

Chapter 4 - Ongoing Management and Monitoring of Programmes

4.1 Introduction

Once a programme has been validated and approved for delivery, the process of monitoring the on-going delivery needs to be enacted. This provides a formal mechanism for quality assurance and facilitates two-way communications between staff and students, maintaining a high level of engagement with programme operational issues. The programme monitoring process also includes a formal channel for feedback to be provided by students and staff to inform programme design, development and delivery.

The monitoring and review of programmes post validation is a regulatory requirement, both from a European perspective. (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), May 2015, and a National QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, April 2016). The specific requirements are set out under section 3.3. Programme monitoring and review

“Programme delivery is monitored in a way which allows for the identification of needs and the modification and adjustment of the programme and the delivery method as appropriate. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of a programme is used as an opportunity to evaluate that programme with the benefit of the experience of programme delivery incorporating feedback from staff and learners. Such evidence is reflected in learner enrolment and programme completion rate data; learner, teacher, trainer, employer and/or industry feedback and evaluations of the programme. Programme monitoring and review is taken as an opportunity to:

- ensure that the programme remains appropriate, and to create a supportive and effective learning environment
- ensure that the programme achieves the objectives set for it and responds to the needs of learners and the changing needs of society
- review the learner workload
- review learner progression and completion rates
- review the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners
- inform updates of programme content; delivery modes; teaching and learning methods; learning supports and resources; and information provided to learners
- update third party, industry or other stakeholders relevant to the programme(s)
- review quality assurance arrangements that are specific to that programme

Regular programme monitoring provides information for periodic programme review. The information collected is analysed and the programme adapted to ensure it is up to date.”

4.2 Scope

This chapter deals with the quality assurance systems that are in place to continuously monitor programmes in the Institute. It details the operational aspects that ensure:

- Programmes remain current and academically valid (i.e., that the curriculum and its assessments as currently delivered are appropriate to both the learner and to the programme/programme objectives)
- Programmes that are no longer relevant are removed or re-developed
- New programmes are identified and developed

The Chapter describes the role of the Programme Committee and School Policy Committee in programme monitoring and review.

4.3 Academic Quality Structures

Academic quality structures have been streamlined across the Institute and consist of:

- Programme Committees
- School Policy Committee.

The establishment and operation of these are mandatory.

4.4 Programmes

A programme is a planned and coherent learning opportunity leading to the award of a qualification registered on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). All taught programmes in the institute at level 6, 7, 8 and 9 fall under the scope of this document.

4.5 Programme Committee

4.5.1 Purpose and Functions of Programme Committees

The Programme Committee is intended to provide a structure for:

- (i) Routine monitoring of a programme to ensure that it is being delivered according to the approved programme schedule and to identify any impediments to student learning
- (ii) Feedback from staff, students and other stakeholders regarding the programme design, development and delivery.
- (iii) Programme planning and development

While these activities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, for the purpose of clarity and describing the functionality of Quality Assurance it is useful to outline them separately.

The remit of a Programme Committee is to:

(i) Monitor programme delivery and monitor student performance:

- Identifying on-going issues related to delivery and student progress on current programmes
- Responding to student issues raised via student representatives.

- Planning, organising and reviewing student induction
- Analysing examination results
- Responding to external examiner reports
- Monitoring student progress
- Identifying resource requirements
- Documenting actions and decisions.

A primary function of a Programme Committee is student performance analysis. This is key to the identification of necessary programme modifications, programme terminations and new programme development (EAP1) and re-development. A programme monitoring report (EAP7-Programme Committee Report Form) shall be prepared on an annual basis for each programme and submitted to the Head of Department on or before 31st October.

The Head of Department shall produce a summary of this data which will be sent to the Head of School (EAP8-Department Report Form). These reports must be considered at a School Policy Committee meeting, before the end of Semester 1.

Finally, the Head of School shall produce a School Summary (EAP9-School Report Form) which will be sent to the Academic Council for the first meeting in semester 2 of the academic year. It shall also be disseminated to all members of the School.

The inclusion of key performance indicators (KPI) to allow five-year trend analysis is an important part of the monitoring process. The EAP7 report from the Programme Committee includes statistical data such as:

1. CAO Applications
2. CAO Average Points
3. Registrations (at census 1st March)
4. Pre-Exam Attrition
5. Pass and Retention Rates
6. Student Feedback
7. Feedback from External Examiner reports

The Programme Committee is required to analyse the data and recommend actions to be taken as part of their Programme Committee meetings. (with persons responsible identified). All academic staff are responsible to contribute to the content of the 'EAP7 - Programme Committee Report' document. The Head of School (or nominee) are responsible to for maintaining records (e.g., Programme Committee minutes, staff surveys, previous EAP7 documents etc.).

(ii) Review Feedback:

- Soliciting student feedback via surveys from student representatives via Programme Committee meetings and from ad hoc focus groups
- Identifying attrition/retention initiatives

- Documenting actions and decisions.
- Identify and manage changes to a programme

The following survey forms are available:

QA1 – Survey of Students by Lecturer – Student Survey Questionnaire: which is completed by students for each module to gather feedback for the lecturer.

QA2 – Summary of survey of students by lecturer: which is completed by the lecturer based on the QA1 forms for each module, to gather feedback for input into the Programme Committee or the EAP7 report.

QA3 – Department Survey of Students -Course Survey Questionnaire: which is completed by each student cohort to gather feedback on the programme stage, to gather feedback for input into the programme committee to the EAP7 report.

In respect of student feedback, the School Administrative Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Lecturers are issued with the three survey forms for completion by students (QA1 and QA3) and by staff (QA 2). Lecturers are responsible for ensuring that these forms are completed and that the relevant findings and suggestions for improvement are discussed by the programme committee. Alternatively, the survey(s) may be carried out through Moodle.

The Admissions Office requests each student who formally withdraws from a programme to complete a student exit questionnaire. In practice it is very difficult to collect this information since many students do not formally withdraw. However, it provides the Institute with valuable information on the reasons why students withdraw.

(iii) Programme Planning and Development:

Programme development is by definition an on-going activity. It is included as an agenda item for the operational meetings, but occasionally “single item agenda” meetings dealing solely with programme modifications may be held. At certain times, for example when developing a new programme, several Programme Committee meetings may be required over a relatively short timescale. Typically, the following need to be considered:

- Changing, updating and revalidating programmes
- Reviewing/updating existing modules and developing/introducing new modules
- Evaluating quality of facility/resource provision
- Developing new programmes
- Documenting actions and decisions.

4.5.2 Membership of the Programme Committee

The membership comprises all of the lecturers who deliver the programme modules, as well as two elected student representative with limited attendance rights. The Head of Department is an ex-officio member.

4.5.3 Programme Committee Chairperson

The chairperson is a member of the lecturing staff teaching on the programme and all staff should undertake the role of chairperson in rotation. The Programme Chair and year co-ordinators are proposed and elected/re-elected by the members of the Programme Committee at its first meeting in any academic year, which is typically undertaken for a period of one to three academic years.

Training should be provided when a Lecturer undertakes the role programme chair for the first time. Previous Chairs should assist in the handover period.

The role of the chairperson is to (i) organise the meeting and agenda items (in conjunction with the Head of Department) and provide links to appropriate documentation for a meeting, (ii) chair each programme meeting and (iii) attend School Policy Committee meetings ensuring a link between it and the programme committee and (iv) have an appropriate knowledge of academic processes pertaining to programme committee meetings.

All members should contribute to the operation of the Programme Committee to assist the Chair.

4.5.4 Frequency and Focus of Programme Committee Meetings

Four meetings of each Programme Committee must be held each academic year. These are held in October / November / late January / early May. Attendance by all members is expected, but may not be possible depending on the number of programmes a staff member may belong to. Apologies will be recorded for any member who does not attend, for whatever reason. Any subgroups/work-groups established by the programme committee must provide a record of minutes/notes before any consideration of their outputs and any recommendations need to be approved by the programme committee. Student members of the committee are excused from the meeting once matters pertaining to student feedback are concluded or matters pertaining to individual students are under discussion.

It is recognised that many lecturers are involved in more than one Programme Committee. Where a number of lecturers are teaching on a range of related programmes joint Programme Committee meetings may be held to address the management and monitoring of a group of related programmes together. Where practical, lecturers who teach on a number of programmes should be facilitated by not holding all Programme committees at the same time.

The specific agenda will vary from meeting to meeting. Any member of a Programme Committee can request items to be added to the agenda, by emailing the Chairperson, at least 10 working days before the meeting. Appendix 4.1 outlines a sample agenda template to ensure some consistency across the Institute. The agenda should be distributed 5 days in advance of each meeting.

While specific programmes may add additional programme specific agenda items, programme committees must cover the following core agenda items over the academic year.

- Student feedback (standing item)
- Student attendance and progress (standing item)
- Learner workload, delivery and assessment (standing item)
- Completion and review of EAP7 Report
 - Examination results
 - Staff and Student Feedback
 - External Examiner feedback
 - Statistical Data & Student Retention
 - Quality Enhancement
- Induction
- Proposed changes to the programme (EAP4)
- Programme promotion
- Resource requirements
- Pertinent updates from Academic Council
- Pertinent updates from School Policy Committee meetings

4.5.5 Meeting Organisation

Minutes should be prepared after each meeting with administrative support from the School. See sample template for minutes in Appendix 4.2.

A Departmental and School Academic Calendar should be made available at the start of each academic year which will indicate the dates of Programme Committee meetings, School Policy meetings, and other relevant items (e.g., open days, expos etc.). Responsibility of this resides with the Head of School. Issues raised by the programme committee can be forwarded to the School Policy committee for academic matters or to the Head of Department for non academic matters.

4.5.6 Conduct at Programme Committee Meetings

Meetings will be chaired by the Programme Chair. All members have an equal voice at the Programme Committee and are encouraged to participate fully. This may result in robust discussion and the expression of differing opinions and this is a normal part of the process. All participants should be treated with respect and consideration, valuing a diversity of views and opinions, and critiquing ideas rather than individuals, with due regard to academic freedom. The role of the chair is to manage the process.

4.6 School Policy Committee

4.6.1 Purpose and Function of the School Policy Committee

The School Policy Committee is concerned with overseeing and implementing the School Plan. Because it is not concerned with operational issues it confines its business to actions required to ensure implementation of strategic initiatives.

The tasks include, but are not confined to:

- Interpretation of the Institute Strategic Plan in respect of School activities
- Appraising academic developments
- Advising the School on physical resource implications
- Proposing new programmes of learning to Academic Council or its committees on behalf of the school.
- Proposing substantial revision of existing programmes of learning
- Advising the School on likely staff recruitment and development of specialist discipline areas
- Reviewing EAP8-Department reports and EAP9-School reports
- Passing information or requests onto Academic Council and/or the Executive Committee or back to the programme committees.

4.6.2 Membership of the School Policy Committee

- Head of School
- Heads of Department
- Chairperson of each Programme Committee in the School
- Senior Lecturers of the School
- Two undergraduate student representatives, who have been nominated by the body of class representatives for the School.
- One post-graduate representative, nominated by the body of postgraduates from the School.
- One member of the Technical Support Staff
- School Administrative Manager.

4.6.3 School Policy Committee Chairperson

The Head of School is Chairperson of the School Policy Committee. The Chairperson will arrange meetings and set the agenda in consultation with the Heads of Department.

4.6.4 Frequency and focus of School Policy Committee Meetings

The School Policy Committee shall meet four times in each academic year, which will occur following the meetings of the Programme Committees. When a Programmatic or Institutional Review occurs, additional meetings may take place as required.

Among other topics, the School Policy Committee will have as agenda items:

- Issues forwarded/highlighted directly from Programme Committees
- EAP8 – Department Report
- EAP9 – School Report
- Review of progress of School Strategic Plan

- Proposed new programmes, or substantial changes to an existing programme which require an EAP1
- Programmes under review or withdrawal.
- Research activities and development
- School resource requirements.

4.7 Documentation Flow and Reporting Structures

Proposals that are made by the Programme Committees usually cluster around (i) resource requirements for current programme to ensure alignment with student needs; (ii) induction and retention initiatives; (iii) new programme proposals and development

Proposals made by the Policy Committee will typically be related to School strategic direction, new programme proposals and resource requirements at the School level.

The Head of School shall also furnish the Planning and Coordination Committee of Academic Council with a list of proposed (i) new programmes for development and (ii) existing programmes which require substantial re-development in time for the first meeting of that committee in any calendar year, or as close to that date as possible.

The Head of School shall, on an annual basis, ensure that five-year trend analysis of all programmes is made available to the School illustrating (over the 5 years on a per-annum basis):

- Student numbers (per year of programme)
- Attrition
- Resources allocated
- Whether the programme generated a surplus or deficit, and the amount of same
- New programmes developed
- Existing programmes paused/cancelled
- A School plan for the development of new programmes for the academic year

All proposals made by the school policy committee are channelled through the Head of School who will decide on the appropriate action and the route required for approval of the proposal, i.e., for action by one more of the following:

- School Policy Committee
- Head of Department
- Head of School
- Executive Committee
- Committees of the Academic Council
- Academic Council
- Governing Body.

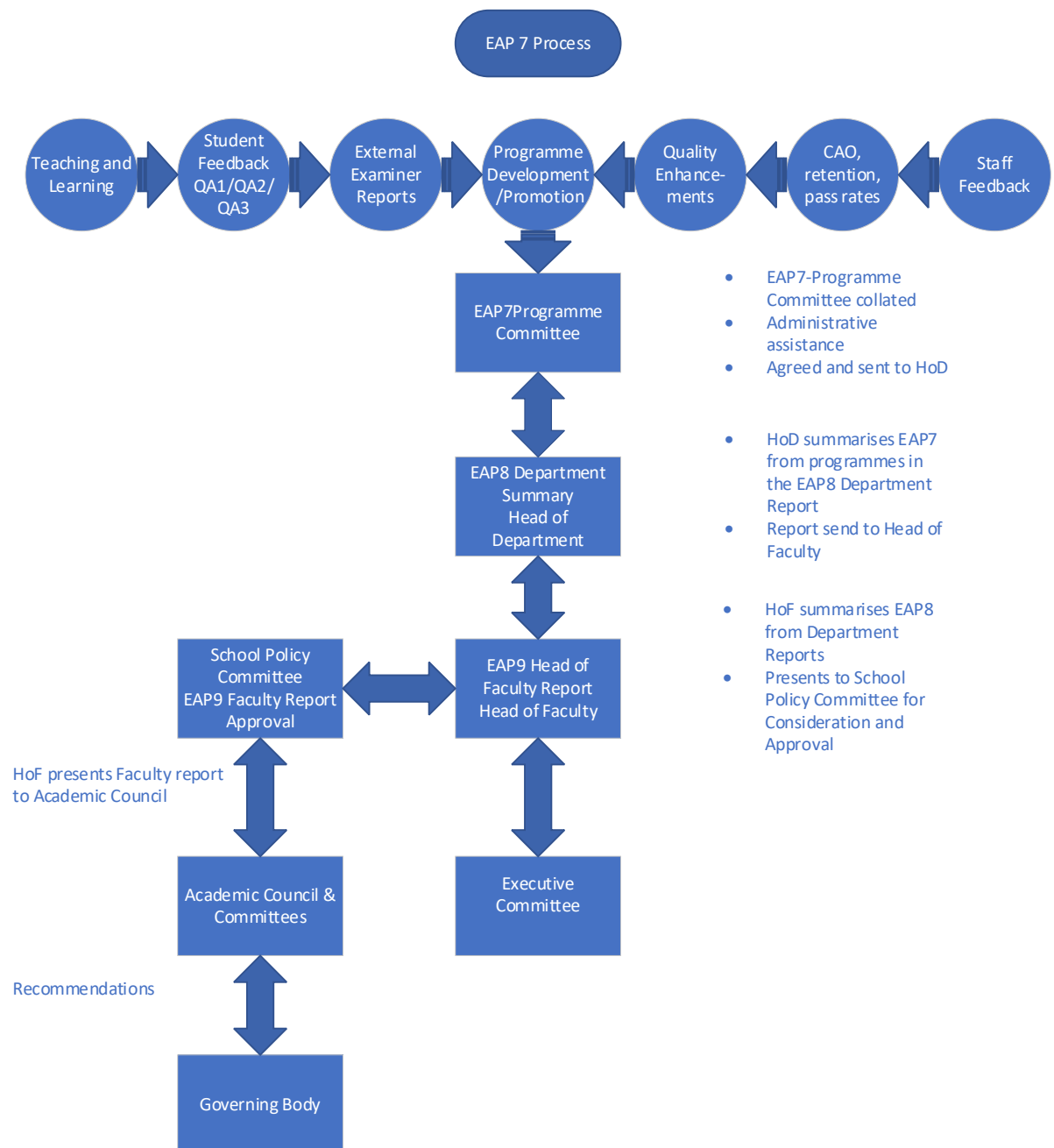
A diagrammatic representation of the communication process is shown in Figure 4.1

It should be noted that feedback is an essential requirement for the success of any quality assurance process. Inherent in the reporting structures outlined in Figure 4.1 is a requirement that each

function feeds back a response to a proposal to the appropriate committee or function head. This may be done in the form of a:

- Formal written response
- Minuted response or
- Verbal response.

Figure 4.1 Schematic diagram of the communication process for programme management and monitoring.



4.8 Documents related to this Chapter

QA1 – Survey Student Module Evaluation Form
 QA2 – Survey Student Programme Stage Evaluation Form
 QA3 – Survey Staff Programme Stage Evaluation Form
 EAP7-Programme Committee Report Form
 EAP8-Departmental Report Form
 EAP9-School Report Form

4.9 Revision History

Rev. No.	Issue Date	Description of Change
000 to 013	Feb 2003	All chapters of the Quality Manual were incorporated into one document, see chapter 1 for revision history for entire Quality manual.
014	Jan 17	Updating for online version with links. Chapters separated into separate document. Future revisions will have separate revision numbers
015	Issued 21/04/21	Update to the process for programme monitoring and review following substantial review of the process. Approved AC 26/03/21.

Appendix 4.1 Sample agenda for programme committee meetings

Programme Committee Meeting Agenda

Department of XXXXXX

Date, Time and Location

List of Programmes

- 1.
- 2.

	Agenda items	Meeting No			
		1 (Oct)	2 (Nov)	3(Jan)	4(May)
1	Minutes of previous Meeting	X	X	X	X
2	Matters Arising	X	X	X	X
3	Correspondence	X	X	X	X
4	Student Issues & Feedback	X	X	X	X
5	Ongoing Attendance /workload /assessment	X	X	X	X
6	Induction	X			X
7	Resource requirements/delivery	X		X	
8	Completion of EAP7 Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination results • External Examiner • Feedback & Surveys • Statistical data and student retention • Quality enhancement 	X			
et c	Other e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed programme change EAP4 • Research • Programme Promotion • EAP8-Department report • EAP9-School report • Programme budgets and costs • Pertinent updates from Academic Council • Pertinent updates from School Policy 		X	X	X

Appendix 4.2 Sample of Programme Committee Meeting Minutes

Programme Committee Meeting Minutes

Department of XXXXXX

Date & time of Meeting

List of Programmes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Persons present:

No.	Item
1.0	Minutes of Date XXXX
	Approval of the previous minutes Proposed by and seconded by
2.0	Matters Arising
	These pertain to the minutes (e.g. 'was x followed up')
3.0	Correspondence
	Items which were emailed on to the Programme chair after the agenda was issued
4.0	Student Issues and Feedback (Standing Item)
4.1	Y1 Students Y2 Students etc.
5.0	Ongoing Student Attendance /workload/ assessment (Standing Item)
5.1	Y1 -> Individual students should not be named. Y2
6.0	Other Items Discussed
6.1	List areas of discussion covered in the meeting very briefly. Should reflect the areas set out in the specific agenda. Note items for future inclusion in EAP7 report.
6.2	
6.3	
7.0	Decisions and Recommendations from this Meeting
	List of action items to be followed up with Member name and due date where applicable.

Prepared by _____ Date: _____