



2019 Quality Reviews

Reviewers' Feedback Summary Report



Quality Support Unit
February 2020

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The [Quality Review Process](#) at the University of Limerick is one of the University's cornerstone quality assurance mechanisms. Cycle 3 quality reviews commenced in 2018. The cyclical review schedule, which is available [here](#), incorporates faculties, research institutes, academic and support units and affiliate units. Tailored quality review guidelines are compiled for each stream of reviews and are available [here](#).

Three reviews were held in 2019: Irish World Music Academy (February), Library & Information Services Division (September) and Cooperative Education and Careers Division (December). As part of our ongoing quality assurance activities, the Quality Support Unit (QSU) conducted a post-review survey with the three quality review groups (QRGs). A total of 19 (9 national and 10 international) reviewers were surveyed, of which 15 responded, giving an overall response rate of 79%. This brief report outlines the key survey findings and the proposed actions to address issues identified.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

1. Please indicate how you found the following:

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	
1) Communication by the QSU prior to the review	0	0	0	0	15 (100%)	15 responses
2) Quality of documentation provided by the QSU in preparation for the review	0	0	0	1 (7%)	14 (93%)	15 responses
3) Overview of the process provided by the QSU	0	0	0	3 (20%)	12 (80%)	15 responses
4) Quality of SAR and appendices provided by the department under review	0	0	0	1 (7%)	14 (93%)	15 responses
5) Timing of documentation sent to reviewers in advance of the review	0	0	0	2 (14%)	13 (86%)	15 responses
6) Meet-and-greet session on Monday evening	0	0	1 (7%)	4 (26%)	10 (67%)	15 responses

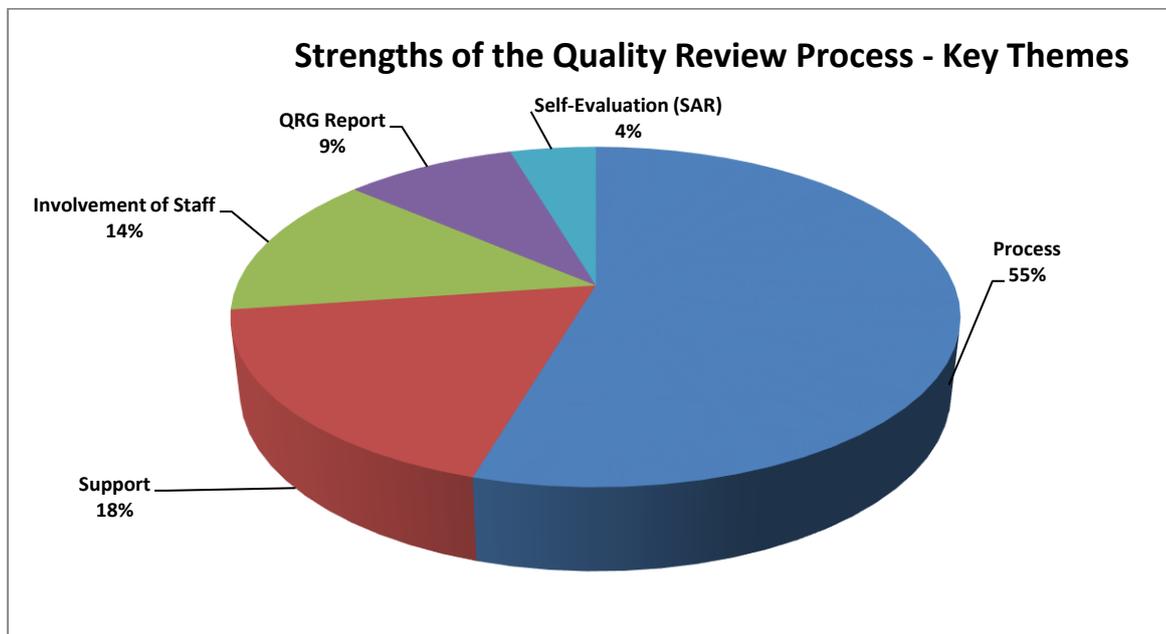
2. Please indicate how you found the following:

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	
1) The review schedule	0	0	2 (13%)	4 (26%)	9 (60%)	15 responses
2) Meetings with department staff	0	0	1 (7%)	5 (35%)	8 (57%)	14 responses
3) Meetings with stakeholders	0	0	1 (7%)	3 (20%)	11 (73%)	15 responses
4) Meetings with senior management	0	0	0	5 (33%)	10 (67%)	15 responses
5) On-site review facilities	0	0	0	4 (26%)	11 (73%)	15 responses
6) Catering	0	0	1 (7%)	3 (20%)	11 (73%)	15 responses
7) Hotel accommodation	0	0	0	1 (7%)	14 (93%)	15 responses
8) Taxi transfers	0	0	0	1 (7%)	13 (93%)	14 responses

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions on the overall quality review process: 1) *What are the strengths of our quality review process?* and 2) *How could we improve the quality review process?* A summary of the findings and representative reviewer comments are given below.

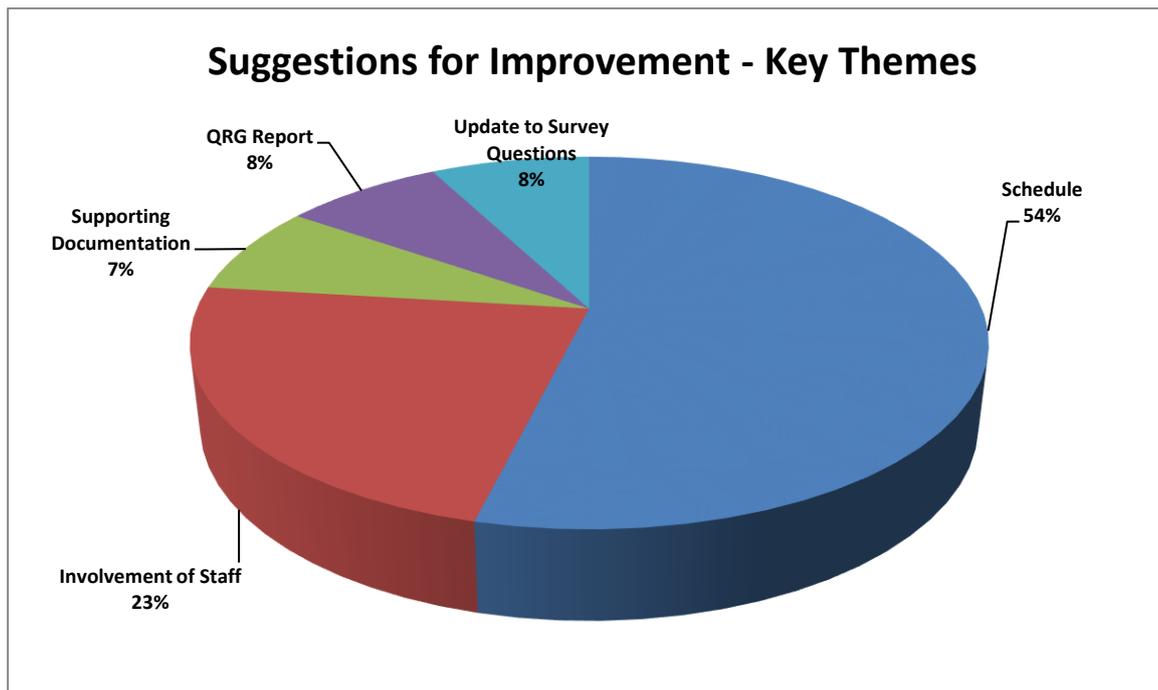
Question 1: What are the strengths of our quality review process?



Sample Qualitative Comments on Strengths of the Process:

- "I thought it was an excellent process and well managed. In addition to the completeness, professionalism and affable approach of the QSU, the astute and genial stewardship of the Chair was noteworthy as was the dedication and complementary nature of the other team members."
- "The process is well organised and thorough, enabling the unit being reviewed an opportunity to receive suggestions for improvement and recommendations from an outsider's perspective."
- "The unit under review were open and honest because they were interested in having a review for the benefit of what might come from it."
- "The SAR was complete and thorough but not so long that it risked obscuring important points."
- "The inclusivity of all staff and stakeholders in the process."
- "I appreciated that the process ensured our report was completed while we were together. Reviews I have conducted in the past required the team to continue working together to produce a report. This would become increasingly complicated due to location and time differences."
- "Having a break for lunch is a very welcome process improvement."
- "The fact that it is so clearly enhancement-focused and the positive atmosphere in which the visits and materials are provided."
- "The succinct nature of the report is great."
- "The completion of the QRG report onsite, with all members contributing to the discussion and ironing out any inaccuracies or subtle points as a group, while the issues are fresh in the minds of participants."
- "The brevity of the reviewers' advance comments prior to the site visit is good in that it keeps the discussion focused."
- "Having the technical writer is really helpful on the final day, especially for guidance around detailed working of the commendations and recommendations. She is very experienced and I valued her views throughout."

Question 2: How could we improve the quality review process?

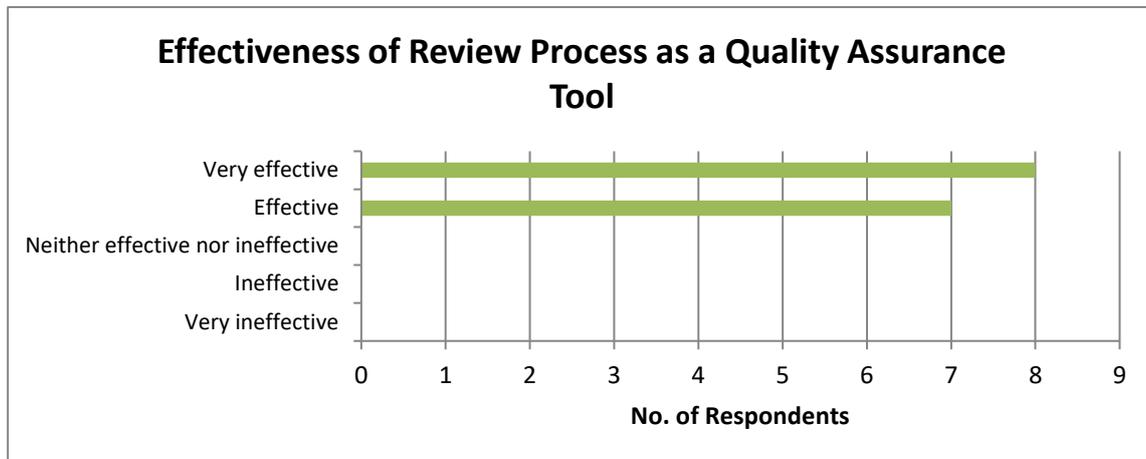


Sample Qualitative Comments on Suggested Improvements:

- “The review schedule would benefit from some revision. The days were very long with limited scope for breaks. Meeting the same staff repeatedly gives limited opportunity for triangulation of views. If the meetings were grouped by type of staff rather than broad SAR topics, that would enable the team to meet different groups of staff and stakeholders, in turn, allowing for fewer meetings overall with longer gaps between the meetings for planning and review.”
- “Slightly greater gaps in the site visit schedule would enable the team to make more use of the notes provided by the technical writer. This time could be used to create bullet point notes of things the team agree they have got out of the meeting.”
- “There isn’t much scope for having a break or even reflecting as a team on progress.”
- “It would have been helpful to have a little more breathing space between meetings.”
- “I found the time for writing the report tight. The last day we had 90 minutes to write up our notes and submit them to the technical writer. I found this challenging.”
- “The guideline document for the Chair was very useful. Could that include information on what is expected from each of the meetings included on the schedule?”
- “When the QRG members are submitting their commendations and recommendations, it would be more efficient if these are submitted into a single document, rather than being separated by report section. Having one set of commendations and recommendations would have simplified the process of checking for duplication/gaps, plus getting them presented in the right order on the final morning.”
- “It would be useful to reflect on how QRG members can make better use of the notes provided of the discussions. The notes are actually tricky to use because they are shared with a bit of a delay. A model that could be investigated would be to have a team de-brief after each review session’ so the team agrees what it considers it learned from the discussion and reflects on how the questions for any future meetings might need to be adjusted.”
- “It would be useful in future to arrange meetings with unit staff without their supervisors being present.”
- “The QRG would appreciate some sessions where the most senior managers of the unit are not present.”
- “Some of the questions in the survey were not relevant to internal reviewers. There was no option for ‘not applicable’.”

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS

Respondents were asked one final question: *As a quality assurance tool, how effective did you find the review process?* One hundred percent of respondents (i.e. 15) answered this question and all considered the review process to be either 'very effective' or 'effective' as a quality assurance tool.



QSU PROCESS ENHANCEMENTS ON FOOT OF REVIEWER FEEDBACK

1. Schedule:

- a. Revise the site visit schedule to include the following:
 - i. Change the meeting groupings from SAR chapter headings to staff/stakeholder groupings. Trial the revised schedule on a forthcoming reviews and revise again if necessary following future feedback.
 - ii. Reduce the number of overall meetings to allow more planning / review time to the panel.
 - iii. Ensure at least one meeting is of unit staff without the management team in attendance.

2. Process:

- a. Develop a 'guideline' document outlining what is expected from each of the site visit meetings.
- b. Reflect on how best use can be made of the notes provided by the technical writer. Perhaps devise a template for completion as a debrief after site visit meeting.
- c. Update feedback survey to allow for the inclusion of a 'not applicable' option on relevant questions.

TIMEFRAME

The actions outlined above will be incorporated into all future quality reviews, commencing in September 2020.

The Quality Support Unit would like to thank all of the reviewers who took the time to provide such comprehensive feedback.

Kim O'Mahony
Quality Support Unit
February 2020