

Definition

1. Internal Quality Audit (IQA) is the investigation of any quality-related issue that matters to students and to staff. IQA has two related purposes: to deliver rapid improvements to the student experience and to strengthen elements of SGUL's quality assurance framework.
2. IQA complements other quality assurance processes, including annual monitoring and periodic review, but does not supersede them.

Aims of Internal Quality Audit

3. IQA aims:
 - In any matter related to teaching, learning and assessment, to identify what works well and to provide a framework for **sharing good practice**
 - In any matter related to teaching, learning and assessment, to allow colleagues to discuss challenges and issues relevant to them candidly in a non-judgmental environment and to identify realistic improvements (**enhancement**)
 - To check whether quality assurance processes are being implemented (**compliance**)
 - To check whether quality assurance processes are having the intended impact (**effectiveness**).

Principles of Internal Quality Audit

4. IQA should:
 - ♦ Be sufficiently flexible to allow the process to be tailored to the specific context of the audit. For example, a meeting is a common feature of IQA but may not be needed in all cases
 - ♦ Be academically led to ensure that the focus of an IQA is pedagogically relevant
 - ♦ Be based on peer review and make use of appropriate external scrutiny
 - ♦ Be conducted in a collaborative spirit
 - ♦ Not present a disproportionate addition to the overall burden of quality assessment and enhancement
 - ♦ Make use of pre-existing evidence to support outcomes
 - ♦ Allow for students to be meaningfully integrated into the audit process.

The focus of an IQA

5. IQA might focus on any of the following:
 - A quality assurance process
 - A course or cluster of courses
 - An aspect of curriculum design, delivery or assessment (e.g. placement learning, e-learning, inter-professional learning, student support)
 - Specialist support provided by administrative units

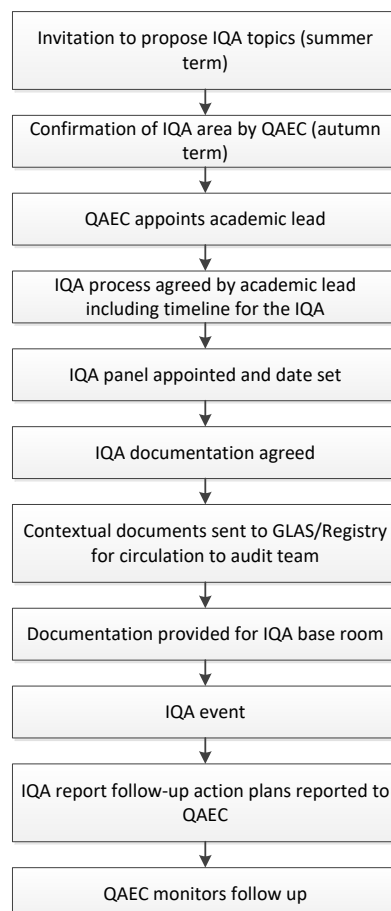
6. This list is indicative rather than exclusive.

Selection of an IQA

7. QAEC has overall responsibility for the IQA process and this responsibility includes the selection and initiation of an IQA. Any one of the following groups and individuals might suggest the focus of an IQA:
- Groups with responsibility for quality and standards (e.g. the Education and Student Strategy Committee, the Student Experience Action Group, the TEF Steering Group)
 - Senior academic staff with responsibility for quality and standards (e.g. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deans and Associate Deans, Head of the Graduate School)
 - Course Directors
 - Monitoring Committees.
8. Proposals for a possible IQA will be invited in the summer term to allow QAEC to review proposals and confirm the IQA programme when it meets in October. There will normally be one IQA in the academic year although QAEC may initiate more than one IQA.

Process

9. After QAEC has decided what the focus of the IQA will be, the following flowchart illustrates how an IQA might work :



The IQA Process

Academic lead for the IQA

10. QAEC will identify an academic lead for the audit as soon as the IQA has been initiated. The role of the academic lead is to, with the support of the Director of Quality and Partnerships:
 - a) Specify the detailed IQA process (including the need for a meeting and the format of the meeting).
 - b) Decide on the membership of the IQA team. Audit teams will usually consist of three internal auditors and an external specialist. Administrative support will be provided by QPD.
 - c) Identify which courses, individuals and departments will take part in the process.
 - d) Confirm the evidence base for the IQA. Requests for evidence will be kept to a minimum and will usually be limited to off-the-shelf documents. However in some instances, course teams (or others) may be asked to prepare an issues paper to provide the context for the IQA process (see paragraph 15).
 - e) Decide how students will be engaged in the IQA process (see paragraph 11).

Student engagement in IQA

11. Students may be engaged in IQA:
 - a) As members of the IQA team or
 - b) By meeting the IQA team;
 - c) By being asked to contribute to the documentary evidence base for the review, eg by completing a survey.

Documentary Evidence

12. When the academic lead for the audit has specified the evidence base, the request for documentary evidence will be issued by the administrator supporting the audit. Requests for evidence will be kept to a minimum and issued to those being audited as quickly as possible.
13. The academic lead for the audit may also consider undertaking a survey of appropriate colleagues to add to the evidence base and to obtain wider views. Survey outcomes will be summarised and presented in a report prepared by an administrator supporting the audit to the IQA audit team at the IQA event.
14. The evidence requested will normally be made available in the IQA event base room on the day of the event (where an event is scheduled).

Contextual document

15. Course directors, departments or other colleagues may be asked to submit a contextual document three weeks prior to the IQA event. Although there is no set format for the contextual document, the document should:
- a) be brief and no more than four A4 sides in length;
 - b) introduce and explain the processes in place that are relevant to the focus of the audit;
 - c) signpost the evidence which will be provided to support the audit;
 - d) highlight any strengths or weaknesses with the current process;
 - e) highlight any areas for improvement at the local or the institutional levels.

Main IQA event

16. The purpose of the main IQA event is to create an environment in which the ongoing effectiveness of current procedures, processes and/or strategies for teaching, learning and assessment can be discussed with a focus on enhancement, improvement and dissemination of good practice.
17. The event is likely to last for a day or halfday, depending on the scope of the audit and the volume of documentation to be reviewed. The event will usually include a short meeting between the panel and key faculty/institute/programme-level staff.

Reporting

18. The report of the IQA is usually written by the administrator supporting the IQA. IQA reports are generally brief, comprising a summary of the process, a list of participants, the recommendations made by the audit team to those being audited and recommendations made by the audit team to SGUL. Reports contain sufficient detail to provide the rationale and context for the recommendations. Draft reports are circulated to participants within three working weeks of the IQA, and the confirmed report is considered by QAEC.
19. The course or department that was subject to the IQA may be required to produce a response to the report, normally in the form of an action plan appropriate to the particular audit topic. This may include proposals for dissemination and reviews of existing procedures. This will be considered and approved by QAEC.
20. Follow-up actions arising from the action plan will be monitored by QAEC.