

Institution-Wide Review:

Some Useful Facts

What are the purposes of an Institution-Wide Review?

- The Institution-Wide Review (IWR) assures current and future students, the Government, employers and national and international stakeholders that the Icelandic universities are providing good education and managing their research activities effectively.
- The IWR is an opportunity for the university to demonstrate how it is reaching its goals and fulfilling its mission. As part of that process, the university needs to show that it is providing good learning experiences to its students; offering degrees that meet high national and international standards; and properly managing its research activities.
- The main goal of the IWR is to foster a culture of continuous enhancement in universities.

What is the approach of an Institution-Wide Review?

- The process is based on an enhancement philosophy: it promotes deliberate steps to bring about improvement. As such, the process encourages a constructive and honest dialogue between the university and the Quality Board.
- IWR evaluates each university in the context of its specific mission and values and thus respects university autonomy.
- Each IWR is carried out by a team of five: four international experts and an Icelandic student, with an appropriate combination of skills, competences and experience.

What is the process of an Institution-Wide Review?

Step one: A Reflective Analysis (RA) is written by a group of university staff and students, in consultation with the university community. The RA assesses how well the university (1) enhances the student learning experience, (2) safeguards standards, and (3) manages its research. A good RA strikes a balance between presenting the university and evaluating what is working well and what requires improvement and is firmly based on evidence.

Step two: The IWR Team reviews the Reflective Analysis and may request further information.

Step three: The IWR Team visits the university for 3-4 days to interview students, the leadership team, academic and administrative staff, and external stakeholders (such as alumni and employers). The interviews serve to validate the information provided in the RA and gather additional information.

Step four: The Team drafts an IWR Report, which concludes with summative judgments about how the university (1) enhances the student learning experience, and (2) safeguards standards. The judgments express one of three levels of confidence: (a) confidence, (b) limited confidence, or (c) no confidence. There is no judgment on management of research in the IWR Report, but the Report will provide comments on what is being done well and what could possibly be improved in that area.

Step five: The Quality Board receives the final draft of the IWR report, including the confidence judgments. This validation step contributes to ensuring equity and fairness across the university sector.

Step six: The IWR report is published.

Who does what in the Institution-Wide Review process?

- The Quality Board designs and implements the Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education (QEF2) in cooperation with the Quality Council. The IWR is one element of that Framework.
- The Quality Board selects and trains the IWR Team members and is ultimately responsible for the confidence judgments in the IWR Report.
- The IWR Team is responsible for executing the review and drafting a formal report with recommendations for judgments to the Quality Board.
- The Quality Board Secretariat provides secretarial support to the IWR Team.

What Role do students have in the Institution-Wide Review process?

- Student representatives take part in providing evidence for and writing the RA. The Chair of the Student Council of the university also makes a statement in the RA about the involvement of students in the writing of the RA.
- There is one student member in the IWR Team, who is nominated by LIS.
- The IWR Team will interview groups of students during its visit to the university. They may also be included in meetings with university staff and can request their own open meeting with the Team.

What else is good to know before you meet with the IWR Team?

- Team members will come prepared to lead discussions with carefully prepared questions. Meetings are intended to be interactive, with no formal presentations.
- All documents prepared for the process are in English, and all meetings are conducted in English.
- All information shared with the Team during the on-site interviews is strictly confidential.
- The IWR process is meant to be helpful and constructive.

For more information on the Quality Board and the QEF2 Handbook: www.qef.is.

For questions and comments, please email the Board Secretariat at secretariat@qef.is