

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

Purpose of self-evaluation

- Evidence that the institution continues to / meets the principles for OU institutional approval
- An SED should be both descriptive and evaluative – it should describe how the institution does things and how it knows that its approach is effective and how it could be further improved. Throughout the document – useful to have a descriptive statement with some evaluation and then substantiate the statement with supporting evidence
- Need to bear in mind that it is for an external audience and so therefore should include contextual information on the institution
- Should identify strengths and areas for development for the institution and/or programmes
- Build on strengths and take remedial action on areas for development. Should be a frank appraisal of weaknesses and how it is intended to deal with them
- Self-evaluation should not be seen as a paper-driven and bureaucratic exercise – it should be about whether educational objectives are being met and whether current practice can be improved upon. It should be about accountability and improvement – it should not just be an external imposition but have intrinsic value internally to make improvements

Phases of self-evaluation

1. Define the purpose

As above but ensure that all those involved in the purpose know and understand the purpose.

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

- A plan should set out the areas subject to self-evaluation – e.g. assessment, teaching and learning, staffing policies, student support and guidance etc
- Explicit statements setting who is responsible for which action and when they should be completed
- The plan may depend on resources available and constraints of time – it may need to be modified to what is achievable and realistic
- A timetable should be based on submission date (OUPV requests 6 weeks before the (re)approval visit) and then work backwards. At least 3 months is useful
- It is useful to identify goals and indicators/criteria against which it would be measured. As an example:

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

3. Assembling information and evidence

- OUPV gives further guidance in the OUPV handbook on documentation requirements – it is important that the IR documentation includes evaluations of engagement with the OU, evaluation of external audits and annual monitoring etc.
- The SED should be no longer than about 20 pages. It is useful for it to have one author but the draft should be circulated to staff and students for wide ownership. The IR panel will expect more than one person to be able to talk to the document and will want to triangulate themes
- All boxes should be completed in full to provide detailed information
- Make sure there is consistent numbering of paragraphs and appendices – it is important that the IR panel are able to navigate the document easily
- Many of the documentation should already exist – always use existing documents where possible.
- Supporting evidence should be presented as appendices and should be relevant to the SED

4. Making judgements based on the assembled evidence and information

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

clear. A common failing is for SEDs to be too descriptive. Feedback from students, EEs, employers etc are very valuable to a SED but may be judgemental – an institution may need to balance the weight given to each judgement. It is important that the judgements are made and collectively agreed. Judgements made by the author alone will not necessarily be accepted.

5. Actions and monitoring

Actions and recommendations in the report should be explicit and obtainable.

After the review, there should be a clear system for monitoring that recommended actions have been taken and what impact they have had – this could be the institutional action plan from annual monitoring.

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

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

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

- Office for Students
- Ofsted
- Any Professional, Statutory Recognised Body at programme or institutional level
- The Quality Assurance Agency
- Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland)
- Compliance to Tier IV requirements

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

- The assessment of students
- Admissions
- Appeals/complaints

Box 4.1 - You should refer to the following:

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

Box 4.2 – You should include use of external reference points and evidence of how the professional/research activities of academic staff sustain the academic development of the organisation: