



Institutional Review Policy

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1. Purpose

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) was established on April 1st, 2022. Central to its remit is the maintenance of an appropriate Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (AQAEF) across the University.

There are a number of interrelated internal and external periodic review processes involved in ensuring best practice in the maintenance of AQAE standards, including Institutional Reviews; School/Faculty Reviews; Programmatic Reviews; and Professional, Managerial, Support Staff (PMSS) Reviews.¹

The purpose of this policy is to outline and describe ATU's process for Institutional Review in the context of its requirements under the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) CINNTE Cyclical Quality Review process for Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) in Ireland.

This systematic review process ensures that ATU adheres to a system for continuous quality improvement as well as accountability for and compliance with relevant QQI policies and the European Standards for Quality Assurance.

The CINNTE review cycle evaluates the effectiveness of institution-wide quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of the education, training, research, and related services that the HEI institution provides. The review is coordinated by QQI.

Institutional Reviews are part of the broader quality framework for Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs). DABs derive, from law, the authority to make awards and are listed in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 and Qualifications And Quality Assurance (Education And Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. Institutional Reviews are integrated within the broader quality framework in ATU comprising the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement (AQAE) Framework, and ATU engagements with QQI through the adoption of Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines; Annual Quality Reports (AQR); and Dialogue Meetings.

An Institutional Review involves a detailed and in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of ATU AQAE policies and procedures; the fulfilment of ATU's mission; the effectiveness of ongoing monitoring and review activities; University innovations and the impact of these within the AQAE Framework. In addition, an Institutional Review may act as a catalyst for improvements.

¹ Please refer to the related Periodic Reviews Policy which outlines the process for School/Faculty Reviews; Programmatic Reviews; and Professional, Managerial, Support Staff (PMSS) Reviews.

The overarching theme for the Institutional Review of a newly formed Technological University is: ensuring a forward-looking perspective (QQI, 2020). The first ATU Institutional Review represents an opportunity for ATU to have an international review panel appraise the actions being taken to build our new University and evaluate the efficacy of our approved approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

This document sets out ATU Institutional Review process and includes:

- the principles that guide and underpin Institutional Review
- the stages involved in undertaking an Institutional Review
- the responsibilities relating to the above.

2. Scope

The policy applies to all ATU staff, students, and external stakeholders involved in the preparation and development of the Institutional Review for the purposes of undertaking the QQI CINNTE Cyclical Quality Review.

3. External Reference Documents

ATU operates according to the provisions set out in the:

- Technological Universities Act 2018,
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012,
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019,
- HEA Act (2022),
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015) Brussels, Belgium ESG.

The following policies and procedures frame the ATU Institutional Review process and must be consulted when preparing for an Institutional Review:

1. QQI Terms of Reference Universities and other Designated Awarding Bodies Addendum for the Review of Technological Universities (2020).
2. QQI Cyclical Review Handbook 2017-2023.
3. QQI Terms of Reference Universities and other Designated Awarding Bodies (July 2016).
4. QQI Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies (July 2016).
5. QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016).

6. QQI Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions (February 2016).

4. Policy

4.1 Principles

The approach to an Institutional Review in ATU is underpinned by three key principles, illustrated in Figure 1.

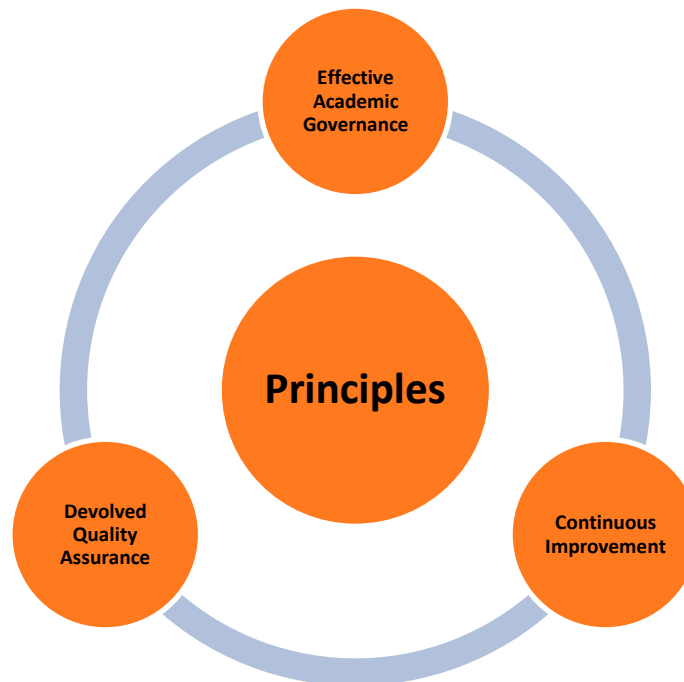


Figure 1. Principles Underpinning an Institutional Review

4.1.1 Effective Academic Governance

This principle recognises that ATU has a robust and transparent system of governance of QAE to manage all periodic reviews including the Institutional Review. This is supported by an integrated and transparent governance AQAE Framework within ATU.

4.1.2 Continuous Improvement

This principle recognises that the Institutional Review may identify areas for improvement, to ensure, that ATU's AQAE Framework remains current and effective. All reports related to the Institutional Review will be published on the ATU website to ensure accountability and transparency. Following an Institutional Review, an 'institutional implementation plan' must be developed, implemented, and monitored.

4.1.3 Devolved Quality Assurance

This principle recognises that quality assurance is a function of all areas of the University. ATU acknowledges the critical and shared role of all staff and students in embedding a quality culture and values, and respects and supports staff and student contributions to that culture.

4.2 Glossary of Key Terms

The **Institutional Review Executive Lead (IREL)** is a senior manager within ATU who has executive responsibility for leading and managing the Institutional Review and serves as the main liaison person between ATU, QQI and the Review Team, throughout a review process.

The ATU **Institutional Review Steering Group (IRSG)** is a working group drawn from across ATU and is representative of students, all key functions, and Schools/Faculties. It works with the IREL to oversee the development of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) and the Institutional Profile (IP).

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER): is a report of the self-evaluation process and is an essential component of the Institutional Review process to ensure that the University operates effectively, efficiently, responsively and in line with its core values and mission. A robust ISER enables ATU to reflect on and identify areas for improvement, assess its performance against its strategic objectives, and demonstrate accountability to its stakeholders.

Annual Quality Report (AQR): ATU is required to provide QQI with an Annual Quality Report (AQR). The AQR summarises and provides links to ATU AQAE policies and procedures and provides updates to the AQAEF during the reporting period. It enables ATU to map its AQAE system against Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education space. The AQR informs the CINNTE Review process. Where appropriate, it may be possible for a Review Team to review the evidence provided by the AQR to determine that ATU is compliant with ESG 2015. The AQR provides the evidence for the emerging AQAEF for the University.

Dialogue Meetings take place between ATU and QQI. The purpose of the dialogue meetings is to provide a forum for ATU and QQI to update each other about developments in quality assurance and to share advice on themes and strategic issues. The notes of dialogue meetings may be used by ATU in its self-evaluation for the analysis of ongoing engagement with QQI.

The **Review Team** is an independent team of reviewers appointed by QQI to conduct the Institutional Review. Review teams are composed of peer reviewers including senior leaders and students from comparable HEI institutions, and external representatives. QQI has final

approval on the composition of a review team. Each review team will have at a minimum, a chairperson, coordinating reviewer, student reviewer, and external representative. Review teams comprise an appropriate mix and balance of expertise. A review team provides an opportunity for an external team to review the effectiveness of ATU AQAE policies, procedures, and processes and to provide external advice on improvements and enhancement, where necessary.

The **Planning Visit (PV)** A one-day on-site planning visit will normally be conducted by the Chairperson and the Coordinating Reviewer approximately 7 weeks prior to the Main Review Visit (MRV). Review team members will be invited to provide comments on the ISER, and additional documentation required by the Chairperson and Coordinating Reviewer in advance of the planning visit. A QQI staff member will also attend the planning visit to ensure that the process is conducted in accordance with applicable criteria.

Main Review Visit (MRV) The main review visit will be used by the review team to gather evidence to determine the effectiveness of the processes employed by ATU for assuring quality management in keeping with its mission and strategy and in accordance with national and European requirements. The review team will receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria as set out in the Terms of Reference. The main review visit does not normally exceed four days in duration.

4.3 Institutional Review Process

The CINNTE Institutional Cyclical Quality Review process aligns with Parts 2 and 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and is based on internationally accepted and recognised approach to reviews. The process is as follows:

- the publication of Terms of Reference. QQI completes an institutional information profile and confirms the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference document the objectives of the Institutional Review and the ways in which the objectives must be measured and assessed. Once the Terms of Reference and the related objectives of the Institutional Review are confirmed by QQI, they will be used to inform all subsequent actions including the preparation of the ISER and the Review Team Report.
- a process of self-evaluation and preparation of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER). Self-evaluation is a self-reflective and critical evaluation report compiled by ATU which describes how effectively it assures and enhances the quality of its teaching, learning, research, and support activities. The ISER and the AQR shape the key points of discussion with the Review Team, the structure of the site visits and the Review Report
- desk review of the ISER by the Review Team.

- Planning Visit to ATU by the Review Team Chair and the Coordinating Reviewer.
- Main Review Visit to ATU to receive and consider evidence about the ways in which ATU meets the objectives as set out in the Terms of Reference.
- the publication of a Review Report including findings and recommendations
- the ATU response to the Review Team Report
- ATU prepares an institutional implementation plan which will be published
- a one-year follow up report by ATU that review actions taken, that is submitted to QQI, and then published.

All timelines relating to the above will be established by the Institutional Review Executive Lead and the Institutional Review Steering group in conjunction with QQI.

4.4 Responsibilities

4.4.1 Academic Council (AC)

Under the Technological University Act (2018) the Academic Council shall control the academic affairs of a Technological University, including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, the Technological University. The drafts of the AQR, ISER and Institutional Profile (IP) will be noted by the Academic Council before submitting to QQI.

4.4.2 Institutional Review Executive Lead (IREL)

The Executive Lead has overall responsibility for steering and managing the Institutional Review process.

4.4.3 Institutional Review Steering Group (IRSG)

An Institutional Review Steering Group with representative membership across the university including student representation, will provide high level oversight and co-ordination of the development of the ISER. The steering group will provide advice and guidance on the preparations for the review.

4.4.4 ATU Functions/Academic Units

All functions/academic units will be required to contribute to the development of the ISER.

4.4.5 Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar (VPAA&R)

The VPAA&R has overall responsibility for the academic governance of the Institutional Review process.

5. Associated Documents Generated by this Policy

*Procedure for the Conduct of Institutional Review***6. Revision History**

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
000	New Policy Approved by Academic Council	14/06/2023