Quality Board
for Icelandic Higher Education

Guidelines for Chairs and Team Members for Online Institution-Wide Reviews

July 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

General abbreviations

Board	Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education
Council	Quality Council for Icelandic higher education
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Also known as European Standards and Guidelines.
IWR	Institution-Wide Review
LÍS	The National Union for Icelandic Students
Ministry	Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
QEF	Quality Enhancement Framework
QEF1	First round of the Quality Enhancement Framework
QEF2	Second round of the Quality Enhancement Framework
RA	Reflective Analysis
SLR	Subject-Level Review

Abbreviations of the Icelandic universities

AUI	Agricultural University of Iceland
BU	Bifröst University
HUC	Hólar University College
IUA	Icelandic University of the Arts
RU	Reykjavík University
UI	University of Iceland
UNAK	University of Akureyri

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to orient Review Chairs and Team Members to the process of online Institution-Wide Review (IWR). This Guide is based on a similar Guide for on-site IWR[1]. It should be read in association with the 2nd edition of the *Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education*[2] (thereinafter, QEF Handbook), which is the definitive source of information on QEF2. This Guide is therefore only intended to be a convenient summary of information that is most relevant to Chairs and Team Members for purposes of online IWR. More information is available on the QEF website (www.qef.is).[3]

Some facts about the Icelandic Higher Education system

The Icelandic Higher Education system operates in accordance with Icelandic laws and regulations, including the Higher Education Act (63/2006)[4], the Act on public higher education institutions (85/2008)[5], the National Qualification Framework for higher education (regulation 530/2011)[6], Rules on Quality Assurance of Teaching and Research (1368/2018)[7], regulation on Doctoral Studies in Higher Education Institutions (37/2007; in Icelandic only)[8], regulation on the procedure of the Board of Appeal for Higher Education Institution students' complaints (1152/2006; in Icelandic only)[9], and regulation on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (1067/2006; in Icelandic only)[10].

In academic year 2019, there were approximately 18 700 students enrolled at the seven Icelandic higher education institutions. All seven are universities, of which four are public and three are private. There are no other types of higher education institution in Iceland.

Public universities:
- University of Iceland (UI); est. 1911; approximately 12 400 students
- University of Akureyri (UNAK); est. 1987; approximately 2 400 students
- The Agricultural University of Iceland (AUI); est. 1990s; approximately 200 students
- Hólar University College (HUC); est. 2006; approximately 120 students

Private universities:
- Reykjavík University (RU); est. 1998; approximately 3 000 students
- Bifröst University (BU) est. 1990s; approximately 580 students
- Icelandic University of the Arts (IUA); est. 1990´s; 446 approximately 500 students

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[1] https://qef.is/assets/PDFs/Others/Guidelines-for-IWR-team-chair-and-team-members_FINAL-1-9-2020.pdf

[2] https://qef.is/assets/QEF2-Handbook-for-website.pdf

[3] To help the reader distinguish between the two, the QEF Handbook **annexes** use Arabic numbers while the **appendices** of this documents use Roman numbers.

[4] https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-PDF-Althjodlegt/Higher-Education-Act-no.-63-2006nytt.pdf

[5] https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-PDF-Althjodlegt/Act-on-Public-Higher-Education-Institutions-no-85-2008---amended-2010.pdf

[6] https://www.stjornartidindi.is/PdfVersions.aspx?recordId=8bfec154-2168-4de8-9170-4b19cf11d7c3

[7] https://qef.is/assets/PDFs/Others/Rules-pertaining-to-quality-assurance-of-teaching-and-research-in-higher-education-no-1368_2018.pdf

[8] https://www.stjornartidindi.is/PdfVersions.aspx?recordId=9e43f819-38e4-4bc4-9466-e77ce98015ae

[9] https://www.stjornartidindi.is/PdfVersions.aspx?recordId=2e55c0dd-f482-4f07-8143-3e4edc393908

[10] https://www.stjornartidindi.is/PdfVersions.aspx?recordId=9dc4f819-3423-45d1-9ca1-e48a773d793e

All seven universities are open to all students holding a matriculation diploma (or equivalent), but admissions exams are in effect in some departments. All universities offer degrees at the Bachelor and Master levels. UI, UNAK and RU offer doctoral degrees, and AUI offers doctoral degrees through resource sharing with UI's Graduate School. Professors from Hólar serve as supervisors to doctoral students, but those matriculate at UI. No formal distinction is applied to Icelandic universities in terms of research/teaching intensity or pure/applied science focus.

While both public and private universities receive block funding from the government per student, based on the same funding model, private universities can charge tuition, whereas the public universities cannot. The Icelandic Student Loan Fund (a government agency) sets a limit to students' annual loans. That cap tends to be close to what the private universities actually charge. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Ministry) reports that approximately two-thirds of the income of the universities comes from government funding. Annual expenditure per student in Iceland is on par with OECD countries but lower than the Nordic average[11], which is a common reference point and the Government's stated goal for the funding of Icelandic universities. Iceland has relatively high student/staff ratios, which have approximately doubled since 2000.

The government also runs various research and innovation funds that provide additional funding on a competitive basis. For example, the Icelandic Research Fund (annual budget = 21.7 million GBP) almost exclusively awards grants to university-based researchers.[12]

Although the Ministry is directly responsible for public universities by law, it does not play a significant role in their daily activities. Public universities must follow the same financial, legal, and reporting requirements as other state institutions, but their academic autonomy is ensured through the legislation on universities. Private universities are not-for-profit. They are formally independent and can in principle determine their own governance structure, but they must follow the general law on universities and be reviewed by the Quality Board like a public university. The private universities operate in accordance with performance and funding agreements that are re-negotiated every few years with the Ministry.

The Quality Enhancement Framework and Institution-Wide Review

Iceland developed a Quality Enhancement Framework in 2011, two fundamental components of which are:

- Subject-Level Reviews: conducted by each individual university and covering all of its subject areas;
- Institution-Wide Review: an external review of an entire university that results in a published report.

The first QEF operated over six years from 2011 and was judged to have been successful. A second cycle (QEF2) began in 2018, in the course of which all universities will again review each of their academic subjects through SLRs and undergo an IWR. Some changes were made to the Framework in the light of the QEF1 experience, the most significant of which was to include the management of research as a component of both SLRs and IWR. The QEF is overseen by an independent Quality Board that works in collaboration with a Quality Council, appointed by the universities, and the national student union, LÍS.

The IWR process is designed to:

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[11] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/deliver/69096873-en.pdf?itemId=%2Fcontent%2Fpublication%2F69096873-en&mimeType=pdf

[12] Hermannsson, K. (2017) Higher Education Systems and Institutions, Iceland. In: Shin, J. C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.) Encyclopaedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions. Springer. ISBN 9789401795531 (doi:10.1007/978-94-017-9553-1_371-1)

- support universities in reflecting on the relative success of their management of the enhancement of quality, their safeguarding of standards of awards and their management of research;
- be a valuable resource in supporting institutional strategic planning processes and contribute to the formulation of future strategies;
- provide independent external assurance of the operations of these universities for the benefit of current and future students, the Government, employers and other stakeholders nationally and internationally.

2. ROLE OF THE REVIEW TEAM

The Team for an online Institution-Wide Review (thereinafter, the 'Team') generally comprises three to four international experts, one of whom is the Chair, an Icelandic student, who is a full member of the Team, and a Secretary. The Team receives logistical support from the Board Secretariat (hereinafter, Secretariat). The Team works together to prepare for and undertake a virtual visit with online review meetings with staff, students and stakeholders of the university being reviewed and then to write the IWR report. Online review meetings with the university normally take place over one week, but are preceded and followed by online Team-only meetings. This chapter describes how to prepare for each phase of the IWR process.

Before online review meetings

a) The QEF Handbook

All members of the Team should ensure that they are familiar with the principles, processes and main elements of the QEF Handbook. The associated annexes also contain information that is important for the Team, notably the ESG-anchored frame of reference for confidence judgments detailed in Annex 11.

Three defining features of the QEF should be kept in mind at all stages of the review:

First, it recognises that each university operates in a specific context and has its own priorities and goals; each university should be evaluated in the context of its own mission and values, with fitness for purpose as the principal criterion. The object is not to rank the universities but to assess the extent to which each is meeting its own, stated aspirations.

Second, the approach is enhancement-led. Enhancement means 'taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement'; it entails quality assurance but goes beyond it.

Third, the process results in judgements: on confidence in the management of quality of the student experience (quality) and in the standards of degrees and awards (standards). See *QEF Handbook*, ¶ 93-98, for further details.

In the event of a confirmed 'limited confidence' judgement, it is the Board's responsibility to agree a Follow-up Action Plan with the university and to monitor the implementation of that Action Plan. As described in the *Handbook*, this would be done in consultation with the Ministry. In the event of a confirmed judgement of 'no confidence', the Board would agree with the Ministry the required follow-up action.

b) The Reflective Analysis and supporting documentation

Well before online review meetings, Team members will receive the university's **Reflective Analysis** (thereinafter, RA) (QEF Handbook, ¶65-71). The RA is a confidential document that, in essence, is the

university's own careful consideration of its quality assurance work since the last review. When producing the RA, the university is asked to demonstrate, based on evidence, how it knows that the learning experience of its students is consistently as good as it could be by Icelandic and international standards; how it assures itself that the standards of its awards are comparable nationally and internationally; and how it analyses the effectiveness of its management of research. The Ministry has approved the creation of a common data set for all Icelandic universities and the university should draw upon this when producing its RA. The RA will include a Case Study, chosen by the university to illustrate its recent quality enhancement work.

Other **documentation** that is routinely supplied to the Team comprises:

- The IWR Report from QEF1
- The Mid-Term Progress Report (QEF Handbook, ¶101)
- The most recent SLRs, which may be from QEF1 and/or QEF2.
- The main sources of evidence on which the RA is based (e.g., key statistics)
- The university's own Quality Handbook
- Other documents that are available in English and will help the Team to understand the university's processes and structures

Appendix I, below, provides further details on how to read the documents.

c) Initial response to the RA

The Team will meet online to discuss its initial response to the RA. Each member of the Team produces a **commentary** (which can be in note form) on each of the main sections of the RA and sends this to the Chair prior to this meeting. The Chair will synthesise the various observations in advance of a preparatory meeting with the university (see below). Appendix I, below, offers further guidance on reading the RA and supporting documents.

Besides their commentary on the RA, each member of the Team is expected to assist the Chair in planning the review meetings with the university by identifying:

- any particular themes they would wish to see explored during review meetings;
- who they should be meeting during review meetings;
- any additional documentation to be requested from the university. Documents that only exist in Icelandic should only be requested if they are of critical importance because of the limited time available to the Secretariat for translation.

The Chair will then conduct an online preparatory meeting with representatives of the university to agree a schedule of review meetings and discuss any additional documentation that has been requested from the university.

Online review meetings

Online review meetings normally take place over the duration of one week (Monday through Friday). The Secretariat will manage the scheduling of meetings and invitations to meetings. The Secretariat will be the host for all meetings and hence control who can be admitted to meetings. The Review Team will be admitted to all online meetings first. When the Secretariat has confirmed that all members of the Team are ready to

begin a meeting, other attendees (university representatives, students or stakeholders) will be admitted. Meetings will take place via the Zoom™ platform and will not be recorded.

- In the weeks preceding the week of review meetings: The Team agrees on a schedule of online preparatory meetings to attend an orientation session from the Quality Board, to decide the chairs of the individual meetings with the university, and to determine what questions will be asked during each of these meetings (at least the initial ones) by whom. All Team members submit questions for each meeting.
- Week of review meetings: To prevent fatigue, review meetings will be scheduled for no more than about six hours each day. Breaks, as well as Team-only interim and follow-up meetings, will be scheduled around review meetings.
- Week following the week of review meetings: Team meets online at an opportune time for all members to arrive at judgments and headline bullets (see Section IV, below). The number of meetings following the week of review meetings is at the discretion of the Review Team.

Below is an illustrative sample schedule for one day of online reviews.

Time	Type of Meeting	Theme(s)	In Attendance
9:00-10:00	Review Meeting	Theme A	Team and representatives/stakeholders
10:00-10:15	Interim Meeting	Catch-up and preparation for next meeting	Team Only
10:15-10:30	Break		Team Offline
10:30-11:30	Review Meeting	Theme B	Team and representatives/stakeholders
11:30-11:45	Interim Meeting	Catch-up and preparation for next meeting(s)	Team Only
11:45-12:30	Lunch		Team Offline
12:30-13:25	Review Meeting	Theme C	Team and representatives/stakeholders
13:25-13:35	Interim Meeting	Catch-up and preparation for next meeting	Team Only
13:35-13:45	Break		Team Offline
13:45-14:30	Review Meeting	Theme D	Team and representatives/stakeholders
14:30-14:45	Interim Meeting	Catch-up and preparation for next day	Team Only

Annex 9 of the QEF Handbook provides examples of the likely types of meeting and the sorts of topics to be covered and Appendices I and II, below, provide further details on those meetings.

In an online review, it will not be possible for the university to host a physical *University Showcase*, which is normally conducted in the morning of the first day of an on-site review visit. The university will be encouraged to include an online event at the beginning of the online meeting schedule that has the same function.

Registration for open meetings with students and staff will be online. Secretariat will manage registrations, invites and sending instructions to attendees on the goals and conduct of open meetings.

Prior to the week of online review meetings, the Secretariat will establish a Team-only WhatsApp™ account for the Team to communicate privately during the week of online review meetings.

Conduct of meetings

The designated meeting chair will prepare a list of questions (and who will ask each question) prior to each meeting, based on suggested questions received from Team members. The questions will be entered into a script that will be shared with the whole Review Team in advance of each meeting. This will be done at least for the initial meetings, with an understanding that the questions may be changed as the review progresses. The script will also contain the names and titles of attendees from the university side. A blank template for a meeting script is included in Appendix III. The Secretariat will also send an information sheet to all meeting attendees from the university side (staff, students and stakeholders) that contains a link to the meeting, an introduction to the team members, (see Appendix IV for a template), as well as online meeting guidelines (see Appendix V).

Meetings normally involve a maximum of 6 interviewees and last for one hour. Each meeting should have clear aims, and it is the responsibility of the designated meeting chair to keep time to ensure that all aims are sufficiently covered.

The Secretary will take comprehensive notes. Team members are encouraged to focus on engaging with the attendees and ensuring that all of them are given an opportunity to speak. Immediately after a meeting finishes, the meeting Chair should oversee a short session in which Team members record the salient points in the form of 'bullets'. The Team will take further stock at key points during the day, and then again at the end of the day.

During online meetings, the Secretariat will monitor the Secretariat's email account and be ready to receive phone calls in case any attendees have problems connecting to a meeting. The Secretariat will also monitor the Team's WhatsApp™ account during meetings. Secretariat will be muted and have its camera turned off during meetings. Secretariat member will listen in on meetings and will be ready to provide clarifications or instant translations if called upon.

Simultaneous interpretation from English to Icelandic, and *vice versa*, is available if university requests that service for an entire meeting.

After the online review meetings: Writing the Headlines Letter

The Team's last meeting with the university will be with senior staff, to resolve any possible misunderstandings that may have arisen and complete any other unfinished business. However, it will not communicate its judgements at this stage: they will be included in a 'Headlines Letter' that will be sent to the university within two weeks of the conclusion of online review meetings.

a) Headline Outcomes

Following the conclusion of online review meetings, the team will meet online within one week of the conclusion of the review meetings. During this meeting, the Team will draft the Headlines letter:

- Draw up a list of the strengths and examples of good practice that members have noted down during the course of review meetings and decide which merit highlighting by including them in the Headlines letter.
- Do the same for areas that need further development.

Only then, with the help of these summary findings but on the basis of all the evidence that it has had, does the Team decide on the two judgements.

The Team should also agree a note on the management of research to be included in the Headlines letter.

The Judgements

As set out in detail in the QEF Handbook (¶ 93-98), the Team makes two separate judgements: of confidence in the management of the quality of the student experience; and of confidence in the management of the standards of degrees and awards. There are three possible outcomes for each judgement: confidence, limited confidence, and no confidence (which is essentially a 'failing' grade). The table on the next page, copied from the QEF Handbook, summarises these outcomes and their consequences.

No judgement is to be made on the university's management of research, but the Team will have evaluated this with reference to the same five dimensions that are now part of SLRs (Handbook, ¶ 48-50).

Overview of IWR judgments

Judgment	Follow-up	MESC involvement
Confidence	Year-on Report	None
Limited confidence	Year-on Report, Action Plan	Receives notice if Action Plan is not agreed upon
No confidence	Meeting between HEI , MESC, and QB Chair	Determines how to proceed

After online review meetings: Writing the Report

a) Content

Annex 10 of the QEF Handbook provides a specimen Table of Contents, but actual content will of course depend on the university's special characteristics and its RA.

b) Authorship

The entire Team is collectively responsible for the content of the Report, but it is normal practice for members to have agreed, during the course of their first face-to-face meeting, on a division of labour to achieve collective ownership of the report. The Chair draws the Report together with the assistance of the Secretary and Secretariat.

c) Evidence base

There must be a firm evidence base for all major observations and conclusions in the Report, regardless of whether they are about areas in need of improvement or about good practice that deserves special mention. All key sources of evidence should be referenced in the draft text (e.g., Document X; Meeting Y). The references to specific meetings will normally be removed before the draft is sent to the university but kept on file in case of subsequent need. References to documents can stay.

d) Style and language

Teams are advised to avoid words such as 'seem', 'appear', etc. that signal a hesitation. Such wording may send 'mixed signals' to the university and become contentious at later stages of the IWR process.

Recommendations should be stated as principles or objectives rather than as full-fledged action plans. Where an area needs improvement, it may be appropriate to suggest how this might be done, but as an example for possible action and not prescriptively.

The Team should keep in mind that the report needs to be readable to multiple stakeholders, including some stakeholders that may not be well acquainted with the university or with university life in general.

e) Steps and Timeline

The Chair, assisted by the Secretary and Secretariat, will co-ordinate the writing of the Report, drawing upon the material drafted by Team members. This may involve multiple communications. Once the draft is complete it will be sent to all members for comment before a second draft is prepared by the Chair and agreed by the Team. This is then sent to the university, for fact-checking as detailed in ¶87 of the QEF Handbook.

Annex 8 of the QEF Handbook sets out the various stages with an indicative timeline, but the actual schedule will be agreed during the course of review meetings. The Team may decide to meet online to discuss the writing of the Report after the Headlines Letter has been submitted.

Appendix VI, below, discusses the specific role of the Chair, Secretary and the Secretariat.

3. PROFESSIONALISM

All individuals acting on behalf of the Quality Board as part of the review are expected to hold themselves to the highest professional standards, including in their professional attire and the manner in which they interact with the university under review and within their Team. The following principles should be kept in mind during the whole process.

Equality

Review Team members should treat all with whom they interact in the same manner. This includes ensuring that everyone's opinion is heard in meetings regardless of position, seniority, or group membership. Dismissive or derogatory comments about interviewee statements should be avoided at all costs. Team members should also be careful not to dismiss how interviewees report experiencing a given event or be dismissive of strong feelings they may have about a given issue. The same principles apply to the interactions within the Review Team.

A note on students

Students play an integral role in Institution-Wide Review. The student member of the Review Team is a full member of that Team and has the exact same rights and responsibilities as other members. The role of the student member is not just to gauge students' opinions and provide the comforting presence of a peer in interviews with students. The student is on an equal footing with other Team members in all respects. If the chairing of meetings is shared among the team members, as is normal practice, then the student member should be invited (though not obliged) to take the chair on one or more occasions.

Confidentiality

The RA is a confidential document. It should not be distributed, as a whole or in part, outside the Review Team. Any information contained in the RA, but not in the public domain, should also be treated as confidential. Proceedings of Team meetings should remain confidential, as well as any information gathered in interviews during online review meetings. The Headlines Letter is confidential to the university and the Ministry. The IWR Report, and any part thereof, is confidential until it has been published on the Board's website.

Team members should be careful not to divulge the sources for statements made in meetings during online review meetings, including relaying statements made by one group to the next group they meet. Team members should also make sure to paraphrase oral comments, particularly when writing about any sensitive issues, and ensure that any such comments cannot be traced to individuals or groups of individuals.

Impartiality and objectivity

It is crucial that objective criteria be applied in all judgements, and that all information obtained in the process of review be received, interpreted and re-presented without prejudice. It is particularly important that Team members not let any preconceptions they may hold towards groups of people, disciplines, schools of thought or research traditions affect their impartiality and objectivity in seeking and processing information and in arriving at conclusions in their work. These principles also apply when reviewing areas in need of improvement and writing recommendations in the report itself (see below).

Transparency

Transparency is one of the principles of QEF2, and that principle naturally extends to the work of Review Teams. The QEF Handbook (and its annexes) lays out the process of IWR and transparency is best ensured by following the procedures described therein. Transparency also entails openness in communication. Open communication between the Team and the university is achieved by ensuring that the university is well informed and briefed on the Review before the week of online review meetings, by collaborating with the university in creating the meeting schedule, by scheduling frequent meetings between the Team and university top management and contacts during the online review week, and by scheduling a liaison meeting, usually at the end of each day, with a nominated institutional contact to monitor progress and address any concerns.

Evidence base

Teams can best demonstrate accountability for their work by providing strong evidence for all statements supporting a confidence judgment. The evidence base must be comprised of objective information collected from reliable sources – be they survey data, data from student records databases, data from Learning Management Systems, or information gathered from interviews. In general, the Team should be mindful of asking for evidence for all opinions presented to them in the RA or in interviews. In addition, teams should always seek confirmation of important information from more than one source.

It is important to remember that the primary role of the Review Team during online review meetings is to gather evidence related to the effectiveness of the university's management of quality and standards and obtain information relevant to the university's management of research. In order to do this in the most effective manner possible, it is important to avoid:

- Engaging in an argument with a member of the university community or another Team member;
- Providing advice in a meeting or pushing an opinion on a certain matter;
- Making statements along the lines of: "At my university/In my country, we do X, Y, and Z".

It might happen that the Team receives an anonymous complaint from university staff about their institution. The response to such cases should be discussed with the Secretariat first.

APPENDIX I: HOW TO READ THE MATERIAL
Reading the Reflective Analysis

The important questions to ask when reading the RA include: Is this RA truly reflective and analytic? That is, is the RA honest about the strengths and weaknesses it identifies? Is the evidence base for conclusions about strengths and weaknesses sufficient? Are action plans for quality enhancement appropriate and realistic? In this context it is also important to be wary of unsubstantiated claims of excellence, and of action plans for quality improvement initiatives that have vast scopes and ambitious goals, but lack details and specifications of resources. The more specific questions that might be asked when reading the RA and its supporting documentation could include the following.

In relation to teaching and learning:

- How has the university responded to previous reviews and accreditation exercises?
- How is the responsibility for safeguarding academic standards assigned within the university?
- What use does it make of external reference points?
- Are its assessment procedures linked to intended learning outcomes and are they clearly communicated to students?
- Is published information clear, accurate and comprehensive?
- Do students have a voice and is it listened to and acted upon?
- How is the performance of such support services as the library or student counselling evaluated?
- Does the university have a strategy for enhancing its teaching and learning opportunities for students?
- How are staff recognised and rewarded for excellent teaching?
- How is teaching linked to research at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels?
- Looking at Annex 11, do you see any important gaps in how the university addresses part 1 of the ESG?

In relation to research management:

- What are the main strategic research priorities of the university? How realistic is the strategy? What policies serve as a lever to support the strategy? How is the strategy supported at unit and institutional levels? Is the research environment designed to support the strategy? Does the research strategy take account of issues of equality, including gender?
- How is the effectiveness of the strategy monitored? How do academic units and the university evaluate and manage the quality of research output?
- How does the university maximize it research funding? What support does it provide to its staff in bidding for research funds and securing other external funding, such as contracts?
- How does the university measure the impact of research? (for a definition of impact, see p. 14 of the QEF Handbook)
- How does the university support exceptional blue-skies research (if applicable)?

Reading the previous IWR report

Team members should also read the university's IWR report from QEF1, which is available on the QEF website. The IWR from QEF1 can serve as an important tool to gauge the development of the university's quality efforts over time. However, Team members need to be careful not to be over-reliant on this earlier report to guide their work but rather use it as a complement to the RA.

All reports from QEF1 conclude with remarks on the university's strengths and areas for improvement.

Team members should note the areas for improvement identified in the report, seek evidence for progress on these areas in the RA, and prepare questions on this topic before the review meetings. Team members should also note any major shifts in the general mission and/or vision of the university by comparing the QEF1 Report with the RA prepared for the ongoing QEF2 review. At the same time, it is helpful to attend to changes in emphasis in specific areas, such as research, community engagement, and teaching and learning, to name but a few examples.

Reading the SLRs

SLRs are carried out by the university itself across all subject areas and at all levels (postgraduate and undergraduate) in which awards are made. The IWR Team should examine how the university has supported and engaged with action plans arising from previous reviews. To gauge research management, the Team should enquire as to how the university intends to incorporate this new element in its SLRs.

APPENDIX II: SOME TIPS FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

This appendix should be read in conjunction with Appendix 9 in the QEF Handbook.

The style of meetings during the week of online review meetings will be collegial and open. This is a peer-based process: a discussion among equals. To foster this aspect, supervisors should normally not sit in the same meetings as their subordinates, and staff and students should be interviewed separately.

Rather than using leading or closed (yes /no) questions, strive to ask open questions such as "How do you do X?" or "How do you make sure that X, Y, and Z happen?" It is also important to remember that students and staff may not know the exact names or terminology for the quality initiatives at the university. So rather than asking about specific initiatives, operations or functions (for example, pastoral care), it may be more productive to ask how the university, in this example, is systematically creating a supportive and inclusive environment for its students.

When asking for evidence, there are a number of ways to solicit information. Below are just a few examples of possible questions to ask:

- What are the strategic plans in place to achieve this outcome?
- How do you know you are reaching your goals?
- Based on what evaluation/data/indicators do you make the statement that X is happening/that problem Y has been solved?
- Can you tell me about an action plan related to this project/issue, such as goals, performance indicators, accountabilities, milestones and resources?
- Have you done a SWOT analysis (or similar) of this situation/challenge that your university is facing at present?

It is important to remember that the university is not on trial, and there is usually no need to repeatedly push for clarification or details if they are not forthcoming. Questions can, and sometime must, be probing but the overall tenor of the engagement should be one of dialogue. Rather than persisting with an unproductive line of questioning, it is usually better to stop and note that this information could not be provided by the university representative(s) at this meeting. Those questions can be re-visited in subsequent meetings with other people, if need be.

The Team will be meeting different groups and will need to have a productive dialogue with each one: management; academic and administrative staff; students; and stakeholders from various backgrounds. The universities will be asked to ensure to the best of their ability that any person (excluding top management) is not interviewed more than once. Below are some tips for conducting interviews with the different groups that the Team will meet.

Management. In meetings with management, it is important to be careful not to divulge sources of critical comments gathered in previous meetings. Rather than using negatively charged terms such as "shortcomings," "failures," or "weaknesses" it may be more productive to talk about "possible areas for improvement" and "opportunities to develop" or something along those lines. It is also important to be concise in any summaries or responses provided to management during meetings.

Academic staff. Academic staff can provide information on the extent to which various quality initiatives impact their work and speak to the amount of support they receive for their teaching and research, including adopting new technologies. It may also be helpful to ask academic staff how key data are

communicated to them, and what changes they have seen in response to changing policies at the university level. In interviews with academic staff, it is particularly important that Team Members refrain from voicing their own opinion on the information that was gathered or saying something that can be interpreted as criticism of the university.

Administrative staff/Professional Services. As part of online review meetings, the Team will meet with administrative staff responsible for a variety of functions. Some examples of fairly general questions to ask this group may include: Are students and front-line academic staff sufficiently supported by the resources available to them? Has the number of administrative staff gone up or down since the last IWR? Is management supportive of the mission of the various administrative/support functions on campus? Is the role of administrative staff included in university monitoring and evaluation processes? To what extent are all staff involved in developing and supporting the mission of the university? How do they conceive of their role in the university, and are their services evaluated?

Students. Students need to be assured at the beginning of each interview that all their responses will be kept confidential. The Team should also give students plenty of time to introduce themselves at the beginning of the meeting in order to "break the ice." Students are ideal sources of evidence for student engagement in internal quality insurance, what information and feedback they receive from the university, and how the university responds to student feedback on a variety of issues (course evaluations, student association feedback, support to student associations and representation, etc.).

Stakeholders. Stakeholders would, for example, include employers/enterprise representatives, research end-users, and representatives of civic authorities. In meetings with stakeholders, it is especially advisable to avoid jargon associated with higher education and quality work in higher education. This would also be a good group with whom to discuss the relevance and impact of the university's research and scholarship, their engagement with the region, and the quality of graduates, and to ask for evidence of successful partnerships with the university, including students.

The Review Team and representatives of the university will be in regular contact leading up to online review meetings, and the Review Chair and Secretary will be in regular contact with senior university officials during the week of review meetings. In addition, all review days will conclude with a liaison meeting between the Review Team and top management. Through these regular opportunities for dialogue, the Team will be able to get a general sense of its progress, and how well it is engaging with the university community.

APPENDIX III: TEAM SCRIPT FOR ONLINE REVIEW MEETINGS[13]

A. Contact information

In case of bandwidth or internet access problems during the meeting, please text or call NAME at (+354) CELL NUMBER.

B. Meeting information

Meeting #:   X

Chair: INITIALS

Meeting with: INDIVIDUAL/BODY

Date: DATE

Icelandic Time: TIME
Member 1 Time: TIME
Member 2 Time: TIME
Member 3 Time: TIME
Member 4 Time: TIME

Attending: ATTENDEE 1 NAME
                           ATTENDEE 2 NAME
                           ATTENDEE 3 NAME
                           ATTENDEE 4 NAME
                           …

C. Zoom information

Link: Link

Zoom meeting ID: ID

Zoom passcode: PASSCODE

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[13] Yellow highlight indicates text that is to be changed so as to include relevant information for each individual meeting.

D. Script for starting meeting

- Introductions are not necessary
- This meeting is hosted by the Quality Board, not the university
- The session is not recorded, and the Zoom chat is not saved
- The Team takes notes, but no responses are linked to individuals or small groups

E. General comments/observations from attendees, not related to listed questions

- …
- …

F. Questions to be asked

Question 1: TEXT?
- Asked by: INITIALS
- Notes on Response to Question 1:

Question 2: TEXT?
- Asked by: INITIALS
- Notes on Response to Question 2:

Question 3: TEXT?
- Asked by: INITIALS
- Notes on Response to Question 3:

…

APPENDIX IV: INFORMATION SHEET FOR MEETING ATTENDEES FOR ONLINE REVIEW MEETINGS[14]

A. Contact information

In case of bandwidth or internet access problems during the meeting, please text or call NAME at (+354) CELL NUMBER.

B. Meeting information

Meeting #:   X

Chair: INITIALS

Meeting with: INDIVIDUAL/BODY

Date: DATE

Icelandic Time: TIME
Member 1 Time: TIME
Member 2 Time: TIME
Member 3 Time: TIME
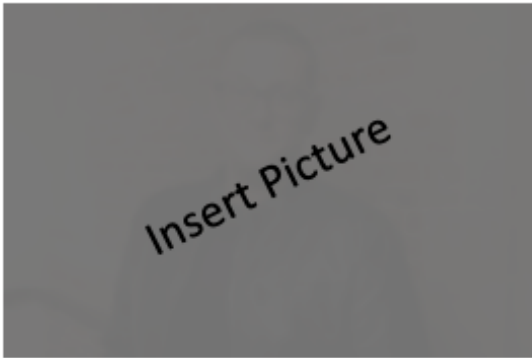**Member 4 Time:**   TIME

C. Zoom information

Link: Link

Zoom meeting ID: ID

Zoom passcode: PASSCODE

PLEASE REFER TO
IWR VIRTUAL VISIT MEETING GUIDELINES
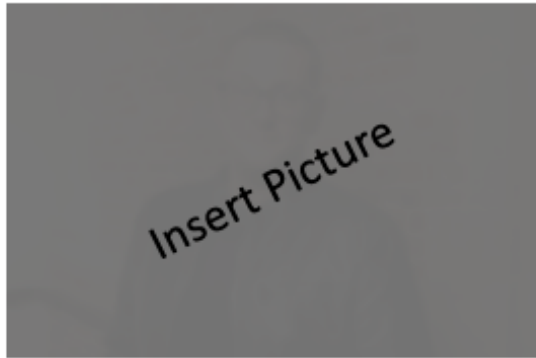**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE MEETING PROCESS**

PLEASE FIND BELOW AN INTRODUCTION TO REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS
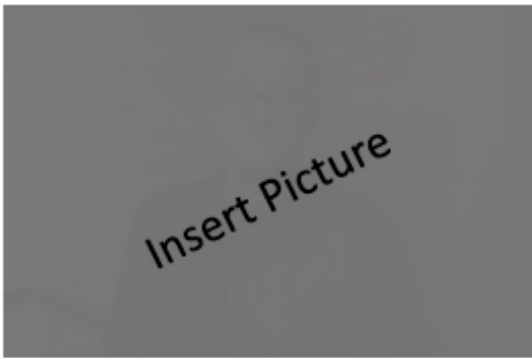
---

[14] Yellow highlight indicates text that is to be changed so as to include relevant information for each meeting.
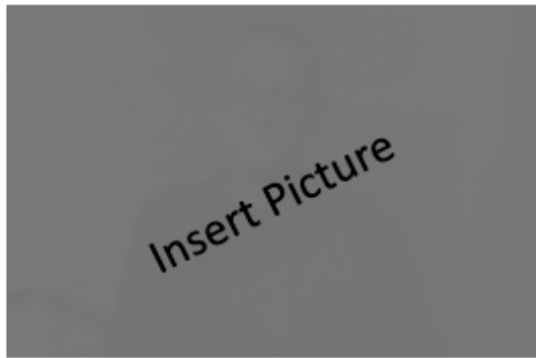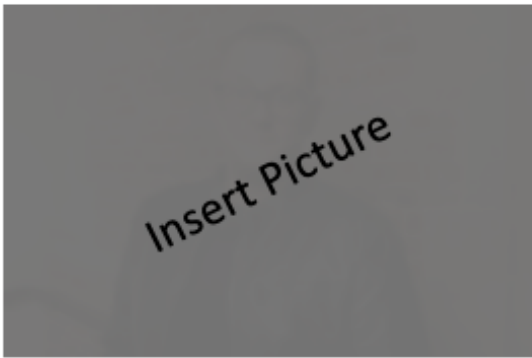
Name, Chair
-Position, Institution

Name, Secretary
-Position, Institution

Name, Student Member
-Position, Institution

Name
-Position, Institution

Name
-Position, Institution

Name
-Position, Institution

Appendix V: IWR Virtual Visit Meeting Guidelines

IWR Virtual Visit Meeting Guidelines

The Institution-Wide Review Team is pleased to have the opportunity to meet with representatives of your University, albeit virtually. As we enter into our meetings, we want to review the process for our discussions.

Using Zoom™

- In case of any problems accessing a meeting, call or email Sigurður Óli at 897-8935/secretariat@qef.is.
- Please keep your microphone muted if you are not talking to reduce background noise.
- If you need to step away from the conversation for a period of time, please turn off your video and mute your audio.
- If you have issues with bandwidth and Zoom audio, consider using your phone as a Wi-Fi hotspot (if possible).
- As with a campus visit, these sessions are your time with the visiting team, and they are not being recorded nor are the chat transcripts kept. While members of the team may take notes to remember the conversation, the source of all information shared is considered strictly confidential and no one will be identified by name in the IWR report.
- We ask that meeting attendees do not share a web camera. That is, there should be only one attendee per one web camera.

Meeting Process

- Given the limited time for each session, we will not introduce ourselves. You have been provided a list of the team members with our credentials and we ask that you refer to this document.
- We will not ask you to introduce yourselves. We will still be able to know your name, as it appears in your Zoom window. We have the names and titles of all university representatives attending each meeting.
- A member of the IWR Team has been designated as the lead for each of our meetings. This person will guide the question and answers.
- Questions will be directed at a specific participant(s) in the meeting. If you feel like you are not the best person to answer a question, then please suggest who in this meeting would be better placed to answer the question.
- We have limited time to go through a lot of material. We would appreciate you being brief in your responses and we may interrupt you to get to a new question in the interest of time.
- Should you wish to add to the response, please raise your hand to be recognized because we will not be monitoring the chat function during the meeting.
- Again, because time is limited, we ask for your understanding if we are not able to respond to everyone's desire to add to a particular response.
- It is possible that you will not be asked a question even though you have been invited to the meeting. That is because we are not always sure who is the best person to talk about a given topic, so we invited more people than not.

Through this review, both the university and the IWR Team have responsibilities to commit to an enhancement approach, that involves trust and an open dialogue. This is a peer review process and with a focus on qualitative rather than quantitative assessment. We look forward to learning more about your university over the coming week.

APPENDIX VI: SPECIFIC ROLES OF THE CHAIR, SECRETARY AND THE SECRETARIAT

This Appendix describes the role of the Team Chair, the Secretary and the Secretariat in an online visit.

Before the review week, the Chair, in discussions with the team, will decide whether the Application provides an appropriate basis to support the review. The Review Chair will lead an electronic discussion (email, Zoom, etc.) of the Application before the review week, receive requests for more information or material from Team members, and communicate those requests to the university through the Team Secretary. Responses to these requests will be fed back, as appropriate, to the Team members. The Chair will develop with the Department a programme of online review meetings. The Chair will lead discussions on the responsibility for chairing meetings.

During the review week, the Chair will provide oversight of and co-ordinate all meetings, maintain open communications with the institutional contact regarding the progress of the review, and (along with the Secretary) maintain good communications and cordial relationships within the Team and with the university. The Chair will also ensure that, immediately after each meeting, the key or 'bullet' points are noted down by Secretary, as a rapid aide-memoire before the full record is available. The Chair will also ensure that key issues that arise in meetings are covered in subsequent meetings if further information (or confirmation of facts or opinions) is needed. At the beginning of each day the Chair will convene a meeting of the Team to review the programme, and at the end of the day to review the progress made that day. At the conclusion of the review week, the Chair will agree with the Team a full draft of the Headline Outcomes, and the timetable and individual responsibilities for the completion of the report.

After the review week, the Chair (along with the Secretary) will ensure that the Team completes the work of the report to the agreed schedule and to professional standards and will then sign off the full draft report with the agreement of the team. The Chair will also lead and coordinate the response of the Team to the university's response to the draft report and sign off the final report for transmission to the Board on behalf of the Team.

During the review week, the Team Secretary manages secretarial functions, records minutes, and keeps notes of key points to be confirmed with the Team. The Secretary is responsible for collecting 'bullet' points at the conclusion of a meeting. As the review week proceeds, the Secretary will discuss with the university, usually at the end of each day, any issue related to logistics that has arisen during the course of the review.

Following the review week, the report is written in a manner that ensures collective ownership. The Secretary and Secretariat assist the Chair in ensuring that the Team completes the work on the report to the agreed schedule and to professional standards; and by coordinating the response of the Team to the university's response to the draft report. It is the role of the Secretary to ensure that the evidence base is sound for any conclusions in the Report.

The Secretariat is available to assist the Review Team throughout the review process but is not part of the Review Team.