QRG Feedback - Summary Report
Online Review Platform

21 Responses

2021

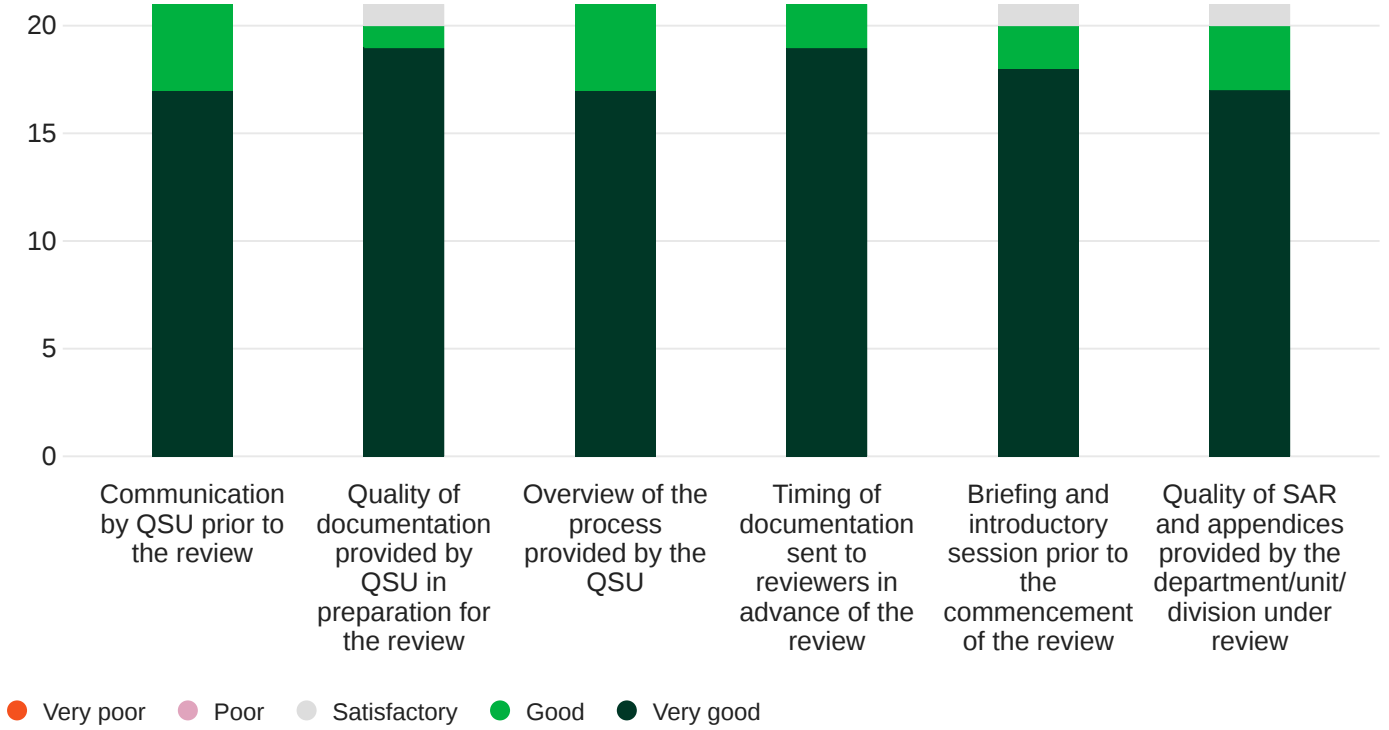
The Quality Review Process at the University of Limerick is one of the University's cornerstone quality assurance mechanisms. Cycle 3 quality reviews commenced in 2018. The cyclical review schedule, which is available here, incorporates faculties, research institutes, academic and support units and affiliate units. Tailored quality review guidelines are compiled for each stream of reviews and are available here.

Four reviews were held in 2021, all of which were conducted virtually on MS Teams: Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (February), Information Technology Division (May), Bernal Research Institute (November) and Human Resources Division (December). As part of our ongoing quality assurance activities, the Quality Support Unit (QSU) conducted a post-review survey with the various quality review groups (QRGs). A total 26 (13 national and 13 international) reviewers were surveyed, of which 21 responded, giving an overall response rate of 81%. This brief report outlines the key survey findings and the proposed actions to address issues identified.

Quantitative results

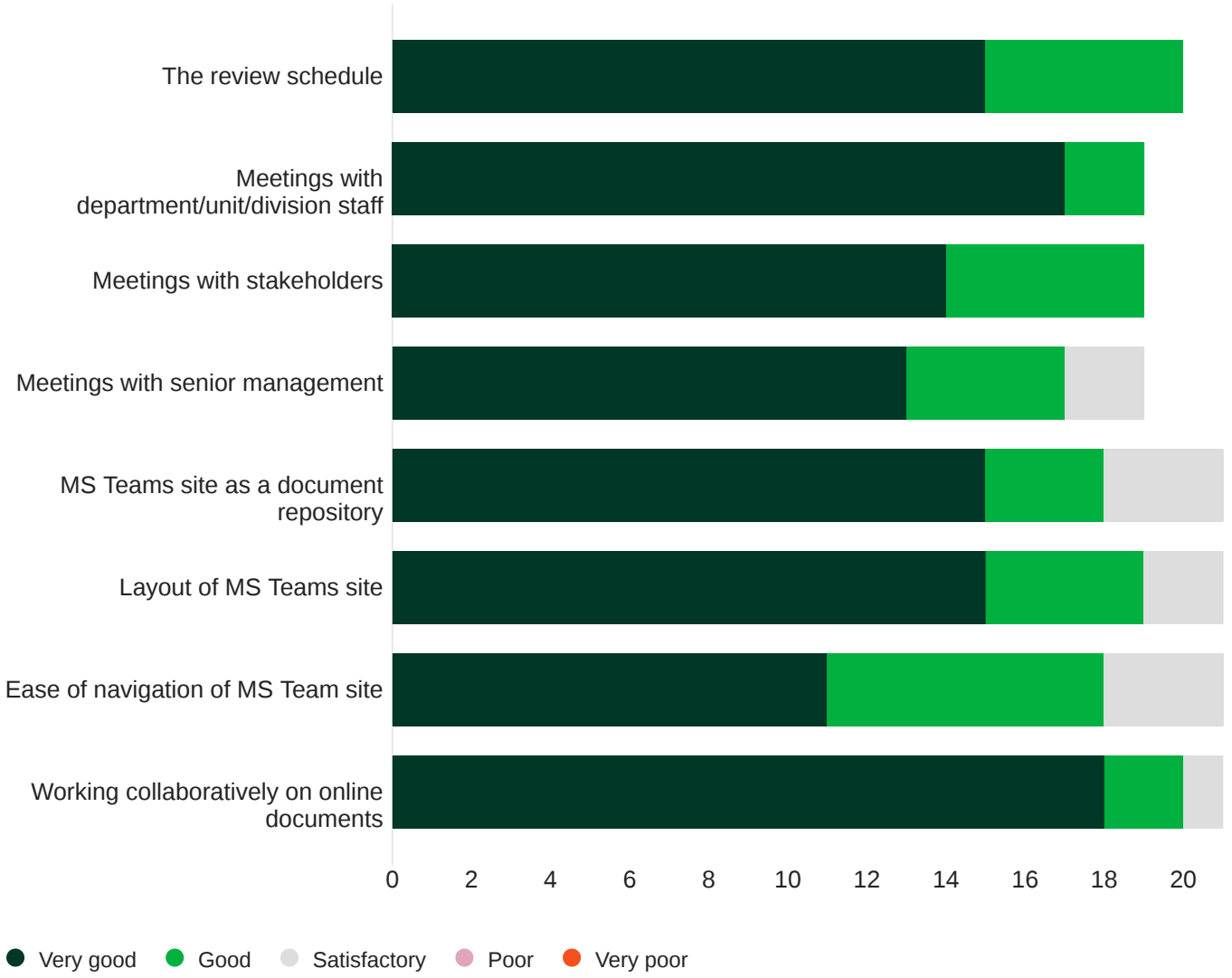
Prior to the review - Please indicate how you found the following:

21 Responses



Virtual Quality Review Questions

21 Responses



Qualitative results

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions on the overall quality review process: (1) What are the strengths of our quality review process? and (2) What could we do to improve the quality review process overall? A summary of the findings are given below.

Strengths of the Quality Review Process - Key Themes:

Sample qualitative comments on strengths of the process:

- "A great opportunity to question a diverse range of stakeholders The opportunity as the review nears its conclusions to seek further views from previously interviewed stakeholders."
- "It is transparent open and a fair assessment. I think it is good that there is inclusion of an internal member of staff who may not be familiar with the inner workings of another area for professional development and for more detailed understanding of quality."
- "The efficiency in the way the meetings were run, time management was excellent."
- "The flexibility of the QSU in responding to requests from the QRG for additional meetings or documentation. It is not a rigid one size fits all process."
- "The fact that the QRG report is finalised and finessed while the group is still together. It is interesting to see how peers weigh up the effect of even individual words."
- "I think the process is clear and the support team was excellent. I also thought that the panel selected was diverse and strong."
- "The support provided by the Quality Unit and the person assigned to record the sessions. Kim and Ailish were just great. Kim was very discrete when she had to but contributed when asked or when she saw the need. She provided very judicious advice without trying to influence the process. Ailish miraculously understood the technical discussions on IT and provided very good notes as well as excellent editing of our report."
- "The SAR was an invaluable pre-visit briefing document to frame the quality review process and gives a good internal insight into what the Faculty understands as its own strengths and weaknesses."
- "Undoubtedly, the provision of documentation, especially the SAR, and the preparation done by the QRG (homework) in advance of their coming on site. This means that the reviewers already have a very good sense of the unit and are ready to 'hit the ground running'."
- The support particularly from Natalie and Ailish was brilliant. Natalie was always available, positive and a source of help and support."

Suggestions for Improvement - Key Themes:

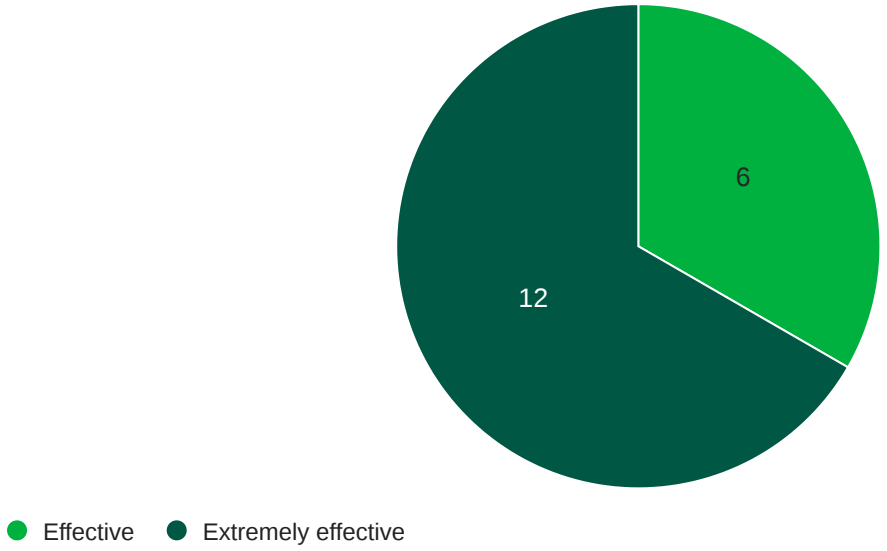
Sample qualitative comments on suggested improvements:

- "Departments could be encouraged not to be defensive - it's not an exam!"
- "I think in the very early days and as the team is settling, a meeting earlier on would be really helpful just so that everyone has met and then if questions are asked, people don't feel as though it is a bit of an imposition."
- "I'm not sure what more could be done. The support from the QSU is exceptional and much appreciated, with every effort made to preempt problems and excellent guidelines provided. Despite that, what seems very obvious may not always hit the mark! This can lead to unnecessary extra work within a tight timeframe for all involved, as, for example, in the inclusion of a lot of detailed information in the preliminary comments, when much of this would have been more appropriate in the commentary on the recommendations."
- "Maybe structure the SAR a bit more so that the unit responds to clear questions you want answers to - would save them a lot of time and also make it easier for the panel to identify any potential issues."
- "Maybe a quick 20 minute introductory meeting to Teams when it needs to be used, as some people are not familiar with it. Shared screen and problem solving would be useful."
- "In the Stakeholder meetings, possibly some additional prep work with the students as there was a reticence to speak."
- "Once the SAR is uploaded, it could possibly be useful at that point to hold a virtual meeting as an introduction across the team before the review commences."
- "I appreciate the fact that the UL president cannot be involved in all the internally-organised reviews. In the ITD case, however, it was important to meet her. Perhaps, this can be considered when central services are being reviewed (such as finance or HR)."
- "I found the last session where, as the chair, I had to read the report really difficult, particularly because of the bullet style of writing. I wondered about the audience and how digestible this was, without a visual support. Might it be a good idea to have the bulleted section of the report written directly on PowerPoint so that it can be shown? This section of the report could be easily transferred to Word later on."
- "Provide a clearer view of the university hierarchy matrix. At times, we were confused with the chain of command and wondered where people and divisions were feeding into."
- "Especially in the online context, it is important that the breaks be observed as the meetings are demanding for the participants in terms of concentration."
- "Clarification regarding a 'second' to the Chair should any technical issues occur!"

Overall effectiveness of the quality review process

Respondents were asked "As a quality assurance tool, how effective did you find the review process". 69% of respondents answered this question and considered the review process to be either very effective or effective as a quality assurance tool.

As a quality assurance tool, how effective did you find the review process?



QSU process enhancements on foot of reviewer feedback

Schedule:

- Ensure QRG Chair adheres to the allotted breaks in the schedule for the benefit of all participants.

Process:

- Reassure unit under review that potentially probing questions by the QRG will be asked, and should be answered, in a friendly and non adversarial manner.
- Arrange an introductory meeting for the QRG prior to the commencement of the review and provide a comprehensive overview of MS Teams site and relevant documentation.
- Work with unit to agree suitably worded communique when inviting stakeholders so that they are fully aware of why they are being asked to participate. (To elicit their views on their interactions with the unit under review)
- Review the current format of the feedback session to unit staff, whereby commendations and recommendations are read by the Chair. Consider giving a summary of the main outcomes of the process.
- Consider using a template approach to the SAR for academic units, as is currently the practice with professional service departments.
- Offer a demonstration session on Teams for those reviewers not familiar with the platform. This should take place after the SAR is uploaded to Teams, and should be separate to the planning meeting.
- The addition of a clear University hierarchy matrix to the briefing documentation for the QRG.

Timeframe: Where possible, process enhancements are undertaken after every iteration of feedback. Where suggested enhancements have not already been implemented, outstanding actions will be considered for future quality reviews, commencing in September 2022.

The Quality Support Unit would like to thank all of the reviewers who took the time to provide such comprehensive feedback.

Ruth Corless
Quality Support Unit