



Focused External Review Parameters

A. Context

1. The purpose of the Focused External Review is to evaluate the school's progress or performance against one or few of the [National Quality Standards](#).
2. During a Focused External Review, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) taps into various data sources, including school documents, interviews, questionnaires, and observations, to evaluate the school's progress. These data sources vary according to the focus / identified National Quality Standard(s) of the external review.
3. 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 review team may also be joined by an expert in the field. The Director or Assistant Director DQSE may assist on site the review team at any time during the review.
4. The selection of schools that will be evaluated through the focused external review model is [based on one or more factors](#), such as over two years since the last external review.
5. At the beginning of the scholastic year, the Director DQSE 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.
6. Any documentation related to the external review may be also accessed via the [DQSE site](#).

B. Before the Review

7. Around five [5] weeks prior to the external review, the Head of School and the Head of College Network (or equivalent in non-state schools) are informed of the Focused External Review to be held at their school and in particular:
 - i. the focus of the review,
 - ii. the reason behind the focus of the review,
 - iii. the dates of the review,
 - iv. the external review team members.
8. Around four [4] weeks prior to the Focused External Review, the Head of School is informed about the logistics of the review and if applicable agreed-upon timeframes, primarily:
 - i. the data sources for gathering evidence,
 - ii. the dissemination of questionnaire links and information sheets among the selected stakeholders,
 - iii. the forwarding of school policies and documentation related to the focus of the review.

C. During the Review

9. The school makes available a lockable room that can be used by the review team for the duration of the review. This room needs to have enough space for the team to work in and basic tea/coffee making facilities.
10. During the review, reviewers hold observations as well as interviews or focus groups with different stakeholders.
11. All communication with and observations by the review team is considered on the record and part of the evidence base that underpins the final report. The review team accepts requests for meetings by any member of staff.
12. Lesson observations may be carried out depending on the focus of the external review.
 - i. The number of lesson observations carried out at school depends on the focus of the review and the number of reviewers.
 - ii. Where possible, the review team observes 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, reviewers:
 - a. observe the lesson in an unobtrusive manner;
 - b. observe strategies related to the focus of the review;
 - c. communicate informally with some learners in a way that does not interfere with the learning process.
 - vi. After lesson observations, reviewers provide constructive feedback to teachers upon request. 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.
13. During the review, the Head of School is informed about the main outcomes of the pre-focused external review questionnaires.
14. Reviewers are also available after school hours to discuss any arising matters with any stakeholder.
15. On the last day of the review, the Head of School and the rest of the SLT are briefed about the main findings of the review.
16. Following the briefing, the Head of School and possibly members of the teaching staff involved in the external review can give their feedback on the external review process by responding to a post-review questionnaire.

D. After the Review

17. The review team drafts the Focused External Review report. This report includes:
 - i. an introduction, including the focus of review, the school context and objective of report,
 - ii. the review findings related to the focus of the review, and
 - iii. required actions emanating from the findings which the school community would be expected to tackle effectively for school improvement.

18. Within ten [10] working days after the external review, a draft report and the outcomes of the pre-review questionnaires are emailed to the Head of School. The Head of School then has two [2] working days to email his/her feedback on the draft report to the review leader. The review leader may amend the draft report accordingly.
19. Within ten [13] working days after the External Review, the finalised report is emailed to the Head of School, the Head of College Network (or equivalent in non-state schools), the Archbishop's Delegate for Education and the Director for Curriculum and Standards in the Secretariat for Catholic Education (in case of church schools), and the Director General – Directorate for Educational Services [DG-DES] (in the case of state schools).
20. A post-review action plan template which includes the report's required actions will also be sent to the Head of School.
21. The dissemination of the external review outcomes to the teaching staff and parents depends on the context and focus of the external review.
22. If a decision is taken to disseminate the outcomes of the external review to the teaching staff and parents, the Head of School is to forward 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.
23. The Head of School, in collaboration with the rest of the Senior Leadership Team and the teaching staff, is to formulate SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) actions to be taken by the school to address the required actions listed in the report. The actions to be taken may be inserted in the action plan template provided by the review leader. State schools may avail themselves of Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) sessions for this purpose. Non-state schools are encouraged to take similar measures.
24. Around six [6] weeks after the external review, the school hosts a post-review meeting. The Director and/or Assistant Director DQSE, the review leader, the Head of College Network (or equivalent in non-state schools), representative/s from the Secretariat for Catholic Education (in case of church schools) and any SLT members are invited to this meeting. 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 the post-review action plan template. Following the meeting, the updated version of the action plan is to be forwarded to the review leader.
25. The DQSE follows up the outcomes of the Focused External Review through one of its [external review models](#) within the following scholastic year.