Student Reviewer Training

Sample Quality Review Practice Three (Panel Site Visit)

SCENARIO

You are a Student Reviewer within a Quality Peer Review Panel for a unit of the University. The Site Visit of the unit has begun and one of the first meetings of the Panel is with the Head of the Unit currently under review.

Below follows the beginning of the Head's introductory speech, which will be followed by questions by the Panel members:

Meeting with the Head, School of X
(to be joined by the School Manager, at TIME)

Discussion regarding developments to date, strategic priorities of the School and overview of educational provision.

Professor X:

'(…) The Self-evaluation process was a very positive exercise, which began a year ago; it turned out to be very productive, thanks to a constructive consultation with all staff (SWOT), an extensive consultation with external stakeholders and a fruitful benchmarking exercise Ulster University, Glasgow University and Queen's University Belfast.

Instead, the student consultation process, unfortunately, saw the involvement of small numbers of participants. Yet, under certain respects, student feedback is in line with employers' feedback: for instance, professional skills are not embedded in the curriculum enough.

Our unit is a confederation of 5 departments. The department system works very well for us, since each head can continue to advance the department's individual strategic interests with agility and responsiveness (…). On top of this, I, as a head of the whole unit, can promote our collective strategic targets in general. For example, I could put a strong application for the Human Capital Initiative as a head of unit within a cross-college initiative. What we have here is excellent initiatives to enhance individual departments but also great synergies. We combine our interests for Master's programmes and at undergraduate level. We have a research centre made up of a number of clusters drawn from the various departments.

On the other hand, our experience of Covid-19 shed light on areas where we need to collaborate better. One of these is Teaching and Learning for which we have an Officer. We realised with the pandemic that this role was not enough, so we decided to introduce a T&L Committee. We set up a seminar on teaching approaches during the pandemic, which has been very useful to share experiences among School departments. I am happy with constant and incremental evolution.

> The curriculum has been developed on a piecemeal and fragmented basis over the years, not in a systematic manner. We also urgently need to rationalise our curricular offerings at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. For some Master's we have more modules on offer than actually registered students and there are overlaps in contents and discrepancies in assessment methods.
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> Internationalisation has been effective in attracting visiting scholars and facilitating our student mobility abroad; yet, foreign student recruitment has not progressed at a good pace. We also need to strengthen the School's connections with UCC's Alumni and Development to maximise our students' opportunities for additional work placements, secure sustained funding for student scholarships and prices year in and year out. (…)
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TASK

Reflect on the above excerpt from the Head's speech, wearing the hat of a Student Reviewer and, hence, representative of the student's diverse body and experience/s.

In light of the speech's excerpt, write your considerations in bullet points format, using the following questions as prompts:

> ➢ What are the positives of the Self-Evaluation process according to the Head of the unit? What are the negatives?

> ➢ How does the Head describe the *governance structures* of the Unit? What advantages does the Head highlight? Can you think of any potential shortcomings in that governance structure in terms of effectiveness and consistency of *service delivery*, *staff workload distribution* and *student experiences* across the departments?

> ➢ What question would you pose to find out potential downfalls deriving from the described governance structure?

> ➢ What is highlighted by the Head as being the main issues for students, their learning experience and future professional outcomes in the above text?

> ➢ What questions would you ask the Head of the Unit to clarify any potential doubts and represent the interests of students at the meeting?

> ➢ What question/s would you ask students you will meet later at the Site Visit (Meeting with Students), to ensure their needs and requirements are highlighted and met?

Please, keep a copy of your notes at hand during the discussion of Scenario 2 which will take place at the Student Reviewer Induction Session.