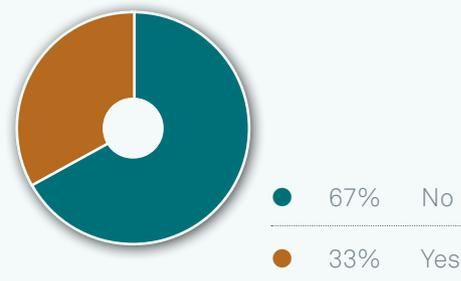
4 Key Findings

The findings were analysed along three thematic areas which reflect the questions in the survey. These are:

- » the purpose, impacts and systemic changes;
- » review models and review resources; and
- » review forms.

4.1 Purpose, impacts and systemic changes

HIGHLIGHTS

The six key purposes for reviews ought to be (in summary):

1) *Encouraging QA culture and enhancement*

2) *Ensuring compliance*

3) *Promoting transparency*

4) *Providing institution-level analysis and feedback*

5) *Improvement through fit-for-purpose methods*

6) *Encouraging system-level quality assurance*

The first three are most important.

The Review of Reviews Team highlighted the need for clear specific purposes for reviews, against which the success or otherwise of QQI reviews could be measured.

The survey asked respondents to consider the purpose of reviews (Question 1 of the HEI survey, as shown in Table1 on pages 4 and 5). The survey also asked respondents for their views about a range of additional matters which also impact on reviews such as the outcomes of reviews (Question 2), the unique impacts of reviews (Question 3), systemic changes and improvements that can be brought about through reviews (Question 4), and the audiences for reviews (Question 5). All of these are key factors for consideration when determining the unique purposes of external reviews. In order to provide a richer and more rounded source of information about reviews, all five of these items were plotted together on a single table (see Appendix 3). When the analysis of this table was conducted, some purposes merged with each other and other more distinct and granular purposes emerged. While a number of interpretations could be made, an attempt is made to capture these in the purpose statements in the table. The unique purposes for reviews that emerge are:

PURPOSE 1

External reviews will encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment within institutions through:

- » piloting a new thematic review methodology;
- » providing a source of evidence for thematic areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change;
- » identifying areas of best practice;
- » identifying areas of quality as well as quality assurance;
- » emphasising the improvement of quality assurance procedures.

PURPOSE 2

External reviews will ensure compliance with legislation and policy and a well-functioning quality assurance system by:

» determining that quality assurance procedures and qualifications are compliant with national and international standards (Bologna, ESG, NFQ);

» evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of QA procedures in an integrated way;

» ensuring that procedures are fit-for-purpose and that students, along with other stakeholders, are engaged with them;

» identifying areas for improvement and basing follow-up upon them;

» identifying innovative and effective practices and procedures.

PURPOSE 3

External reviews will promote transparency in QA through:

» purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent;

» the publication of a periodic review cycle;

» the publication of external QA reports in accessible locations and formats for different audiences;

» the evaluation of internal reporting procedures to ensure that they are transparent and accessible;

» regular publication of analyses of the impacts of reviews;

» regular publication of periodic synoptic reports.

PURPOSE 4

External reviews will provide feedback to the institution about the institution-wide impact of governance and management on the student learning environment and quality assurance.

PURPOSE 5

External reviews will improve institutional and system-level quality assurance through fit-for-purpose methods:

- » independent external evaluations of quality based on evidence and data;
- » reviews that are informed by national and international practices and standards;
- » the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice.

PURPOSE 6

External reviews will encourage improvements in systems-level quality assurance through:

- » consistent and flexible approaches to reviewing across institutions;
- » emphasising the student and the student learning experience;
- » focussing on institution-wide matters;
- » regular publication of analyses of the impacts of reviews;
- » regular publication of periodic synoptic reports.

It is important to note that this is an attempt to merge a wide range of qualitative information into key themes and concepts. Other interpretations may be possible. It will be necessary to conduct further consultation, through a seminar, to ensure that the views of institutions and other stakeholders have been interpreted accurately by QQI, and also to allow for further analysis and refinement of these purposes. It may also be appropriate, and perhaps

necessary, to focus on a more discrete and refined set of purposes for the next cycle of QQI reviews. If the level of response to the survey about the various purposes is taken into consideration, then purposes 1-3 are of greater relevance. Whether this emphasis on the first three purposes should be sustained will be a matter for further consultation.

4.2   Review models and review resources

HIGHLIGHTS

The comprehensive and enhancement models are most appropriate.
Different models for different provider types and levels of maturity.
Resources are a consideration in selecting models.

The Review of Reviews Team posited four separate but interrelated review models: accountability; extended accountability; enhancement; and comprehensive. In general it seems that, though different models could be devised, the review model options presented are a reasonable way of selecting an appropriate model or set of models. It was acknowledged that some more discussion will be required to fine tune these.

The results of the survey demonstrate a preference for review models that incorporate quality enhancement. Almost seventy per cent of respondents opted for either a comprehensive model or an enhancement-only model. However, when the comments provided about the review models are analysed a more complex and nuanced set of views emerge.

Comments made in respect of the accountability and extended accountability models would indicate that, from the respondents' perspective, these models had little to recommend them. Nonetheless, some respondents

proposed that, whilst these models would not be suitable for their own institutions, they might be suitable for other institutions i.e. those that have undergone fewer review cycles or have a 'for-profit' mission.

The enhancement-only model was identified by many as optimal but acknowledged as probably more suitable to institutions with more mature quality assurance systems.

The comprehensive model was identified as very resource intensive, requiring significant inputs from QQI, institutions and broad-based review teams. Some respondents wondered if this model might encroach on institutional autonomy and strategic direction. One respondent commented that if review was every seven years this model might be more appropriate, allowing for sufficient self-evaluation and preparation time.

Almost sixty per cent of respondents thought QQI should not implement the same review model for all sub-sectors in the higher education system. The surveys also generated a range of comments and arguments in favour of a mixed models approach. Arguments made included that the review model should be dependent on the number of previous reviews, the 'maturity' of institutions, the missions of institutions (for profit, public).

A number of contributors acknowledged that resources, for QQI and institutions, may be a factor in the selection of a model. Accordingly, the views of respondents about the question about resources are included in this analysis. Respondents generally identified external reviews as very time-consuming over an extensive period both before and after the actual site visit. They involve a significant number of staff at a range of levels in the organisation. Efficiencies have been found by integrating and blending the review with other institutional enhancements. Unsurprisingly, a number of respondents pointed out that resources for reviews at present are more constrained than in previous cycles. While enhancement-focussed reviews were seen as more resource intensive, all reviews will demand a great deal of time and resources. It would seem that it will be important that reviews deliver outcomes and impacts for institutions that are worth the significant inputs involved. This may point in the direction of reviews that are more focussed on enhancement.

4.3 Review forms

HIGHLIGHTS

Preference for sector-specific elements in review forms.
Need to select options based on variables such as return for inputs, usefulness for improvement and comparability and not making excessive differentiations.

The institutions indicated a clear preference for review forms specific to their own sub-sectors and the use of different review forms for different sectors. As in the review models, analysis of the comments made about review forms yields a richer source of information.

A general view put forward was that the provision of one form only would be over-simplistic, retrograde and could only focus on areas of commonality between institutions, thus limiting significantly the scope of reviews.

Different review forms, reflecting different sub-sectors, were preferable, though it was stated that all institutions must meet the same standards in general. On the basis of the comments it would seem that the options of utilising a 'core and sub-sector approach' (1) and a 'sub-sector distinct approach' (2) were equally popular.

Comments made in favour of the 'core and sub-sector approach' (1) seemed to focus on its capacity to simultaneously focus on the uniqueness of institutions while allowing for some cross sector integration, common approaches and comparability. It was stated that institutions could benefit from other sectors. More negative comments with respect to this approach included views that it could be time consuming to negotiate the common elements between sectors; that the approach could be incoherent and restrictive; and that, in the final analysis, the real core common elements might be very limited.

Comments about the 'sub-sector distinct approach' (2) were more positive, acknowledging that this approach probably accords most closely with the current state of differentiation within higher education and the diversity of providers. It would enable similar institutions to make comparisons with each other and would more likely add value than other forms. It was felt that this form could allow scope for improvement and enhancement in an environment of collaboration and participation involving all primary stakeholders within a sub-sector. On the more challenging side, it was acknowledged that the basis for distinguishing between sub-sectors will have to be established and made clear and could lead to undesirable differentiation between sub-sectors.

5 | Conclusions

The objectives of the survey were:

- » to capture the views of higher education providers and other stakeholders in relation to the perceived purposes, outcomes and impacts of reviews;

- » to consult with stakeholders on their preferences in relation to the review model and form options presented in the Review of Reviews Report; and

- » to gain an understanding of the institutional inputs and resources required for reviews to better inform planning and policy.

Six core purposes for QQI external reviews have emerged through the survey. They are, in summary:

1. Encouraging QA culture and enhancement

2. Ensuring compliance

3. Promoting transparency

4. Providing institution-level analysis and feedback

5. Improvement through fit-for-purpose methods

6. Encouraging system-level quality assurance

These purposes emerged from an integrated analysis of the perceived purposes, outcomes, impacts, systems, changes and audiences for reviews. The purposes identified are extensive and granular. It is reassuring that amongst and throughout these the fundamental purposes identified by the Review Team are prevalent (successful student learning; effective institutional performance; the generation of public confidence). Some of the purposes will find their direct expression in the specific objectives for future QQI external reviews. Others may impact on review design

and methods. These purposes will require some further consultation with the sector to ensure their validity and appropriateness. Some additional work will also be required to ensure that they are measurable and achievable through external review, and do not duplicate the purposes of other engagements with QQI. Nonetheless they will provide a foundation for debate and will commence QQI on a path towards attaining the recommendation of the Review Team that *any future institutional review process must be developed on the basis that its form reflects its functions and its functions are clearly and unambiguously stated.*

In terms of review models the tendency toward enhancement-focussed reviews also reflects the view of the Review Team that reviews should have a much greater focus on quality enhancement and the effectiveness of provision rather than just compliance with specific rules and regulations. Some further work will be required to determine the extent to which enhancement can be emphasised and compliance can be focussed upon less or perhaps managed through other QQI engagements such as annual reporting or desk analyses. The prevailing feedback that different review models might be implemented for different sub-sectors will also require further analysis as the overall preference across institutions appears to be for enhancement-type models.

A good deal of additional work and dialogue will also be required to establish the extent to which QQI can distinguish between different sub-sectors in the use of different review forms, the extent to which differentiated review forms can be supported in the system and the possible system-level impacts and implications of these kinds of differentiation.

This survey has been successful in building on the work of the Review Team and in bringing QQI closer to a policy on reviews for higher education. In particular, a degree of clarity and preference is emerging about the purposes of reviews and the models for review. Some further work will be required to establish whether these purposes are realistic and achievable. Some further work will also be required to determine what kind of review form or forms will work best for the higher education system.

It has been useful and necessary to focus this survey on the subject of reviews only. Some further consideration will be required, by QQI and partners, to situate and balance reviews within the broader framework of quality assurance and QQI engagement with institutions. Nonetheless, taken as a whole, the feedback from the survey would indicate a general support for, and willingness by, institutions to engage with institution-level reviews. Many respondents reflected on the distinct advantages of this unique, non-routine, holistic, institution-wide approach. Respondents also reflected on the more intangible benefits that accrue from reviews of this nature, often some time after the review has taken place. This presents reassuring evidence that institutional review, as an approach to external quality assurance evaluation in higher education, will continue to have a significant role in the future.
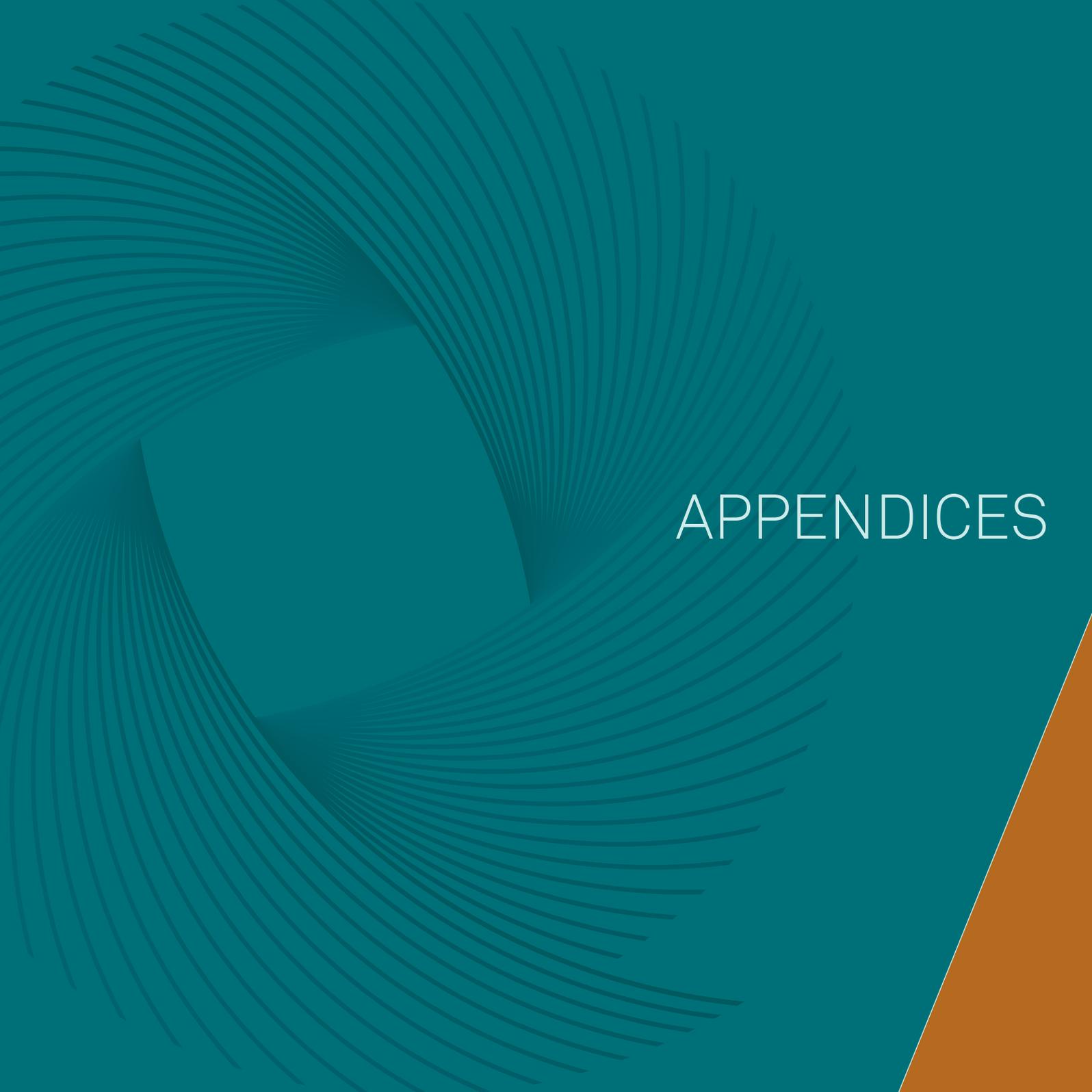
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: List of institutions and other stakeholders contacted

American College Dublin

AONTAS

Athlone Institute of Technology

Carlow College

Chambers Ireland

Chartered Accountants

Children's Therapy Centre

City and Guilds

Clanwilliam Institute

College of Computer Training

Cork Institute of Technology

Department of Education and Skills

Dorset College

Dublin Business School

Dublin Chamber of Commerce

Dublin City University

Dublin Institute of Technology

Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Education and Training Boards

Engineers Ireland

Enterprise Ireland

Forfás

Gaelchultúr Teoranta

Galway Business School

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

Garda College

Grafton College of Management Sciences

Griffith College

Hibernia College

Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA)

HSE Regional Centres - Nursing and Midwifery Education

IBAT College Dublin

IBEC

ICD Business School

IDA Ireland

Independent Colleges

Independent higher education consultants

Institute of Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy (IICP)

Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science (IPTAS)

Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown

Institute of Technology, Carlow

Institute of Technology, Sligo

Institute of Technology, Tallaght

Institute of Technology, Tralee

Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI)

International School of Business

Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences (ICHAS)

Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management

Irish Payroll Association (IPASS)

Irish Research Council

Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association

Irish University Association (IUA)

Kimmage Development Studies Centre

Leinster Academy

Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Limerick Institute of Technology

Marketing English in Ireland

Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy

National Centre for Guidance in Education

National College of Ireland

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

National Tourism Development Authority - Fáilte Ireland

National University of Ireland (NUI)

National University of Ireland Galway

National University of Ireland Maynooth

Newpark Music Centre

Open Training College

PCI College

Portobello Institute

Public Affairs Ireland

Respond! College

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)

Science Foundation Ireland

Setanta College

SIPTU College

Small Firms Association

SOLAS

SQT Training Ltd

St Nicholas Montessori College

Trinity College Dublin

Union of Students in Ireland

University College Cork

University College Dublin

University of Limerick

Waterford Institute of Technology

APPENDIX 2: Tables of detailed qualitative responses

TABLE 2: **Key desirable outcomes of reviews**

- » Standards being complied with/attained/improved

- » Effectiveness of quality/good practices/enhancement being complied with/attained/improved

- » Compliance with state legislation/policy

- » Reputation publicity/publication/infamy/assurance

- » Identification of problems/protection of learners

- » Overview/information/learning about the sector

- » Returns for funding

- » Independent assessment of quality

- » National and international benchmarking; common areas

- » National and international recognition – awards and quality

- » Focus on learners: Ease of transition/progression; Consistency/parity across system; Ability of learners to influence; More of a focus on individual programmes for learner outcomes; Good learning experience/environment

- » Focus on institutions: Good organisational governance and management; Opportunity to face challenges; Capacity to fulfil mission; Confidence; Direction, guidance; Basis for developing an action plan; Parity

- » Focus on system: All HEIs reviewed similarly; Promotion of quality agenda/quality culture; Parity across institutions

TABLE 3: **Reviews and systemic change**

THEMES	SPECIFIC COMMENTS
Best Practice	» System wide approaches » Identification » Dissemination and transfer » Baseline and benchmarks » Enhancement initiatives » Panel members bring back practices to their own institutions » A vertical approach
Revision of Policy and change	» Evidence basis for the revision of existing policy (organisational and national) » Development of new policy and guidelines where they do not exist » Overlapping themes » Inform planning » Collation can provide cross-sectoral results and engagement » Systemic change in areas that are difficult to address in a fragmented way e.g. the student learning experience » Consider change in a wider context » Tools for management in the change process as it is peer and evidence-based » Greatest change will be implemented internally » Action Plan for the institution is the most important element
Transparency, information and sharing	» Between institutions » For outside stakeholders » Promote diversity » More informed political decisions » Cross-sector working and collegiality » Greater parity (shared challenges etc.) » Communication is a critical success factor
Quality/Better Processes	» Keeps quality on the agenda » Embedding institutional quality » Improvements to structures and processes in recommendations

TABLE 4: **Range of audiences for reviews**

HEI management and governance	Research communities
Education leaders	HEI students
Potential learners	Media
Employers	International audiences
Quality agencies	Public
Potential staff	Professional accreditation bodies
State bodies and regulators	Alumni
Academic accreditation bodies	HEI staff
Parents	Funders
HEI system	Other HEIs
Partners	

TABLE 5: **Audiences for reviews and their requirements**

HEI staff and management and governance	» QA procedures compliance and enhancement » Independent assessment of: learning environment; capacity for enhancement » Validation of strategy » Guidance » Recognition » Identification of strengths and weaknesses » International comparability » Effectiveness of QA/QE
HEI students	» Return for investment » Environment that will allow them to achieve goals » Excellent learning experience which can be enhanced » National and international recognition of qualifications » Institution will listen to them
Employers	» Needs are considered/recommendations taken on board » Qualifications and graduates recognised as meeting international standards/global norms » The institution reaches a standard
Public	» Reputation of HE » Trust that public authorities have an interest in monitoring and evaluating providers (oversight) » Quality of HE » Deliver graduates that can contribute to the economy » HE delivering value/return on investment
State bodies and regulators	» Compliance » Accountability; enhancement » Assurance of standard » Quality » Value for money
Other HEIs	» Reference point for potential partners » Comparator data » Examples of good practice
Others	» Standards » Confidence » Value for money » QA processes are appropriate and effective » Quality

TABLE 6: **Resources for reviews in institutions**

THEME	COMMENTS
General	» Resources will depend on model and form of review » Less resources now » Enhancement may mean more cost » Institutions need to be funded for quality management – withdrawal of ring-fenced funding was unhelpful » Large-scale institutions have greater resources but small scale institutions find it easier to build a coherent institutional review » Readiness
People	» Project management group » Registrar's office » Senior academic manager/leader with authority » Working and focus groups » Self-evaluation writing team » Administrative staff (2) » All staff involvement, especially senior staff (1hr per week) » Involvement of governance structures » Project manager for follow-up » External 'mentor' or guide » Overseas campus involvement
Time	» Very time consuming » Three years preparation » Genuine reflection time together » Team meet once every two weeks for nine months before » Logistics alone take time » Time for response to queries » Site visit time consuming » Less time for other internal reviews » Follow-up time
Processes	» Adapt internal QA procedures to reduce disruption » Management and controls functions » QA Handbook key resource » Cross-institutional buy-in » Paper based evidence generated where databases and electronic files are the norm » Statistical data, surveys, summaries » Guidance with flexibility so that review can be blended with other activities » Secure information » User-friendly » Link to other cross-institutional initiatives

TABLE 7: **General comments about review models**

MODEL	COMMENTS
General comments on all models	» Reasonable » Not exhaustive » Need for more discussion and information to identify a fit-for-purpose model » Review should be about overall capability of the institution » Need for some kind of enhancement mechanism as well as enhancement reviews » Resources may be a factor in selecting a model
Accountability model	» Too superficial » Desk-based is too detached from provider » Tick box » Little to stretch organisations or gain buy-in from staff
Extended accountability	» Achievable and workable » Not popular but recognised as realistically achievable » Tick box » Little to stretch organisations or gain buy-in from staff
Enhancement	» Future proof » Appropriate for mature institutions (but the comprehensive model is more appropriate)
Comprehensive	» Very resource intensive » Would require large teams » Might encroach on autonomy and strategic direction » This might be the model we eventually get to » If review was every seven years this might be more appropriate with sufficient time for SER and preparation » One party felt that this might be perceived as too driven by the agency and reducing provider ownership
Multiple models	» Review dependent on lifecycle » Different models as institutions evolve » One-size-fits-all is not appropriate » Could alternate between models for institutions » Models 3 and 4 for more mature institutions on their third cycle » There may be other models » Enhancement for larger more mature institutions; accountability more appropriate for smaller private institutions » Quality focus is integral to models 3 and 4 » Need for greater flexibility in models » More clarification required on the difference between models 3 and 4 » QQI capacity to support models 3 or 4 is questioned » Peer reviewers more appropriate for models 3 and 4; experts better for 1 and 2 » Ultimate aim might be model 4 but providers would move through the other models first

TABLE 8: **General comments about review forms**

CATEGORIES	COMMENTS
General views	» Three types of forms a good balance » All providers should demonstrably meet the same standards » Different institutions have different missions e.g. research. If the same form is used then it can only focus on the common elements between institutions » Three forms may be artificially discrete
Whole sector Generic approach	» Will facilitate whole sector review reports. » Practical and logical » May limit the ability to carry out in-depth reviews and reviews aligned to individual missions » Entirely inappropriate and regressive » Will not work
Core & sub sector	» Allows for some cross sector integration and common approaches » Recognises the uniqueness of institutions » Preferred » Time consuming to negotiate common elements » Too incoherent and restrictive » Common elements should be limited to compliance with the 2012 Act » Might provide more balance between sectors » Would suit diverse missions and the changing HE landscape » Could be nuanced depending on institution » All could benefit by input from other sectors » Allows for comparability while accommodating difference » May require a sophisticated model » The core common element would be very limited
Subsector- distinct processes- no shared elements	» Reflects the reality of the differences between institutions » Most suitable and most likely to add value » May lead to undesirable differentiation between sub-sectors » Most appropriate for the diversity of providers. Could allow for comparison on conclusions. The basis for distinguishing between sub-sectors will have to be clear » Facilitates institutions to make comparisons with similar institutions nationally and internationally » Allows scope for improvement and enhancement in an environment of collaboration and participation involving all primary stakeholders » Different sectors work under such different legal controls/aims/ objectives/ stakeholder expectations and have vastly different external links and international standing » Review should follow the structure of organisation that predominates. Sectors in Ireland and loose, like-minded collectives. Institution level or cluster level review would be more beneficial

APPENDIX 3: Analysis of purposes

PURPOSE	OUTCOMES	UNIQUE IMPACTS	SYSTEMIC CHANGES	AUDIENCE REQUIREMENTS	AUDIENCES
QA culture and enhancement	» Standards being improved	» Integrated » Range of expertise » Fresh insight » Holistic/greater than the sum of the parts » Exceptional event » Themes » Dissemination of good practice	» Themes » Best practice » Revision of policy and change » Quality/better processes	» QA enhancement » Enhancement » Quality » Capacity » Validation of strategy » Guidance » Recognition » Identification of strengths and weaknesses » International comparability » Environment that will allow them to achieve goals » Excellent learning experience which can be enhanced » Institution will listen to them (students) » Value for money	» HEI staff and management and governance » HEI students » State bodies and regulators

PURPOSE 1

External reviews will encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment within institutions through:

» piloting a new thematic review methodology
» providing a source of evidence for thematic areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change
» identifying areas of best practice
» identifying areas of quality as well as quality assurance
» emphasising the improvement of quality assurance procedures

PURPOSE	OUTCOMES	UNIQUE IMPACTS	SYSTEMIC CHANGES	AUDIENCE REQUIREMENTS	AUDIENCES
Compliance	» Effectiveness of quality » Good practices being complied with » Compliance with state legislation/policy	» Integrated » Themes » Exceptional event	» Quality/better processes	» QA processes are appropriate and effective » Quality » Return for investment » Environment that will allow them to achieve goals (students) » National and international recognition of qualifications » Institution will listen to them » Compliance » Accountability » Assurance of standard » Quality » Value for money » Confidence » Independent assessment of: learning environment » Recognition » Identification of strengths and weaknesses » International comparability » Effectiveness of QA	» HEI students » State bodies and regulators » Others » HEI staff and management and governance

PURPOSE 2

External reviews will ensure compliance with legislation and policy and a well-functioning quality assurance system by:

» determining that quality assurance procedures and qualifications are compliant with national and international standards (Bologna, ESG, NFQ)

» evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of QA procedures in an integrated way

» ensuring that procedures are fit-for-purpose and that students, along with other stakeholders, are engaged with them

» identifying areas for improvement and basing follow-up upon them

» identifying innovative and effective practices and procedures

PURPOSE	OUTCOMES	UNIQUE IMPACTS	SYSTEMIC CHANGES	AUDIENCE REQUIREMENTS	AUDIENCES
Institution-level QA	» Focus on learners: Ease of transition/progression; Ability of learners to influence; More of a focus on individual programmes for learner outcomes; Good learning experience/environment » Effectiveness of quality » Good practices being complied with	» Institution wide » Range of expertise » Fresh insight » Holistic/greater than the sum of the parts » Exceptional event » Themes	» Quality/better processes	» QA procedures compliance and enhancement » Guidance » Recognition » Identification of strengths and weaknesses » International comparability » Effectiveness of QA » National and international recognition of qualifications » Institution will listen to them (students) » Compliance » Accountability » Standards » Confidence » QA processes are appropriate and effective » Quality	» HEI staff and management and governance » HEI students » State bodies and regulators » Others

PURPOSE 2

External reviews will ensure compliance with legislation and policy and a well-functioning quality assurance system by:

» determining that quality assurance procedures and qualifications are compliant with national and international standards (Bologna, ESG, NFQ)
» evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of QA procedures in an integrated way
» ensuring that procedures are fit-for-purpose and that students, along with other stakeholders, are engaged with them
» identifying areas for improvement and basing follow-up upon them
» identifying innovative and effective practices and procedures

PURPOSE	OUTCOMES	UNIQUE IMPACTS	SYSTEMIC CHANGES	AUDIENCE REQUIREMENTS	AUDIENCES
Public confidence, information and reputation	» Reputation » Publicity/ publication/ infamy/ assurance » Identification of problems/ protection of learners » Overview/ Information/ learning about the sector » National and international recognition – awards and quality	» Integrated » Institution-wide » Formal recognition » Range of expertise » Fresh insight » Holistic/greater than the sum of the parts » Exceptional event	» Transparency, information and sharing » Revision of policy and change	» Needs are considered/ recommendations taken on board » Qualifications and graduates recognised as meeting international standards/global norms » The institution reaches a standard » Reputation of HE » Trust that public authorities have an interest in monitoring and evaluating providers (oversight) » Quality of HE » Deliver graduates that can contribute to the economy » HE delivering value/return on investment » Assurance of standard » Quality » Value for money » Confidence » QA processes are appropriate and effective » Quality	» Employers » Public » State bodies and regulators » Others

PURPOSE 3

External reviews will promote transparency in QA through:

- » purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent
- » the publication of a periodic review cycle
- » the publication of external QA reports in accessible locations and formats for different audiences
- » the evaluation of internal reporting procedures to ensure that they are transparent and accessible
- » regular publication of analyses of the impacts of reviews
- » regular publication of periodic synoptic reports

PURPOSE	OUTCOMES	UNIQUE IMPACTS	SYSTEMIC CHANGES	AUDIENCE REQUIREMENTS	AUDIENCES
Good governance, strategy, planning, direction	» Returns for funding » Focus on institutions: Good organisational governance and management; Opportunity to face challenges; Capacity to fulfil mission; Confidence; Direction, guidance; Basis for developing an action plan; Parity	» Focus on longer term/longer term trends » Institution wide » Range of expertise » Fresh insight » Governance » Holistic/greater than the sum of the parts » Exceptional event	» Best practice » Revision of policy and change » Quality/better processes	» QA procedures compliance and enhancement » Independent assessment of: learning environment; capacity for enhancement » Validation of strategy » Guidance » Recognition » Identification of strengths and weaknesses » International comparability » Effectiveness of QA/QE » Accountability » Value for money » Confidence » Quality » Environment that will allow them to achieve goals (students) Institution will listen to them » Reputation of HE » Quality of HE	» HEI staff and management and governance » State bodies and regulators » HEI students » Public » Others

PURPOSE 4

External reviews will provide feedback to the institution about the institution-wide impact of governance and management on the student learning environment and quality assurance.

PURPOSE	OUTCOMES	UNIQUE IMPACTS	SYSTEMIC CHANGES	AUDIENCE REQUIREMENTS	AUDIENCES
Independent evidence-based external evaluation	» Independent assessment of quality	» Impartial » Sounding board » Focus on longer term/longer term trends » Dissemination of good practice		» Independent assessment of: learning environment; capacity for enhancement » Validation of strategy » Recognition » Identification of strengths and weaknesses » International comparability » National and international recognition of qualifications » Qualifications and graduates recognised as meeting international standards/global norms » The institution reaches a standard » Reputation » Trust » Accountability » Comparator data » Examples of good practice » Confidence » QA processes are appropriate and effective » Quality	» HEI staff and management and governance » HEI students » Employers » Public » State bodies and regulators » Other HEIs » Others
Comparison and benchmarking	» National and international benchmarking; common areas	» Focus on longer term/longer term trends » Themes » Dissemination of good practice » Holistic/greater than the sum of the parts	» Themes » Best practice » Revision of policy and change	» Reference point for potential partners » Comparator data » Examples of good practice	» Other HEIs » Others

PURPOSE 5

External reviews will improve institutional and system-level quality assurance through fit-for-purpose methods:

» independent external evaluations of quality based on evidence and data
» reviews that are informed by national and international practices and standards
» the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice

PURPOSE	OUTCOMES	UNIQUE IMPACTS	SYSTEMIC CHANGES	AUDIENCE REQUIREMENTS	AUDIENCES
Systems-level QA	» Focus on system: All HEIs reviewed similarly; Promotion of quality agenda/ quality culture; Parity across institutions » Focus on learners: Ease of transition/ progression; Consistency/ parity across system; Ability of learners to influence	» Broader view of the sector » Focus on longer term/longer term trends » Holistic/greater than the sum of the parts » Exceptional event » Themes » Dissemination of good practice	» Themes » Best practice » Revision of policy and change	» Qualifications and graduates recognised as meeting international standards/global norms » The institution reaches a standard » Reputation of HE » Quality of HE » Deliver graduates that can contribute to the economy » HE delivering value/return on investment » Quality » Value for money » Reference point for potential partners » Comparator data » Examples of good practice » QA processes are appropriate and effective » Quality	» Employers » Public » State bodies and regulators » Other HEIs » Others

PURPOSE 6

External reviews will encourage improvements in systems-level quality assurance through:

» consistent and flexible approaches to reviewing across institutions
» emphasising the student and the student learning experience
» focussing on institution-wide matters
» regular publication of analyses of the impacts of reviews
» regular publication of periodic synoptic reports

NOTES

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