



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

**University of Limerick
Quality Management System Framework
for Support Units**

Revision 1

Approved by Governing Authority Strategic Planning & Quality Assurance Committee (GASPOA)

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UL QMS Framework for Support Units

The overall purpose of a quality review of a UL support unit is to assess the status of the unit's quality management system (QMS). The QMS must show compliance with the ISO-based seven principles of quality management. Collectively, these principles provide the framework that defines the scope and ethos of the QMS, which is then operationalised in practice by the unit through its policies, documents and processes (section 2.2.2 of [Quality Review Process for Support Units Guidelines and QMS Framework](#)).

Each of the seven principles of quality management is outlined individually. For each principle, a brief statement that outlines the rationale behind the principle is given. Evaluation criteria, which can be used by the QRG to assess the unit's conformance to the principle, are specified. Finally, questions for self-evaluation, which can be used by the unit and auditors when making an in-house assessment of the status of the QMS and when preparing for a quality review, are listed.

Principle 1: Customer Focus

"The primary focus of quality management is to meet and strive to exceed customer requirements. Sustained success is achieved when a unit attracts and retains the confidence of customers and other interested parties on whom it depends. Every aspect of customer interaction provides an opportunity to create more value for the customer."

Evaluation Criteria

- The extent to which customer requirements and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements are determined and met.
- Evidence that risks and opportunities that can affect service delivery and the ability to enhance customer satisfaction are determined and addressed.
- The extent to which the unit focuses on enhancing customer satisfaction.
- The establishment of a two-way customer communications process.
- Objective evidence of obtaining and acting on customer feedback (opinion surveys, focus groups, compliments, complaints).
- The publication of a customer charter for the unit.

Self-Evaluation Questions

- Have you defined your customer base in the quality manual?
- How do you ensure that customer requirements are met?
- How do you ensure that statutory and regulatory requirements are met (if applicable)?
- Have you written and published a customer charter?
- Do you have a documented communications process?
- How do you manage relationships with customers to achieve sustained success?
- Is customer feedback used as an input to your QMS?
- Do you have a process in place to monitor and review customer feedback?
- Do you report back to customers on actions taken?
- Do you publish customer feedback reports?
- How do you ensure that customer satisfaction is maintained?

Principle 2: Leadership

“Leaders at all levels establish unity of purpose and direction and create conditions in which people are engaged in achieving the quality objectives of the unit. By establishing a common purpose, leaders can ensure that all strategies, policies, processes and resources are aligned and being used to pursue a common direction and to achieve a common set of objectives.”

Evaluation Criteria

- Evidence that the unit’s management team has ensured that the quality policy and objectives are established for the QMS and are compatible with the strategic direction of the university.
- The extent to which the quality policy is embedded in the ethos of the unit.
- The identification of risks and of the necessary actions to be taken to address these (risk register).
- The identification by management of the resources required for the establishment, maintenance and continual improvement of the QMS and the extent to which the responsibilities and authorities for relevant roles are assigned, communicated and understood.
- The extent to which management determines, provides and maintains the appropriate infrastructure (buildings, equipment, etc.) and environment (physical, social, psychological) for the operation of the unit’s processes.
- When addressing changing needs and trends, the extent to which management considers the unit’s current knowledge and determines how to acquire or access any necessary additional knowledge.
- An evidence-based approach to reviewing the QMS, at planned intervals, to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness.
- The extent to which the integrity of the QMS is maintained when changes are planned and implemented.

Self-Evaluation Questions

- How does management demonstrate its commitment to quality management?
- How do you identify risks and opportunities that could influence performance?
- What measures are taken to address the identified risks and opportunities?
- How do you assess the effectiveness of actions taken to address risks and opportunities?
- What records are kept of planning for quality management?
- How do you ensure that the quality policy is compatible with the strategic direction and context of the unit?
- Are strategic objectives set in line with university objectives?
- How is progress on objectives reviewed?
- How do you ensure the integration of the QMS requirements into your key business processes?
- Do you capture lessons learned from successes and failures?
- How do you address changing needs and trends?
- How does management review the ongoing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the QMS?
- How do you ensure a unit-wide commitment to quality?

Principle 3: Engagement of People

“It is essential for the university that all staff be competent, empowered and engaged in delivering value. To manage a unit effectively and efficiently, it is important to involve all staff at all levels and to respect them as individuals. Recognition, empowerment and enhancement of skills and knowledge facilitate the engagement of people in achieving organisational objectives.”

Evaluation Criteria

- The extent to which the unit ensures that employees are competent on the basis of education, training and/or experience.
- Evidence that annual Performance Development Review System (PDRS) meetings are conducted with all staff.
- Maintenance by the unit of training evaluation records.
- The identification by management of the responsibilities and authorities for all relevant roles and the extent to which these are assigned, communicated and understood.
- The extent to which staff are made aware of the value of their individual contribution to the effectiveness of the QMS.
- The encouragement of teamwork to invoke an ethos of inclusiveness and collaboration.

Self-Evaluation Questions

- How do you ensure that staff have the competencies and skills required to perform their work tasks?
- What actions are taken to ensure that staff acquire the required competencies if there is a shortfall?
- Do you conduct regular PDRS meetings?
- Do you evaluate the effectiveness of training undertaken by staff?
- How do you share information about ongoing changes and development of the QMS with staff?
- How do you encourage staff to contribute to making the QMS more effective?
- How are staff suggestions for improvement recorded?
- Are staff notified of outcomes relating to their suggestions for improvement?
- Are teams used for quality improvement initiatives?
- How is collaboration encouraged within the unit?
- How do you facilitate open discussion and sharing of knowledge and experience?

Principle 4: Process Approach

“Consistent and predictable results are achieved more effectively and efficiently when activities are understood and managed as interrelated processes that function as a coherent system. Process approach is a management strategy. When managers use this approach, it means that they manage and control their processes, the interactions between these processes, and the inputs and outputs that tie these processes together as a coherent system. Understanding how results are produced by this system allows for performance optimisation.”

Evaluation Criteria

- The extent to which units establish, implement, maintain and continually improve all the processes outlined in the QMS.
- The identification of the sequence and interaction of the processes, which clearly outline process inputs and outputs.
- The identification, review and control of changes to processes.
- An evidence-based approach to risk identification and management by the unit to give assurance that the QMS can achieve its intended results.
- The documentation and publication of the following QMS processes:
 - Internal Audit
 - Communications
 - Documentation Control
 - Training and Development
- Publication on the web of the scope and content of the QMS.

Self-Evaluation Questions

- What is the scope of your QMS?
- How do you plan for changes or modifications to the QMS?
- Do you determine process inter-dependencies and analyse the effect of changes on individual processes and on the QMS as a whole?
- What are the key outputs of your QMS?
- How do you ensure that customer requirements feed into your business processes?
- Does your unit have a risk register?
- How do you address business risks?
- How do you evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken to address risk?
- Have you identified the records that are needed to maintain your QMS?
- How are QMS objectives set for the unit?
- How are actions against objectives reviewed?
- How do you ensure the QMS is embedded into daily work practices?
- How do you review processes for effectiveness?
- Is your QMS published on the web?

Principle 5: Continual Improvement

“Continual improvement is the ethos underpinning quality management systems. To achieve success, there must be an ongoing focus on improvement. Improvement is essential for a unit to maintain current levels of performance, to react to changes in its internal and external conditions and to create new opportunities. Continual improvement is a recurring activity to enhance performance. Continual improvement should be a permanent objective of every unit.”

Evaluation Criteria

- The extent to which the unit determines and selects opportunities for improvement and implements the actions needed to meet customer requirements and enhance customer satisfaction.
- Evidence that the unit continually improves the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the QMS.
- The publication of an annual audit schedule.
- The extent to which audits take into consideration the quality objectives, the importance of the processes concerned, customer feedback, changes affecting the unit and the results of previous audits.
- The documentation and publication of a complaints process that outlines how complaints are received, who is responsible for responding, how corrective and preventive actions are recorded and how the process is reviewed for effectiveness.
- The extent to which the unit considers the outputs of analysis and evaluation and the outputs from management review to check for under-performing areas or opportunities that will be addressed as part of the continual improvement process.
- Evidence of corrective actions taken to address any deficiencies identified in the QMS.
- The selection and utilisation of applicable tools and methodologies for investigating the causes of under-performance and for supporting continual improvement.

Self-Evaluation Questions

- How are opportunities for improvement identified by the unit?
- How are corrective actions identified?
- Does the unit have an audit schedule?
- Does the unit have a panel of trained auditors?
- Do auditors participate in the audits of other support units?
- How are audit findings reviewed for effectiveness?
- What tools and methodologies are used to support improvement?
- How often does management review the effectiveness and ongoing improvement of the QMS?
- Does the unit have a quality improvement plan?
- How often is this plan reviewed?
- Are metrics in place for process improvement?
- Is trend data gathered and analysed?
- Does the quality policy include a commitment to continual improvement?

Principle 6: Evidence-Based Decision Making

“Decisions based on the analysis and evaluation of data and information are more likely to produce desired results. Decision making can be a complex process and may involve a degree of uncertainty. It is important to understand cause and effect relationships and potential unintended consequences. Facts, evidence and data analysis lead to greater objectivity and confidence in decision making.”

Evaluation Criteria

- The extent to which the unit outlines what needs to be monitored and measured, when the monitoring and measuring will be performed and when the results from monitoring and measurement will be analysed and evaluated.
- The extent to which the unit evaluates the resources required to ensure valid and reliable monitoring and measuring of results.
- The extent to which the unit ensures that data and information are accurate, reliable and secure.
- The extent to which the output from monitoring and evaluation is used to (i) assess and enhance customer satisfaction; (ii) ensure the QMS conforms to standards and is effective; (iii) demonstrate that planning has been successfully implemented; and (iv) determine opportunities for improving the QMS.
- Documented evidence that the unit evaluates the performance and effectiveness of the QMS at defined intervals.

Self-Evaluation Questions

- What quality-related data are measured by the unit?
- What metrics are in place to measure business performance?
- How do you use outputs from measuring to demonstrate that requirements are being met?
- How do you evaluate the performance of your QMS?
- What data are used as inputs for the management review process?
- How do you demonstrate that planning has been successfully implemented?
- How do you know that your processes are achieving their intended results?
- What trend data are gathered by the unit?
- Are records of problems kept by the unit?
- What key performance indicators (KPIs) have been defined by the unit?
- Is benchmarking being undertaken by the unit?
- How do you ensure that monitoring and measurement is adequately resourced?
- How are the results from monitoring and measurement analysed and evaluated?
- How do you ensure that the data you use are accurate, reliable and secure?
- What documented evidence is retained by the unit that your monitoring and measurement strategies are fit for purpose?

Principle 7: Relationship Management

“Sustained success is more likely to be achieved when an organisation manages relationships with its interested parties to optimise their impact on its performance. Due to the impact or potential impact on the unit’s ability to consistently provide services that meet customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, the unit should monitor and review the information about these interested parties and their relevant requirements.”

Evaluation Criteria

- The extent to which the unit monitors and reviews information about all interested parties and their relevant requirements.
- The establishment of criteria to select and evaluate external service providers.
- The extent to which the unit’s communications process clearly outlines the methods of communication with both internal and external stakeholders.
- Inclusion in the quality manual of details of relationships within UL and with the wider community and professional bodies.
- Identification by the unit of collaborative working relationships with suppliers, partners and other interested parties.

Self-Evaluation Questions

- Who are the interested parties relevant to the QMS?
- How do you determine these interested parties’ requirements?
- What processes are in place to manage the unit’s relationship with these interested parties?
- Are any of your services provided by external companies?
- How do you think externally provided services could potentially affect your unit’s ability to meet customer requirements?
- Do you have service level agreements (SLAs) with external providers?
- How do you ensure that outsourced services remain within the scope of your QMS?
- Does the unit have a communications process for both internal and external stakeholders?
- How is the campus community informed of services provided by the unit?
- Are details of relationships with the wider community and professional bodies outlined in the quality manual?
- Do you engage in collaborative development and improvement activities with suppliers, partners or other interested parties?

Revision History

Rev. no.	Date	Approved by	Details of change	Process owner
1	26 Jan 2016	Executive: 13 Jan 2016 GASPQA: 26 Jan 2016	Initial release of QMS framework	Director of Quality