

EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT GUIDELINE



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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This guideline outlines how CQUniversity will include external peer review of assessment (EPRA) against higher education award courses, as a requirement of the [Higher Education Standards \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) (HESF 2021).

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This guideline applies to higher education award courses.

3 GUIDELINE

- 3.1 The HESF 2021 requires external referencing to be included in a university’s toolbox as part of course review, monitoring and enhancement, specifically, HESF 2021 sections 1.4.1, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, and 5.3.4.
- 3.2 This guideline focuses on EPRA, which is covered in section 5.3.4 of the HESF 2021:
“Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including:
- analyses of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and
 - the assessment methods and grading of students’ achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.”
- 3.3 EPRA is undertaken at the University to ensure assessment methods used to assess course and unit learning outcomes are valid through comparison with methods used by external providers.
- 3.4 In regard to grading student achievement, EPRA helps to ensure the standards the University upholds continue to meet sector benchmarks through comparison with comparable external courses (e.g. grades at the University are broadly equivalent to grades elsewhere in the sector).

4 PRACTICE PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING EPRA

- 4.1 The External Referencing of Standards (ERoS) Project Team¹ developed and tested a comprehensive process and approach for external referencing in courses/units². The Project Team proposed the following practice principles be applied to underpin any EPRA activity:

Effective: supports both the quality enhancement and quality assurance of courses and units.

Efficient: efficiently enables the external referencing of assessment methods and grading of students' attainment of learning outcomes across comparable courses of study.

Transparent and open: the process engages multiple perspectives and facilitates critical and open dialogue between teaching employees across comparable courses to support consensus-building around standards of student learning outcomes.

Capability building: contributes to the professional development of participating employees and discipline communities of practice.

Sustainable: provides sustainable end-to-end process for external referencing that can be operationalised and used routinely by participating institutions.

5 PREPARING FOR AN EPRA ACTIVITY

- 5.1 Before starting the external review:

- Access the University's External Peer Review Template.
- Identify the reviewer.
- Decide which assessment will be reviewed.
- Decide if a memorandum of understanding (MoU) is required.

- 5.2 These decisions should be made by the School to ensure consistency of results across all units. It is suggested that a toolkit be created that contains all the relevant information and templates.

6 TYPES OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

- 6.1 Schools may use any one or more of the following methods, provided the review meets the requirements of relevant policy documents, e.g. Higher Education Qualifications Policy and Procedure:

- a) use the [Peer Review Portal](#)
- b) partner with other institutions to peer review assessment
- c) engage an external peer reviewer
- d) use the Course Reference Committee
- e) include EPRA as part of external professional accreditation.

- 6.2 The External Peer Review Template contains a set of questions that must be addressed during the External Review, regardless of the method used, and reported through Academic Information Management System (AIMS).

A – Use the peer review portal

- 6.3 The [Peer Review Portal](#) is a cloud-based system, endorsed by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), that supports, connects, and advances external peer review activities. The Portal provides a solution for managing and monitoring review activities such as:

- pre-moderation and post-moderation activities

¹ Krause, K., Scott, G., Aubin, K., Alexander, H., Angelo, T., Campbell, S., Carroll, M., Deane, E., Nulty, D., Pattison, P., Probert, B., Sachs, J., Solomonides, I., Vaughan, S. (2013). *Assuring final year subject and program achievement standards through inter-university peer review and moderation*. Available [online](#).

² Bedford SB, Czech P, Sefcik LT, Smith J and, Yorke J (2016). *External Referencing of Standards – EROS Report. An example of a collaborative end-to-end peer review process for external referencing. Final Project Report*.

- annual course review activities
- comprehensive curriculum review activities
- external referencing activities, and
- course and professional accreditation activities³.

Conditions of use and details of payment are located on the Peer Review Portal.

- 6.4 Once the review is complete, the completed external peer review template will be uploaded in AIMS as part of the course or unit review process.

B – Partner with other institutions to peer review assessment

- 6.5 Establish a MoU with a partner institution (e.g. another higher education provider) that encompasses a review of assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study.
- Identify a partner institution of equivalent or higher educational standing. A good starting point will be to consider other universities that are part of the [Regional Universities Network](#).
 - Complete an MoU. This can be initiated by the University or by the partner institution. An [MoU template](#) and more information about MoUs in the [Partnerships Policy and Procedure](#) are available on the University's policy website.
 - Establish the scope of EPRA activity, how many units, timeframes, plus any other relevant requirements.
 - Complete the EPRA activity and upload the completed external peer review template in AIMS as part of the course or unit review process.

C – Engage a peer reviewer

- 6.6 Contract a suitably qualified expert to conduct an external peer review of selected units. The reviewer should be a practitioner and/or academic with teaching or academic leadership responsibilities for a comparable course and/or discipline expertise.
- 6.7 After a reviewer has been identified, complete a contract that identifies the scope of the EPRA activity, including how many units, timeframe, deliverables to be received from the reviewer, plus any other relevant requirements. The reviewer's role will be to compare assessment practices of the unit/s under review with assessment practices used in comparable courses within Australia and/or internationally.
- 6.8 Once the reviewer has finalised the EPRA activity and delivered the completed external peer review template, this template will be uploaded in AIMS as part of the course or unit review process.

D – Use the Course Reference Committee

- 6.9 In accordance with the [Course Reference Committee Terms of Reference](#), an appropriately constituted Course Reference Committee may perform external referencing activities.
- 6.10 To conduct an EPRA, the Course Reference Committee membership must comprise two external academics from the applicable cognate course area.
- 6.11 Contact the Chair of the relevant Course Reference Committee to set up the review in line with the Committee's meeting schedule and any other associated requirements.
- 6.12 Once the review is complete, the completed external peer review template will be uploaded in AIMS as part of the course or unit review process.

³ McCallum, L 2018, *What is the Peer Review Portal?*, <https://peerreviewportal.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/35000087889-what-is-the-peer-review-portal>- accessed on 20th December, 2018.

E – Include EPRA as a part of external professional accreditation

- 6.13 Some professional accreditation bodies include peer review of assessment as part of their accreditation process. The University encourages using these accreditation processes as a form of EPRA, providing they align with the University's policy requirements for external peer review of assessment and professional accreditation, e.g. Higher Education Qualifications Policy and Procedure.
- 6.14 If the course is accredited by an external professional accreditation body and it currently does not include peer review of assessment in their process, consider negotiating with the professional body to include peer review of assessment in its process when the course is next due for re-accreditation. This could be achieved by reviewing the assessment of multiple units as part of re-accreditation.
- 6.15 Once re-accreditation is completed, the completed external peer review template will be uploaded in AIMS as part of the course or unit review process.

7 ACTING ON RESULTS OF AN EPRA ACTIVITY

- 7.1 The intention of EPRA is to assure the standard and quality of the educational products provided to students.
- 7.2 While the results of EPRA activities will feed into annual unit enhancement review reports (AUERs), annual course enhancement review reports (ACERs), and five-yearly course review processes, it is important that results of the EPRA are acted on in a timely manner so that any required changes can be implemented as soon as practicable.
- 7.3 Discipline, Course Committee, and Course Reference Committee meetings are useful forums for reflecting on the results of the EPRA activity and deciding on next steps and timeframes for making changes that may be required.
- 7.4 In some instances, it may be the assessment task description, and/or marking rubric that may need to be changed. These changes can be made and internally validated before the next unit offering.
- 7.5 Changes to assessment strategies, types, and/or weighting will need to proceed through the Update Unit Proposal (UUP) process in AIMS before the next offering, taking into consideration due dates for approvals through the relevant committees.

8 DEFINITIONS

- 8.1 Terms not defined in this document may be in the University [glossary](#).

9 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

[Course Reference Committee Terms of Reference](#)

[External Peer Review Template](#)

[External Referencing and Benchmarking Policy and Procedure](#)

[Higher Education Qualifications Policy and Procedure](#)

[Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) (CwIth)

[Memorandum of Understanding Template](#)

[Partnerships Policy and Procedure](#)

[TEQSA Guidance Note: External Referencing \(including Benchmarking\)](#)

10 FEEDBACK

- 10.1 Feedback about this document can be emailed to policy@cqu.edu.au.

11 APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Academic Board
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Notes	