

Cycle 3 quality review schedule – by Academic Year. Approved by Executive Committee, March 1st, 2017.

Review (AY)	Academic unit review	Support and other unit review	Research institute	Thematic review	Programmatic review	Additional review activity
YEAR 1 (2017/18)		Centre for Teaching & Learning (March 2018)		Compliance exercises (4)*	Programmatic reviews are ongoing, under the auspices of Academic Council/APRC	
Year 2 (2018/19)	IWAMD (Feb. 2019)	UL Students' Union (October 2018) UniJobs (Nov 2018)		Compliance exercises (4)**		Linked provider review: (Garda College)
YEAR 3 (2019/20)		Library & Information Services Division (September 2019) Cooperative Education & Careers Division (CECD) (Dec 2019) Buildings & Estates (Mar 2020)				UL Institutional review [August 2020]
YEAR 4 (2020/21)	National Council for Education & Fitness (Dec 2020) Faculty 1 (Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences) (Feb 2021)	Information Technology Division (May 2021)				
YEAR 5 (2021/22)	Faculty 4 (Education & Health Sciences) (Mar 2022)	Human resources (Dec 2021)	Bernal Institute (Nov 2021)			

		International Education Division (May 2022)	Health Research Institute (Feb 2022)			
YEAR 6 (2022/23)	Faculty 3 (Science & Engineering) (Jan 2023)	Finance (Sept 2022) Research Office (Oct 2022) Academic Registry (Nov 2022) UL Sport (Feb 2023) Student Affairs (Mar 2023) Plassey Campus Centre (Apr 2023)				
YEAR 7 (2023/24)		Marketing and Communications (Sept 2023) Office of the President (Nov 2023) Graduate and Professional Studies (Feb 2024) UL Alumni (May 2024)		Cornerstone institutional QA processes		Potential linked provider review (MIC second institutional review)
	Review of reviews exercise Review of any newly formed unit Planning and preparation for next cycle quality reviews, due to commence in AY 2024/25)					

***Compliance exercises for year 1 (AY 2017/18):**

1. Core statutory quality assurance guidelines (QQI, April 2016)
2. Standards & guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area (ESGs, 2015)
3. Code of practice for provision of programmes of education and training to international learners (QQI, 2015)
4. European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning

*** Compliance exercises for year 2 (AY 2018/19):**

1. IHEQN guidelines for the approval, monitoring and review of collaborative and transnational provision
2. Sector specific QA guidelines for designated awarding bodies
3. Statutory guidelines for the QA of research degree programmes
4. Statutory guidelines for flexible and distributed learners

Appendix 1: Explanatory notes

- 1. Academic unit quality reviews:** For the purposes of this review cycle, the term ‘academic unit’ will, by default, refer to a faculty. It is proposed to review the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance separately as it does not fall within the faculty structure. Taking a faculty-level approach is proposed on the basis that: (a) schools/departments have thus far undergone two cycles of quality review while faculties have not yet been reviewed; (b) a faculty-level review will capture constituent school/departmental-level issues as well as overall faculty-level governance, organisation, co-ordination, cohesion and contribution to implementation of the strategic plan; (c) the executive role now played by faculty deans renders a faculty-level review appropriate; (d) the recently revised programme-level annual monitoring and periodic review process will be operationalised at departmental/school level. Maintaining quality reviews at departmental or school level would result in significant review overlap and duplication of effort and could place an unnecessary and unreasonable burden on individual schools/departments. It is proposed to retain scope for subsequently including an individual departmental/school review should a department/school itself request such a review or should Executive Committee consider such a review to be appropriate.
- 2. Support and other unit quality reviews:** Individual support divisions/offices will undergo quality reviews (as in the previous cycle) because such units maintain individual quality management systems (QMS) and pursue distinct functional roles. While the support unit review cycle structure will remain unchanged, QSU will consider (and will seek stakeholder input into) some process modifications, including the potential for a template-based self-assessment document and increased emphasis on the end quality of the services provided as opposed to the QMS *per se*. A number of associated units that bear a legal distinction from the core university are also included (upon their request or with their agreement). These include UL Sport and PCC (who partook in round 2 quality reviews), as well as ULSU, NCEF, Unijobs and UL alumni. A tailored review process appropriately proportional to their size and operation is envisaged in the case of the latter 4 units. Due cognisance of governance arrangements will be taken during review of any unit legally distinct from the university.
- 3. Research institute reviews:** Research institutes have not been reviewed under the quality review process to date. The reorganisation and streamlining of research institutes, as outlined in the university’s research and innovation strategy, renders timely their review within this cycle.
- 4. Thematic reviews:** A number of cross-cutting thematic reviews are proposed. Compliance mini-reviews proposed for years 1 and 2 of cycle 3 activity will be undertaken in full by QSU or will be coordinated by QSU with input from appropriate support and academic units. Collectively, the aim of these self-assessment exercises is to assess institutional compliance with national statutory quality requirements and with associated guidelines published by QQI (which universities must take due consideration of when developing, assessing and revising their QA processes). The mini-review reports will be presented to GASPQA. The individual exercises, in themselves, will not incorporate an immediate external review element. They would, instead, form appendices in the institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), which will be prepared in advance of our next institutional review (2020). Central to the terms of reference of any institutional review is assessment of compliance

with national statutory requirements. The institutional review will, in effect, represent the external review element of these mini reviews.

- 5. Quality reviews and the strategic plan:** The quality reviews, individually and collectively, are aligned with the university's strategic plan, and the detailed scope of individual reviews will be tailored to include a consideration of primary strategic goals.
- *Theme 1* of the plan focuses on the university's core mission of teaching and research; involvement with local and regional communities; and relationships with staff, students and alumni. Exploration of these topics will represent a core focus of almost all the reviews proposed.
 - *Theme 2* of the plan largely focuses on research, industry engagement, employability and infrastructure, all core issues to be considered in the reviews of faculties, research institutes and many support units.
 - *Theme 3* of the strategic plan focuses on our international profile. Consideration of internationalisation activities will form a core focus of academic, relevant support unit and all research institute reviews.

While the strategic plan could potentially be used to identify additional institutional-wide thematic reviews around, for example, internationalisation or research, this approach is not being proposed because:

- Such reviews would likely significantly overlap with strategic plan implementation reviews, hence leading to unnecessary duplication of review effort;
- Such topics will form core elements of the proposed reviews. For example, research will form a central topic in all faculty reviews, all research institute reviews and relevant support unit reviews (most notably the Research Office itself).

- 6. Amendments to the review schedule:** Future circumstances may render desirable or necessary the introduction of modification(s) to the currently proposed schedule. Such changed circumstances could, for example, include the restructuring of a unit, a change in university policy direction or evolving national statutory quality requirements. Any proposed schedule modifications will be considered by the Director of Quality on a case-by-case basis and will require approval from the Vice President Academic & Registrar.
- 7. Review process characteristics:** Once a review schedule is adopted, QSU will begin to develop integrated review terms of reference, scope and guideline documents tailored to the various review streams. The review process will likely mirror current practice, with the unit under review undertaking an initial period of self-evaluation, followed by peer review, followed by implementation of a quality improvement plan. Stakeholder input will be sought when updating the review process, which will also be informed by feedback from cycle 2 review participants. The current (cycle 2) review process guidelines document for academic units can be accessed [here](#), while the guidelines document for support units is available [here](#).
- 8. Programmatic reviews and additional review activity:** Programmatic reviews are ongoing and fall under the auspices of AC/APRC. Additional review activities listed include the next UL institutional review, and reviews of linked providers. These review categories (i.e. the last 2 columns provided

in appendix 1) fall outside of the cycle 3 quality review process (and hence the approval currently sought from Executive committee does **not** extend to these categories). Details of these review categories are included in this document in order to provide Executive Committee with a comprehensive overview of forthcoming institutional quality review activity.

9. **Consultations undertaken:** While preparing and finalizing this proposed schedule, the Director of Quality consulted with the following individuals or groups: Individual members of Executive Committee; QQI; all support and other unit directors (either individually or collectively via VPA&R management group); research institute directors; faculty managers; the associate registrar. An advanced draft of the schedule was also circulated to all university students and staff via global email, with an invitation for commentary and feedback.