



QAA
Global

International Quality Review

Building a global reputation for your university or college



Introduction

“Our Institute had the honour to be the first in the world to have an International Quality Review. As a result, we are now able to assure students and parents that the programmes we offer meet European academic standards.”

**Dr Vong Chuk Kwan, President
Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao**



About IQR

International Quality Review (IQR) enables institutions worldwide to demonstrate that they meet European standards for quality assurance in higher education.

It is a great place to start if your institution wants to attract more students, strengthen its global positioning, or begin to form long-lasting relationships with institutions in the UK.

About QAA

IQR has been developed, and is conducted by, the UK's national quality agency, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

QAA is a well established and trusted agency with two decades of experience. It is a full member of both the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

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Standards for IQR

IQR tests whether an institution meets the 10 European standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ENQA, 2015), often known as the 'European Standards and Guidelines' (ESG).

The 10 European standards

- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance**
- 1.2 Design and approval of programmes**
- 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment**
- 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**
- 1.5 Teaching staff**
- 1.6 Learning resources and student support**
- 1.7 Information management**
- 1.8 Public information**
- 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes**
- 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance**

For the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg

During an IQR we consider how an institution's policies and processes help it to meet each standard. Further details about how we do this are given in the full handbook for IQR, which is provided to successful applicant institutions.

The three main stages of IQR

Application



You apply and submit initial information. We assess your application and determine whether you are eligible for IQR.

Scoping



We visit you to gather information and answer any questions you may have. This enables both you and us to decide whether to proceed with IQR. If we recommend that you proceed, and you wish to do so, we then agree a schedule of dates.

Review

We appoint the review team and you prepare a self-evaluation document (SED) and supporting evidence, which you submit 12 weeks in advance of the review visit. The review team analyses these to plan what questions they need to ask and whom they need to meet. They visit your institution to evaluate whether you meet the 10 European standards. Their findings are published, and you respond to this report in an action plan. If you are successful, you are able to use the IQR Graphic.



People involved in the review

We appoint someone as your main point of contact, known as the QAA officer. Likewise, we ask you to appoint a facilitator who will be our main point of contact at your institution.

The QAA officer manages the review, including liaising with you, scheduling visits, briefing participants, recording discussions and drafting the report. He or she also attends the review visit and ensures that correct procedures are followed.

The facilitator ensures effective communication between you and our review team, providing further information and reducing the possibility of misunderstandings.

The lead student representative (LSR) is an optional additional voluntary role. The LSR is appointed by the students to represent their perspective. The LSR may identify students for us to meet and may coordinate a student submission, which expresses students' views on their learning experience and involvement in quality assurance.

The review team

We appoint a review team of three people to carry out the review stage of IQR. They are known as 'peer' reviewers, meaning that they have relevant experience in the higher education sector.

One of them will have held a senior post at a UK higher education institution; another at a non-UK institution. The third reviewer will be a current or recent student. All reviewers are fully trained and briefed. We will notify you in advance of the review team's members, enabling you to let us know of any potential conflicts of interest before we finalise the appointments.

The review team is responsible for evaluating whether you meet the 10 European standards. It does this through analysing documents submitted in advance, and by pursuing lines of inquiry during the review visit.

The role of students

Students play an essential role in IQR, providing valuable insights based on their current or recent experiences of higher education. Our review teams always include a student reviewer. Your students may optionally appoint a lead student representative (LSR). Students are encouraged to: express their views through a questionnaire, meet the review team, contribute to the student submission, and help develop the action plan after the review.

“Our review was conducted with a high level of professionalism by a team of higher education experts with experience of specific disciplinary areas related to our Institute. It was a guided journey to help us identify strengths and weaknesses, so that the right resources can be put in place for continuous improvement.”

Application stage

Your application should include a brief overview of the institution, the arrangements for delivering higher education, and a list of the programmes on offer. We decide whether you are eligible on the basis of whether you:

- can guarantee that the review can be conducted in the English language
- are officially recognised as a higher education provider in your home country
- have informed your national quality assurance authority, or other agency or ministry as appropriate, of your application for IQR
- have been operating for at least three years and have recruited at least three cohorts of students, at least one of which has graduated
- are financially viable and sustainable
- have the legal right to use the infrastructure, main facilities and resources of the premises in which you deliver higher education
- offer higher education as a significant proportion of your provision.

We also conduct a risk assessment before deciding to proceed.

Scoping stage

If you pass our eligibility screening and decide to go ahead, we undertake a scoping visit to your institution. This is a chance for you to learn more about IQR, and it enables us to determine whether your institution is suitable to proceed.

In advance we will ask for more evidence about your governance and management structures, your use of external expertise and reference points, and any arrangements you have with other institutions to accredit your courses. If you provide courses that lead to a qualification from a separate university or other degree-awarding body, we will ask you to provide details, including how the responsibilities are distributed.

After the scoping visit we notify you in writing of whether we recommend you to proceed, giving reasons, and advise you of the length of the review visit (if relevant). If we do not recommend a full review we will indicate what needs to change.

Review stage

This is the most detailed stage of the IQR, lasting about six months. We announce the membership of the review team and agree with you a date for the review visit. The QAA officer provides general guidance to help you prepare but is not allowed to act as a consultant on the detailed information you submit.

About 12 weeks before the visit (which lasts two to four days) you submit a self-evaluation document (SED) and supporting evidence. The review team analyses these and visits your institution at the appointed time.

We write to you about a week after the review visit to state our findings. We follow this up with a draft report three weeks later. You respond with any factual corrections, and we subsequently publish the formal report of the IQR on our website around nine weeks after the review visit. You respond with an action plan around eight weeks after that, at which point the IQR is complete.

Documentation

The review team looks at a range of relevant documentation. Your SED and supporting evidence are central to the review, together with any information provided by students (student submission).

The SED describes and evaluates systems and activities that enable you to meet the 10 European standards, covering how quality assurance is managed and monitored, how it could be further improved, and what external reference points are used. Each standard should be addressed in a separate section, supported by clearly cited evidence.

Desk-based analysis

The review team begins by undertaking a desk-based analysis of all the documentation. In doing so, they may request further information or evidence. They will be looking for indications that quality assurance monitoring:

- is systematic and uses management information and benchmarks
- involves students, as appropriate (and other relevant roles/organisations)
- identifies strengths and leads to improvements in procedures or practices.

They will also seek evidence that you provide students with sufficient support to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes for their courses.

Having analysed the documentation, the review team holds a meeting to discuss its requirements for the review visit. The QAA officer agrees arrangements with you, including the length of the visit, whom the review team wishes to meet, and the main lines of enquiry.

Review visit

The review visit lasts two to four days. We will inform the appropriate national government ministry or agency about it and will seek their advice about local context and regulations.

The review team of three people considers whether you meet each of the 10 standards for IQR, taking account of the local context and applicable reference points. They will meet the head of the institution, students, and academic and support staff. They may also ask to meet recent graduates, employers of your graduates, and representatives of any partner institutions. Some meetings may be by video conference or teleconference.

The review team decides whether, in relation to each standard, your institutional policies, procedures and systems are clear, transparent, appropriate, fair and relevant, systematically applied and consistently operated, and whether they enable you to be confident (and assure others) that you meet the standard.

On the last day of the visit the review team agrees its findings, which consist of:

- the overall conclusion
- a decision in relation to each of the 10 European standards
- any recommendations for improvement
- any features of good practice.

Findings

We write to you about a week after the review to announce our findings.

The overall conclusion is expressed as one of the following:

The institution meets all the standards for International Quality Review

If you meet all standards outright, the report is finalised and we publish it on our website. Your subsequent publication of an action plan marks successful completion of the review.

The institution meets all the standards for International Quality Review subject to specific conditions

If you do not meet one (or at most) two of the standards in full, the review team may set specific conditions, fulfilment of which (within specified timescales) could lead to you meeting all the standards and achieving a successful review outcome. Such conditions will only be set if the team thinks that QAA can verify their fulfilment through desk-based analysis of further evidence and, if necessary, a phone/video call.

The institution does not meet the standards for International Quality Review

If you do not meet the standards this means an unsuccessful outcome of IQR. We send you the draft report. If you decide to appeal you may do so through our formal appeals process. We will not publish the report, disclose its contents, or consider the action plan while an appeal is pending or under consideration. Where an appeal is unsuccessful the report will be published promptly.

Recommendations are graded either as 'advisable' (more serious) or 'desirable' (less serious), with a suggested time limit within which they should be addressed.

You are invited to correct any factual errors. The next steps depend on what overall conclusion has been reached.

Report

About four weeks after the review visit, we send you our draft report setting out the key findings and containing an evaluation on each standard. You have a chance to respond within three weeks, to correct any errors. We publish the final report on our website. You can also make it available via your own media outlets.

Action plan

Once we have published the IQR report you are expected to draw up an action plan in consultation with students, and publish this on your website. It explains how you will address any recommendations and sets out plans to build on the good practice. If we have set conditions for meeting the standards, your action plan also, crucially, explains how these will be fulfilled.

After publishing their action plan, successful institutions will be able to announce that:

‘[The institution] has received a successful International Quality Review from the UK’s Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) undertaken in [Month Year], in acknowledgement that at the time of review [the institution] met the standards set out by QAA’s review process.’

IQR Graphic

Successful institutions will also be issued with an IQR Graphic that indicates the date on which the institution completed the review.

“Having a QAA International Quality Review Graphic enhances our Institute’s reputation, competitiveness and global image.”

**Dr Vong Chuk Kwan, President
Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao**



Further information

To find out more about International Quality Review, and to apply:

www.qaa.ac.uk/iqr

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