



Student Reviewer Training Session

Quality Enhancement Unit

**A TRADITION OF
INDEPENDENT
THINKING**



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Student Reviewer Training Session Schedule

SESSION	Time
Welcome and Ice-breakers (slides 1-4) <i>with tea, coffee & refreshments from 9.45 am</i>	15 minutes
QEU staff and students will introduce themselves and discuss training goals, contents, students' initial views and expectations	
Quality in Higher Education and Student Engagement in Quality (5-7)	10 minutes
This section will explore the relevance of quality and student engagement in quality in Irish Higher Education, situating the student as a key stakeholder throughout all quality processes.	
The Policy Context for quality reviews, quality review processes, the role of Student Reviewers and the Panel's Site Visit at UCC (8-24)	20 minutes
The presentation's focus now is directed to key national legislation that regulates the implementation of quality processes in Irish HE institutions. It also outlines the UCC-specific context and, in particular, the role of student reviewers.	
The Quality Review Scenario (25-27)	40 minutes
Participants will analyse excerpts from units' Self-Evaluation Reports and engage in practice-based Site Visit scenarios.	
Meet Past Student Reviewers: their experiences, tips and Q&As (28)	20 minutes
In-person testimonials by two former Student Reviewers	
Next Steps – and close (29-33)	15 minutes
Follow up from the training session: formation of the Student Reviewer Panel, pairing of quality reviews and student reviewers; quality peer reviewer digital badge.	

Welcome, Introduction & Ice-breakers

- Brief introduction of facilitators and participants
- What is quality for you as a student?
- In person discussion with alternative online facility



What is Student Engagement in Quality?

- At a **national Level**

- The development of student engagement in Irish higher education institutions (National Student Engagement Programme –NStEP)

- At an **institutional level**

'Quality' translates into the standards of teaching, research, service provision and facilities at University College Cork, which overall impact on our student experience, as well as adding value to our qualifications and future employability. To put it simply, the higher the quality of professional practices at UCC, the better our student experience will be; the more valuable our obtained qualifications become; the more rounded we will be as individuals and professionals; and, finally, the more employable we will be. Thus, by proactively sharing our insights, commendations and recommendations on the current standards of teaching, research, service provision and facilities in our university, we are contributing to Quality Enhancement at UCC, a better student experience for us all and better opportunities for our future'.

(Kate Moriarty, past Student Reviewer at UCC)



The Quality Enhancement Unit and Student Engagement in Quality



Elizabeth Noonan, Director of Quality Enhancement, on the QEU efforts to place students at the heart of the quality review process



Why are you here?

- Prepare to participate as full members of the Quality Review Panel
- Contribute to Quality Enhancement of student experiences at UCC
- Personal and professional development opportunity
- Meet with former Student Reviewers
- Opportunity for dialogue and questions
- Contribute to the UCC Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028's mission
"Connect and empower people to create knowledge that shapes a sustainable and inclusive world".
- Especially Goal 2 – Student Success
"Provide a student-centred, inclusive and digitally-enhanced learning environment, a Connected Curriculum and an outstanding student experience, to prepare UCC graduates to make a positive impact".

Policy Context for Quality Review

- The University is required by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) to review all its academic, research, training and related service provision **"at least once every 7 years"**
 - **Enhancement** focus – commitment to sharing good practice - *"raising to a higher degree, intensifying or magnifying ..."* (Williams, 2016, p.98).
- Periodic Quality Reviews for all units at UCC
- Schools are now in the third round of Review (with a second Research Quality Review completed in 2015)
 - Second Institutional Review in 2022/23 (delayed due to Covid-19)

Objectives of Quality Review at UCC

The reviews will provide information that can be used to:

- enable units/schools to identify future directions, needs and practices;
- assist in the dissemination of good practice;
- reflect on academic standards;
- understand the quality of the student learning experience provided to ensure that students have the best chance of achieving academic standards;
- help units to recognise and respond to strengths and areas for development;
- assist units in assessing their relationships with, and contributions to, other areas within the University;
- provide a common framework for discussion with University administration;
- inform the strategic plans of units/schools, Colleges and the University.
- align with national and international expectations, good practice or innovation.

Quality Review Cycle at UCC

Four-stage Review Model



Quality Review Cycle



Quality Review Outputs

Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

- SER submission: 6 weeks before Site Visit

[Hybrid] Site Visit (followed by Panel Report)

- Panel report: findings, commendations, recommendations, etc.

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

- Panel recommendations: strategic, staff, teaching & learning
- Centre's response: responsibility, resource implications, implementation date, etc.

Organisational Structure of UCC Academic Units

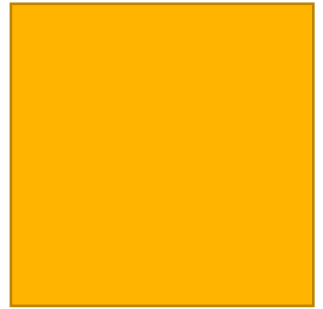
- Four Colleges
- College of Business & Law (B&L)
- College of Medicine & Health (COMH)
- College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences (CACSSS)
- College of Science, Engineering & Food Science (SEFS)

- Schools
- Each College is made up of a number of different Schools

- Departments
- Each School has a number of different Departments

- **Do you know your own School & College?**

Professional Services/Administration Units



- PS: Umbrella term inclusive of all the non-academic units and services
- Different functions, structures and procedures
 - Central Administration and Management Functions & Services
 - Student Support Services
 - Academic services
 - Research & Innovation Management and Support Services
 - Information Technology and Communication Services
 - University's estates/facilities management and maintenance services
 - Staff management services
 - Financial services

And many more...

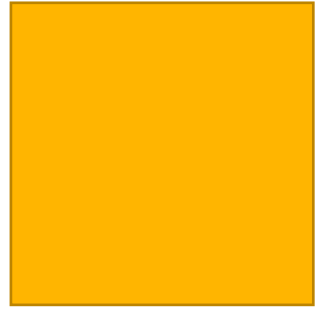
❖ QEU provides Student Reviewers with a tailored overview of the assigned PS unit's details

How are you involved in the Quality Review process?

Student Reviewer
as a *full* Panel member



The Quality Peer Review Panel



The Review Panel usually consists of 6 -7 people:

- 2-3 External Disciplinary Experts (national and international)
- 2-3 Internal Reviewers (including Chair)
- 1 Student Reviewer
- Review Coordinator (QEU)



Your role as a Panel Member

Student Reviewer summary

Demonstrate a clear understanding of the University's quality enhancement objectives in the context of quality peer review;

Critically analyse, interrogate and discuss the key issues arising from the SER (we will provide some tips in the following slides);

Particular focus should be given to those issues pertaining to student learning experience;

Appraise your colleagues on the Panel regarding student issues and exercise leadership throughout the review process in relation to effecting positive outcomes for students;

Contribute fully as a Panel member to the formation of the final Panel Report.

Hybrid Panel Site Visit

- Hybrid site visit *usually* takes place over 2 weeks for a total of 4 days
- Week 1 = 2 days (Panel's get together, evening meal & physical site visit at UCC)
- Week 2 = 2 days
- The site visit's duration may be slightly longer or shorter (unit-specific)
- Pre-site visit meeting to virtually brief panel members on QR & site visit
- Review comprises meetings with interludes to discuss arising matters
- Panel meets with Head of unit, staff, students, University's senior officers and external & internal stakeholders
- Before a meeting, panel agrees together on **issues** to be explored (these tend to arise from the SER and previous meetings); after a meeting, panel agrees *key take-away points*, as well as **tasks/questions** to be asked in the following meetings



Remote Meetings Precautions: Confidentiality & Professionalism

- Confidentiality and professionalism to be upheld at all times regardless of online or physical format of site visit;
- Remote Panel meetings NOT to be accessed in public spaces where conversations can be overheard or screens looked at;
- Quality Review discussions, material and meetings need to be kept confidential as a matter of University's business;
- Public computers should not be used for quality review matters;
- The reputation and interests of the University could be adversely affected if Panel Members openly discuss confidential issues internal to the University and its units (either academic or professional services).

Purpose of the *SER*

PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUE

- will enable the Unit/School to **develop a collective knowledge and understanding of practice** and students' learning and experience
- is about genuine reflection and **analysis of the Unit/School's thinking, practice and professional actions**

THE IMPORTANCE OF EVIDENCE

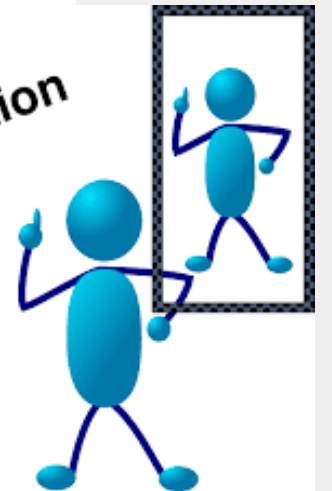
- **What** does the Unit/School do?
- **Why** does the Unit/School do it (values, belief, assumptions, aspirations)
- **How** does the Unit/School know this is important/worthwhile?
- **What** evidence does the Unit/School have to support this opinion?



Content of the *SER*

1. Executive Summary
2. Context/history of the Centre Unit/School
3. Vision/mission – relate to UCC's Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028 / UCC 2022
4. Key developments, issues and opportunities for the Unit/School
5. School structure – data (SSR, FTEs, student retention etc.)
6. Programme portfolio
7. Teaching, Learning, Assessment – (e.g. student evaluation; module feedback)
8. Good Practice Case-Study (e.g. something the School does really well)
9. Unit's recommendations for itself

Self-Evaluation



Tips for analytical reading of SERs

- You are required to critically read the SER to prepare for the Unit's Site Visit.
- At the first Panel's meeting, all Panel members are expected to share their **main observations** arising **from their individual reading of the SER** – including:
 - **General impressions** on the **document's quality** in terms of its contents, structure, presentation/writing style and layout;
 - **Positive observations** about the unit itself and specific **quality aspects** of its provision, structures, processes and procedures (e.g. Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Physical facilities, forms of student support, work placement provision, governance structures, communication structures and so on);
 - **Actual or potential challenges/issues** concerning specific **quality aspects** of the unit's provision, structures and processes (these may be either explicitly acknowledged in the SER or they may be individuated, deduced and extrapolated directly by the reader from the text on the basis of incongruences, lack of evidence-base for assertions or other textual clues):
 - **Quality aspects** of its provision, structures and processes that are unclear and, hence, seem to **warrant further investigation/clarification** during the site visit.

Content of the *Panel Report* (*Academic Units*)

1. Executive Summary
2. Context/history of the Centre Unit/School
3. Vision/mission – relate to UCC’s Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022/UCC 2022
4. Key developments, issues and opportunities for the Unit/School
5. School structure – data
6. Programme portfolio
7. Teaching, Learning, Assessment & Good Practice Case-Study
- 8. Panel recommendations**



Remember..

- You are not expected to be an expert on everything.
- A range of issues may be spoken about during the panel site visit, e.g. financial, university policy-related, historical issues, etc.
- You cannot, and are not expected, to be aware of everything.
- However, you are also not excluded from asking questions on any of these topics if you wish to. You are a FULL panel member and can ask questions on anything pertinent that occurs to you.

Comprehensive guidance and support from the QEU to Student Reviewers

Before	During	After
Compulsory Student Reviewer Training (2-hour long session + prior preparatory exercises)	Guidance and support for queries re SER analysis and participation in pre-site visit Panel Briefing	Debriefing with Quality Review coordinator
One-to-One Guidance Meeting before participating in Panel Site Visit	Open Door Policy for any queries throughout the whole student reviewer engagement, especially duration of the site visit	Peer Reviewer Digital Badge Award
	Support and guidance for queries re student contribution to Panel's Quality Enhancement Report	Student Reviewer Training Feedback Survey

Sample Quality Review Practice One (Part Two)

SCENARIO

You are a Student Reviewer within a Quality Peer Review Panel for an academic unit of the university. At the first day of the site visit, you are discussing the Unit's SER.

TASK

Discuss using the following questions as prompts:

- In your opinion, what are the main points of consideration from a student perspective arising from this excerpt?
- As a Student Reviewer, what questions/requests for clarifications would you ask staff during the site visit? (Think of three)

- ❖ Consider the SER's mention that the unit has a wide range of student support arrangements, as well as measures in place to close the feedback loop.

- Do you think the excerpt provides sufficient evidence?
- What questions could you ask the Head of the Unit to clarify?
- What question would you ask students at the meeting with students?

*Please note that part one is provided in advance of the training session; to view the full exercise, please [click here](#)

Sample Quality Review Practice Two

- *Reflect on the 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, discuss together, using the following questions as prompts:*
- What are highlighted by the Head as 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?

Panel Site Visit Scenario

- 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.

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 this 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.

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 prizes year in and year out. (...)

Meet Past Student Reviewers

Individual accounts and Q&As

An opportunity to hear from and engage with fellow students/graduates who have served as Peer Reviewers

Next Steps: After today's training

- Student Reviewer Panel Formation for the following academic year – all attendees to be included
- Invitation to Student Reviewer Panel members (not guaranteed) to serve as Student Reviewers in internal quality reviews
- Appointed student reviewers to receive one-to-one support ahead of Panel site visit
- Individual support by Review Coordinator throughout QR process (critical reading of the SER, during site visit and for QER contribution)
- Remuneration for the service
- Award of Quality Peer Reviewer Digital Badge
- Trained students to remain on the Student Reviewer Panel for the following academic year (if still registered students*)

Selection for Quality Review Panel

- Based on:
 - Experience
 - Discipline
 - Availability
 - Conflict of Interest Clearance



Quality Peer Reviewer Digital Badge

Acknowledgement of students' valuable contribution to quality enhancement



Sample of Record for the Digital Badge



“Peer Quality Reviewer” Digital Badge Record/Log of Participation



Student Reviewer				
Review				
Dates (Site Visit)				
Activity	Date	Hours/Input	Badge outcomes/criteria met	QEU Comments
Participation in training/development		2	1. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the University's quality enhancement objectives in the context of quality peer review	
Critically review and evaluate the SER		4	2. Critically analyse, interrogate and discuss the key issues arising from the Unit's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and in particular, those pertaining to the student learning experience	
Participation as Panel Member on Site Visit		20	3. Appraise the Panel on student issues and exercise leadership throughout the review process in relation to effecting positive outcomes for students	
Contributing/commenting on the Panel Report		2	4. Contribute fully as a Panel Member in the Quality Peer Review process including the formation of the final Panel Report.	
Online Dialogue with QEU Review Coordinator (if consent is given, recordable and publishable on QEU website)		2	5. Critical reflection via dialogue on the student reviewer experience and QR process: -Personal/professional development; - QE-informed critical evaluation of the QR process from a SR perspective (benefits, challenges, suggestions for change)	
Signed on behalf of the QEU				

QEU contact details

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Useful Links

- [UCC QEU Student Digital Space](#)
- [UCC Strategic Plan \(2023-28\) *Securing our Future*](#)
- [UCC Academic Strategy \(2018\)](#)
- [UCC \(QEU\) Quality Enhancement Plan \(2018\)](#)
- [Guidelines on Periodic Quality Reviews](#)
- [Information on Digital Badges](#)