

## **OUPV Guidance Notes on Preparing a Self-Evaluation Document (SED)**

### **Purpose of self-evaluation**

- To provide evidence that the institution continues to/meets the principles for OU institutional approval, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code 2024 and Sector Principles and the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of registration
- An SED should be both descriptive and evaluative – it should describe how the institution does things and how it knows that its approach is working in practice, but how it could be further improved. Throughout the document it is useful to have a descriptive statement with some evaluation and then substantiate the statement with supporting evidence and examples which helps the reviewers understand the organisational more
- When completing the template please bear in mind that it is for an audience external to your organisation and so therefore should include contextual information on the institution
- The SED should identify strengths and areas for development for the institution and/or programmes being brought forward for (re)validation.
- Reflection and completion of the SED should build on organisational strengths and take remedial action on areas for development. The SED should be a frank appraisal of areas for improvement and how it is intended to deal with them (with an anticipated timescale for completion)
- Self-evaluation should not be seen as a paper-driven and bureaucratic exercise – it should be about whether educational objectives are being met and whether current practice can be improved upon. It should be about accountability and improvement – it should not just be an external imposition but have intrinsic value internally to make improvements and enhancement.

### **Phases of self-evaluation**

#### **1. *Define the purpose***

As above but ensure that all those involved in developing the SED and collating the IA/IR submission documentation should know and understand the purpose of the activity.

## 2. Planning (deciding what information is required, responsibilities and timetable)

- Devising an internal plan should set out the areas subject to self-evaluation – e.g. assessment, teaching, and learning, staffing policies, student support and guidance, compliance with external benchmarks and sector requirements etc.
- Explicit statements setting who is responsible for which action and when they would be completed
- The plan may depend on resources available and constraints of time – it may need to be modified to what is achievable and realistic
- A timetable should be based on submission date to OUVV (OUVP requests submission 6 weeks before the (re)approval visit) and then work backwards to establish production dates. At least 3 months is useful to assemble the documentation and produce the SED, and realistically longer time is often needed for the exercise
- Consider and map organisational policies and processes against the OUVV Principles of Validation
- It is useful to identify goals and indicators/criteria against which it would be measured. As an example:

Issue	Related goal	Criteria to measure achievement
Student Support & guidance	Extend ops for non-traditional students.	Aim for a minimum (specified) percentage of non-traditional students to complete programme.
Assessment	Improve quality of feedback to students.	Aim for improved student satisfaction in this area. EE responses

## 3. Assembling information and evidence

- OUVV gives further guidance in the OUVV handbook for validated awards on documentation requirements and submission, and provides a list of via the Guidelines on Provision of Electronic Submission Documents for Institutional Approval or Reapproval Events document – it is important that the A/IIR documentation includes evaluations of engagement with the OU, evaluation of external audits and annual monitoring etc.
- Ideally, the SED should be no longer than about 20 pages. It is useful for it to have one author, but the draft should be circulated to staff and students for wide

ownership. The IA/IR panel will expect more than one person to be able to talk about the development and content of the document and will want to triangulate themes during various meetings scheduled for the final event

- All boxes should be completed in full to provide detailed information.
- Make sure there is consistent numbering of paragraphs and appendices – it is important that either the IA or IR panel are able to navigate the document easily.
- Please ensure that internal acronyms are referenced appropriately in the document e.g. Quality Assurance Committee (QAC hereafter). Equally, when referring to action owners and key staff they should be referred to by their job title and not their name e.g. the Chair of the Academic Board.
- Many of the documentation should already exist or may be drawn from other sources and redeveloped, e.g. a QAA Educational Oversight Review (EOR) Self Evaluation Assessment – and always use and reference existing documents where possible.
- Supporting evidence should be presented as appendices and should be relevant to the SED. Organograms of staffing structures and governance structures are helpful visual to the Panel and can be included as an appendix if there is insufficient space to include the information in the main document.

#### **4. Making judgements based on the assembled evidence and information**

Self-evaluation involves judgement – i.e. something is good, might be improved etc. The SED document should include explicit judgements rather than leaving them implicit.

Evidence on which judgements are made should be clear. A common failing is for SEDs to be too descriptive. Feedback from students, EEs, employers etc are very valuable to a SED but may be judgemental – an institution may need to balance the weight given to each judgement.

It is important that the judgements are made and collectively agreed.

#### **5. Actions and monitoring**

Actions and recommendations in the report should be explicit and obtainable and include a timeline of completion.

After the review, there should be a clear system for monitoring and reporting on recommended actions have been taken and what impact they have had – this could be the institutional action plan from the annual, Institutional Programme and Monitoring exercise partners of the OU are asked to complete.

Guidance for completion of specific areas in the SED IR template:

Box 1.3 – Non-UK partners: Please include local accreditation status, including details of your accrediting body, when you were last accredited, and any conditions set and the status of those conditions.

Box 1.4 – UK partners: You should consider providing information on areas such as your involvement with:

- The Office for Students (OfS) conditions of registration and Student Protection Plan
- Ofsted Inspections for HE and Apprenticeship provision
- Any Professional, Statutory Recognised Body (PSRB) at programme or institutional level
- The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code 2024 and Sector Agreed principles
- Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland)
- Compliance to Tier IV requirements
- (The) Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

Box 3.2 – You should consider how policies/regulations support validated programmes in areas such as:

- The assessment of students
- Admissions
- Appeals/complaints

Box 4.2 – You should refer to the following:

- How provision is ensured for an open and intellectual academic and learning community;
- Maintaining and developing appropriately qualified and experienced staff;
- Provision of learning resources and student support services;
- Staff appraisal, development (of subject expertise & pedagogical issues), workloads and contingency planning for absence.

Box 4.3 – You should include use of external reference points and evidence of how the professional/research activities of academic staff sustain the academic development and community of the organisation.