

Procedure No: QProVR Revision: 1.0 Sheet: 1 of 24 Date of Issue: November 2020

Title: Procedures for Virtual Reviews

1. Context

The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated travel restrictions has caused severe disruption to internal quality review processes across the higher education sector, nationally and internationally. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (<u>ENQA</u> <u>statement 6 May 2020</u>) advised that *'conducting review processes and site visits entirely online and/or extending the validity of accreditations are fully permissible under the ESG.*

In response, Qualifications & Quality Assurance Ireland (QQI) the statutory body for quality in Ireland and the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) have piloted virtual review processes and released guidelines (QQI) or published <u>handbooks</u>. (QAA) to assist Higher Education Institutions address requirements for virtual reviews. Increasingly, Irish Universities are developing virtual review procedures in an effort to minimise disruption to their internal review cycles and respond to the changed environment.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with <u>General Procedures for Quality Reviews</u>. - which outlines the broad elements of the quality review process common to reviews of Schools, Programmes, Administrative, Service Units, Trinity Research Institutes (TRIs) and together with the specific <u>procedures</u> that have been developed for each review category.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the process for the conduct of virtual reviews in Trinity College, Dublin, the University of Dublin, and in particular to outline variations in practice from the current approved procedures for quality reviews.



3. Guiding Principles

- 1. The decision to conduct a virtual review will be taken using a risk-based approach based on:
 - i. current public health and travel regulations at the time;
 - ii. the size and complexity of the review;
 - whether it is a 'first' i.e. an initial review or whether a review has been conducted previously;
 - iv. the requirement by College to maintain a cycle of internal quality reviews under the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act 2012.
- 2. The Head of Area/Dean and Head of Unit/School and the External Review Team agree with the decision to conduct of a virtual review process.
- 3. The Terms of Reference for the Review are achievable via a remote review process and there is no detriment in terms of the thoroughness and comprehensiveness of the review.
- 4. The review process will be conducted via MS Teams as a supported College platform that is EU-GDPR compliant. College has recently gained a campus-wide licence for Zoom and it may be used as an alternate in case of larger meetings e.g. School Executive.

4. Scope

- This procedure applies to all quality reviews (School, Programme, Administrative Unit and Trinity Research Institute and Thematic Reviews conducted in Trinity for the duration of the pandemic, where conditions mitigate against the conduct of a physical on-site review.
- Linked Providers are responsible for drafting their own quality review procedures but must seek the approval of Trinity as the Designating Awarding Body of any new procedures, including those for a virtual review process, under the Trinity <u>Approval of Linked Providers'</u> <u>Quality Assurance Procedures</u>.

5. Benefits

- 1. Trinity maintains compliance with the requirement to conduct a cycle of reviews in accordance with the <u>Quality & Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012</u>.
- 2. Units undergoing quality reviews continue to gain the benefits of internal reflection on their quality processes, and benefit from the expertise of peer reviewers on the quality of their



education/research/service provision or other specific issues as included in the Terms of Reference for their Review.

6. Procedure

1. Initiation

The procedure is unchanged to those outlined in the <u>General Procedures for Quality</u> <u>Reviews</u>. Section 5 but with the following amendment to sub section 5.5:

Appointment of the Review Team (§5.4-5.12 of General Review Procedure)

Trinity seeks to engage external reviewers who are leading experts in their field and from high-ranking institutions. The process for nomination and selection of the External Review team seeks to achieve a diversity of membership in terms of gender, discipline and **geographical location.** In the virtual review process, reviewers must be located in countries within a **two-hour** radius of the location of the review in order to co-ordinate meetings within core business hours. For reviews at Trinity College Dublin, this means it will **not** be possible to engage reviewers from North/South America, Asia or Oceania. Every effort should be made therefore to select reviewers with relevant international experience to add the international outlook, sought after in the review process.

2. Development of the Self- Assessment Report (§5.13-5.18 of General Review Procedure; Appendices of the specific review procedures).

An additional product required to facilitate the virtual review procedures is a virtual tour of the Trinity campus and the School/Unit under review showing the teaching and learning facilities including: small group teaching space, laboratory or equipment, learner resources and student and staff amenity available to the School/Unit under review. Contact Public Affairs and Communications or Estates and Facilities for professionally produced videos of main campus or off-campus sites. The External Review Team will decide what facilities (teaching and learning, research, staff and student amenity areas), they wish to view during the virtual briefing meeting (ref 3.3. below). The School/Unit under review has the option to produce a short 3-5 minute video or conduct a virtual tour using an iPad camera. If the latter is chosen, time needs to be protected in the review schedule to facilitate the virtual tour to be accommodated.



Refer to the Office of the Bursar, Estates and Facilities and the Estate Strategy for maps and condition reports for space allocated to the School/Unit under review and space utilisation statistics if available.

Request online access to College Systems for the External Review Team Members well in advance of the review e.g. **Blackboard**.

3. Schedule of Meetings (§5.19-5.24 of General Review Procedure)

The schedule of meetings should be aligned to participation via remote technology i.e. MS Teams (e.g. fewer and smaller meetings, remote tour of facilities etc.). In developing the schedule of meetings, the Quality Office will seek to ensure that the following principles are followed:

- Normal review activities (generally accepted as 2.5 days) may need to be extended over a longer period i.e. one calendar week incorporating meetings on half -days only, early starts or late finishes but where possible meetings will remain within core-business hours;
- Timing of meetings are in alignment with the geographical location of External Reviewers and GMT constraints. Ensure that meeting times in the Schedule of Meeting specify the time for all relevant time zones;
- Priority is given to include key meetings in accordance with the significant issues identified in the SAR and the Terms of Reference for the review; and the key personnel/representatives that can inform and respond to those issues for the review team;
- In general, the maximum number of attendees at each meeting (excluding the review team, the internal facilitator and the unit coordinator) should be limited to **eight.** Where larger meetings are required e.g. the School Executive, the use of Zoom is recommended to facilitate attendance by large groups (18-20 attendees);
- Sufficient time is allocated between meetings to facilitate the virtual meeting process via
 MS Teams, to allow for overrun of the meeting due to connectivity problems etc.
- The Schedule should facilitate scheduled debrief meetings (30-minute duration)
 between the External Reviewers, Internal Facilitator with the School Manager/Unit Coordinator and Quality Office representative;



- Scope for additional meetings should they be requested by the review team will be included in the schedule;
- Time allocated on the final day of the review is protected to prepare for wrap-up meetings, the Exit Presentation and for report writing. The exception being any additional meeting requested by the review team.
- 3.3 The Reviewers will have an opportunity to make amendments to the proposed draft Schedule of Review Meetings at the virtual Briefing Meeting hosted by the Quality Officer and Head of Unit with the External Reviewers three weeks pre-review.
- 3.4 Thereafter any amendments requested by the Review Team to the draft Schedule of Meetings will be actioned by the Unit or Quality Office as appropriate. The final draft of the Schedule of Meetings disseminated one week prior to the review should have the MS Teams Links to the meeting embedded in the Schedule. A conference phone number and pin should also be provided on the final schedule to facilitate connectivity by participants who experience connectivity problems.
- *3.5* Refer to **Appendix 1** *Operational Guidelines for conducting a Virtual Review and Appendix 2 Template Invitation* for information to be provided to meeting participants.
- 4. Conduct of the virtual site visit/review (§5.25-5.27 of the General Review Procedure)

The Quality Office will establish a **SharePoint folder** to facilitate sharing of information such as review documentation in accordance with College's Secure File Transfer protocol. Access will be provided to the External Review Team, **six weeks** prior to the review, as per the expected timeline for physical on-site reviews.

The School/Unit under review should nominate a **Coordinator**, to act as a key contact point in the lead up to and during the review, in the case of technical assistance required to participate in meetings. The role of the Co-ordinator is referenced in the Operational Guidelines (Appendix 1). The Coordinator contact details should be included in the Template Invitation to review participants in (Appendix 2). The Coordinator will receive back-up from the Quality Office. In addition to the pre-review teleconference conducted with the External Review Team, the Head of Area/Unit, the School Administrative Manager (or equivalent) and Quality Office representatives that is scheduled **three weeks** prior to the review, the purpose of which is to review the documentation, respond to any questions/point of clarification and identify the need



for any further documentation/evidence and o/or changes to the review schedule, check if the review team have gained access to the SharePoint folder and to Blackboard, an additional virtual meeting will be scheduled in **one week** prior to the review.

The purpose of the additional meeting is to pre-test access by the External Review Team members to MS Teams, for review team members to share any questions they proposed to ask in meetings they are the nominated to chair/lead and to review the Contingency Plan (Appendix 3). The **Internal Facilitator** and the **Coordinator** nominated by the School/Unit under review will be invited to join this meeting.

Microsoft Teams is the platform for communication for this review process and all technical guidance provide below relates to this platform. Zoom may be used as a contingency measure, but it does not offer the same security profile as MS Teams.

Staff of the School/unit under review should familiarise themselves with available College information on MS Teams:

IT Services, TCD - Guide to Using Teams.

Microsoft Teams Video Training (Microsoft).

Refer to **Appendix 1** of this Procedure for **Operational Guidelines for conducting a Virtual Review** and **Appendix 3 Contingency Plan** to troubleshoot difficulties that may arise during the virtual review.

- 5. Responsibility Responsibility for this procedure lies with the Quality Officer.
- Document Control Approved: Quality Committee on 12th November 2020. Next Review: 2022/23

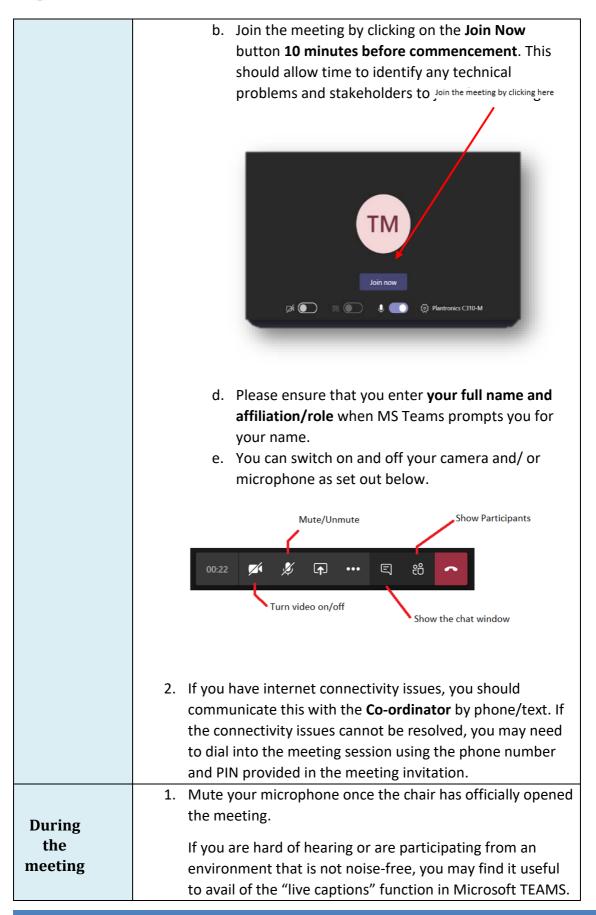


Appendix 1: Operational Guidelines Virtual Visit (QQI Guidelines).

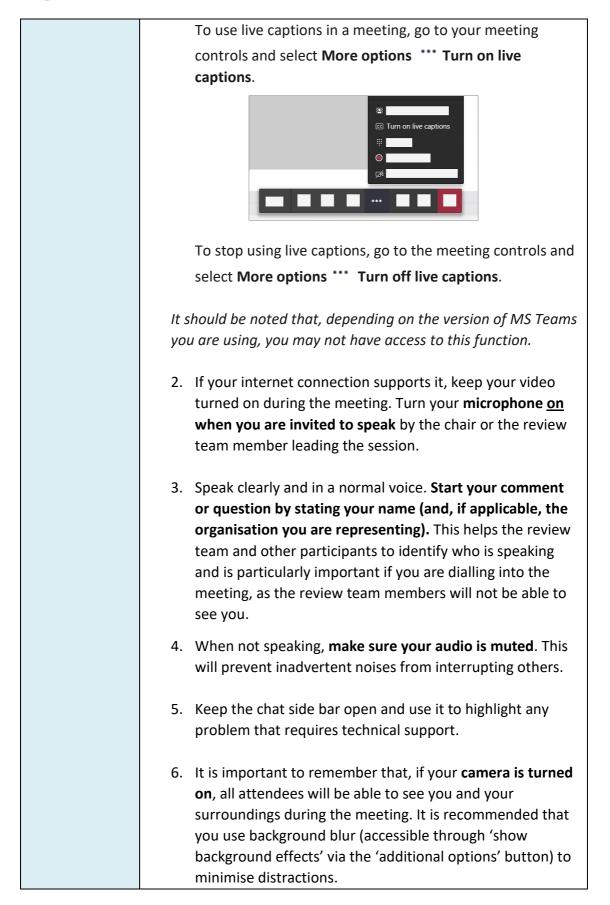
Prior to the Meeting	 The example below illustrates how to join a meeting from invitation using Microsoft Teams. a. Click on the 'Join Microsoft Teams Meeting' hyperlink in the meeting invitation.
	Click this link to bring you to the MS Teams meeting
	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
	 When issued with a meeting invitation, you will be prompted to select how you want to join the Teams meeting. It is recommended that you select 'Continue on this browser'.
	TTST - VACUE: boold-Ages × Solid communities × Solid co
	We do you want to join your Teams meeting? Image: Comparison of the compar

1. General Guidelines for **All Participants**











	 ③ Show device settings ③ Show meeting notes ③ Show meeting details □: Enter full screen ◎ Show background effects ○ Start recording Ø Turn off incoming video ○ & ô
	7. If you wish to raise a point or add an additional response to a question during the meeting, you can indicate your intention to the chair using the 'raise hand' function:
	Select Raise your hand ${}^{igodoldsymbol{ heta}}$ in the meeting controls.
	● 01:02 💋 🎙 🖓 🖓 🐨 🕑 🖾 🕋
	Everyone in the meeting will be able to see that you have your hand raised.
	02:36 💉 🎐 🕞 … 🕐 🗐 😤
	The chair will monitor this and will invite participants to speak where appropriate.
	 8. Once you have made your point, select Lower your hand bin the meeting controls.
After the	Leave the meeting when instructed to do so by the chair.
After the meeting	E &



2. Guidelines for All Review Team Members

Prior to	 Follow the General Guidelines (no. 1 above) in respect of joining the meeting, connectivity, etc.
the meeting	2. Review team members must ensure that they have all relevant meeting links prior to commencement of the main review visit. Meeting links are accessible in the Outlook calendar invitations that you will receive from the School/Unit; if you need any meeting links to be re-sent, you should communicate this directly to the Coordinator or the Quality Office.
	3. It is recommended that the review team establishes a means of communicating non-sensitive information with each other privately during the review (and particularly during meeting sessions). With the agreement of all team members, the Internal Facilitator may set up a WhatsApp group for this purpose.
	4. A private meeting of the review team will be scheduled for a period of 20 minutes prior to each institutional/stakeholder session. These meetings will take place in the private review team meeting space, which will appear in your calendar as an all-day meeting invitation.
	5. It is recommended that the Internal Facilitator take responsibility for monitoring the chat sidebar/hands-up feature. In the event that the chair/lead team member appears not to have noticed a raised hand/message, this may be communicated to the chair/lead team member via the review team WhatsApp group.
	Once the private meeting has concluded, hang up and join the meeting session with institutional representatives/stakeholders.



During the	 Follow the General Guidelines (no. 1 above) regarding video and microphone usage.
Meeting	 If you are the team member assisting the chair/lead team member, you should monitor the chat and 'raise hand' function throughout the meeting.
	 It may be useful to identify yourself when speaking. It is easy to forget that there are virtual participants who are not able to see (or identify) the speaker.
	4. Speak slowly and clearly – participants do not have access to body language and other non-verbal cues. Be explicit about thoughts and opinions and ensure that your questions are clearly phrased. The only way others can know a participant's stance on something is if the participant is very clear about verbalising their opinions.
	5. You should pause and allow sufficient time for stakeholders to answer any questions posed, and invite other participants contribute. Particularly if you are leading a session, you should be mindful to ensure that all participants are given the opportunity to share their views, including those who do not have their cameras on, or those who have joined the meeting by phone. (Co-ordinator will inform you at the earliest possible time if any participants have had to join a session by phone due to connectivity issues.) This may be checked several times throughout the meeting.
	 Avoid speaking while others are talking unless an interruption is necessary to clarify/correct a participant's understanding of a question or to curtail lengthy or circuitous responses. Ask for clarification on any point or issue that is not clear.
After the	 Once a meeting session has ended, hang up and join the private review team meeting space.
meeting	 A 15-minute private review team meeting will be scheduled after each session or block of sessions.



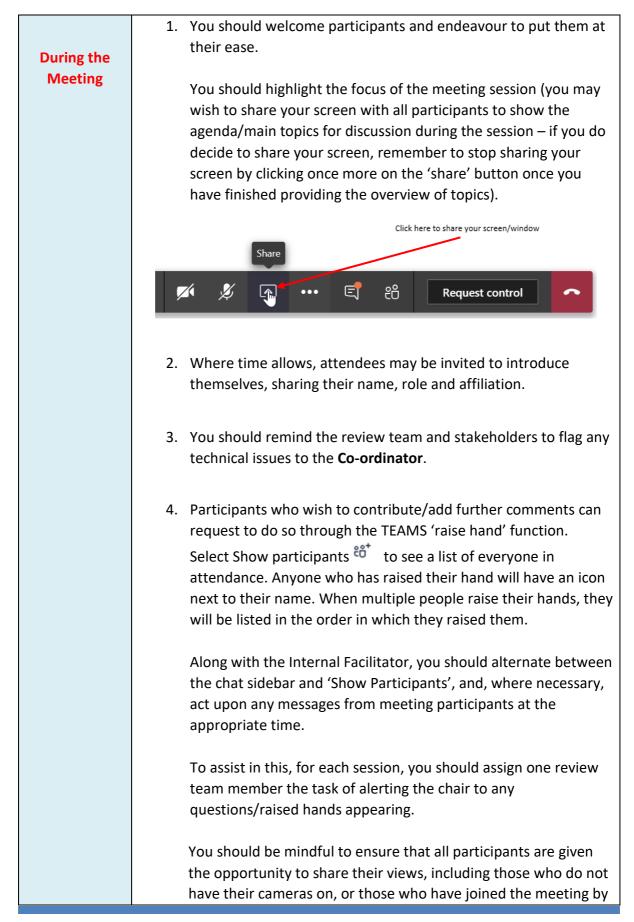
3. Ensure that you and the other team members agree on the main points of evidence gathered in the meeting. If you are not in agreement on a particular point, it is important to voice this.
4. Any outstanding questions, or areas that require further clarity should be identified and agreed by team members. Consider which stakeholder groups will be able to provide clarity on the point in question and plan to include questions on the topic in the relevant session.

3. Guidelines for Review Team Chair

Virtual meetings create different situations that require a modified approach from the Chair.

Prior to the meeting	 As chair, you, along with the Internal Facilitator, should ensure that all relevant documentation required for the meeting is available to the review team in advance. The Quality Office will support you in this.
	2. You should confirm which team member will lead questioning during the meeting session, and who will act as support. You, as chair, should nonetheless open and close each meeting session.
	Before each meeting, you should confirm with review team members the agreed focus of the meeting. This will include topics for discussion and indicative questions.







	phone. This may be checked several times throughout the meeting.
	 Time for participants to make any additional comments should be built in at the end of each session, which you, as chair, should highlight and coordinate.
	6. You should clearly bring the meeting to a close and indicate that <u>all</u> participants may leave the meeting. Where a session is followed by a private review team meeting, you should instruct team members to join the subsequent private meeting session.
After the meeting	 Confirm that all team members have joined the separate private review team meeting.
	You should ensure that all review team members agree on the main points of evidence established during the meeting.
	 Any outstanding questions, or areas that will need to be clarified further in subsequent meetings, should be identified and noted by the Internal Facilitator.



4. Guidelines for Stakeholders



Prior to the	1. Follow the General Guidelines prior to the meeting.
meeting	2. You may be using the same TEAMS link for more than one meeting. if you are entering a new session via a link that has already been in use by a previous session, you will still need to be ready to join 10 minutes before the meeting. However, you will not be admitted until the previous session has ended.
	 If you have internet connectivity issues, you should contact the Co-ordinator by phone/text using the contact number provided. If the connectivity issues cannot be resolved, you may need to dial into the meeting session using the phone number and conference ID provided in the meeting invitation.



During the Meeting	 Follow the General Guidelines (no. 1 above) regarding video and microphone usage and the 'raise hand' function.
	 Indicate any technical issues experienced through the meeting's chat facility.
	The chair will open the meeting by introducing the review team members and the topics to be addressed during the meeting.
	 Where time allows, the chair will invite you and fellow stakeholders to introduce yourselves, sharing your names and roles/affiliations.
	The chair/lead speaker will invite you to contribute to the meeting by addressing specific questions raised on the topic.
	 In general, it is useful to identify yourself when speaking. It is easy to forget that there are virtual participants who are not able to see (or identify) the speaker.
	 Speak clearly – virtual attendees do not have access to body language and other non-verbal cues, you should speak slowly and clearly. Be explicit about thoughts and opinions on the questions asked.
	8. Do not speak while others are talking and avoid interrupting speakers. Ask for clarification on any point or issue that is not clear. An opportunity of time for additional comments will be built in at the end of each session. This will be controlled by the chair.
After the	 Follow the General Guidelines (no. 1 above) for after the meeting.
meeting	 Please be aware that should you fail to remove yourself at the end of a meeting, the Co-ordinator may need to do so on your behalf.
	 If you are no longer required to access the chat facility, the Co- ordinator will remove access on your behalf.





4. Guidelines for Internal Facilitator

The Internal Facilitator remains the main point of contact between the School/Unit under review, the Quality Office and the review team. However, virtual meetings create different situations that require a modified approach.

An optional meeting with the **Quality Office and Co-ordinator** will be retained in the timetable at the beginning and end of each day of the virtual review. This provides the team with the opportunity to request additional documentation and (in exceptional circumstances) to request amendment to the main review visit timetable.

The Co-ordinator organise all meeting sessions with the exception of the Introductory Meeting with College Officers (Day 1 - first meeting), the Finance Meeting – where applicable (Day 1 immediately follows-on after Introductory Meeting with College Officers, and the Wrap-up Meeting with College Officers (final day).

Prior to the meeting	 Ensure that the review team has all review documentation to hand. This will have been issued via SharePoint folder established by the Quality Office for this purpose. Confirm with the review team has the most up-to-date version of the Schedule of Review Meetings and advise of any last-minutes changes or apologies from stakeholders.
During the Meeting	The Co-ordinator or other representatives from the School/Unit, with the exception of agreed representation for specific meetings, will not be in attendance for the meetings.
After the meeting	 Follow up with the review team chair and the Co-ordinator on any additional documentation required and ensure that this is uploaded to the agreed SharePoint folder in good time. If you are approached by a stakeholder who has experienced connectivity issues during a meeting session, you should instruct them that they may make a short written submission within one hour of the session's conclusion, detailing any additional, new information that they did not have the opportunity to provide during the session.



Appendix 2: Guidance Notes for attendees - sample template: meeting invitation to attendees and stakeholders (internal and external)

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 <u>Quality & Qualifications (Education and Training Act) 2012</u>.

2. The quality review process

An External Review Team, comprising 3-4 person members, is appointed to undertake the review. The *insert unit here* 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 will be conducted virtually via MS Teams and is scheduled for *insert review dates here*, the Reviewers meet with College Officers, Unit staff, students (if required), and other appropriate internal and external stakeholders. The Reviewers will also be provided with a virtual tour of facilities.

3. The Review Team

The Review Team for the *insert Unit here* comprises *Insert Reviewers names and institutions here*. The Internal Facilitator is *insert internal facilitator name here*.

A note taker is also present during the meetings. This person does not have any links with the *insert unit name here* nor with the Quality Office. Notes are confidential and are **only** circulated to the Review Team.

4. Purpose of your meeting with the External Review Team

The purpose of the meetings is to give the External Reviewers an opportunity to discuss issues of interest that they have identified in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) or in the background material provided to them with the relevant stakeholders.

You will be circulated with a link to the MS Teams meeting in advance and are asked to join the meeting, at least 10 minutes in advance to check connectivity. You will be provided with guidelines on how to join the meeting by the *insert Unit here*.

If you have any connectivity issues, please contact xxxx xxxx on mobile number +353 8xx xxx xxx.

The other participants in your meeting with the Reviewers are (insert list of names below).



Appendix 3: Contingency Plan

Issue	Proposed Actions
A. Review Team	
 Review team member(s) (ANY) unable to connect to meeting session Review team member (ANY) unable to connect or dial in to meeting session 	 Review team members should contact the Internal Facilitator by phone/text as soon as an issue becomes apparent. The Co-ordinator will re-issue the session invitation to the review team member. If the issue persists, the Co-ordinator will communicate this to the Quality Office. The Internal Facilitator will communicate the issue to the chair and remaining team. The review team member experiencing the problem should dial into the meeting. A conference pin will be required. This is included in the review visit timetable, as well as in the calendar invitation for the meeting. The chair indicates to all attendees that a review team member is joining the meeting by phone. The review team member affected should contact the Internal Facilitator by phone/text. The Internal Facilitator will communicate the issue to the chair and remaining team members via their review team WhatsApp group. Where the review team member is not the chair/lead for a session, they may communicate by email to their team colleagues any questions relevant to the session. Where the review team member is the chair/lead for a session, an alternate team member assumes responsibility for leading questioning during the meeting session. It is important that team members leading sessions are familiar with their partners' questions.
3.Internal Facilitator unable to connect or dial in to meeting session	 The Internal Facilitator should contact the Quality Office by phone/text as soon as an issue becomes apparent. The Quality Office will liaise with the Chair and the Review Team. The Quality Office will reissue the meeting invite to the Internal Facilitator.



B. School/Unit	
1. Stakeholders/participants (ANY) unable to connect to meeting	 The stakeholder/participant contacts the Co-ordinator by phone/text as soon as the issue becomes apparent. The Co-ordinator re-issues the meeting invitation to the stakeholder/participant. If the issue persists, the Co-ordinator will communicate with the stakeholder/participant and instruct them to dial into the meeting, reminding them that a conference pin, available in the calendar invitation for the meeting, will be required.
 Stakeholder/participant (ANY) unable to connect to or dial into meeting 	 The affected stakeholder/participant should contact the Co-ordinator by phone/email. The stakeholder/participant affected may make a short-written submission to the review team up to one hour after the meeting session has concluded.
3. Key institutional personnel unable to connect to or dial into meeting	 As per Section 2
C. Co-ordinator	
1. Co-ordinator unable to connect to meeting session	 Unit Co-ordinator should contact the Quality Office.
D. All	
1. Microsoft Teams outage or similar prevents all participants from joining/remaining in meeting session	 Co-ordinator or Quality Office will create a new MS Teams meeting session for the same time as the original session and circulate its link to review team members, the Internal Facilitator and meeting participants. Co-ordinator will contact the Internal Facilitator by phone/text to confirm receipt of new link by review team members. The <i>Internal Facilitator</i> will request confirmation of receipt by review team members via the review team WhatsApp group. The Internal Facilitator will contact the Co-ordinator by phone/text to confirm receipt of the link. The Co-ordinator will circulate the new MS Teams meeting link to all stakeholders/participants. Zoom can be used as an alternate platform; the Quality Office and Coordinator will issue a Zoom meeting link to all participants.



2. Microsoft Teams outage or	•	After consulting with the review team members and the Quality Office, the Co-ordinator will reschedule a
similar prevents all participants from		meeting session via MS Teams at the earliest possible time.
joining/remaining in meeting session.	-	Alternatively, a Zoom meeting request can be sent to all meeting participants.
New meeting links do not function.		