

International Quality Review

Virtual scoping and review visits



Currently QAA's five stage International Quality Review (IQR) includes two visits to the provider; firstly, during the Scoping Stage and, secondly, during the Review Stage. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent country lockdowns, restrictions on international travel, social distancing, quarantine regimes and other limitations will prevent QAA from undertaking these visits for the foreseeable future.

As a consequence of these unprecedented circumstances, we have introduced virtual scoping and review visits as part of Stages 2 and 3 of IQR. This approach is in line with EQAR's [temporary concession for site visits](#), ensuring compliance with ESG requirements for external quality assurance.

The introduction of a virtual visit for the Scoping and Review Stages of IQR is an interim approach and will be subject to regular review by QAA.

Visits to IQR applicant institutions will be replaced with the following online components:

Scoping visit

- IQR applicant institution to provide video(s), photographs, descriptions or equivalent to evidence the resources available to students and staff. This will replace the tour of facilities that is a key element of the on-site visit.
- QAA and IQR applicant institution will agree a schedule of meetings with key people to take place over a 2 or 3-day period. This will replace the in-person meetings that would normally be held during the site visit. Prior to the virtual site visit, the QAA team will agree the meeting schedule and required attendees. Meetings will take place online, for example through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. A preparatory meeting will be included in advance of the formal schedule to check accessibility to the chosen platform.
- QAA will prepare a short presentation video about IQR for sharing with key stakeholder groups, agreed with the IQR applicant institution, in preparation for the university-wide discussion. Attendees are likely to include: senior management, registry and quality departments, academic and professional staff representatives, and student representatives. Ministries of Education and/or regulatory bodies might also be present. The video will precede a question and answer session that will be part of the schedule for the virtual visit and which will replace the 'all staff' presentation and Q&A sessions that are part of an in-person visit.

Review Visit

- A similar approach to the virtual scoping visit will be taken. The Review Team will analyse the Self-Evaluation Document (SED) and agree the schedule of meetings and list of attendees prior to the virtual review visit.
- Instead of the visit to the campus, one of the following will be required:
 - i. A visit to the site and tour of facilities and resources will be conducted by an independent reviewer, on behalf of QAA, who is resident in, or able to travel to, the IQR applicant's campus(es)
 - ii. Where i. is not possible, QAA will make a judgement on the absence of a site visit based on the individual circumstances and the level of risk associated with awarding IQR with Accreditation to the IQR applicant. Relevant factors will include, but not be limited to, confirmation from the relevant in-country regulatory body of a recent successful review and/or accreditation.
- Where an on-site visit is not included as part of the Review Stage, QAA will require a visit to be undertaken as part of the Mid-Term Review. Where this applies, the host higher education provider will be responsible for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for a two-person review team.

