



Protocol for mid-term programme reviews

Leiden University, 30 March 2021

1. Purpose and structure of the mid term review

The mid-term review forms part of the six-year quality assurance cycle for education and takes place halfway through the accreditation cycle.

The mid-term review focuses in particular on educational development, which means that the programme department and its peers engage in a substantive dialogue about the quality of the programme. The review also contributes to the objectives and wishes of the department and the faculty. It focuses on the development needs of the programme as well as the department's own plans and challenges. To facilitate this, the mid-term review does not have to follow a specific format; the programme department itself is free to choose how it wants to structure the process.

Position in the university's quality assurance system

The mid-term review is part of Leiden University's internal quality assurance system for education. It is an independent assessment that takes place in the third year of the accreditation cycle. The mid-term review ensures that the programme department's plans and developments are subject to external evaluation.

The development-oriented approach of the mid-term review is consistent with its embedding in an effective quality assurance system and the result of two positive institutional audits. The underlying principle is that there is confidence in the faculty and the programme department and in their ability to monitor and promote the quality of the programme. The mid-term review is not a mini audit, but rather a component of quality assurance that is designed by the programme department itself, whereby the advice of independent peers is sought.

Purpose

The mid-term review is an independent (external) assessment conducted by peers in the third year of the accreditation cycle. The purpose of this review is to:

1. Assess relevant developments within the programme on the basis of the programme department's own vision and choices;
2. Assess the level and quality of the final papers (Ba) and theses (Ma/RMa) on the basis of random samples;
3. Assess, if desired, whether the programme department is adequately implementing the Action Plan that was drawn up on the basis of the assessment report.

2. Structure and scope of a mid-term review

The programme department takes the lead in designing the mid-term review.

The mid-term review focuses explicitly on development and on providing the programme department with feedback on its plans, questions and challenges. This means that the department and its peers engage in a substantive dialogue about the quality of the programme as well as the objectives and wishes of the department and the faculty.

The programme department is free to design the mid-term review as it sees fit and submits a memorandum containing development-related questions to the panel. For further information, the panel relies as much as possible on existing documents (including assessments of theses).



No specified format

The programme department itself may decide on the most suitable format for the mid-term review. The mid-term review is not a mini audit, but rather a component of quality assurance that is designed by the department itself and whereby the advice of independent peers is sought. The department itself chooses which aspects to address. It is not necessary to assess all the standards and aspects included in the assessment framework.

In addition to discussions based on the questions submitted, other formats may also be considered, for example a symposium on education, a consultation with additional stakeholders other than the two peers, such as the social council, other methods or presentations and greater student involvement. The department is free to make its own choices in this respect.

As long as the review culminates in a written report on the development-related questions and the panel's recommendations on them, the programme has a considerable amount of freedom.

Conditions

The mid-term review is subject to a number of conditions.

- The mid-term review must be completed three years before the submission date for the next audit (i.e. approximately three years after the previous audit).
- The Faculty Board is ultimately responsible for the format and nature of the mid-term review.
- The panel must consist of at least two independent (external) peers and one colleague from Leiden University.
- A selection of final projects/theses must be assessed.
- The panel's findings must be published in a report for the Faculty Board and the Executive Board.

The panel issues an assessment of the following:

- Advice and feedback on the programme's development issues, based on those issues submitted to the panel.
- The learning outcomes achieved within the programme, based on the final projects/theses.
- If desired: how the programme has developed since the previous audit.

In order to safeguard the learning outcomes achieved within the programme, the panel always assesses a number of theses or final projects/theses (at least three per programme). This is so that it can evaluate whether the students' final attainment levels are in line with the academic expectations of the field. The panel also evaluates whether the assessment of theses and final projects/theses is adequate.

3. Composition of the panel

- The mid-term review panel consists of at least three members.
- External members: In order to ensure an independent, external perspective, the panel has two external members with expertise in the subject matter covered by the degree programme (for example, a colleague from a related programme).
- An expert from Leiden University: The panel also includes a member from Leiden who is an expert in the field of quality assurance in education (for example, a faculty portfolio holder for education, a programme director, someone who has successfully completed the Educational Leadership course, a Teaching Fellow). This way, faculties and programmes can learn from each other and make use of each other's expertise.
- A student member (optional).



Panel members may act in various capacities, depending on the format of the mid-term review, for example as participants in a symposium on education or a round-table discussion, or as participants in peer feedback sessions.

The faculty provides the panel with secretarial support.

4. Information for the panel

The panel bases its assessment on the memorandum submitted by the programme department containing development-related questions and on selected recent final papers.

In addition, the panel may examine existing relevant documents, such as:

- The assessment report and Action Plan based on the previous assessment
- Programme annual reports, Boards of Examiners' reports and programme metrics
- The most recent version of the course and examination regulations
- Progress reports and evaluation documents regarding major changes or innovations
- Supplementary memorandum presenting the current status of the Action Plan

5. The report

The mid-term review panel presents its conclusions and recommendations in a concise report, in which it identifies good practices and areas for improvement. The panel submits its final report no later than one month after the mid-term site visit.

The final report is addressed to the Programme Board and the Faculty Board and is submitted to the Executive Board for information.

Due to the open and development-oriented approach of the panel to issues and problems identified by the programme department itself, the reports are expected to contain many more recommendations and critical observations than is currently the case. This is the added value of the mid-term review. At the same time, it may present a distorted picture of the quality of the programme. For this reason, the mid-term review report is not published externally (unlike an assessment report). It is, however, made available for the institutional audit and for the next programme assessment, during which the context of the development-oriented approach can be explained.

6. Organisation and timetable

The mid-term review takes place halfway through the accreditation cycle and must be completed three years before the submission date for the next audit.

Implementation plan

The mid-term review takes place per programme or cluster of programmes and applies to both new and existing programmes. The Faculty Board is responsible for ensuring that the mid-term review is carried out in a timely manner and that the questions proposed are appropriate.

The implementation plan must be approved by the Rector Magnificus.



No later than three months before the start of the mid-term review, the faculty's portfolio holder for education submits a plan for the implementation of the mid-term review to the Rector Magnificus. This plan contains the questions, the composition of the panel and the timetable.

In exceptional cases, the Faculty Board may decide that a mid-term review will not offer any added value, for example if the programmes have already received positive assessments in several audits and if the programme annual reports do not reveal a need for an additional mid-term review (other than the usual annual reports). If the Faculty Board is of the opinion that a programme consistently performs well and the programme department has no development issues of its own that it would like to address, a substantiated request can be submitted to the Executive Board for exemption from the mid-term review.

Contactperson is the policy adviser on Education and Quality Assurance at the Strategy and Academic Affairs Directorate.

Report and quality improvements

The portfolio holder for education presents the final report to the Rector Magnificus. If the conclusions and recommendations warrant this, additional consultations will be held between the Programme Board and the Faculty Board. The portfolio holder for education informs the Rector Magnificus about the completed mid-term reviews during the Annual Education Interview.

Quality improvements are implemented in the faculty. Supervisory bodies such as the Supervisory Board, the panel of an institutional audit or an audit panel can monitor and request information regarding follow-up measures.

Costs

Insofar as there are costs incurred in implementing the mid-term review, these will be borne by the faculty or degree programme.

This Protocol has been approved by the Executive Board 30 maart 2021