General Procedures for Quality Reviews

1. Context
The purpose of this document is to outline the generic elements of the quality review process at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). These generic elements are common to reviews of Schools, Programmes, Administrative/Support areas and Research Institutes, for which specific procedures have been developed. This document should be read in conjunction with and in support of these separate procedures.

2. Purpose
2.1 The aims of the quality review process are:
   - to provide a structured opportunity for a unit to critically reflect on its activities and plans for development in the context of the College Strategic Plan and other strategic initiatives;
   - to benefit from a constructive commentary by external reviewers to College that are experts in their field both Academic and Industry;
   - to ensure that quality and standards in all areas are maintained and enhanced, and that any areas of concern are identified and addressed;
   - to promote the enhancement of the unit’s provision as part of a strategy for continuous quality improvement;
   - to inform the College’s Quality Assurance Framework (see Appendix 1).

3. Scope
3.1 This procedure applies to quality reviews of Schools, Programmes, Administrative/Support areas and Research Institutes in the University;

3.2 The review process has four distinctive features:
   - It is based within the unit;
   - It is centred on a process of self-assessment carried out by the unit;
   - It is structured around a 2-3 day site assessment visit by external reviewers to ensure objectivity;
   - It evaluates the full range of the unit’s activities.
4. Benefits
The benefits of quality reviews are that they:

- Afford the units under review the opportunity to evaluate their own operation and performance in a structured way;

- Allow the University to evaluate how well the unit’s activities are articulating the College’s Strategic Plan;

- Fulfil the University’s commitment to the quality assurance of its provision of education, research and related areas;

- Demonstrate alignment with the guidelines set out under the Quality and Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012, and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

5. Procedure

5.1 Initiation

- The Quality Office will write to the head of the unit under review in Trinity Term two years prior to the review, notifying them that the unit is scheduled for review;

- The unit under review will establish a Co-ordinating Group to plan and coordinate the activities leading to the development and submission of the self-assessment report (SAR);

5.2 Engagement of External Reviewers

- The Quality Office will ask the head of the unit to bring forward nominations for External Reviewers and these should be discussed with the relevant College Officer to produce a short-list of nominations. The composition of the nomination list should be balanced in terms of geography, gender and experience, and where possible nominees should come from top-ranked Universities (QS world and subject ranking) comparable to Trinity in terms of institution. External Reviewers should not normally have had a close association with staff in the area under review, either in a personal or professional capacity, within the last five years. (See Reviewer Nomination Form attached as Appendix 2);

- Nomination forms should ideally include sufficient background information about the proposed Reviewers to allow an informed decision to be made by the Selection Panel. The unit under review should not contact potential nominees. If background information is not available on the internet or through other public information sources, candidates may be contacted informally by the Quality Office to request a CV or resumé;

- The Quality Office will provide the short-list of nominations to a working group of College Officers i.e. the Selection Panel who will select three-four Reviewers along with appropriate reserve candidates. Nominees should comprise representatives from the university sector and where appropriate, the business/professional sectors, with at least one nominee coming from within Ireland;
• If the Selection Panel is unable to make an informed decision on the most appropriate
team of Reviewers, based on a lack of adequate information supplied, the Head will be
asked to provide either additional information or a new list of nominees for consideration. Additional names may also be put forward at this stage by the Quality Office or the Selection Panel.

• The Quality Office will contact first preference candidates to formally invite them to participate in the review. If they are not available to participate, the reserve candidates will be approached. If the reserve candidates are also not available, the head of the unit under review will be approached for additional nominations;

• Once the composition of the review team has been confirmed, the Quality Office will liaise with the unit under review and with the relevant College Officers to identify suitable dates and align these with the Reviewers’ preferences;

• An Internal Facilitator will be appointed by the Quality Office, in consultation with the unit under review. The Internal Facilitator is at senior management level and will be from outside of the unit (if possible from a cognate unit but not involved in joint teaching or research programmes etc.) The Internal Facilitator will receive the self-assessment document when the External Reviewers receive it. During the site visit, the role of the Internal Facilitator will be as follows:

(i) to act in an advisory capacity, accompanying the External Reviewers throughout the review and attending all meetings during the site visit;
(ii) to facilitate the review process and ensure that meetings run to schedule;
(iii) to act as liaison between the Reviewers, the unit under review and the Quality Office;
(iv) to ensure that requests for additional documentation or meetings by the Reviewers are met in a timely fashion;
(v) to provide the university and sectoral/national context to the Reviewers when required;
(vi) to ensure that there is clarity amongst the Reviewers regarding deadlines for submission of the draft and final reports and that there is agreement as to who will collate and send the final report to the College.

The Internal Facilitator is required to attend all of the meetings on the schedule unless otherwise directed by the Quality Office or the Reviewers, and to attend both working dinners. Therefore accepting the role of Internal Facilitator requires a time commitment of 2-3 full days and two evenings. The Internal Facilitator will not participate in the drafting of the report.

• Where the Faculty Dean is a member of the School under Review, a nomination of a Pro-Dean will be sought from the Faculty Dean. The Pro-Dean cannot be a member of the School undergoing review or of a School involved in multidisciplinary provision of School programmes, but maybe from another School within the Faculty. The Pro-Dean represents
the role of the Dean at the meetings with College Officers and the Review Team, but does not have a role in responding to or implementing the report. The Faculty Dean is expected to meet with the Review Team with respect to Faculty and School Finances, and can attend School related meetings as a member of academic staff.

5.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

- The self-review exercise is designed to take a critical look at the performance and direction of the unit under review. A facilitated brainstorming activity such as a SWOT analysis will inform the critical assessment and help to identify key issues to be addressed in the review. Current data on the various aspects/activities of the unit should inform the SWOT analysis;

- A critical evaluation of current activities should be carried out by the unit and should draw on the outcomes of the SWOT analysis and self-review. It should include a critical assessment of the governance, structure, activities, internal and external interactions and relationships, and resources. Key issues identified in this process can be assessed against the unit’s and the College’s strategic plan;

- The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) forms the principal source of information for the External Review team prior to their arrival on-site. Its development is based on the outcome of the self-review and SWOT analysis. It should have a strategic focus, be forward looking, and provide a critical appraisal of the unit and the quality assurance processes that support the unit’s activities;

- Responsibility for the development of the SAR and engagement of internal and external inputs rests with the Coordinating Group. It is important that students are included amongst the key internal stakeholders and that their feedback and input is elicited through surveys, focus groups, class representatives etc.;

- Data collection and analysis will be led by the unit under review and the optimal period for data arrays is 5 years. The financial/budget data included in the SAR will be provided by the Financial Services Division based on the outcome of the previous year’s annual budgetary cycle (ABC) process;

- The main body of the SAR should not normally exceed 50 pages (excluding the appendices);

- The Quality Office will review drafts of the SAR, make recommendations for improvement and arrange for proofreading of the final draft prior to its dissemination to the Review team;

- The Quality Office will provide a template for the schedule of meetings to the unit under review and a detailed draft timetable for the review visit is prepared by the relevant unit head in consultation with the Quality Office;
• The unit under review should advertise widely for stakeholder participation in the review visit. A guidance note for attendees is available (Appendix 4) which provides an overview of the quality review process and the purpose of their meeting with the Reviewers. This can be customised by the Coordinating Group to provide a context for the Review;

• Principles to be followed in the development of the schedule include the following:
  - Check that key persons/representatives referred to in the SAR have been included in the schedule.
  - Larger meetings (max 45 minutes in duration) with groups of representatives such as Management, Senior staff, Junior staff, students, clients, alumni etc. is preferred over shorter meetings with 1-2 attendees. Forum style meetings which allow for themed discussions with groups of relevant stakeholders should be included where possible.
  - External stakeholders should be provided with sufficient notice of their meeting, and the date, time and venue should be confirmed again closer to the review date.
  - Responsibility for inviting attendees, with the exception of College Officers, rest with the School. The Quality Office will schedule meetings in College Officer diaries once the review date is confirmed.
  - Sufficient private time must be allocated in the schedule to allow the External Review team to process information between meetings and allow for changes to the schedule.
  - Time allocated to report writing should be protected to allow the External Review team to prepare for presentation of findings.
  - Ensure that a tour of relevant facilities is included.
  - Allow transfer time between venues.

• The draft SAR and a draft schedule of meetings are forwarded to the External Reviewers at least seven weeks in advance of the review date;

• The Reviewers will have an opportunity to make amendments to the proposed review timetable in advance of, and during, the review visit.
5.4 Conduct of the site visit and post-review process

- The site visit is usually for a period of two to three days during which the Reviewers will meet with College Officers, staff members, and other internal and external stakeholders, conduct a review of facilities (including library holdings and ISS resources) and meet members of relevant related units. If external organisations e.g. hospitals or professional organisations have an involvement in the unit, representatives should be invited to meet with the Reviewers. Note that it is not permissible for the External Reviewers to hold meetings with or give presentations/seminars to members of the School during the course of the site visit.

- The Reviewers will submit a draft report to the Quality Office within three weeks of the site visit;

- The Quality Office will forward a copy of the draft report to the relevant College Officer the Head of the unit under review, who will communicate their response to the Quality Office within two weeks;

- The Quality Office will communicate any factual accuracy comments to the reviewers, and will request that a final report be submitted within three weeks;

- Upon receipt of the final report the Head of the unit under review and the relevant College Officer are asked to prepare individual responses to the Review report, which should ideally be no longer than 3-4 A4 pages. The response should not address the recommendations individually, as this is the purpose of the Implementation Plan. A response template is provided by the Quality Office (see Appendix 4);

- The Reviewers’ report will be considered in the first instance by the Quality Committee along with the response from the unit head and the response from the relevant College Officer. The unit head will be invited to attend the Quality Committee meeting for these discussions;

- Following Quality Committee, the review report and the responses from the unit head and the relevant College Officer will be forwarded to University Council and/or College Board for consideration. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer will draw Council or Board’s attention to any College-specific recommendations for action;

- Following approval by the relevant Principal Committee, the Reviewers’ report will be published in full on the Quality Office page on the College website http://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/quality/reviewers_reports_2.php;
• Following approval of the Reviewers’ report, the head of the unit under review will be asked to draw-up an Implementation Plan (IP) in consultation with the relevant College Officer (see Template for Implementation Plan attached as Appendix 5.) This IP will address all of the recommendations arising from the review process and will be submitted to the Quality Committee in the first instance and from there to University Council and/or College Board for approval. The head of the unit will only attend the Quality Committee meeting if there are issues that they wish to draw the Committee’s attention to. The Implementation Plan should be signed off by both the unit head and the relevant College Officer;

• Within twelve months of Council and/or Board approval of the Implementation Plan a Progress Report will be submitted to Quality Committee, and then to Council and/or Board (see Template for Progress Report attached as Appendix 6).

5.5 Cost associated with the Review

The direct financial costs associated with the Review i.e. reviewer flights, accommodation, transfers, expenses and honorarium will be sourced from a quality review budget which is administered by the Quality Office, who will organise and manage the travel and accommodation arrangements. Units under review should liaise with the Quality Office in relation to reimbursement of local expenses incurred during the review i.e. lunches, tea/coffee and dinner with unit staff. Units are responsible for the indirect costs of reviews such as resourcing the preparation of the Self - Assessment Report.
Appendix 1 – Quality Assurance Framework
Appendix 2 – Reviewer Nomination Form

(a) One form is to be completed for each reviewer nomination by the head of the area under review;
(b) In completing this form, the following should be noted:

- Nominees should have had no formal links with the College in the last 5 years (e.g. acted as an external examiner, auditor, reviewer, collaborator, been through the College’s recruitment process etc.);
- Nominees should have no professional or personal links with staff of the area under review;
- Nominees should include representatives from the university and service/professional sectors where appropriate, with at least one coming from within Ireland. The composition of the nomination list should be balanced in terms of geography, gender, and experience;
- Nominees should come from top-ranked Universities (QS world and subject ranking) comparable to Trinity in terms of institution;
- Nominees should be of international standing in their field with some senior administrative/management experience if possible;
- A minimum of ten nominees should be provided by the unit (with more being required for large areas) in order to allow the Working Group to select their first preference candidates as well as a number of reserve candidates;
- There should be no contact with the nominees by the unit under review;
- Sufficient background information on each nominee should be supplied by the unit under review (e.g. CV/resume, publications list etc.) in order to allow the Working Group to make an informed decision.

NAME OF UNIT TO BE REVIEWED:

NAME AND POSITION OF PROPOSED REVIEWER:

UNIT AND INSTITUTION:

CONTACT ADDRESS, EMAIL AND TELEPHONE NUMBER:

DETAILS OF RELEVANT SUBJECT/AREA EXPERIENCE:

DETAILS OF RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL/MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE:

DETAILS OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE AS AN EXTERNAL EXAMINER/MEMBER OF A REVIEW PANEL (WHERE KNOWN):

I certify that the information given above is to the best of my knowledge correct and that the nominee has had no formal links with the area under review during the last five years.

Signed: 
(Head of Unit)

Signed: 
(College Officer)

Please complete this form and send along with any supporting documentation for the proposed reviewer to the Quality Office, Room 23, West Theatre, College.

1 Faculty Dean, Chief Operating Officer or Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer as appropriate)
Appendix 3: Guidance note for participants

1. Background to the quality review process
The *insert Unit here* is being reviewed as part of a cycle of quality reviews of schools, programmes administrative/service areas and research institutes that College is required to undertake under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

2. The quality review process
An External Review Team, comprising 3-4 person members is appointed to undertake the review – a balance of gender, geography and experience/speciality is taken into consideration in choosing the review team. The Unit carried out an extensive self-assessment in advance of the review and have produced a self-assessment report (SAR) which reflects our current activities and plans/strategy for the future.

During the review which is scheduled for (*insert review dates*), the Reviewers meet with staff from the unit under review, students, College Officers and other appropriate stakeholders. The Reviewers also have an opportunity to review facilities (e.g. offices, meeting rooms, etc.).

Following the site visit, the Reviewers submit a joint report. This report along with a response from the *insert Unit here* and the relevant College Officer is considered by the Quality Committee and then by Council/Board. An Implementation plan is then drawn up and considered by the Quality Committee and by Council/Board. One year later, a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations is provided.

3. The Review Team
The Review Team for the Unit comprises:

*Insert Reviewers names here*

The Internal Facilitator is *insert internal facilitator name here*

His/her role is:

(i) to act in an advisory capacity, accompanying the External Reviewers throughout the review and attending all meetings during the site visit;
(ii) to facilitate the review process and ensure that meetings run to schedule;
(iii) to act as liaison between the Reviewers, the unit under review and the Quality Office;
(iv) to ensure that requests for additional documentation or meetings by the Reviewers are met in a timely fashion;
(v) to provide the university and sectoral/national context to the Reviewers when required;
(vi) to ensure that there is clarity amongst the Reviewers regarding deadlines for submission of the draft and final reports and that there is agreement as to who will collate and send the final report to the College.
The Internal Facilitator will NOT participate in the drafting of the report or in the interview process.

A note taker is also present during the meeting. This person does not have any links with the unit under review or with the Quality Office. Notes are confidential and are only circulated to the Review Team.

4. **Purpose of your meeting with the Review Team**

The purpose of the on-site meetings is to give the Reviewers an opportunity to discuss issues of interest that they have identified in the self-assessment or in the other background material, with the relevant stakeholders. The meetings will generally take the form of a discussion, and an agenda for the meeting is not outlined by the Reviewers in advance.

The other participants in your meeting with the Reviewers are:

- *Insert names here*
- *Insert names here*
Appendix 4: Template for response to the Reviewers’ Report

Introduction/overview:
This should be a short paragraph thanking the Review Team for their work/input to the Review etc. and welcoming/acknowledging the Reviewers’ report and their positive comments (examples of which can be given here).

Main body of the response:
This should ideally be no more than 2 pages in length and address the key, high-level recommendations/issues arising from the Reviewers’ report. The Reviewers’ recommendations should not be addressed individually at this stage – this is the purpose of the Implementation Plan.

The types of high level issues that could be addressed include:

High level recommendations to be addressed here....

Conclusions:
This should be a short paragraph indicating that the head of unit intends to work with the appropriate College Officer/s to address the recommendations arising from the report and prepare a detailed Implementation Plan.
Appendix 5: Template for Implementation Plan

Implementation of Unit-level recommendations

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<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Responsibility and action taken</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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Implementation of College-level recommendations

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Head of Unit

Date:

College Officer:

Date:
Appendix 6: Template for Progress Report

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<th>Total no. of recommendations</th>
<th>No. of recommendations completed/partially completed by IP stage</th>
<th>No of recommendations completed/partially completed by PR stage</th>
<th>No. of recommendations outstanding/cannot be completed</th>
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**Unit-level recommendations:**

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Action &amp; timeframe at Implementation Plan Stage</th>
<th>Status update</th>
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</table>
| 1. List recommendation here | **Action:**  
List action here as outlined in IP  
**Timeframe:**  
List timeframe here as outlined in IP | Provide update here on progress since the IP |

**College-level recommendations:**

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<tr>
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</table>
| 1. List recommendation here | **Action:**  
List action here as outlined in IP  
**Timeframe:**  
List timeframe here as outlined in IP | Provide update here on progress since the IP |

Head of Unit:  
Date:  

College Officer:  
Date: