

STUDENT TEAM MEMBER HANDBOOK

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A. GENERAL CONDUCT OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

(please refer also to PowerPoint presentation notes)

1. As you read this handbook, you will need to refer to the document, *External Quality Arrangements for Scotland's Colleges: September 2008*. This provides you with details of external review within the context of HMIE activities.
2. The Managing Inspector (MI) manages the review. He or she will ensure that the review is rigorous and fair and that it has regard to the individual college circumstances. You must consult the MI promptly if you need advice or meet any difficulties. Within the team (normally five members, plus the STM), there will be four lead writers, each with responsibility for co-ordinating evaluations in relation to a confidence statement.
3. Remember at all times that you are an advocate for learners and potential learners whilst working with HM Inspectorate of Education. You do not represent your college, your Students' Association (SA) or NUS and you must behave appropriately. You must exercise discretion, confidentiality, a professional attitude and enthusiasm in the discharge of your duties. You will receive further information on these issues during your training sessions.
4. Reviews put considerable pressure on staff and learners and you should try to minimise this as far as you can. Explain what you will do and why, and make it clear that you will respond helpfully to questions about the review process. Remain flexible and be prepared to adjust your draft plans to accommodate learners wherever possible. Give learners opportunities to talk about key issues that are important to them.
5. You should remind yourself at all times to be objective and open to the views of others. For example, don't divert an interview to tell learners how you do it in your college or your student association. Do not align yourself with complaints, for example on funding or members of staff.
6. Keep in mind the three key principles of *high quality learning, learner engagement* and *quality culture* and focus your review on aspects of **learner engagement** within the college, as well as the **quality of the learner experience** as expressed through the 17 reference Quality Indicators (QIs)¹.
7. Use the attached indicative questions as a guide to aid discussion and not as checklists. They will not suit every circumstance because of variations in mission, catchment area, college size, structure and the nature of the student groups you interview. Adapt the questions as appropriate. Remember – your role in the team is to ***listen to and report back on the learner voice first hand***.
8. Note the views of learners from each of your meetings on the ***Evidence Form (EF) provided (Appendix 1)*** and use these to inform your report.

¹ Refer to *External Quality Arrangements for Scotland's Colleges; September 2008*

9. There is no need to go through all the indicative questions. There may be circumstances where you ask none of them at all. It is important that you listen to and record what learners say. It is advisable to start with a general, wider question, such as “What is it like to be a learner in this college?” You can then direct the discussion, if you wish, using the indicative questions. Over the week, try to have some information for most of the reference QIs. If you have findings relating to any additional QIs these aspects may be recorded as *other significant quality indicators*.
10. Try to cover a representative range of learners from a breadth of programmes and modes of attendance. Be careful to include learners from different ethnic backgrounds and age groups, and remember to include learners with disabilities (including sensory or mobility), as well as a balance of males and females. For example, try to include learners from:
 - mainstream full-time and part-time FE and HE programmes across the college
 - access or pre-entry programmes
 - distance/flexible/blended learning programmes
 - evening programmes
 - programmes where they are receiving learning support
 - the Students’ Association

It is unlikely that you will succeed in speaking to learners from all these categories. In fact, not all colleges will have all of these categories. However, it is important that you speak with as wide a range of learners as possible.

11. Sometimes you may find one dominant group member provides you with most of the information. They may have strong views. It is imperative that you check these views out with other learners to establish whether or not they share these opinions.
12. Ask open questions (such as: “How would you describe the advice you received from the college when you applied to your programme?” as opposed to: “Did you receive good advice from the admissions section when you applied for your programme?”). A closed question invites a “yes” or “no” answer, whereas you require a more detailed response to inform your report.
13. Pay attention to the social and cultural equality and diversity and the college response to it in all your activities, taking account of the six “equalities” - age, disability, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender.
14. If you have any problems or uncertainties at all, consult the MI straight away.

B. OUTLINE OF EXTERNAL REVIEW ACTIVITIES

1. Pre-review activity²

- Around the time of the visit to the college for the *Planning Day*, which normally take place nine weeks prior to the review, the MI will issue the *learner engagement questionnaire* to the student president of the college being reviewed. The MI will ask the student president to return the completed questionnaire to HMIE four weeks prior to the review. The way in which the responses to the questionnaire are presented is the decision of the Students' Association and not HMIE.
- The MI will ask you to contact the Student President, prior to the questionnaire return date, to introduce yourself. You should use the opportunity to ensure that he/she understands what is required and to check on progress.
- You will be asked to attend the *Team Briefing Day*, held approximately two weeks prior to the external review, at which the MI will brief the team on various aspects of the review. The MI will introduce the learner engagement questionnaire and the issues it raises and you should be prepared to discuss these and to identify issues that you may wish to raise with learners during the review.
- You are expected to read any correspondence/documents sent by HMIE.

2. External review week

- You will be present throughout the review. The review team will normally be in college **Monday, Tuesday** and **Wednesday**. The team is out of college, discussing and writing, on **Thursday**.
- You should liaise with the MI on Monday re your schedule for the week and conduct meetings as appropriate.
- You will take part in the team meeting each afternoon or as otherwise scheduled by the MI.
- Discussion of findings with the college will take place on **Friday** and you will be present along with the MI and one other team member.
- *Remember to record the number of Skills for Work, ILA, International (non-EU only), and government funded learners with whom you meet. The MI will let you know if the college has credit rated its own provision using the SCQF framework.*

² The timescales given in this section are for guidance. Time scales may alter, depending on the point in the year that Reviews take place and the impact of local holidays.

C. FRAMEWORK FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW: INDICATIVE PROMPTS FOR STMs

High quality learning

How well are learners progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?

2. Impact on learners and other users of college services

2.1 How accessible, flexible and inclusive are college programmes and services?

- Tell me about the timing and location of your programme
- Have any special arrangements been made to accommodate other priorities in your life?
- Are teaching staff flexible?
- How mixed are learners on your programme (male/female; ethnic origin; disability)?

2.2 How well do programmes and services meet learner needs?

- In what ways have learners been engaged in providing feedback on programmes and services?
- Has your programme turned out as you thought it would? In what ways?
- What have you been told about progression and articulation arrangements?
- How does the college promote different races and cultures?
- What do you know about the college's actions regarding sustainability?
- How has your programme prepared you for employment?

2.3 How well do learners make progress, attain qualifications and achieve more widely?

- How do you know that you are making satisfactory progress in your subjects?
- What kind of feedback do you receive from teaching staff?
- Do you use a PLP? How helpful has this been?
- What do you know about Core skills, skills for employability and citizenship? How is your progress in these skills monitored and recorded?
- Was there anything in this programme that you had already completed and achieved before you started and if so, what was done about that?
- In what ways have your personal learning skills improved/developed since commencing the programme?

How effective are the college's learning and teaching processes?

5. Education, training and lifelong learning

5.1 How well does the college develop and deliver programmes and services to meet the needs of learners from all backgrounds?

- How does the college promote equality and diversity (for example different races, cultures, disabilities, genders, ages etc.) to learners?
- Do curriculum materials and resources acknowledge and reflect social and cultural diversity?
- What measures does the college take to meet the needs of specific groups of learners?

5.2 How well do learners learn?

- Are you motivated in your learning? In your classes, are learners motivated? Do people enjoy it? Is everyone "part of the class"?
- What kinds of resources do you use in your learning?
- Are you encouraged to learn independently?

5.3 How well do teaching and the use of resources ensure effective learning?

This indicator will mainly be reviewed by reviewers as part of the generic review of learning and teaching. However, any learner feedback that you feel will contribute to this aspect of the review will be welcomed.

5.4 How effective is the context and planning for learning and teaching?

- Describe the relationship between lecturers and learners.
- What kind of standards are set by teaching staff in the classroom?
- Are learning activities well planned? Are learners involved in that planning?
- What's the learning environment like?

5.5 How well is assessment used to promote effective learning?

- How are the assessments arranged? Are they well spaced?
- Are you always ready to sit the assessment? Are they well timed?
- Do lecturers provide you with full feedback after an assessment? Do they encourage you and enable you to reflect on your progress?
- Are you aware of any learners who have special arrangements for assessments on account of their additional support needs?

5.6 How well are potential and current learners provided with information, advice and support?

- How approachable are guidance and support staff?
- Are they helping and supporting you effectively?
- What types of support are available? (internal and external)
- Is it well publicised?
- What access is there to specialist services?
- What kind of guidance and information did you receive before you applied/ when you were applying to the programme? Was it accurate? How useful was it in helping you make decisions?
- What was induction like? Does everyone have induction? What about year 2 learners?

5.7 How well does the college sustain continuous enhancement through self-evaluation and internal review activities?

- What kinds of opportunities do you have to take part in or be represented in Programme Review Team meetings?
- How do you contribute to the evaluation of the college's provision and services?
- Is there a class representative system?
- Is there evidence of improvement in any aspect of the college since you have been here?
- Give an example of improvements that have resulted from your feedback.

Learner engagement and Quality culture

How well are learners engaged in enhancing their own learning and the work and life of the college?

How well is the college led and how well is it enhancing the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders?

How well are learners engaged in enhancing their own learning and the work and life of the college? is an over-arching confidence statement. This means that the review team will look for evidence of meaningful learner engagement, as appropriate, in each element of the framework.

Therefore, the STM should liaise with learners in order to establish the extent to which learners are genuinely engaged in enhancing their own learning and in other processes within the college. Examples that you find (or don't find) for this confidence statement may also inform the statement relating to *quality culture*: *How well is the college led and how well is it enhancing the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders?*

Below are some general prompts that you may wish to consider when speaking with learners about *learner engagement*. Remember that you shouldn't try to ask every learner every question!

1. Describe how the college encourages learner engagement, generally.
2. Do college staff encourage engagement with you? Do they encourage you to make suggestions and express your opinions? In what ways?
3. Is there a class representative system here? Are all learners represented? Is it effective?
4. Do you know who the student president is? Is the Student Association useful/effective here? Do they do things for you?
5. To what extent and in what ways do learners contribute to decision-making within the college as a whole?
6. On which college committees are there learner representatives? Do you receive feedback from them? Do you know what is discussed on college committees?
7. Do you attend programme team meetings (or equivalent)? What kinds of improvements occur as a result of your inputs?
8. Have learners had any input from external agencies, such as *Sparqs* and *NUS*? Have learners had any other training to help them engage with the college effectively?
9. When you make suggestions for change, do you hear from the college what has been done about them?

D. FINDING THE LEARNERS AND THEIR INFORMATION

1. Every college is different and therefore every external review will be different.
2. The MI will speak with you at the beginning of the week to explain how your meetings should be scheduled.
3. It is important that we do not disrupt learners and learning during the external review week.
4. You should try to speak with learners in non-scheduled meetings, in informal areas of the college, outwith your programmed meetings. You will arrange this with the MI and you should visit areas such as refectories/cafes, learning centres, common rooms and social areas (including Students' Association facilities). Remember to ensure that you cover all campuses at some point during the review. You must politely ask learners if they are aware that the external review is happening this week and would they mind giving you a few minutes to answer some questions. You must assure them that their responses are non-attributable and that they help you to construct a picture of various aspects of the learner experience in the college. The MI will advise you how to go about this in that particular college.
5. You will have a meeting with the student president or his or her representative(s). This meeting is key to establishing the learners' view of the college. You should use the response to the *learner engagement questionnaire* as an initial basis for your discussions. However, you must be aware that there may be occasions where the president's view and the learners' views do not concur. You may wish to take advice from the MI if this transpires.

E. YOUR REPORT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS WITH THE COLLEGE

Your report text

1. Prior to the review, you will be provided with templates - Evidence Forms (EFs) and Record of External Review Findings (RERF) - , on which you should record your findings. The MI will ensure that you know how to use these. Only issues that have been triangulated by your own evidence, or evidence from other team members, can be recorded.
2. You must be mindful of Freedom of Information (FOI) and equalities issues at all times when recording your findings.
3. Your report findings will not appear separately in the published report. As with the reports of other team members, they will be incorporated into the final report by the MI and lead writers.

The Friday discussion of findings

1. As STM, you will be present throughout the Friday discussions.
2. Your observations from your week's activity will normally have been discussed each afternoon at team meetings and more extensively at the team meeting on Thursday. Your findings will have been incorporated into the final report presented to the college at this meeting.
3. The MI will ask you to provide the principal and student representative(s) with contextual detail, which will be beneficial to the college. In addition, the principal and student representative(s) may ask you for additional detail on aspects of your findings.

Appendix 1

Evidence Form – discussions, documentation, visits

College:		Reviewer:	
Date:		Reference:	EF/

Participants:	
Job titles (if staff)	Profile (if learners)
	Govt-funded:
	ILA-funded:
	Skills for Work
	International learners:
	Other:

Evidence source:	
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Summary evaluations:	Reference QIs	Other QIs

Reference:	EF/
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Record of discussions:

Appendix 2

Equalities

Reviewers should apply good practice in relation to equalities in all aspects of the external review. This includes seeking information and views from a diverse range of staff and learners, as well as exploring how the college responds to the spirit and requirements of equalities legislation.

Colleges have general duties under equalities legislation -

*As public bodies, colleges and universities have duties under equalities legislation which ensure the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of **gender** or **marital status**, on **racial grounds**, or on grounds of **disability**, **age**, **sexual orientation**, **language** or **social origin**, or of **other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions**³.*

Colleges also have specific responsibilities in relation to meeting any additional needs students may have, particularly in relation to disability -

*There are now **four types of discrimination** rather than three: **victimisation, failure to make reasonable adjustments, disability related discrimination** (which is less favourable treatment for a reason related to disability) and the new one for post 16 education: **direct discrimination**. This is less favourable treatment 'on the grounds' of disability, directly because of the disability. This is likely to particularly challenge the provider's stereotypical assumptions about a certain disability or impairment and its effects⁴.*

For a full list of the legislation that covers the general and specific duties colleges have under the heading of equalities, Partnership Matters can be accessed at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/08155445/3>

³ Partnership Matters : A Guide to Local Authorities, NHS Boards and Voluntary Organisations on Supporting Students with Additional Needs in Further Education (Paragraph 2.1.5)

⁴ Partnership Matters : A Guide to Local Authorities, NHS Boards and Voluntary Organisations on Supporting Students with Additional Needs in Further Education (Paragraph 2.1.10)

PRAISE Framework

Best Practice Framework for HMIE Inspectors

The Framework is based on data gathered from: representative samples of experienced inspectors from HMIE and heads of organisations that have been inspected; feedback from post inspection/review questionnaires.

The following principles were identified as underpinning best practice:

Purpose – being clear about the overall purpose of the inspection/review and retaining this throughout. Creating a shared agenda with staff in the organisation and amongst members of the inspection/review team.

Relationships – building and maintaining constructive relationships throughout the process as the basis of a high quality inspection/review.

Awareness – maintaining a high level of awareness of the context in which staff are operating, of their feelings and reactions to the process and of the inspector's own approach and its impact.

Information gathering – careful inquiry to gather and analyse evidence. Retaining an objective stance, testing assumptions and assimilating data before evaluating.

Sharing information – communicating thoroughly throughout the process to prepare and inform staff. Encouraging staff to be open in providing their perspective and providing appropriate feedback as the inspection/review progresses.

Enabling – treating people with respect, engaging them in professional dialogue, recognising their efforts and providing feedback in a constructive way to encourage ownership and learning to take place.

