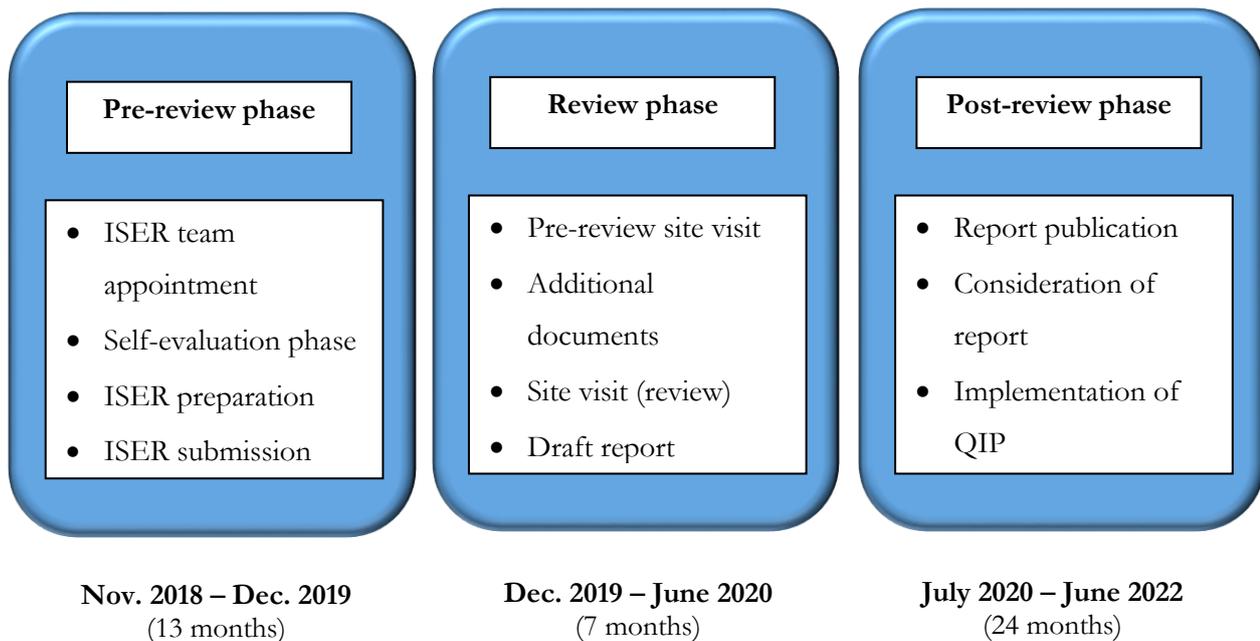


# UL Institutional Review 2020: Preparations to Date

## 1 Process Overview

UL is scheduled to undergo its next institutional review in March 2020 (site visit). The review process requires the University to submit an institutional self-evaluation report (ISER) to QQI in Q4 2019. The QQI [cyclical review handbook](#) informs and/or dictates the main stages of the quality review process, as summarised in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Review Phases and Indicative Timelines**



## 2 Process Oversight and Governance

Ultimate responsibility lies with Executive Committee for ensuring that:

- Adequate preparation for the institutional quality review is undertaken
- Appropriate post-review activities (as achieved by implementation of this project management plan) are conducted

In February 2018, Executive Committee approved an institutional quality review project management plan. Spanning March 2018 to June 2022, the plan outlined key internal objectives and processes and was updated as work progressed. Executive Committee delegated responsibility for routine operational oversight of the institutional quality review process and its project management to the Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement, with support from the Quality Support Unit.

Key process documents, including the institutional self-evaluation report (ISER), institutional review report, post-report quality improvement plan (QIP) and the final QIP implementation summary report, will be presented to:

- Executive Committee (EC)
- Academic Council (AC)
- Management Council (MC)
- Governing Authority's Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance subcommittee (GASPOA)

- Governing Authority (GA)

The responsibility of these various committees with respect to these key review process documents is outlined in the table below.

**Table 1:** UL Committees to which Key Institutional Quality Review Documents will be Presented

	<b>EC</b>	<b>AC</b>	<b>MC</b>	<b>GA</b>
<b>ISER</b>	Consideration and endorsement	Consideration and endorsement	Noting and discussion	Noting and discussion
<b>Institutional review report</b>	Consideration and institutional reply	Consideration and noting	Consideration and noting	Consideration and noting
<b>QIP</b>	Noting and endorsement	Noting and endorsement	Noting and discussion	Noting and discussion
<b>QIP implementation summary report</b>	Noting and endorsement	Noting and endorsement	Noting and discussion	Noting and discussion

### 3 Personnel

#### ***Self-evaluation Team***

In October 2018, the Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement appointed Dr David Fleming to chair a team to undertake the self-evaluation exercise and prepare the ISER in advance of the review panel visit. The Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement wished to appoint someone with experience of core University activities but who was not part of the University's management structure. An employee of UL since 2005, Dr Fleming is Assistant Dean (Academic Affairs) in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and a member of Academic Council.

The self-evaluation team was selected to represent a cross-section of the campus community. The 21-member team includes 16 staff members and five students and is supported by the office of the Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement, members of the Quality Support Unit and a technical writer. Gender balance was considered when establishing the composition of the team. The list the team members and their affiliations can be accessed [here](#).

The five student representatives actively engaged in the team's work. Given the focus of the review's terms of reference, an international student was randomly identified. The respective presidents of the Students' Union (UL Student Life) and the Postgraduate Students' Union accepted the invitation, as did an undergraduate and a postgraduate student.

The staff members on the self-evaluation team were selected on the basis of having demonstrable interest and expertise in quality improvement. Of the 21 members of staff on the team, four (including the chair) represent the four faculties, five represent support departments (Graduate and Professional Studies, Student Affairs Division, Quality Support Unit, International Education Division) and associated companies (Plassey Campus Centre) and one represents Governing Authority.

Since November 2018, the self-evaluation team met regularly in the initial phase of the exercise to undertake the data-gathering and analytical activities described in section 4 below. Communication to and feedback from the team relating to drafts of the ISER during the writing phase were undertaken by email.

### **Steering group**

A [steering group](#) was formed to lead and support the self-evaluation (or 'core') team in its work. The steering group comprises the core team chair, a member of Academic Council, an academic staff member from the Faculty of Science and Engineering, the Quality Support Unit Quality Officer, the Mature Student Access Officer and a postgraduate student. From February to June 2019, the steering group met fortnightly to coordinate project activities and direct the work of the core team.

## **4 Process Milestones**

The table to follow summarises the milestones reached so far.

Feb 2018	Project management plan adopted
Oct 2018	Dr David Fleming appointed to lead the self-evaluation team
Nov 2018	Self-evaluation team recruited
Nov 2018	First meeting of self-evaluation team and induction
Mar 2019	Meeting of QQI representatives with Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement and members of core team
Spring 2019	Regular meetings of steering group and self-evaluation team
June 2019	First draft of ISER completed
Sept 2019	ISER reviewed by Executive Committee
Oct 2019	ISER reviewed by Academic Council and noted by Management Council
Nov 2019	ISER noted by Governing Authority
Nov 2019	Finalisation of ISER and appendices
Dec 2019	ISER sent to QQI: 16 December

## **5 Keeping the Campus Community Informed**

On 21 December 2018, the Director of Quality informed the University community of the forthcoming institutional review by email. On 6 December 2018, the chair of the core team and Director of Quality met with Management Council to brief them on the review process. In April 2019, memoranda on current and future activities were circulated to Executive Committee, Academic Council and Management Council, while a general email update was sent to the campus community.

To keep the general campus community informed of the review and abreast of developments, a dedicated [web page](#) was added to the Quality Support Unit website in November 2018. The page provides information on the self-evaluation exercise and the forthcoming review visit and contains links to the QQI Handbook, the ESG and a list of both ISER teams. Once the final Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) and appendices were sent to QQI in December 2019, the report itself was uploaded to SharePoint (the University's internal file-sharing portal) for dissemination to the campus community.

## **6 Data-gathering Activities**

The first meeting of the core team in November 2018 included an induction and planning workshop to help the team identify what it considered to be the University's main quality assurance and enhancement activities. As well as focusing on identifying what formal QA activities applied to the University's four core areas, i.e. teaching, learning, research and services, the workshop provided team members with an opportunity to get to know each other.

The core team met on six occasions. At its third meeting, the team reviewed and accessed how the University had implemented the recommendations of the 2012 review. It also began the process of

an in-depth analysis of how the University complies with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and QQI guidelines. The results of that analysis form a significant portion of the ISER.

During the spring of 2019, core team subgroups were formed to analyse the University's QA/QE activities with respect to each of the areas under review:

- research;
- governance;
- access, transfer and progression;
- international learners; and
- compliance

Each subgroup used the following questions to guide their analysis:

1. What are our current institutional practices relevant to the area and have all of these been captured?
2. What are the existing gaps in meeting our commitments under QQI's core guidelines and ESG? Where do we do well?
3. What suggestions or recommendations may be proposed for improvement or enhancement?

The subgroups consulted widely in their respective areas and presented their findings to the core team in May 2019. Following discussion, the reports were finalised in June and used to inform the ISER.

An early decision was made to avoid contributing to 'survey fatigue' by using pre-existing survey data wherever possible, along with focus group activity.

Following an email invitation to all students from the Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement, two student focus groups were held on 19 March with a random selection of students. Scheduled by the student representative on the ISER steering group, both focus groups were facilitated by final-year students with note-taking services provided by the Quality Support Unit. One group provided feedback on how the University deals with assessment and feedback while the other dealt with learning resources.

Facilitated by an external consultant, three staff focus groups were held on 2 April. Members of staff were selected from departments and support units. Comprising 15 senior members of academic and support staff, the first group considered a number of QQI core guidelines (CG), including governance and management (CG 1); documented approach to quality (CG 2); staff recruitment, management and development (CG 4); and self-evaluation, monitoring and review (CG 11). The second group of 12 academic staff considered programmes of education and training (CG 3); teaching and learning (CG 5); and assessment of learners (CG6). Comprising 12 professional service or support staff, the third group examined how the University dealt with information and data management (CG 8), and public information and communication (CG 9).

The results of both student and staff focus groups were considered by the core team on 7 May.

A quality team leaders' forum, which normally convenes as part of the quality management system, met on 11 June 2019 to consider and deliberate on the University's quality systems as they apply to support divisions. Members were asked to contribute case studies of enhancements undertaken as a result of quality review recommendations or customer feedback.

## **5 The ISER**

The writing and editing of the ISER involved extensive consultation. With reference to the outcomes of the data-gathering activities described above, the chair began writing the initial draft of the ISER

in spring 2019. This first draft was reviewed by the core team and the Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Engagement in June and July, and the second draft was given to a technical writer in August. The next version of the ISER and all finalised appendices were reviewed in September by the core team, Executive Committee, Management Council, Academic Council and Governing Authority, and amendments were made accordingly. Based on the rigour of the review phase, the core team is confident that the views expressed in the ISER represent those of the institution and not just those of the team.

The ISER and supporting appendices were submitted to QQI on 16 December 2019.