

# Quick Guide to the Self-Evaluation Process (Academic)

## FAQs

### 1. Why does the School undergo a quality review?

The University is required under the Education and Training Act (2012) to review its provision “at least once every 7 years” in line with QQI’s Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. The review process presents an opportunity to take stock and plan for future direction, with the benefit of external, expert peer support and guidance.

### 2. The School has recently undergone external professional accreditation – does this impact the quality review?

Data and information compiled for the purposes of professional accreditation can be galvanised for this review; where possible, the QEU will work with Schools to align internal and external processes.

### 3. What are the core objectives of academic quality review?

The overarching objectives of academic quality review at UCC are to enable Schools, through evidence-based self-evaluation, to:

1. Reflect on and promote the strategic enhancement of their academic activities to ensure an outstanding learning experience for all students (enhancement dimension)
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of their processes for assuring academic standards and provision, in line with the University’s academic mission and strategy (assurance dimension)

### 4. What is self-evaluation?

QQI (2016) defines self-evaluation in the context of review as *“an opportunity to engage in crucially important dialogue with stakeholders, including learners, employers, collaborative partners, and external experts used by the provider in its quality assurance procedures.”*<sup>1</sup> The self-evaluation process is an opportunity for the School to research itself, by consulting with stakeholders and reflecting on the outcomes. It offers space for collegiate reflexive and reflective practice, for the dissemination of good practice, and for bringing the School’s collective intelligence to bear on planning and problem solving. The self-evaluation culminates in a Self-Evaluation Report (SER).

### 5. What is the SER?

The SER is the central feature of all reviews; it sets out, and reflects on, the current activity of the School and provides a point of departure for discussion between the Peer Review Panel and the School. This is usually compiled by a coordinating committee which takes responsibility for the self-evaluation process within the School and for authoring the SER.

### 6. Who should be on the Self-Evaluation Committee?

The committee should comprise a representative group from the School, which reflects a range of experience – academic and administrative staff; programme leaders from different disciplinary areas;

### 7. What is the structure of the SER?

The information provided in the SER is focused largely around the ESGs and QQI’s statutory guidelines; a suggested template for the SER, with guidelines, is available from the QEU. Schools may choose to structure their own SER to suit their requirements; however, the key issues outlined in the ESGs and QQI guidelines should be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> Quality Qualifications Ireland (2016) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines

## **8. What is an enhancement approach to academic quality review?**

The European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching place the student learning experience at the centre of an enhancement-led culture, highlighting the need for:

*“Enhancing the profile of teaching and innovative pedagogies, strengthening the link between education and research, promoting the use of new technologies for teaching and learning, and communicating the overall importance of higher education for individuals and society”.<sup>2</sup>*

An enhancement ethos both challenges and supports the systematic examination of what we do as a University to enable excellence in serving learners, stakeholders and our wider community in terms of our education, research and other activities.

## **9. Who should we consult for self-evaluation?**

Critically, all staff and students at the School should have an opportunity to contribute to the self-evaluation. The normal process involves a SWOT analysis with all staff; consultation with students; a benchmarking exercise with comparable institutions; and appropriate consultation with any other relevant stakeholders. Extern examiners’ reports should be referred to as well as any information coming from employers, work-placements etc.

## **10. What data is required for self-evaluation?**

The School should reflect on the effectiveness of their processes, in the light of available data, viz., intake trends; student progression and retention; staff-student ratios; postgraduate numbers and profile; graduate trends; annual student evaluation/surveys. The QEU will support the School to access this data where necessary.

## **11. To what extent do students participate in the review process?**

UCC’s enhancement-led approach places student experience at the core of the process. Students at the School should be consulted as stakeholders; usually a focus group is held with a representative group of students, which can provide qualitative information to complement other student data. There will always be a student reviewer (from a different School) as a full member of the Peer Review Panel.

## **12. To whom is the SER distributed?**

The SER is a confidential document and consequently is only read/accessed for the purpose of the review. It is sent to the QEU six weeks before the Site Visit and then distributed by the QEU to the Panel Members, and to Senior Officers of the University, in advance of their meetings with the Panel.

## **13. What is the Good Practice Case Study?**

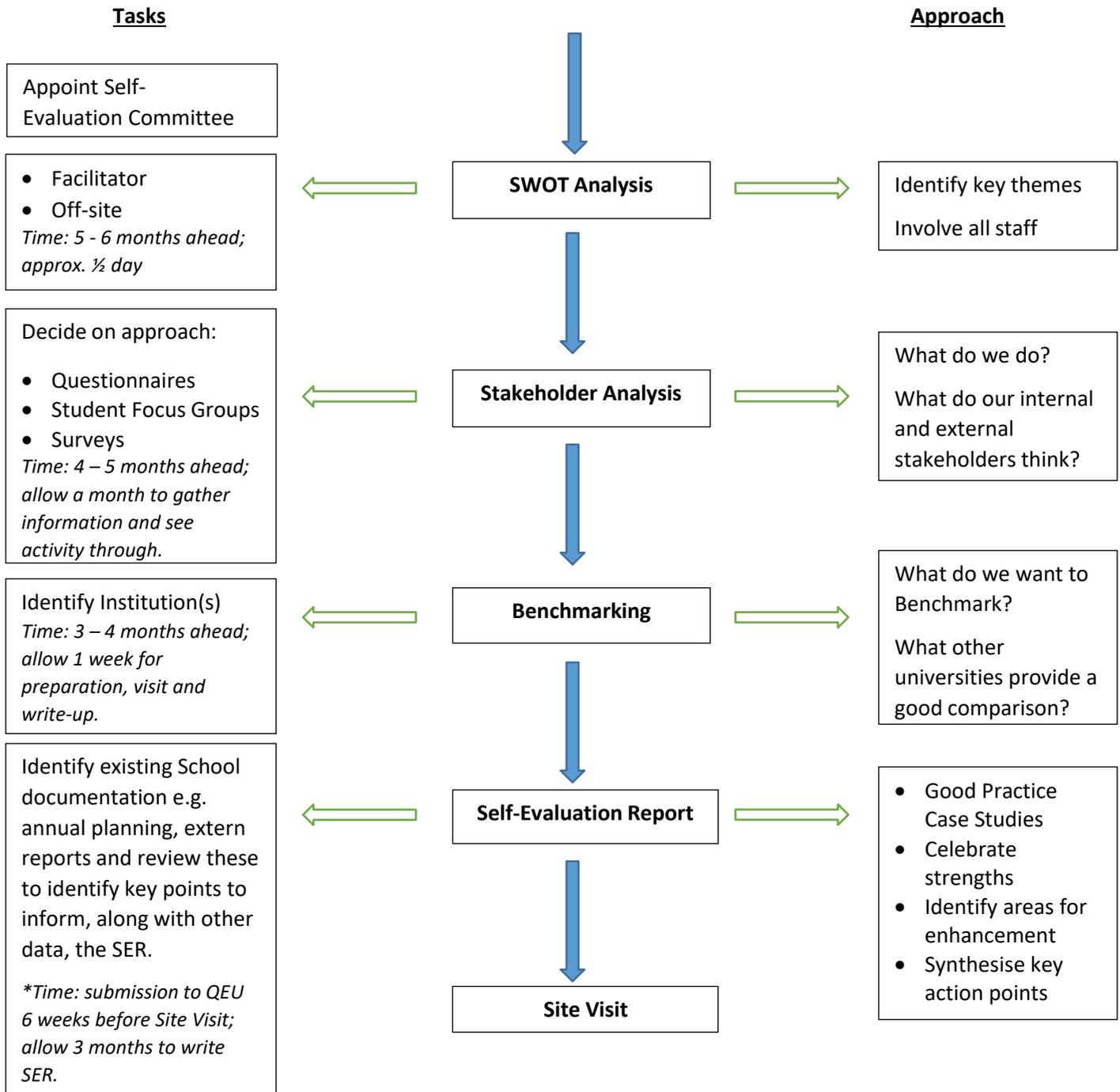
The case-study provides an opportunity for the School to outline practice that it is particularly proud of and considers it does really well. The approach sets out to describe the good practice activity in terms of its origin, purpose, design, implementation and review. Details and examples of case studies are available on the QEU website by clicking [here](#).

**Please see below a chart outlining the Self-Evaluation process**

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<sup>2</sup> EFFECT (2017) European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. Available at: [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/web\\_effect-principles-one-pager.pdf](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/web_effect-principles-one-pager.pdf)

## Overview of Self Evaluation



*\*Time is indicative and is expressed in terms of period of time over which all elements of SER might be brought together and inform the drafting of the SER.*