



Whole School External Review Parameters

A. Context

1. Whole School External Reviews aim to evaluate how far schools are planning to and actually managing to reach the [National Quality Standards](#) that ensure learners' entitlement to a quality education.
2. This external review model focuses on the school's educational leadership and management, the learning and teaching processes, and the school's ethos. In considering these areas, reviewers focus their attention on the progress registered by the school in achieving the National Quality Standards.
3. Schools identified for this external review model are reviewed against their School Development Plan (SDP) and the [Pre-External Review School Self-Evaluation](#) (a reflective document about educational leadership, learning and teaching, and ethos of the school, compiled by the Head of School). Other sources of evidence considered include school documents, interviews, questionnaires and observations.
4. The external review team evaluating the school is composed of DQSE Education Officers, one of whom would take on the role of Review Leader. The Director or Assistant Director, Quality and Standards in Education, may assist the review team on site at any time during the review. The length of the review and the number of reviewers in the team varies according to the size of the school.
5. The selection of schools that will be evaluated through the whole school external review model is [based on one or more factors](#).
6. At the beginning of the scholastic year, the Director Quality and Standards in Education issues a letter circular to schools indicating commencement of External Reviews. Reference is made to the different review models as explained on the [DQSE site](#).
7. Any DQSE documentation related to the external review may be accessed via the [DQSE site](#).

B. Before the External Review

8. Around six [6] weeks (30 working days) prior to the actual review the Head of School and the Head of College Network or equivalent are notified with the dates of the review. Subsequently, a meeting is held whereby the Assistant Director informs the Head of School and the Head of College Network or equivalent (if

- available) about the processes and necessary documentation related to the external review.
9. Once notified about the dates of the review, the Head of School forwards to the teaching staff and parents the informative letter related to the external review process available [online](#) on the DQSE website. The Head of School disseminates the links to the online pre-external review questionnaires, provided by the DQSE, to the respective stakeholders. The deadline for stakeholders to submit their questionnaire response is three weeks prior to the commencement of the external review.
 10. Around three [3] weeks prior to the external review, the Head of School submits all the [required documentation](#) to the review leader via email. The review leader coordinates with the Head of School a date for the pre-external review meetings.
 11. Between two [2] weeks to one [1] week (five [5] to ten [10] working days) prior to the review, the review leader and at least one review member:
 - i. hold an interview with the Head of School, mainly to clarify queries emerging from the Pre-External Review School Self-Evaluation,
 - ii. hold an interview with the Head of College Network or equivalent for non-state schools to get an overall picture of the school,
 - iii. hold informative meetings with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members and teaching staff,
 - iv. may hold interviews with other stakeholders, including school council or equivalent and learner representatives, as agreed beforehand with the Head of School.

C. During the External Review

12. The school makes available a lockable room that can be used by the review team for the duration of the external review. This room needs to have enough space for the team to work in, internet access and basic tea/coffee making facilities.
13. During the external review, reviewers hold observations as well as interviews or focus groups with different stakeholders.
14. All communication with and observations by the review team are considered on the record and part of the evidence base that underpins the external review report.
15. The review team accepts requests for meetings by any member of staff.

16. Lesson Observations

- i. The number of lesson observations carried out in schools depends on the number of teachers and reviewers.
- ii. In the case where it is not possible to observe all teachers, the review team selects a stratified sample of teachers to allow for due representation of all levels/years/departments.
- iii. Observations may or may not last the whole lesson. Teachers may be observed more than once, at the discretion of the review team.

- iv. The reviewer may opt to stop observing a lesson that may give a falsely negative impression of the observed teacher's professional abilities.
 - v. During lesson observations, teachers share planning documentation, including plan of lesson, with the reviewer.
 - vi. During lesson observations, reviewers refer to a lesson observation sheet which includes various teaching and learning strategies. Moreover, reviewers:
 - a. Observe the lesson in an unobtrusive manner,
 - b. May review the teachers' file, scheme of work, forecast/record of work, resources, displays and lesson planning in a way that does not interfere with the learning process,
 - c. May review Individual Education Programme [IEPs], LSE's planning e.g. daily schedules, any adaptations/modifications/accommodations to address the individual needs of the student, communication book or other official means of communication with parents,
 - d. Observe learners' work,
 - e. Communicate informally with some learners in a way that does not interfere with the learning process.
 - vii. Following each lesson observation, the teacher is given brief, constructive feedback by the reviewer *only* if this is requested. Teachers are encouraged to take this opportunity and engage in a professional dialogue with the reviewer as it can serve as a means for professional growth.
17. Halfway through the review, the Head of School is informed about the strengths and the main areas for improvement that emerge from the pre-external review questionnaires, the progress of the review process and any arising issues.
18. Reviewers are also available after school hours, to discuss any arising matters with any stakeholder.
19. During the external review, reviewers keep a lookout for evident health and safety issues that are of significant danger to the school community and/or school visitors. These are immediately pointed out to the Head of School and followed up by the DQSE.
20. On the last day of the review, the review team holds a meeting with the Head of School. The review leader informs the Head of School of the main findings and of the review and the required actions. The Head of School may ask the SLT members to attend the meeting.
21. At the end of the review the Head of School disseminates the links to the online post-external review questionnaires to the SLT and educators. The response received will help the DQSE improve its practices.

c. After the External Review

22. After the external review, the review team drafts a report which includes:
- a. an introduction including formation of review team, data sources, survey responses and the school context;
 - b. review findings related to the key areas of the National Quality Standards;

- c. areas of strength for each of the key areas of the National Quality Standards intended to acknowledge and encourage existing good practices;
 - d. a way forward for each of the key areas of the National Quality Standards that can be considered by the school in its endeavour to register further progress;
 - e. a set of required actions, usually ranging between five to six, that the school would be expected to address effectively for school improvement. There might be cases which warrant more than six required actions.
23. A draft report and the outcomes of the pre-external review questionnaires are emailed to the Head of School within two [2] weeks (10 working days) after the review. The Head of School then has three [3] working days to email his/her feedback on the draft report to the review leader. The DQSE may amend the draft report and finalise it accordingly. The finalised report is endorsed by the Director, Quality and Standards in Education.
24. Within three [3] weeks (15 working days) after the review, the finalised report is emailed to the Head of School, the Head of College Network or equivalent, the Director General Curriculum Lifelong Learning and Employability [DG-CLLE], the Director General Educational Services [DG-DES] (in the case of state schools), and the Archbishop's Delegate for Education and the Director for Curriculum and Standards in the Secretariat for Catholic Education (in case of church schools). No further changes can be made to the report from this point onwards.
25. A summary report and a post-review action plan template which includes the report's required actions will also be forwarded to the Head of School.
26. The review report and the Head of School's feedback are retained in the DQSE files as internal documents.
27. It is highly recommended that the Head of School and the Head of College Network or equivalent discuss the report prior to communicating the outcomes of the external review to all members of the teaching staff. The Head of School is to inform confidentially any member of staff who may have been identified in the external review report. These members of staff are to be shown only the part of the report that concerns them as well as given the opportunity to discuss the identified issue/s with the HoS for reflection and improvement purposes.
28. The Head of School disseminates the Report Summary to all staff members. This dissemination is mandatory. The RL needs to be informed and/or copied in the email sent to staff.
29. The Head of School informs parents in writing about the outcomes of the review. Before the dissemination of this information, the Head of School forwards a draft version to the review leader, informing him/her when and how the outcomes will be disseminated. The review leader has the right to ask for the information to be revised if it does not constitute a comprehensive representation of the review report.
30. The Head of School communicates and discusses the findings of the review with

the teaching staff. Together they decide on SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) actions to be taken by the school to address the way forward and required actions highlighted in the report. State schools may avail themselves of Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) sessions for this purpose. Non-state schools are encouraged to take similar measures.

31. The Head of School forwards the draft post-review action plan to the review leader prior to the post-review meeting which the review leader sets up within eight [8] weeks after the external review.
32. The Director Quality and Standards in Education and/or Assistant Director, the Head of School, the Head of College Network or equivalent in non-state schools and representative/s from the Secretariat for Catholic Education (in case of church schools) are invited to the post review meeting. The Head of School may consider inviting the key person contributing to the internal review process. During the meeting the Head of School explains how the school agreed to address the required actions listed in the report, which actions would have been recorded in a post-review action plan template. Following the meeting, the updated version of the action plan is forwarded to the RL within two [2] weeks. The post-review action plan is to be considered as a working tool where actions should be evaluated and tweaked/changed as necessary along the year to better address the required actions.
33. The DQSE follows up the outcomes of the whole school external review through one of its external review models within the following scholastic year.