



EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Background

1. At its meeting on 1 June, the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) discussed and endorsed an approach to the development of the elements of self-assessment over the coming months. This paper focuses on external evaluation and review and was discussed by the EAG on 19 June.

Introduction

2. External evaluation and review is critical to achieving confidence in the process and results of self-assessment. Disclosure and validation of the evidence used and generated through the self-assessment is needed to provide rigorous and independent evaluation of tertiary education organisations. External evaluation and review will also provide feedback to tertiary education organisations on their performance, and the validity of their self-assessment.
 3. The external evaluation and review process will test the quality of the evidence that underpins self-assessment, and use the results of self-assessment and other evidence to make judgements about the quality of the individual provider. The findings of external evaluation and review will be taken into account by the individual TEO in their improvement plans and will be part of Investing in a Plan discussion and decisions with the TEC.
 4. It is assumed that self-assessment and external evaluation and review are complementary processes, supported by regulatory arrangements. Thus, both self-assessment and external evaluation and review look for evidence of meaningful outcomes, and the key processes that contribute to these outcomes. Compliance with legal and other regulatory requirements will be “business as usual” for TEOs who will be encouraged to manage their own compliance responsibilities. The proposed approach, as shown in the diagram, Fig.1, below, has previously been discussed with EAG.
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Fig. 1 The focus on outcomes and the key processes influencing outcomes

Outcomes	Key Processes Influencing Outcomes
Evidence of TEO contribution to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student outcomes (achievement and progress) • institution level outcomes • system level outcomes 	Evidence of TEO internal systems and processes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs identification at student, employer, regional and national levels • quality improvement (considering evidence of both process and outcome)
Compliance with Regulatory Arrangements Evidence of TEOs meeting legislative and regulatory requirements	

The elements of external evaluation and review

5. At its previous meeting, EAG discussed the elements for self-assessment and noted that these six elements also apply to external evaluation and review.
 - Principles: similar to self-assessment
 - Key features: similar to self-assessment
 - Evaluative questions: similar to self-assessment
 - Evaluation indicators: same as self-assessment
 - Guidelines and tools: similar to self-assessment
 - Training and support: similar to self-assessment

6. There are four further relevant dimensions of external evaluation and review:
 - independence – the conduct of the external evaluation and review by a third party which is independent from the funding organisation is critical to achieving confidence in the self assessment process and the funding process
 - the “fresh eye” that the external evaluator brings to otherwise familiar practices (“accommodation to the goals of the programme”)
 - A research-informed, experiential and comparative basis for reaching judgements about quality (provided through the tertiary evaluation indicators)

- Identification of common issues across the sector or sub-sectors.

Principles and key features of external evaluation and review

7. The principles and key features for external evaluation and review are similar to those for self-assessment.
8. A distinction has, at this stage, been made between ‘principles’ and ‘key features’. Principles are seen as “fundamental truths or propositions serving as the foundation for the design and development” of both self-assessment and external evaluation and review. Features are “distinctive attributes resulting from the application of these principles”.

Principles

9. The principles of external evaluation and review are:
 - external evaluation and review supports a focus on the attainment of excellence and high standards for all students
 - quality is about the impact of provision on the student and the qualitative change (added value) that takes place, i.e. progress for key stakeholders, especially students. Therefore, there is a primary focus directly on the quality of learning outcomes, including the value added for learners, and the quality of the learning experience, including teaching.

The quality of learning	=	the quality of the learning experience	+	the value of the outcomes achieved
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- there is a focus on outcomes at various levels - student, employer, regional, community
- an analysis by the provider of student intake characteristics and capabilities underpins programme design and delivery and the approach to external evaluation and review
- needs identification (for example at student, employer and regional levels), is a primary driver of tertiary education programme design and delivery and is therefore a central focus of external evaluation and review
- implementation will reflect the particular characteristics of the various sub-sectors, i.e. distinctive contributions

- high-level features such as the focus on outcomes and key processes influencing outcomes will be common to all TEOs. However, methods of achieving desired outcomes may vary depending on context.
- external evaluation encourages continuous improvement within individual TEOs and, more generally, the sector
- TEO autonomy, innovation and effectiveness are supported
- evaluation capacity building is supported
- evaluation practices are transparent to all stakeholders and findings are based on valid analysis and interpretation of evidence.

The principles of the proposed approach apply to all TEOs including government-funded and the non-government-funded PTEs and the smaller providers.

Key features

10. External evaluation and review will focus on:

- the extent to which stakeholder needs are systematically determined and addressed effectively
- the quality of the organisation's self-assessment processes and results
- the extent to which stakeholder outcomes, including valued added, are analysed honestly and transparently and are used to inform future programme design and delivery
- a robust identification of institutional strengths and weaknesses and a demonstration that changes are being made in the interests of enhanced student achievement
- achieving the desired aims in as "light-handed" a way as possible.
- TEOs self-management of compliance functions.

Other relevant points

- Wherever possible, multiple sources of evidence to inform evaluative conclusions.
- Given the number of TEOs in the sector, the cycle for an individual TEO's external evaluation and review will not necessarily align with the TEC's investment cycle. The TEC will be aware of each TEO's cycle and any risk that might relate to the individual TEO so that investment decisions are fully informed by the quality assurance processes.

- There will also be provision for the TEC to request a specific focus review if there were any issues of concern raised.
- Peer expertise will be used, wherever appropriate, on external evaluation and review teams as a means of ensuring an up-to-date sector perspective is incorporated into the processes for analysing data and synthesising evaluative conclusions.
- Evaluation findings are informed by rigorous analysis of relevant evidence (which is discussed with the TEO).
- There will be a minimum of two evaluators per evaluation with larger teams reflecting the size of the provider being evaluated.
- The approach will be flexible to meet the individual provider's context and size. It could vary from a whole-of-institution approach to sampling of departments and could be thematic in its approach, for example reviewing outcomes for foundation education or support for Māori.

Evaluative questions

11. The evaluative questions will be similar to those for self-assessment.

Possible examples include:

- How well do learners achieve?
- How are learner needs identified?
- How effective are teaching, training and learning?
- How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and aspirations of students?
- How well are learners guided and supported?
- How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?
- How effective are the TEOs internal evaluation practices (self-assessment) and how well are areas for improvement identified and acted on?

Tertiary Evaluation Indicators

12. Tertiary evaluation indicators provide an informed evidential basis for reaching judgements about quality or value for both self-assessment and external evaluation and review. The indicators for external evaluation and review will be the same as those for self-assessment.

Guidelines and tools

13. The guidelines and tools for external evaluation and review will be similar to those for self-assessment.

The following are envisaged for external evaluation and review:

- a set of evaluation indicators of quality based on the principles established by the EAG, and compatible with the key performance indicators under development by TEC
- information and guidance on evaluation approaches in quality assurance systems
- guidelines for support and training of TEOs and quality assurance bodies (QABs)

14. These guidelines and tools will be designed to assist TEOs and QABs to focus their evaluative activities on:

- identifying, analysing and tracking learner, institution and system level outcomes
- analysing learner intake characteristics and tracking learner progress
- identifying relevant contributing processes i.e. what it is that actually makes a difference to outcomes
- developing and strengthening self evaluation of effectiveness
- identifying learner, employer and regional needs
- measuring compliance with the regulatory arrangements.

One example of a potential tool could be the development of an attestation process whereby the individual organisation will affirm, prior to external evaluation and review by the quality assurance body, that it is compliant with all appropriate regulatory requirements, for example, the Code for Pastoral Care of International Students.

Training and support

15. The proposed external evaluation and review approach will utilise trained and experienced evaluators to ensure a robust process. The evaluators will be people with sound evaluation and research skills and a good knowledge of tertiary education. As with self-assessment, this capability will also need to be built through appropriate training and support.

The overall planning for the quality assurance and monitoring reforms includes a change management workstream. Currently, QAB staff are being briefed regularly on the reforms work as it progresses. We envisage discussing the training of evaluators for the trial of self-assessment and external evaluation and review with the appropriate managers; the aim is to have some trained evaluators fully involved in the trial from early 2008.