Implementation Guidelines and Support for UWS Reviews

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1. **Overview**

These guidelines are for those involved in designing and delivering major reviews of academic, administrative, management and support provision at UWS. They are based on a detailed study of the most efficient and productive approaches to undertaking academic and administrative reviews in a wide range of Australian and overseas universities.

The guidelines provide a framework for developing effective Terms of Reference for reviews. They also bring together the practical advice of people experienced in each role on how to successfully deliver the key steps in the UWS Review process, and implement the University’s [Reviews Policy](#).

There are specific guidelines for each of the following roles:

1. UWS Executive Sponsor of the Review
2. Review Panel Chair
3. Review Panel members
4. The Review Manager
5. Head of School/Unit being reviewed

It is recommended that all staff members involved in a UWS Review are not only clear on their role but what all the other members of their team are to contribute.

For further information and support please don’t hesitate to contact the UWS Office of Strategy and Quality.
2. **Guidelines for setting the Terms of Reference for Reviews**

These guidelines establish the broad parameters within which Terms of Reference are set for cyclical reviews. While not intended to be prescriptive or limiting, it is expected that, in general, reviews would focus on the following broad thematic areas:

1. Strategies for and progress towards meeting the objectives set out in the UWS mission and strategic plan. This would incorporate learning and teaching, research and engagement aspects; priority student and other stakeholder cohorts; as well as broader community and social responsibility dimensions.

2. Strategies and support for the implementation of the UWS Indigenous Education Policy.

3. Specific thematic areas identified through AUQA/TEQSA audits.

4. Progress towards implementing the outcomes of previous reviews.

Within the broad settings outlined in the Overview, it is important that the Terms of Reference are shaped to fit the context, stage of development, and circumstances of the School or Unit being reviewed. This would be reflected in the specific areas of focus pointed up by the Terms of Reference.

More generally, reviews are intended to be an opportunity to reflect on current performance and to assess future positioning strategies and activities. It is essential that Terms of Reference reflect this balance in a way that reviews are clearly seen as having more of a forward-looking than backward-looking perspective.

In this context, cyclical reviews should not become the default mechanism for examining and addressing program performance issues. These should be dealt with as part of ongoing management activity, using TILT and the relevant data. The review function would be to confirm that this process is happening effectively. Reviews are an important opportunity to step back and objectively assess the way in which Schools/Organisational Units are positioning for the future, and to engage express intelligence around this process through the expertise of particular review panel members selected from outside the university.
3. The UWS Review Process

Stage 1: Scheduling and approval of Reviews

Major strategic (e.g., disciplinary, organisational or thematic) reviews are nominated at least 12 months ahead, except with the agreement of the Vice-Chancellor. The need for a major academic or administrative review is initiated either centrally or locally; and a short, evidence-based case to justify is produced.

UWS also has a Cyclical Review Schedule, whereby all Schools and Administrative Units are reviewed not less than 5-yearly. The Office of Strategy and Quality (OSQ) develops the University’s Cyclical Review Schedule in consultation with Division Heads and the UWS Executive. OSQ manages the implementation of cyclical reviews in accordance with the Schedule.

For Cyclical reviews, Terms of Reference (TOR) are drafted between OSQ and the relevant Executive member responsible for the area being reviewed, and the TOR are considered by the Strategy and Quality Committee (SQC). SQC’s comments are forwarded with the review proposal to the Vice-Chancellor via the UWS Executive.

The Vice-Chancellor makes the final decision on the Terms of Reference for all reviews. The Vice Chancellor includes the successful delivery of the review in the performance plan of the relevant senior officer for the year concerned, and the process is then listed in the register of reviews kept by OSQ.

In consultation with members of SQC, OSQ provides advice and guidance to the relevant review secretariat on available data and necessary documentation and guidelines. Cyclical Reviews are managed by the Office of Strategy and Quality which provides an Executive Officer and secretarial functions. Further assistance may be provided for all Cyclical Reviews from a Deputy Dean on fractional secondment.

Stage 2: The Review Panel and briefing materials

The Executive Director, Strategy & Quality and Manager, Planning & Review (OSQ) provides advice to shape the process for review, consistent with the requirements of the UWS Review Policy.

Review Panels typically comprise 5-6 members, one of whom wherever feasible drawn from Board of Trustees, along with a mix of external academics and/or professionals; and the UWS Executive and SQC. Panels are chaired by a BOT or non-UWS Panel member. In all cases, Review Panel members are chosen on the basis of their ability to provide a strategic perspective on the discipline/function being reviewed, and their having met basic due diligence requirements in relation to any previous relationship(s) with the area being reviewed.
Documentation provided by the University to Review Panels includes:

1. a copy of the UWS Reviews Policy and Guidelines
2. a Project Plan for the review, which sets out processes and associated timelines
3. Terms of Reference for the review
4. a Self Assessment Report which addresses the Terms of Reference
5. relevant performance data for the area being reviewed in a summary format (including as set out in next paragraph)
6. for School reviews, details of School teaching and research programs

Portfolio leaders (PVC’s) are invited to provide the Panel with a written, evidence-based submission about the area under review (addressing the TOR) or to provide comment on the Self Assessment Report. Such commentary is provided to the School/Unit to assist in finalising its Self Assessment Report, and is also provided to the Review Panel as part of University briefing materials.

The University also provides the Review Panel with a summary overview of the Self Assessment, and suggests areas the Review Panel might include in its considerations and report.

**Stage 3: Review Panel processes and visit**

Review Panels consider the University briefing materials in the context of the TOR for the Review. This process generally occurs over a series of teleconferences where the Panel shapes its view about the areas of focus for the report, and requests any additional information etc from the University. The Panel may decide to undertake a formal visit to the area being reviewed in order to explore more fully areas of focus and interest. Such visits would normally be of not more than 2 days duration. The visit would be shaped by an agreed agenda between the Panel and the area being reviewed. During the visit, Panels would normally hold discussions with the relevant Division Head/Dean of School/Unit head and their management team; managers and a selection of staff of the area being reviewed; as well as client and partner groups, and other relevant University portfolio leaders/staff.

At the conclusion of the visit whilst the Panel is still on site, the Panel provides indicative feedback/impressions to the Dean of School/Unit head of the area being reviewed. An important aspect of this feedback is to provide an opportunity to clarify any misconceptions on the part of the Panel and/or any apparent/potential errors of fact or emphasis on the part of the Review Panel.
Stage 4: Review Panel Report and Action Plan

The Review Panel report is drafted by the Manager, Planning and Review at the direction of the Panel Chair. The draft of the report is forwarded to the relevant Division Head for their information and comment before the report is finalised. The main purpose of this process is to provide the responsible Executive member with a final opportunity to clarify any aspect of the report with the Panel, and address errors of fact or emphasis. The Division Head would normally share the draft report with the Dean of School/Head of Unit of the area being reviewed as part of this process.

The final Report from the Panel is presented to the Vice Chancellor by the Panel Chair.

The Vice Chancellor invites the relevant Dean of School/Head of Unit being reviewed to comment formally on the report as part of the process of developing an agreed action plan to address issues arising from the review report. The action plan is agreed between the Vice Chancellor and the relevant Dean/Division Head.

A briefing, as well as copies of the Review Panel Report Executive Summary and Action Plan, are provided for University Executive and Board of Trustees.

Stage 5: Follow up

The review sponsor provides an annual progress report on the implementation of the report’s recommendations to SQC and reports progress to the Vice-Chancellor via the UWS Executive until all recommendations have been addressed. OSQ assists with the monitoring of Action Plan implementation.

Timelines for undertaking Cyclical Reviews

The GANTT chart at Appendix A sets out in more detail the indicative steps involved in UWS Cyclical Reviews, as well as the associated timeframes involved.
4. **Guidelines for Staff Involved in Reviews**

**Executive Sponsor for the Review**

It is expected that the Review Sponsor will:

1. Be thoroughly familiar with the UWS Reviews Policy and the UWS Review Process

2. With the Executive Director of Strategy & Quality (OSQ), produce a document justifying the review for submission to the Vice-Chancellor via the UWS Strategy & Quality Committee and the UWS Executive. This would normally be produced and approved 12 months in advance of the review, except with the agreement of the Vice-Chancellor.

3. If the review is approved by the Vice-Chancellor, work with the Executive Director of Strategy & Quality to:
   a. Produce Terms of Reference for the review which are consistent with the UWS Reviews
   b. Policy and the focus of the review as agreed by the Vice-Chancellor;
   c. Provide a recommendation as to who will chair the review and the membership of the review panel. In some cases an honorarium may be relevant. In such cases this will be approved by the Vice-Chancellor;
   d. Identify the Review Manager and, if necessary, additional support staff;
   e. Clarify the nature of the self-assessment documentation to be delivered to the panel, as well as who will produce it and the data necessary to inform it. (In some instances it will be useful to involve the panel chair in this step);
   f. Endorse the timetable, interview schedule and other activities for the site visit;

Outcomes of the above steps will be considered by UWS Strategy and Quality Committee and, when endorsed, forwarded for approval by the Vice-Chancellor via UWS Executive.

4. In conjunction with the Executive Director of Strategy & Quality (OSQ), oversee the review to ensure that the process operates efficiently and effectively (including promotion of the review, confirmation of venue, accommodation and travel for external members, production of the self-assessment portfolio, delivery of any supplementary information requested by the panel, assistance for the panel chair and follow up on the review).

5. Check the draft review report for errors of fact or emphasis.

6. Ensure that those affirmations and recommendations of the review approved by the Vice-Chancellor are followed up promptly, wisely and effectively. To ensure that follow up is effective the sponsor will work with the relevant Divisional Head/Executive Dean and the Executive Director of Strategy & Quality to develop an implementation plan for endorsement by SQC and approval by the Vice-
Chancellor. This plan will include - for each affirmation or recommendation - targets, timelines, success indicators and accountabilities for delivery.

7. Provide an annual progress report on the implementation of the actions being taken to address the affirmations and recommendations to SQC until all have been addressed.

**Review Panel Chair**

It is expected that the Review Panel Chair will:

1. Be thoroughly familiar with the UWS Reviews Policy and the UWS Reviews Process.

2. Sign the UWS Confidentiality Undertaking and/or inform the Review Manager if s/he has any potential conflict of interest.

3. Read the review self-assessment portfolio and all the submissions to the review.

4. Chair the pre-visit meeting/teleconference with panel members on the review’s self-assessment portfolio and submissions. The focus of this meeting is to identify:
   
   a. Any supplementary information to be provided to the panel prior to the site visit
   b. The potential commendations, affirmations and recommendations to be tested during the site visit and panel interviews
   c. Which members of the panel will be responsible for interview questions in particular areas
   d. How the panel will test the veracity of the claims made in the self-assessment portfolio during the interviews.

5. With the Review Manager, ensure that all supplementary information requested by the panel is delivered to it prior to the site visit and confirm the key panel member responsibilities during the site visit, including which specific questions/tests each panel member will pursue across different interview groups.

6. Ensure panel members are clear on how the site visit interviews will operate, their specific role, and the expected ways of behaving during them. This would include emphasising the importance of creating a collegial, trusting and professional atmosphere; along with the importance of avoiding making personal judgments on the responses given and ensuring that conclusions drawn from interviews are evidence-based and align with data from other sources.
7. Chair the interviews undertaken during the site visit. For each interview group to:
   a. Welcome the interviewees, introduce the panel, explain the purposes of the review and outline how their time with the panel will be handled
   b. Confirm that what individuals say will remain confidential and that what is referred to in the final report will be aggregated and consistent views, not individual ones
   c. Coordinate questioning by each panel member, ensuring that this process remains generally on target and that responses are succinct enough to enable all planned questions for each interview session to be addressed
   d. Allow some new, unexpected lines of inquiry to be pursued.

8. During the period set aside between meeting each interview group (normally about 15 minutes):
   a. Determine the key outcomes from the previous set of interviews against the key questions being pursued
   b. Identify any new areas for follow up
   c. Ensure that the Review Manager has accurately and succinctly recorded the points made
   d. Review the progress being made and identify any aspects of questioning that require enhancement

9. At the end of the interview process:
   a. Confirm the key commendations, affirmations and recommendations with the panel
   b. Confirm the reasons that will be used to justify them.

10. With the Review Manager, produce a draft review report against the agreed Terms of Reference including a set of commendations, affirmations and recommendations; assuring that these are consistent with the tested conclusions of the panel and take into consideration a triangulated analysis of the self-assessment portfolio, submissions, interviews and other data generated during the review process.

11. After feedback from the panel on the draft report, finalise it with the Review Manager.

12. Test the final draft with the Review Sponsor for errors of fact or emphasis.

13. Then forward the completed report for endorsement by the UWS Strategy and Quality Committee and transmission via the UWS Executive to the UWS Vice-Chancellor for approval.

14. Return all materials provided during the review to the Review Manager at the end of the process.

15. If appropriate, provide feedback to the Executive Director (OSQ) and Manger of Planning & Review on the overall review process, including how the operation of similar reviews in the future might be further enhanced.
Review Panel Member

It is expected that each member of the review panel will:

1. Be thoroughly familiar with the UWS Reviews Policy and the UWS Reviews Process (Attachment One).

2. Sign the UWS Confidentiality Undertaking and/or inform the Review Manager if s/he has any potential conflict of interest.

3. Read the review self-assessment portfolio and all the submissions to the review.

4. Participate in the pre-visit meeting/teleconference on the review’s self-assessment portfolio and submissions. The focus of this meeting is to identify:
   a. Any supplementary information the panel wishes to be provided with prior to the site visit
   b. The potential commendations, affirmations and recommendations to be tested during the site visit and panel interview phase
   c. Which members of the panel will be responsible for interview questions in particular areas
   d. How the panel will test the veracity of the claims made in the self-assessment portfolio during the interviews.

5. Study all of requested supplementary information prior to the site visit and confirm with the Chair/Review Manager specific responsibilities during the site visit, including which specific questions/tests you will pursue across different interview groups.

6. Clarify how the site visit interviews will operate, including your specific role, and the expected ways of behaving during them.

7. Seek to apply the following guidelines during on-site interviews:
   a. Seek to create a collegial, trusting and professional atmosphere
   b. Approach interviewees with tact and diplomacy
   c. Target your agreed question to the person(s) best positioned to answer it. Then ask if others have anything additional to say on that question;
   d. It is quite appropriate to pursue briefly an unexpected but directly relevant issue, should this arise. The Panel Chair will oversee the time given to this process;
   e. Avoid making value judgements on what is being said.

8. During the period set aside between meetings with interview groups (normally about 15 minutes) assist the Chair to:
   a. Determine the key outcomes from the previous interview session against the key questions /issues to be pursued
   b. Identify any new areas for follow up
c. Ensure that the Review Manager has accurately and succinctly recorded the points made
d. Review the progress being made and identify any aspects of questioning that require enhancement.

9. At the end of the interview process assist the Chair to:

a. Confirm the key commendations, affirmations and recommendations in the light of the evidence presented in both the written materials submitted and the interviews or other aspects of the site visit;
b. Confirm the reasons that will be used to justify them.

10. Evaluate the draft review report against the review’s agreed Terms of Reference, returning comments to the Review Chair within the agreed timeframe for providing feedback. This would normally include assessing the set of commendations, affirmations and recommendations in the draft for their consistency with the tested conclusions of the panel; taking into consideration a triangulated analysis of the self-assessment portfolio, submissions, interviews and other data generated during the review process.

11. Return all materials provided during the review to the Review Manager at the end of the process.

12. If appropriate, provide feedback to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality) on the overall review process, including how the operation of similar reviews in the future might be further enhanced.

**Review Manager**

It is expected that the review manager will:

1. Be thoroughly familiar with the UWS Reviews Policy and the UWS Review Process (Attachment One).

2. Ensure the smooth operation and delivery of all of the following organisational elements associated with the review:

a. Production of its Terms of Reference, panel member list, self-assessment portfolio, and any supplementary information requested by the panel
b. Confirm that all those involved in the review have signed the UWS Confidentiality Undertaking, and are familiar with the UWS Review Policy, Review Process and this set of guidelines
c. Deliver all the organisational elements for the review, including travel and accommodation for any external panel members; confirmation of interview times and locations with those concerned and their briefing on what will happen; food, booking and set up of the interview rooms for the site visit etc

3. Take notes on and, under the direction of the panel chair, action the outcomes of the pre-site visit teleconference.
4. Take notes on the outcomes of each set of interviews during the site visit under the direction of the Panel Chair.

5. Assist the panel chair to produce the draft review report and ensure this is distributed with clear guidelines for review to the panel and that timely feedback is received.

6. Assist the panel chair to produce the final draft of the report and ensure that it is promptly considered by the UWS Strategy and Quality Committee and forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor via the UWS Executive.

7. Ensure all materials produced for the review are returned and are disposed of appropriately.

8. Seek and consolidate feedback from the panel chair and panel on how to further enhance the UWS Reviews process and forward this to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality).

**Interviewee Support**

It is the responsibility of the Review Manager to ensure that all of those interviewed:

1. Are clear on the purposes of the review – that, for example, the main objective is to improve the quality of what UWS is doing in the area being studied.

2. Understand that, during the site interviews, they are to respond to questions when they are directed to them and to do so authentically and honestly from their perspective; that there are no right or wrong answers; that what they say is confidential and that they will be informed of the review’s outcomes.

**Head of School or Organisational Unit being reviewed**

It is expected that the Head of School/ Organisational Unit being reviewed will:

1. Be thoroughly familiar with the UWS Reviews Policy and the UWS Review process (Attachment One).

2. Facilitate the successful progress of the review, i.e.
   a. Actively participate in the consultation processes associated with developing the Terms of Reference for the review
   b. Actively promote the review and communicate its Terms of Reference to School/ Unit staff
   c. Lead the process of self-review within the School/Unit;
   d. Facilitate access by the review panel to relevant School/Unit staff within operational requirements
   e. Take responsibility for actioning review outcomes which fall within the School/ Unit’s responsibility, and develop a plan to address these
f. Provide regular feedback to the review sponsor on progress in implementing review outcomes.

3. The Head of School/Unit would normally lead a self-review process within the School/Unit. This would be an open and collaborative process involving relevant staff, and would be assisted by OSQ, and informed by performance data, and a range of other evidence. The self assessment would focus specifically on the areas identified in the Terms of Reference. This process would be evidence-based and outcome oriented, with a view to developing proposed action plans and associated measures of success. OSQ staff are able to provide advice about the self review process and a suitable indicative format for this.
Appendix A

Indicative Process and Timeframe for conducting Cyclical Review (Schools & Administrative Units) – UWS.
This is a guide only and timeframes will need to be adjusted around key workload peaks, leave periods, availability of external panel members etc

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<th>Activity</th>
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<th>post review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop &amp; approve Terms of Reference</td>
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<td>ED &amp; VC</td>
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<td>2. Approve Review Panel membership</td>
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<td>3. Develop performance diagnostic report(s)</td>
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<td>4. Invite Panel Members &amp; provide copy of TOR</td>
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<td>5. Conduct School/Unit self assessment process</td>
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<td>6. Conduct Panel briefing on process (teleconf)</td>
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<td>7. Invite UWS comments on self assessment</td>
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<td>8. Develop other briefing materials for Panel</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Panel considers briefing materials</td>
<td>(see more detailed explanation below)</td>
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<td>Review Panel</td>
<td>OSQ, DOS &amp; Review Panel</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Panel visits University</td>
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<td>Review Panel</td>
<td>OSQ, DOS &amp; Review Panel</td>
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1. Develop and approve Terms of Reference: Using the UWS Cyclical Review template based on the ‘Making The Difference’ priorities, Division Head/Dean of School and OSQ develop draft TOR in consultation with Head of area being reviewed, and relevant Portfolio Leaders (PVC’s, Dean Indigenous Education etc). TOR approved by Vice Chancellor.

2. Approve Review Panel membership: Division Head/Executive Dean proposes a list of approximately 5 external Review Panel members, from which 3-4 are approved by the VC. VC approves Panel Chair.

3. Develop performance diagnostic report: Executive Director Strategy & Quality (OSQ) provides formal advice to Head of area being reviewed about the Review process, including the requirement for a self assessment to be undertaken. OSQ also provides a diagnostic summary of key areas of strength for the School/Unit and areas for potential attention arising from performance and benchmark data; along with a broad outline of the key challenges for the university and the sector. These
documents are provided to assist the Head of the area being reviewed in addressing both current provisioning and future positioning considerations as specified in the TOR.

4. Invite Panel members and provide copy of TOR: Executive Director S&Q (OSQ) issues invitation via email to approved Panel members, and arranges a formal invitation form the Vice Chancellor. OSQ provides Panel Members with a broad outline of the review process, as well as indicative steps and timelines. Panel members are referred to the UWS Review Policy and Guidelines and given university contact points (OSQ staff).

5. Conduct the School/Unit self assessment process: Head of area being reviewed leads this process within their School/Unit, with a view to developing a report which assesses performance under each of the Terms of Reference. This report is to be evidence based and to identify action plans in areas where performance improvement is identified. This process should reflect a high degree of liaison with University Portfolio Leaders (PVC’s in particular), and the process should be as inclusive as possible of School/Unit staff members. The self assessment is to address current provisioning as well as future positioning considerations around the TOR.

6. Conduct the Panel briefing on process: OSQ provides the Panel with a detailed outline of the Review process, and draws the attention of Panel members to their roles, responsibilities etc as set out in the UWS Reviews Policy and Guidelines. OSQ also recommends a process for the Panel to follow which will optimise its effectiveness and efficient use of the valuable time of members. Elements of the process are outlined and their relationship explained (eg self assessment process: University briefing materials; Panel activity prior to visit; purpose of visit; development and presentation of report).

7. Invite UWS comment on the self assessment: OSQ formally invites Portfolio Leaders to comment of the self assessment report. The desirable approach is that the Head of the area being reviewed seeks input from relevant portfolio areas in conducting the self assessment, so that in most cases this process will involve program areas indicating they support the self assessment report as it relates to their areas of responsibility (eg Engagement; L&T, Research; Indigenous Education; OAR; HRM; Finance; etc).

8. Develop other briefing material for Panel: OSQ compiles a package of performance data relating to the area being reviewed from UWS systems (TILT etc), and obtains for the Panel any other information/data considered relevant to its deliberations. This includes a summary of key review/change activities being undertaken or considered by the university that may be of relevance (eg in areas relating to student administration, or HRM policy and practice etc).

9. The Panel considers the briefing materials: Using the self assessment report and briefing materials the Panel develops a preliminary view about the veracity of the self assessment as supported by the evidence. The Panel requests clarification and/or further data or explanation where necessary. It also considers the relevance/quality/ achievability of future positioning strategy, and identifies issues for potential focus in their report, and for further exploration through a visit to the School.

10. Panel visits University: Panel meets with individuals and groups of staff as it determines appropriate. The schedule for the visit activities is pre-arranged (to the extent possible) by OSQ to maximise the effectiveness of the time the Panel has available. The Panel provides indicative impressions by way of feedback to the Head of the area being reviewed at the conclusion of the site visit, as well as to the relevant Division Head/Executive Dean. The final 2-3 hours of the Panel visit are
dedicated to the Panel meeting to decide the content of their report so that the OSQ staff member on the Panel can commence the drafting process.

11. Preparation of the Panel Report: This report is drafted by the Executive Director/Review Manager at direction of the Panel Chair.

12. Presentation of the Panel Report: As arranged between the Panel and the university.

13. to 15. The Division Head/Executive Dean is invited to comment on the report findings before consideration by University Executive. An Action Plan is developed by Division Head/ED and agreed by the VC. Copy of Panel Report Exec Summary and Action Plan are presented to University Executive and BOT.

OSQ monitors implementation and assists the Division Head/ED report to Executive and BOT on progress. Progress reports required on a 6 monthly basis until all aspects addressed.