HÁSKÓLINN Á BIFRÖST
BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY

Quality Handbook for Enhancement and Assurance

Table of contents

Reviewed at a meeting of the University Council, 8th of April 2022

Valid from 01. August 2022

Approved by the Rector, 8th of April 2022

This is a translation of the document Gæðahandbók-Umbótamiðað Gæðastarf. In the event of any discrepancies between the translation and the original text, the original shall take precedence.

1. Quality assurance environment of Icelandic universities

1.1 The Bologna Process

Iceland was among 29 European states that signed the Bologna Declaration 19 June 1999 that dealt with cooperation in the field of higher education. The European Higher Education Area, EHEA, was founded in 2010 on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Bologna Process There are now 49 states affiliated to the Bologna Process with the addition of various stakeholder associations (e.g. the European Students' Union, European University Association and the European Employers' Association) and of representatives of the Council of Europe, the European Commission and parties from European quality assurance institutions.

Considerable emphasis is placed on enhancing quality control and criteria for efficient internal controls and quality assurance were approved at a meeting of ministers of education in Bergen in 2005 (Bergen Declaration, 2005).

The main purpose of Bologna cooperation is to form a pan-European university region where mobility of students and university teachers is facilitated. Emphasis is placed on efficient internal controls and evaluation of all learning, in order to support optimum harmonisation between schools and countries. Emphasis is also placed on common principles in the operations of universities within Europe, such as academic freedom, independence of institutions and the rights of University students and teachers in democratic social debate.

Participation in the Bologna Process commits participating countries in the cooperation to adhere to common European quality criteria for universities, to mutually recognise university awards and studies between participating countries, and to structure learning at universities in three-tiered standard learning levels, measured in ECTS credits (The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). The European competence framework makes a clear distinction between different university levels and the competence required to complete studies at a specific level. It is therefore unauthorised to count ECTS credits that have been acquired at one university level at a higher university level.

Affiliation to the Bologna cooperation has thus had a major impact on policy-making, organisation and quality assurance in the University environment in this country.

The quality assurance system of Bifröst University is based in its entirety on these processes and we are **obliged** to fulfil the criteria that Iceland has undertaken with membership of the cooperation and of the European Higher Education Area, EHEA.

1.2 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines, were endorsed by ministers within the Bologna Cooperation in 2005, pursuant to proposals elaborated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Since 2005, there has been significant progress in quality assurance and in other actions within the Bologna Declaration, such as the competence frameworks and recognition and widespread application of competence criteria. ESG 2015 is the standard developed in this connection, and which is in use when this is written in 2022 All external controls harmonise with the criteria in that standard, which is intended to provide guidelines for universities when designing evaluation

procedures for internal assessment. The Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education operates in accordance with instructions stipulated in ESG 2015 and Bifröst University is submitted to regular external evaluation, a quality evaluation that assesses university organisation and operations pursuant to the standards in question.

A short translation of the main ESG 2015 definitions is presented here[1] and the full text in English can be found here: https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for Quality Assurance
Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

ESG Standard 1.2: Design and Approval of Programmes
Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff
Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support
Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

ESG Standard 1.7: Information management
Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

ESG Standard 1.8: Public information
Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

---

[1]Translation from University of Iceland 2022, approved by the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes with on-going monitoring. This is done to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Institutions should communicate to all those concerned about any resulting action planned or taken.

ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance
Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

1.3 Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education

Quality assurance of Icelandic universities has traditionally been in the hands of the Ministry of Education. This changed in 2010 when the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education was founded. In the Higher Education Act from 2006, it is prescribed that universities shall seek recognition based on quality criteria of the Bologna Process.

The Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education is responsible for the quality of teaching and research in Icelandic Universities, cf. Act no. 63/2006 and Regulation no. 321/2009. The role of the Quality Board is to form methodology for external quality assurance and to present proposals to the Minister. This involves, among other things, elaborating standards for quality systems and reviewing criteria for applications for recognition pursuant to Regulation no. 1067/2006. The Board authors a book with guidelines for internal and external quality assurance, for use by universities and evaluation committees.

The Quality Board decides the overall organisation and implementation of the framework plan at the beginning of each process, pursuant to an agreement between the Ministry of Culture and Education, with the publication of the handbook "the Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education". Each 7 year quality period of the Council is called Quality Enhancement Framework to which a number is then added which represents the period/process/cycle to which the information refers. A new handbook is written, and this work is done in cooperation with the University and Advisory Council. The quality period QEF1 refers to the first cycle, which was 2010-2015, QEF2 was 2016-2022 and QEF3 will probably be 2023 or 2024 until 2029. The third period should be 7 years, even though the prior periods were somewhat shorter. The role of the Council is to develop, maintain and supervise all QEF operations in accordance with on the one hand, international criteria and on the other hand, Icelandic culture, traditions and legal framework.

The Quality Board meets four times a year. It comprises six foreign experts and one student representative nominated by the National Union for Icelandic Students. Members of the Quality Board (apart from the student representative) are international experts in the field of quality at higher education level and have considerable experience of quality evaluation.

The Quality Board informs the Minister and universities about the conclusions of external quality assurance and makes all conclusions of quality evaluation public. The Board consults with the Advisory Committee on the implementation and issues related to quality assurance.

The Advisory Committee: The Advisory Committee for Icelandic Higher Education works in parallel with the Quality Board, and it comprises the quality managers of the universities and student representatives nominated by the National Union for Icelandic Students. The Committee

is the intermediary contact between the Board and the universities. The role of the Committee is to be a leading force in the quality work in this country, to be a forum for cooperation between quality managers and students and to advise the Quality Board. The quality manager for Bifröst University represents the University in the Advisory Committee.

2. Bifröst University Quality Handbook - enhancement-oriented quality assurance

This manual contains rules and procedures for improvement-oriented quality assurance at Bifröst University. Quality assurance at Bifröst University builds on the second edition of the Quality Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education (QEF2)[2], the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015) and Icelandic legislation and regulations on quality monitoring at higher education institutions in Iceland. The policy and standard procedures for quality, learning, teaching and research at the University are also taken into account.

2.1. Bifröst University Quality Assurance System

ESG 2015 defines the kernel in University quality assurance systems as having a twin purpose:
- responsibility for applying specified processes and policies.
- Improvement-oriented approach which always aims at doing things better.

The Bifröst University quality assurance system is a comprehensive system of tasks that are intended to achieve these objectives. It is the responsibility of the University to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and research in its remit, with the objective of providing students, teaching staff and employees access to a learning community which meets Icelandic and international quality requirements.

The University's quality system should take into account and endeavour to fulfil requirements prescribed for external and internal evaluations of universities, which furthermore constitutes endeavours to make improvements through continuous review and progress.

The quality system includes processes that are to enhance the quality of study programmes, from the time that information is provided for potential applicants until the completion of students' studies. The quality system covers all levels of studies within the school, preparatory studies, undergraduate and masters' studies, and it also covers research.

2.2 The quality assurance system is based on the following key elements:

- The system complies with international and Icelandic criteria, and with laws and regulations on quality assurance in universities.
- The system contains standardised methods to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and research.
- The system contains measurements and registration of the quality of learning, teaching and research. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in measuring.
- The quality system should encourage active participation of students, teachers, staff and external parties.
- The system should be transparent and enhancement-oriented.

---

[2] https://en.rannis.is/media/gaedarad/Final-for-publication-14-3-2017.pdf

2.3 The structure of the Bifröst University quality assurance system

The quality system is based on international and Icelandic laws and criteria on the quality of learning and teaching in universities and also on policy, values, criteria and regulations of the University[3]. The main Rules of Procedure and accompanying documents can be found in the University handbooks: **Handbook on Learning and Teaching, Quality Handbook, Human Resources Handbook** and **International Handbook**. Procedures in these handbooks define the organisation and purpose of procedures in the daily working practices of the University and in quality assurance within it. Performance assessment and controls are an integral part of the University quality assurance system and support development work, follow-up and plans for improvements.

2.4 Organisation, management and responsible parties

Quality assurance is in the hands of the Executive Board of Bifröst University. Overall responsibility rests with the University Council. The Council of Representatives, has the final say in those matters that relate to the University's operations and finances pursuant to the Regulations of the Bifröst University, while in internal matters the University Council is the highest authority. The Quality Assurance System aims to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and research , with a clear management structure and organisation in daily operations of the University.

It is expected that all University employees shoulder responsibility for quality assurance being given full priority within the scope of work of each individual. Work within the University, constitutes varying levels of responsibility for complying with ESG 2015. According to the rules of the University, the Rector is responsible for development and implementation of the university's quality assurance policy.

- The **Rector** appoints the Director of Quality Management who manages matters related to quality assurance and who works with the departmental boards of the academic disciplines.
- The **Director of Quality Management** ensures monitoring of quality of learning and supports quality enhancement and assurance work within the University.
- **Heads of Department** lead policy-making, each for their relevant discipline and are responsible for professional matters in their fields, including quality assurance.
- The **Department Board** is responsible to the Rector for implementation of the University Quality Assurance Policy, each in their own field and they shall take the initiative in development of quality assurance and the University and submit their proposals to the Rector and Director of Quality Management as appropriate. The **Department Board** cooperates both with the Director of Quality Management and also internally between departments as necessary to support effective implementation and development of quality assurance in the University.
- **Programme leaders** are responsible for academic leadership within study programmes, and lead their maintenance and development in close cooperation with heads of departments and teachers. A Programme leader monitors organisation and quality of

---

[3] *The criteria in question in the quality system are for example contained in, the Higher Education Act no. 63/2006, the Regulation on quality assurance in teaching and research in universities no. 321/2009, announcement on the issue of criteria for higher education and university degrees no. 530/2011, the Qualification Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education, 2017(QEF2), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015 (ENQA), policy objectives 2030 of Bifröst University along with values and criteria and University Regulations.

teaching and of the orientation and learning experience of students. A Programme leader maintains good cooperation with Academic Services and with the Director of Quality Management.

- **Teachers** ensure that students acquaint themselves with the required learning and competence requirements, that they strengthen and improve their teaching methods and enhance their competence in pedagogy. In this way they ensure compliance with ESG standards.
- **Administration** enhances the University's quality and service and coordinates teaching organisation and provision of information to students and teachers. Administration supports the organisation of teaching, prepares learning assessment, checks along with teachers that they work within the University quality assurance framework according to the appropriate checklists and policies.
- **Students** assess the quality of courses and teacher performance at the end of each course. In this way, rights and obligations of students are assured as is their share in quality enhancement of the learning.

2.5 Elements of assessment and on-going monitoring of quality assurance

A major part of quality assurance rests on regular assessments, measurements, enhancement plans and follow-up.

Strategy analysis and formulation

Implementation planning and resource identification

Implementation

Monitoring

Evaluation and adaptation
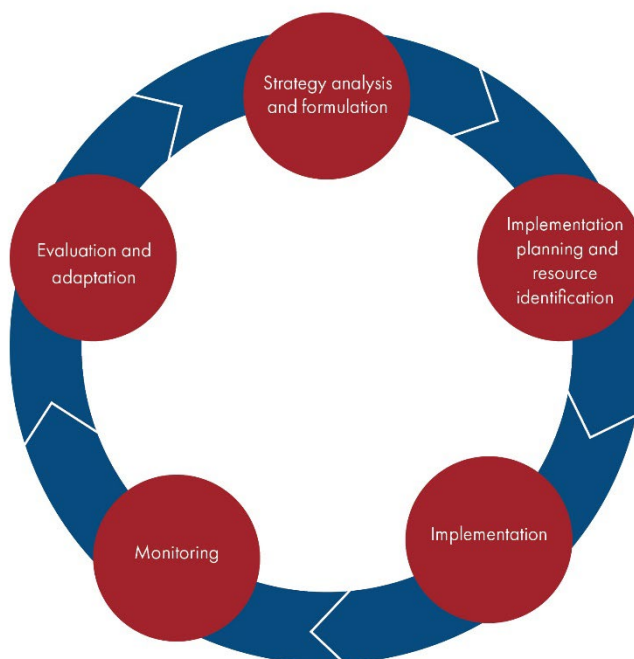
Procedures for these parts of quality assurance are based on objectives that have been defined in teaching policy, research policy, and in general policy at the University. There can also be temporary objectives and tasks that are assessed according to available plans for these tasks. This process furthermore includes quality measurements and progress assessment along with proposals for improvements and an annual outline report, Subject-Level Review and Reflective Analysis. The process is intended to highlight strengths and weaknesses in the University's learning, teaching and research. It should also be improvement-oriented and should secure follow-up.

The following elements are assessed in university operations: Teaching, quality of teaching programmes, student attitudes to learning, information systems, service for students and

teachers, job satisfaction, research, international cooperation and socio-economic achievements.

Gathering of data takes place according to the Operational Calendar, which is a joint task for the Director of Quality Management, Director of Curriculum and Director of IT services. Implementation is revised on an annual basis. The document specifies the data to be extracted from the system, the time of year this is to be done and the party that should evaluate the data. In addition to this, various data is collected for external parties, such as for Statistics Iceland, Ministry of Higher Education, Industry and Innovation and for the Institute of Regional Development etc. Gathering of data is coordinated with meetings of the University Executive Committee, which receives previously specified statistics for each meeting in order to ensure on-going monitoring of the quality of work.

Statistical on-going monitoring by the Executive Committee
August
- Number of students in the summer semester, by department and learning level.   - Number graduating in June.   - Teaching survey from the previous summer.   - Number of applicants by department.   - Spread of grades in summer semester.   - Programme leader reports Spring/Summer.
September
- Prior meeting, number of applications.   - Latter meeting, number of enrolments.   - Number of courses with respect to tenured teachers on the one hand and sessional teachers on the other.   - Number of students per course.   - Graduation survey.
October:
- Statistics Iceland report, 15.10.   - Number of students not returning after previous semester, dropout.   - Number of graduations.   - Participation in on-site sessions.   - Number of undergraduate students from Bifröst University Preliminary Studies.   - Teaching survey HL1.
November:
Internal staff survey.
December:
- Number of applicants as of 10 December.   - Statistics on internships   - Teaching survey HL2.
January
- Number enrolled for spring semester, number of exchange students.   - Spread of grades last autumn semester.

– Size of courses/ number in course.
– Number of courses with respect to tenured teachers on the one hand and sessional teachers on the other in autumn semester.
– Number graduated from Preliminary Studies.
– Number of guest lecturers and workplace visits by department.
– Programme leader reports.
– Graduation survey.

February:

- Number of credits taken in autumn semester.
- Teaching survey V1.

March

- Statistics Iceland report - comparable data to spring as per 15 March.
- FTS students.
- Average grades.
- Number of participants in on-site sessions.
- Number of working students.
- Dropout.
- Reputation survey.

April

- Policy metrics - turn of the month of April/May.
- Number of participants in summer semester.
- Student survey on quality implemented.
- Teaching survey V2.

May

- Spread of grades in spring semester.
- Annual report on metrics.
- Number of applications in autumn.

June

- Number of applicants.
- Numbers for summer school.
- Number graduating at end of June.
- Number of credits taken in spring semester.
- Number of participants in on-site sessions.
- Number of working students.
- Exchange students for autumn.
- Number of courses with respect to tenured teachers on the one hand and sessional teachers on the other.
- Number of students for summer.
- Research level of academic staff.
- Teaching survey S.
- Programme leader reports from Programme leaders, Dean of Department summary of reports.

2.5.1 Surveys

- Graduates receive a survey 18 months after graduation.
- Employees and teachers receive a job satisfaction survey every other year. It includes among other things, questions about attitude to service, provision of information, support, work and communications at the workplace. Bifröst University participates annually in a VR Trade Union job satisfaction survey.
- Students receive a quality survey once a year, which measures among other things, student attitudes to learning and teaching, organisation of learning, service (library, IT service, learning and vocational advice etc.), provision of information, facilities for learning, etc.
- The foreign and Icelandic exchange students receive a survey annually. It measures among other things, attitude to the quality of exchange learning and how experience can be used in learning.
- Reputation survey conducted annually, either a cold or a hot survey; hot is among staff and students, cold is among parties to the labour market and external stakeholders.

2.5.2 Annual report

An annual report is published no later than at the University annual meeting at the end of May each year. The annual report publishes key statistics and an overview of university operations during the past working year.

2.5.3 Work plan and follow-up

A work plan based on University policy is made for a period of three years in each instance. The plan is reviewed in August each year with reference to plans for improvements, changes and development. Statistics, surveys and the annual report for the previous teaching year shall be available prior to each review.

3. Internal and external quality evaluation

Efficient internal controls and quality assurance include regular implementation of internal and external assessment. The timeframe for each quality evaluation cycle is defined by the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education and takes just over 7 years. The assessment processes related to this cycle are: quality evaluation of study programmes, Subject-Level Reviews (SLR) and Reflective Analysis (RA). This data is then used for external assessment, which is conducted by foreign experts chosen by the Quality Board, once every 7 year cycle.

```
        Reflective
         analysis
          7 year
          cycle

      Department self-
        assessment
       5 year intervals

   Regular review of programme
            quality
         3 year intervals
```
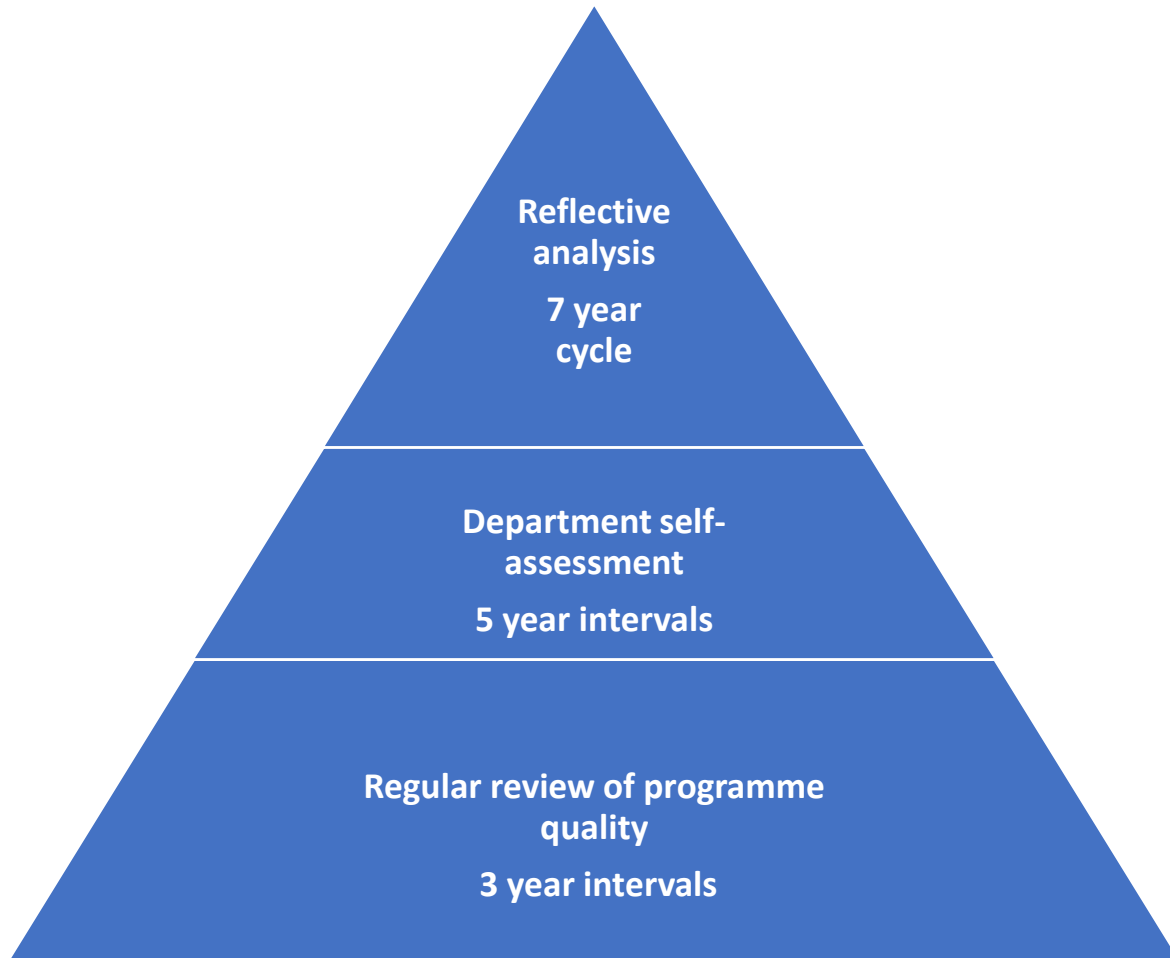
3.1. Procedures for periodic review of programme quality

Regular review of programme quality is conducted in order to secure the standards of awards and bring about quality improvements in teaching, learning, evaluation of learning and of the student learning experience. Regular reviews also function to examine whether objectives set for a programme at the time that it was first established or most recently reviewed have been achieved and whether the programme is in line with the University's strategy and whether it responds to the needs of students and society. Assessment of programme quality is then an item in self-assessment of departments and from there to the University Reflective Analysis report as an item in external assessment.

The template "**Form for periodic review of programme quality**" shall be used to organise the review. The template can be sought in the University Quality System or from the Director of Quality Management.

Responsibility:

The Rector is responsible for quality management at the University, together with the Director of Quality Management. The Dean of Department and the Programme leader are responsible for periodic review of the quality programmes. The Programme leader can lead the project group or can delegate this responsibility to another academic executive in consultation with the Dean of Department. The assessment shall be made in cooperation with the Department Board and Director of Quality Management.

Time plan

Periodic reviews of the quality of study programmes follow the University's seven-year plan for improvement-oriented quality assurance. A formal review should not be expected to take longer than one to two semesters, and they shall normally be conducted at three-year intervals. Between scheduled reviews, evaluation of programme quality shall be conducted if obvious problems call for corrective action.

Implementation of programme quality review

Evaluation of the quality of study programmes involves substantial review of the study programme as a whole, including learning outcomes, the description and goals of the study programme, the composition and content of courses and other factors relating to programme quality considered important in each instance.

The evaluation is the responsibility of the Dean of Department while the Programme leader ensures that the evaluation is conducted. The working group shall include the Director of Quality Management as a group adviser, and also pictures, students and external parties, as appropriate.

Reviews of study programme quality must be critical and carefully argued. In order for reviews to function as an effective foundation for advancement and improvement, discussion should be unfettered and provide a robust analysis of the current situation and future prospects. In reviewing programme quality, the following shall be taken into account:

1. Departments submit a plan for reviewing programme quality to the Director of Quality Management for the time period defined.
2. The Dean of Department/ Programme leader assembles a Review Team, which operates in accordance with the review plan on programme quality. The Review Team shall include two student representatives in the later years of their study programmes. Students receive training and support to take part in the review.
3. The Director of Quality Management meets with the Review Team and presents the processes, instructions and guidelines related to quality evaluation.
4. The Review Team appoints a chair, who manages the Team's work and authors a progress report for the Department Board and the Director of Quality Management.
5. As part of the periodic review process, the Review Team makes use of a template in drafting its report which contains helpful information on the desired content of the quality review of study programmes. The report's editor may decide to divide chapters differently than presented in the template, but in matters of content an effort shall be made to adhere to the guidelines of the QEF and ESG 2015.
6. The Subject-Level Review Team begins the process by making decisions concerning the main points of emphasis, methodology and data collection. It is important to identify all stakeholders to ensure that their viewpoints emerge.

7. The Review Team produces a report on the basis of the data obtained and analysis that takes place during the review. It is important that recommendations be accompanied by a list of prioritised actions and improvement projects, for which a responsible party shall be designated to follow up on tasks and activities.
8. The Review Team delivers its evaluation report to the Dean of Department, who submits the report to the Department Board for discussion.
9. The Dean of Department is responsible for ensuring that information concerning revisions to study programmes is passed on to the Director of Academic Services.
10. The Review Team maintains a record of meeting minutes and formally documents decision-making.
11. The Director of Quality Management provides counsel and support during the process.

3.2 Procedures for departmental Subject-Level Reviews

Subject-Level Reviews are conducted regularly within departments in order to secure the standards of awards and degrees, bring about quality improvements and secure the quality of administrative practice, teaching, learning, evaluation of studies and of the student learning experience. They also serve to evaluate the quality of review activities within departments. Subject-Level Reviews contribute to the building of the university's internal self-assessment, which is called 'Reflective Analysis' in the QEF process.

The template "Report form for departmental Subject-level Reviews" as a basis for the report, and for organisation of the research. The template can be sought in the University quality system or from the Director of Quality Management.

Responsibility for Subject-Level Reviews
The Rector is responsible for quality management at the University, together with the Director of Quality Management. The Dean of Department is responsible for the implementation of the Subject-Level Review, in cooperation with the Department Board and the Director of Quality Management.

Time plan
Subject-Level Reviews follow the University's seven-year plan for improvement-oriented quality assurance. The Subject-Level Review should not take longer than one to two semesters and should be submitted to the Director of Quality Management at the agreed time.

Implementation of Subject-Level Reviews
The Department Board appoints a Subject-Level Review Team for each Subject-Level Review. Students participate in the review process both as direct participants in the Subject-Level Review Team, as well as through teaching evaluation surveys and meetings and through student representation on the Department Board. An international expert is appointed to the Subject-Level Review Team and works as per a letter of engagement. In conducting the Subject-Level Review, the following shall be taken into account:

1. Departments submit a schedule for the Subject-Level Review and a plan for programme review to the Director of Quality Management for each seven-year quality cycle, along with nominations for foreign specialists as external advisors in the review and their letters of engagement.

2. Under the Bifröst University Regulations, the Department Board is responsible for implementation of quality control within the department and shall appoint members of a team that leads the Subject-Level Review.
3. The Department Board shall appoint not fewer than two students to the Subject-Level Review Team. Students receive training and support to take part in the Subject-Level Review.
4. The Director of Quality Management meets with the Subject-Level Review Team and presents the processes, instructions and guidelines involved in quality control.
5. The Subject-Level Review Team appoints a chair who manages the team's work and authors a progress report for the Department Board and the Director of Quality Management.
6. The Subject-Level Review Team begins the process by making decisions concerning the main points of emphasis, methodology and data collection. It is important to identify all stakeholders to ensure that their viewpoints emerge.
7. It is necessary to define comparative universities, departments and/or units that are utilised in the Subject-Level Review, as needed at any given time.
8. The Subject-Level Review Team divides responsibilities and tasks according to the time frame given. The Subject-Level Review Team may appoint subgroups for delineation of tasks in the review.
9. The chair of the Subject-Level Review Team is responsible for the review being conducted according to plan.
10. Regular status meetings shall be held with the Subject-Level Review Team, Dean of Department and Director of Quality Management throughout the review period.
11. The Subject-Level Review Team is responsible for data and information collection. If a situation arises where the Subject-Level Review Team finds data or information to be insufficient, the Subject-Level Review Team must provide a clear explanation for why this is so and make recommendations on how to redress this.
12. The Department Board may decide to cover specific areas within a department that are deemed important to include in the review, in addition to what is recommended in the QEF.
13. The Subject-Level Review Team delivers a written report, with a scheduled improvement plan and other recommendations for action.
14. The Subject-Level Review Team maintains a record of meeting minutes and formally records decision-making.
15. The Director of Quality Management provides counsel and support during the process.

Content of the Subject-Level Review Report
It is important that the Subject-Level Review be critical and carefully reasoned. The Subject-Level Review Report should be an honest, unfettered and analytical discussion of the current situation and future prospects. In this way, the Subject-Level Review can function as a foundation for advancement and improvement

In this context the prior Subject-Level Review should be considered, and an account given of improvement-oriented projects and possible reflection on how prior Subject-Level Review has led to strategic planning and development at the departmental level.

It may be anticipated, in many instances, that statistical information forms an evidence base supporting the findings of the Subject-Level Review. It is necessary to refer to these sources, as

appropriate. Guest access shall be provided to teaching materials, and the External Review Committee shall be provided with the technical service needed.

The Subject-Level Review Report shall be written in English and proofread. It is recommended that the chair of the Subject-Level Review Team edit the report.

Work on the Subject-Level Review shall normally not take longer than one to two semesters, and the Subject-Level Review Report for a given department shall normally not exceed 30–40 pages, in addition to annexes. It is expected that final reports for the Subject-Level Reviews will be ready two months after the assessment is conducted.

The template for the Subject-Level Review provides guidelines on the desired content of the Subject-Level Review Report, but it is not exhaustive. The editor of the Subject-Level Review Report may decide to divide chapters differently than presented in the template, but in matters of content an effort shall be made to adhere to the guidelines of the QEF2 and ESG 2015.

Departmental follow-up on Subject-Level Reviews
Follow-up shall begin with an action plan, based on the recommendations of the Subject-Level Review Team and the comments of the external experts. The Dean of Department and Department Board are responsible for follow-up on Subject-Level Reviews.

3.2 Procedures for Reflective Analysis

According to „the Quality Enhancement Framework", which is updated for each review cycle, reviews are conducted at 5-7 year intervals. The review cycle takes 7 years and the Handbook "the Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education" revised for each cycle. Bifröst University went last through external review in 2015 and 2020, and one can expect that the next Reflective Analysis report, which contains the institution's internal evaluation will be ready 2026/2027. During this period, all Icelandic universities will undergo review and it is not clear when the Bifröst University external review will take place within this cycle. Before being able to make the Reflective Analysis the Subject Level Reviews must be available.

Though the Reflective Analysis constitutes a good opportunity for the University to review status and identify necessary enhancement tasks,, quality assurance review also concerns an evaluation of whether the institution's operations comply with the ESG 2015 quality standards and whether the Quality Board deems the situation to be such that the University will receive approval by the Board that it believes that the University has the capability to secure on the one hand, the quality of the awards and degrees that it grants and on the other hand of the learning environment that it provides for its students, now and for the immediate future.

The Reflective Analysis is intended to function as a critical, unfettered and analytical assessment of improvement-oriented quality assurance within the departments and disciplines of the University. Particular attention shall be paid to how the University performs in safeguarding the quality of programmes and awards and to the student learning experience and to management of research. It is important to report upon how the University's strategy and plans are being reflected in its internal operations and development work.

The primary objective of the Reflective Analysis is to explain how the institution intends to develop and enhance the learning experience of its students and how the institution plans to safeguard the academic standards to which universities are held.

The Reflective Analysis report should reflect the ability of the University to conduct self-assessment in a critical manner. The report furthermore lays the foundations for external quality evaluation which is conducted by the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education.

<u>Responsibility:</u>

The Rector is responsible for the university's quality management, together with the Director of Quality Management. The Rector and Director of Quality Management are responsible for the Reflective Analysis, together with the RA Review Team.

Implementation

Bifröst University decides how the Reflective Analysis shall be conducted and which emphases shall form the basis of the Review in each instance. The evaluation shall also build on the second edition of the Quality Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education (QEF2), on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015) and on Icelandic legislation and regulations on quality monitoring at higher education institutions in Iceland. The policy and Rules of Procedure of Bifröst University concerning quality, learning, teaching and research at the University shall also be taken into account.

Main activities in implementation of the Reflective Analysis:

1. The Rector appoints the Director of Quality Management to lead the Review Team, which managers the Reflective Analysis in collaboration with the Executive Board of the University.
2. Two students shall be nominated to join the Review Team. Students receive training and support to take part in the Reflective Analysis.
3. The Rector may decide to appoint an external expert, who works with the Review Team.
4. The Review Team and Director of Quality Management jointly define points of emphasis for the Reflective Analysis, choose methods for data and information collection and decide the time frame for the Analysis. It is important to identify all stakeholders and seek their opinions and views.
5. The Review Team divides responsibilities and tasks according to the time frame given. The team may appoint subgroups for delineation of tasks in the review.
6. The chair of the team is responsible for the review being conducted within the timeframe. The chair and the Director of Quality Management jointly supervise the project, are responsible for closely monitoring its progress.
7. Regular status meetings shall be held with the Review Team and the Rector throughout the evaluation period.
8. The Review Team is responsible for data and information collection. If a situation arises where the team finds data or information to be insufficient, the team must provide a clear explanation for why this is so and make recommendations on how to redress it.
9. The Review Team's analysis of data and information shall be unfettered and critical, so the results can be used for progress and improvement. The current situation and future

prospects shall be assessed and thus identify areas for review, with respect to improved student experience and quality of learning and teaching at the University.

10. The Review Team decides what main recommendations should be tabled and indicates actions for improvement.
11. The Review Team delivers a written report. Writing this report is a continuous process from the beginning of the evaluation.
12. The Rector delivers a written report on the Reflective Analysis and submits it to the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education.

In implementing the Reflective Analysis, the team should seek advice from colleagues, so that Bifröst University's strategy be reflected as accurately as possible in the evaluation. It shall be emphasised that the Reflective Analysis should be critical and analytical and fit for purpose as a basis for effective improvement.

To the extent possible, the Review Team should cite electronic sources in its analysis or include sources in annexes. If the relevant sources are not available in English, the team shall compose a brief summary of those sources, which shall accompany the Reflective Analysis.

It may be anticipated, in many instances, that numerical information will be presented as an evidence base for findings. It is necessary to cite such data as often as possible. In those cases where the Review Team wishes to supply data or findings from surveys then the Review Committee must have electronic access to those data or services.

3.2.1 Report structure
The report shall be structured according to the Quality Handbook of the Quality Board, cf. Annex 6 The Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education, edition 2017. The report shall contain the following items, provided here in English in the Icelandic edition as the handbook has not yet been translated to Icelandic.
QEF2 Handbook 2017 Annex 6:

Guidelines for Preparing Reflective Analyses
The production of a Reflective Analysis is one of the most important parts of the IWR process. Institutions have considerable freedom in how they present information that is relevant to the Review in the Reflective Analysis. However, the QEF Handbook clearly outlines some materials that must be present in any Reflective Analysis. Those include an analysis of the effectiveness of mechanisms for safeguarding standards of awards, the effectiveness of mechanisms for the enhancement of the student learning experience, and the effectiveness of the management of research.

A main guiding principle for preparing this document is that it should be reflective and analytical. To that end, it is helpful to include an account of what has been learned in the process of compiling the Reflective Analysis, and how the institution plans to effect improvements based on these findings. In reaching conclusions, it is important to reflect on the evidence available to support the conclusions, and the relative strength of the evidence available. In general, it is helpful to avoid anecdotal 'evidence' or commentaries supported only by vague generalizations. Below is a list of suggested chapter headings and topics that could be covered in the respective chapters. This list is based on a reading of all Reflective Analyses submitted in the first cycle of QEF. The list is not intended to be a template but is included as an aid to the drafting teams for Reflective Analyses.

Suggested Structure of Reflective Analysis:

1. Introduction. The function of this brief section is to orient the reader to the construction of the Reflective Analysis and the process of gathering evidence. This section should also include a guide to any reference material.

2. About the institution. This section should outline the mission and vision of the institution, its quality policy, and how the quality policy is linked to strategic management. This section is also intended to orientate the reader to the institution by providing a general introduction with key data, as well as information on its management and organizational structure. The drafting teams may also find it helpful to use this section to provide information on any major changes in organizational structure or policy headlines since the last review, and to highlight specific recent achievements.

3. Previous quality reviews and follow-up. In this section, information on follow-up to the previous IWR would be detailed, as well as the process of, and learning from, any other institutional reviews conducted in the interim. This section could also provide an overview of the strategic follow-up of SLRs at the institutional level. (These are likely to be referred to in the following sections also as important sources of evidence.)

4. Safeguarding standards of degrees awarded.
This part could, for example, be divided into two sections. The first section could detail Strategy and Policy, and include coverage on topics such as organisational structure for the management of standards; use of management information; assessment practices and processes; externals and other benchmarks; and human resource considerations (staff appointment, induction, development, appraisal, adjunct hiring, etc.). The second section could focus on the Monitoring of Standards, and cover areas such as design, approval, monitoring and review of courses and programmes; student admissions; language policy; and public information management.

5. The student learning experience. This section may provide coverage of some of the following topics: student recruitment, admissions, inductions, progression and graduation; student engagement with learning; student feedback and its use; preparation for employment and further study; staff development; use of IT in learning; learning resources; postgraduate student experience – taught and research; distance learning student experience; work-based learning; part-time student experience; contribution of student services; etc.

6. Research and innovation. This section might provide an overview of the effectiveness of the management of research across the institution, and it will probably draw much of its evidence from the SLRs and their evaluation of the management of research, and the implications of these for institutional research management.

7. Managing enhancement. This section is likely to be a summary of the institution's priorities for enhancement growing out of the evidence used in compiling the Reflective Analysis. It could include, for example, a SWOT analysis and may usefully provide an action plan or action priorities for the following period.

8. Concluding remarks.
Annexes.

Case Study. One annex should provide the Case Study. This may be included in the main document
or provided as a separate document, whichever is more convenient. The case study should illustrate an internal QA/QE initiative, along with outcomes and lessons learned from that initiative.
Additional annexes can contain any information, visuals or summary data that do not fit well in the main narrative of the Reflective Analysis.

NOTE
The Reflective Analysis can helpfully be accompanied by any existing documentation relevant to the
Analysis to save duplication of effort. This will include prospectuses, Quality Handbooks etc. It is helpful to give the IWR Review Team access to the intranet as this can often save repetition of data. In general, electronic versions of the Reflective Analysis should be available, which provide specific links to data on such central databases.

The Reflective Analysis Report shall be critical, analytical and evidence based. In writing the report, a balance shall be maintained between description, evaluation and planning; the report should not contain exhaustive descriptions of the status quo.
Guidelines on the content of the report on the Reflective Analysis shall be referred to, for example regarding chapter divisions and content. The Review Team may, however, decide to order the report differently and add chapters and sub-chapters as considered suitable in each instance.

The report shall be written in English and **carefully proofread.** It is recommended that the chair of the Review Team supervise the writing of the report.

4. Continuous assessment of study programme quality assurance

Programme leader is a new position that will be under development during the operating year 2021 and is valued at 8% of a full-time position. A Programme leader is responsible for academic leadership within a study programme, leads its maintenance and development in close cooperation with the Dean of Departments and teachers. The specialist monitors the quality of organisation and teaching and of student orientation and learning experience. A Programme leader maintains good cooperation with academic services and with the Director of Quality Management. The year 2022 is seen as an experimental period and the job description and percentage will be reviewed at the end of this academic year. One may expect increased involvement of the Programme leader in connection with quality evaluation of study programmes.

The role of the Programme leader is an important prerequisite for Bifröst University to fulfil ESG standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes. According to ESG 1.9 institutions need to monitor and periodically review their programmes with continuous assessment. This constitutes among other things the evaluation of:

- The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;
- The changing needs of society;
- The students' workload, progression and completion;
- The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students;
- The student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;
- The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

4.1 Programme leader tasks

- Monitor that the content of study programmes is appropriate and meets academic requirements. Monitor the content being taught in similar study programmes at other institutions in this country and abroad. Become involved in ensuring congruence in individual courses, i.e. prevent repetition or overlap in coverage with similar courses.
- Ensure that there is periodic review of quality assurance, pursuant to the Quality Handbook (cf. 3 .1) at three-year intervals. The Programme leader can lead the relevant project group or can delegate this responsibility to another academic executive in consultation with the Dean of Department.
- Make proposals to the Dean of Department about new courses and teachers, and in general on development of study programmes.
- Be a mentor for sessional teachers of a study programme (particularly with respect to new teachers).
- Monitor, in consultation with Academic Services, the content of the curriculum and of checklists for courses in a study programme. Take the initiative for academic discussion on quality of teaching material with teachers of courses, on the question of whether they meet requirements for the newest knowledge and research. React, in cooperation with the Dean of Department, to indications from Academic Services and the Director of Quality Management that a teacher's management is deficient according to checklists.
- Monitors statistical measurements in the study programme and courses, twice during the academic year on the basis of statistical reports. Scrutinises results of surveys with the Dean of

Department; annual student survey, regular student graduation survey and other incidental surveys. Should the Dean of Department so request, the Programme leader shall play an active role in reacting to "amber or red lights" in the conclusions of teaching surveys. The Programme leader does not however have independent access to a teaching survey.

- Monitor in consultation with the Dean of Department, elective courses in the study programme in question, the number, quality and appropriate learning outcomes. Assist students and advisors with choice of thesis subject.
- Participate as an adviser of the Dean of Department in orientation of students to a study programme.
- In consultation with the Dean of Department, support positive discussion on the learning and the University, among other things by participating in promotion and organising symposia and by encouraging research and publications in the academic discipline of the study programme.
- Participate in promotion and orientation days, according to the schedule of the Dean of Department.

4.2 Ways for the Programme leader to monitor organisation and quality of teaching, enrolment and student experience.

Check-list for teachers
A checklist for teachers supports development and design of courses pursuant to the University's emphases. The checklist gives the Programme leader the opportunity to ensure academic discussion on the content of courses and quality with respect to academic aspects. The role of the Programme leader is to ensure in cooperation with teachers, that learning content is appropriate and revised according to requirements for the newest knowledge, for the University values and for student feedback with respect to quality and organisation. The role of Academic Services is to monitor technical issues that relate to the checklist, such as how well teachers perform in submitting documents at the appropriate time etc.

Canvas
Each Programme leader has access through Canvas to all learning material in a study programme. This access level is called Programme leader and provides access to the curriculum, learning material, student activity and grades. This access has no permissions to change anything as it is what is called "observer" access. The Canvas access in question provides the Programme leader with access to the curriculum, learning outcomes and courses, as the Programme leader sees fit in each instance.

Statistics
The Programme leader receives statistical data on his study programme twice a year, so that the Specialist in question can identify exceptions to what would be considered normal development within the programme. The IT department collates the data in cooperation with the quality manager for statistical reports. Each set of statistics is historical in the understanding that it belongs to the previous semester. Statistics for the autumn semester, come in January and for the spring and summer semesters the statistics come in August.

The representation of the statistics covers the following elements:

- Number of students from beginning of study programme
- Gender proportion between women/men in the study programme
- Number of tenured teachers in comparison with session teachers in courses
- Faculty/student ratio
- Number of students in groups in courses
- Number of courses
- Student progression from 2015
- Number of applications, number of rejected applications
- Average grade in department
- Average grade in each course
- Average grade in each course
- Grade spread in each course

Pass/fail proportion in each course

Statistical reports are scrutinised at department meetings and separate Programme leader meetings where the findings are discussed. The Director of Quality Management also reviews the statistical reports and discusses them with the relevant Dean of Department/Programme leader if required.

Student workload
Teachers receive an Excel spreadsheet which is designed to enable an assessment of student workload with reference to ECTS credits of the course in question. The spreadsheet in question enables Programme leaders to, among other things, monitor estimated student workload in the study programme in question.

Annual student group review of study programme
Once each academic year, the Programme leader, in cooperation with the Director of Quality Management and the Department project manager, organises a student review group within each study programme. Guidelines for procedure and forms are available in the quality system or from the Director of Quality Management.

Work report
The Programme leader is expected at the end of each academic year, to submit to the Dean of Department and Director of Quality Management, a short report on the main work components of the year. There are forms in the Programme leader package where the main content elements of the report are defined. Documenting the monitoring that takes place is an important improvement aspect in the University Quality System.

5. Rules on design and approval of programmes at Bifröst University

The objective of these rules is to ensure professional standards in the development of new lines of study and degree programmes at Bifröst University.

5.1 Responsibility

The Rector is responsible for quality management at the University, together with the Director of Quality Management. Heads of Department, Programme leaders and the Department Board are responsible for academic development of new study programmes within departments.

5.2 General considerations on the establishment of new study programmes

Study programmes form the core of teaching activities within an educational institution. They provide students with academic knowledge and competences that affect their personal development and can be utilised by students in their future careers. When establishing a new study programme, the following considerations must be taken into account. A new study programme shall:

1. be designed in conformity with the policy of Bifröst University and have well-defined learning outcomes,
2. be designed with participation from students and other stakeholders,
3. be designed with the input of external experts, taking external standards into account,
4. be designed in line with normal study progress for students,
5. include a definition of the student workload (measured in ECTS credits),
6. involve well-defined opportunities for internships (where applicable),
7. be subject to a well-defined approval process.

5.3 Implementation

Design of new study programmes is a departmental activity and therefore the responsibility of the Dean of Department and Department Board and Director of Quality Management, with the participation of teachers, students and externals as applicable. The assistance of individual administrative and service departments at the University shall be sought as deemed necessary. A record shall be maintained of all decisions and activities in this context. The design process shall contain a record of the minutes of all meetings called. They shall among other things show the following:

- the procedures that have been used in preparing a new study programme,
- those who were involved in the work,
- the external parties contacted for consultation,
- the comparisons made with other universities,
- the professional bodies, business organisations and individual companies and institutes whose opinion has been sought.

It shall furthermore be stated how the following factors have been taken into account:

- the changing needs of society for university-level education,
- student workload, study progress and completion of studies,
- the effectiveness of yardsticks for assessment of students,
- the learning environment and support services and their fitness for the study programme,
- market conditions and possible exploration of demand for the programme.

In other regards, establishment of new study programmes at Bifröst University shall take into account the guidance of the Quality Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education (QEF) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015).

Processes for establishing new study programmes within departments shall be reported upon in Reflective Analysis reports at the departmental level.

Heads of Department deliver recommendations on new study programmes to the Rector. The Rector puts such a recommendation to the Board of Governors for confirmation. New study programmes shall be presented in the University Council.

6. Procedures for revising procedural rules or strategy

Procedure for amendments to rules pursuant to Article 6 of the Bifröst University Regulations are presented to ensure open and transparent procedure in revising the rules and to ensure that relevant parties within the University have an opportunity to express their opinion on the proposed changes.

6. 1. Proposal for revision received

A formal proposal for revision to rules shall be put to the Rector, who formally sets in motion the discussion process. Each and every revision process shall be formally documented and saved in the University's records management system. Documents containing procedural rules or strategy at the level of the University are saved under case *1501017*, Quality Handbook, where each document has its own folder. All changes must be traceable within that folder. Employees who do not have authorisation to make changes to the Quality Manual may deliver documents to the Records Manager, who saves them there in an appropriate manner.

6. 2. Process for revising rules

The Rector assigns the task of managing the preparation and process for revising rules to the Director of Quality Management. The Director of Quality Management is responsible for their publication and for updates to quality documents or older rules as applicable.

6. 3. Involvement in changes

At the beginning of the revision process, care shall be taken to define the parties within the University to whom the recommendations or ideas will be put. Particular care shall be taken to ensure that student-related cases are put to the Department Board. Additionally, the University Council plays an advisory role.

6. 4. Commentary and discussion

When a case is sent for comment or discussion to the Department Board, University Council or elsewhere within the University, this shall be done formally, with an email sent from the relevant folder in the records management system. A reasonable period of notice is provided for responses, taking into account for example the normal time frame for meetings of Department Boards and the University Council. Should a more rapid response to a case be required, care shall be taken to ensure by other means that the appropriate individuals, by virtue of their work or membership of a board or council, must be consulted and given the opportunity to express their views. The Director of Quality Management shall normally send documents directly to individuals in the University Council and Department Boards and shall specifically draw their attention to the need for the case to be included on the agenda, as applicable. The Director of Quality Management presents all revision processes that are currently under way at meetings of the Executive Board.

6.5. Processing of comments

At the end of the commentary and consultation process, the Director of Quality Management may either assign the task of processing proposals for change to the authors of the proposals and comments, or carry out this task personally, for example if the Director of Quality Management has initiated the revision process. When the Director of Quality Management deems that a recommendation for revision of rules is in its final stage, following appropriate discussion and responses to comments, the Director of Quality Management shall send the

document to the persons involved in the case and give them a reasonable deadline for submitting comments. At the end of this process, a recommendation is sent to the Rector for processing, either for confirmation or referral to the Board of Governors.

6.6. Confirmation, saving and publication
The Rector approves the final finished document by signature. The Director of Quality Management submits the signed final document and an electronic copy of this document to the Records Manager, who safeguards its preservation, and has it published on the University's website.

6.7. Presentation of revisions
The Director of Quality Management is responsible for presenting revisions to rules to students and employees. Depending on what is appropriate, revisions shall be publicised through emails, via the learning management system and on the University's web page, in order to ensure to the fullest possible extent that persons affected by these changes are properly informed.

Háskólinn á Bifröst

311 Borgarnes

Sími: +345 433 3000
Fax: +354 433 3001
bifrost@bifrost.is
www.bifrost.is

HÁSKÓLINN Á BIFRÖST
BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY