EF 340

Guidelines for Reflective Analysis

Introduction
These guidelines for the Reflective Analysis are based on the Quality Enhancement Framework for Higher Education in Iceland (QEF), European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA) and Icelandic laws and regulations on quality assessment in Icelandic higher education.

Students are involved in the review process, both through participation as members in the review team and through student feedback mechanisms and meetings with students.

Objectives for a Reflective Analysis
According to the Quality Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education, a Reflective Analysis must be “genuinely reflective” (i.e., it must present a genuine attempt to analyse and evaluate past experiences), evidence-based (i.e., avoid groundless claims and seek to draw conclusions from available evidence) and comprehensive in its coverage.

The review team is advised to read the Quality Handbook (available online at http://rannis.is/english/qef/qef-handbook/), with emphasis on Section 4 and Annex 3.

The main objective of the Reflective Analysis is to engage in critical discussion of the ways in which the University seeks to develop and improve the student learning experience and its success in securing academic standards. The RA report should demonstrate the University’s capacity for self-reflection and critical evaluation. It is therefore also an important part of the University’s preparation for a Quality Board-led review.

Action
The description of the process for Reflective Analysis is to be found in Bifröst University’s Quality Manual, EV 340 Reflective Analysis.

Operational plan for the review:

1. The University Council appoints a self-evaluation team to lead the Reflective Analysis.

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3 http://rannis.is/english/qef/qef-handbook/
2. The evaluation team appoints a chairperson to lead the work within the team and report on the process to the Director of Quality Systems at the University.

3. In cooperation with the Director of Quality Systems, the team defines objects of assessment, selects data and information collection methods and determines the scope of academic years to evaluate in the Reflective Analysis. A good practice is to use both quantitative and qualitative methods in conducting the analysis. It is important to identify all stakeholders in order to include their opinions and views.

4. The team divides responsibilities and projects according to the time frame given. The team may appoint subgroups for specific tasks in the review.

5. The person chairing the evaluation team ensures that its work is conducted according to plan. The chairperson and the Director of Quality Systems are jointly responsible for managing and coordinating the review and closely monitor its progress. The team may request additional information and data from the University as needed to enhance the quality of the evaluation.

6. Status meetings with the evaluation team, Director of Quality Systems and the Quality Board at Bifröst University are held on a regular basis throughout the evaluation period.

7. The team is responsible for data and information collection. If the evaluation team finds data and information to be insufficient, the evaluation team must give a clear reason for this lack of information and suggest ways to react.

8. The evaluation team analyses the data and information through critical reflection and discussion in order to evaluate the current situation and identify what must be improved to enhance the student learning experience and academic standards.

9. The evaluation team decides what main recommendations will be made and what follow-up processes will be proposed.

10. The evaluation team prepares a written report. Writing this report is a continuous process from the beginning of the evaluation.

11. The Rector signs off the report and submits it to the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education.

The Quality Board at Bifröst University and the Director of Quality Systems submit guiding questions to the evaluation team, which to a large extent provide the general framework for the exercise. The evaluation team is free to address other issues as it deems relevant for the objectives and points of emphasis selected for each individual Reflective Analysis, such as housing facilities and different services on campus.

In conducting the Reflective Analysis, the team should consult with colleagues to ensure that Bifröst University’s policies are fully represented. In the spirit of openness and collaboration essential for an effective review, the team should attempt to convey both the evidence and the confidence displayed in the effectiveness of policy and its implementation.
In conducting the analysis the evaluation team should, wherever possible, provide web references to institutional documents or provide these as annexes to your response. If these documents are not available in English for review by the panel, then the team must provide a short English summary of their contents.

It is anticipated that in many cases, quantitative performance measures will be available to provide supporting evidence. Please quote these wherever possible. The team may wish to illustrate responses to some of the statements by providing the panel\(^2\) electronic access to materials or services on a guest-user basis. Please indicate if this is the case and take the necessary steps to establish log-in arrangements, etc.

It is among the duties of the Director of Quality Systems at Bifröst University to provide guidance and advice throughout the evaluation process.

**Content of the Reflective Analysis**
According to the Quality Enhancement Framework for Higher Education in Iceland (QEF), the expectation is that each and every Reflective Analysis includes a Case Study and also an Annex listing the evidence used in the process of compiling the Reflective Analysis and potentially available to the review team. (See Annex 3 in the QEF).

It is up to Bifröst University to decide how it will approach the task of conducting a Reflective Analysis and whether a given Reflective Analysis will emphasise specific areas or topics.

**Case Study**
The Case Study should provide an illustration of Bifröst University’s strategic and/or operational management of quality enhancement in action, see Annex 3 in the QEF.

The Case Study is an opportunity to identify for the Quality Board-led reviews at the institutional level a self-contained example of Bifröst University’s strategic approach in action. It should focus on the way in which the University is managing particular activities, rather than on individual examples of good practice in themselves. It should furthermore illustrate the linkage between Bifröst University’s strategic approach and its operational management and be reflective and evidence-based.

**Writing the report**

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\(^2\) The external review team conducting the Quality Board-led reviews at the institutional level, see http://rannis.is/english/qef/qef-handbook/
The report should be based on evidence and be reflective and analytical. In writing the report, members of the evaluation team should endeavour to maintain a balance between description, evaluation and planning; the report should not be overly descriptive.

The guiding questions submitted to the team by the Director of Quality Systems and the Quality Board at Bifröst University give a good overview of what the report should include. The following should be included in the report:

- **Introduction**
- **Strategy and organisation**
  - Organisational chart and changes in management
  - Objectives and roles
- **Policy and procedures for quality assurance**
  - Relationship between teaching and research
  - Strategy for quality and standards
  - Organisation of the quality assurance system
  - Responsibilities for quality assurance
  - Student involvement in quality assurance
  - Implementation of the policy, monitoring and revising
- **Structure of Teaching and Research**
  - Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
  - Admission of students
  - Quality assurance regarding teaching staff
  - Learning resources and student support
  - International orientation of programs
  - Information systems
  - Research activities
- **Quality assurance and shared information**
  - Public information
- **Statistics**
  - Teaching and research
  - Student satisfaction
  - Research
  - Knowledge transfer
  - International orientation
  - Regional engagement
- **Conclusion**
- **Annexes to the Reflective Analysis**
  - Index to supporting evidence
  - Summary information about the institution
  - Case Study
The report is written in English and should be rigorously edited. It is recommended that the chair of the evaluation team supervises the writing of the report.