Guidelines for
CINNTE Virtual Review Visit

Contents

Background

QQI CINNTE Cyclical Review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015).

> **2.3 Implementing processes**
> Standard:
> External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include
> - a self-assessment or equivalent;
> - an external assessment normally including a site visit;
> - a report resulting from the external assessment;
> - a consistent follow-up
> (ESG 2015)

The related ESG guideline advises that institutional self-assessment (self-evaluation) is 'normally complemented by interviews with stakeholders during a site visit' (p. 19).   QQI's CINNTE Cyclical Review process is implemented consistent with this guidance and international practice, and to date has included a site visit to the institution by a QQI-appointed international review team.

The opening statement for the ENQA General Assembly in April by ENQA President[1] recognised the massive impact of COVID-19 on the work of quality assurance agencies, as international reviewers can no longer travel, and on-site visits are currently not possible. 'If COVID-19 stays with us, we will have

---

[1] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ENQA-GA-opening-statement_29April2020.pdf

to rethink our methodologies…, [t]his may create realities that call for new forms of external quality assurance' (ENQA General Assembly 29 April 2020)[2].

The ENQA statement in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic[3] encourages members to show flexibility in their review processes and confirms that ENQA membership or EQAR registration will not be jeopardised due to adaption of agencies' usual external quality assurance activities.

Virtual CINNTE Review Process

The COVID-19 restrictions require that QQI now adapt procedures relating to CINNTE institutional reviews, to include virtual review visits. This facilitates the continuation of the CINNTE institutional review process.

These guidelines are for the CINNTE virtual review process in respect of University of Limerick (UL).

A pilot institutional review was conducted in respect of Institute of Technology, Carlow, in June 2020. An evaluation of that pilot is ongoing. This review process will also be evaluated upon its conclusion. The outcomes of both evaluations will contribute to the creation of a revised suite of operating guidelines. In advance of this, some minor amendments have been made to the guidelines used for the pilot based on learning from that process.

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide operational guidelines to the review team, the institution and other stakeholders involved in the review visit meetings on utilising a virtual platform, Microsoft Teams, to enable all to carry out their functions and roles within the review process.

Note: Microsoft Teams is the platform for communication for this institutional review process and all technical guidance provide below relates to this platform.

The role and functions of each member of the external review team are outlined in the CINNTE Review Handbook, and advice and guidance for reviewers is also provided in and additional briefing material provided to the review team. These remain unchanged. However, virtual meetings create different situations that require a modified approach, as well as modified operating principles and guidelines.

Conducting the CINNTE visit remotely through virtual platforms creates the need for additional technical support for the review team and meeting participants. This function will be carried out by QQI. Although this requires QQI personnel to be present during meetings, these individuals are not participants in the meeting and are there in a supportive role only.

---

[2] Opening statement on COVID-19 for ENQA General Assembly, 29 April 2020 By ENQA President, Christoph Grolimund, on behalf of the ENQA Board.
[3] https://enqa.eu/index.php/enqa-statement-on-covid-19-pandemic/

Guidelines Virtual Visit

1. General Guidelines for All Participants

| Prior to the Meeting	1. The example below illustrates how to join a meeting from invitation using Microsoft Teams.
	a. Click on the 'Join Microsoft Teams Meeting' hyperlink in the meeting invitation.
	Click this link to bring you to the MS Teams meeting
	Click or tap to follow link.
	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting +353 1 566 103___ Ireland, Dublin (Toll) Conference ID: 349 150 528# Local numbers | Reset PIN | Learn more about Teams | Meeting options Quality and Qualifications Ireland - Online Meeting Facility
	b. When issued with a meeting invitation, you will be prompted to select how you want to join the Teams meeting. It is recommended that you select 'Continue on this browser'.
	How do you want to join your Teams meeting? Download the Windows app Use the desktop app for the best experience. Continue on this browser No download or installation required. Open your Teams app Already have it? Go right to your meeting.

b. Join the meeting by clicking on the **Join Now** button **10 minutes before commencement**. This should allow time to identify any technical problems and stakeholders to join the meeting.

Join the meeting by clicking here
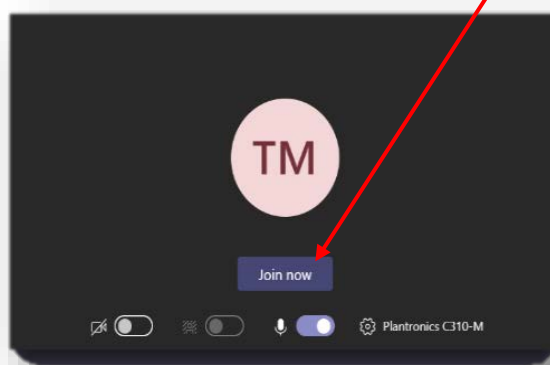
d. Please ensure that you enter your full name and affiliation/role when MS Teams prompts you for your name.
e. You can switch on and off your camera and/ or microphone as set out below.
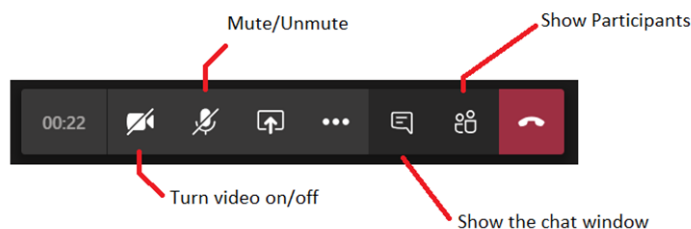
2. If you have internet connectivity issues, you should communicate this with your contact person(s) (for **review team members**, this will be QQI/the coordinating reviewer; for **institutional representatives and stakeholders**, this will be the institutional coordinator) by phone/text. If the connectivity issues cannot be resolved, you may need to dial into the meeting session using the phone number and PIN provided in the meeting invitation.

|	
	The phone number and conference ID are directly under the meeting link. The conference ID is unique to each meeting session. **Join Microsoft Teams Meeting** +353 1 566 1035 Ireland, Dublin (Toll) Conference ID: 286 927 237# Local numbers | Reset PIN | Learn more about Teams | Meeting options Quality and Qualifications Ireland - Online Meeting Facility

During the meeting	1. Mute your microphone once the chair has officially opened the meeting.
	
	   If you are hard of hearing or are participating from an environment that is not noise-free, you may find it useful to avail of the "live captions" function in Microsoft TEAMS.
	   To use live captions in a meeting, go to your meeting controls and select **More options** ••• → **Turn on live captions**.
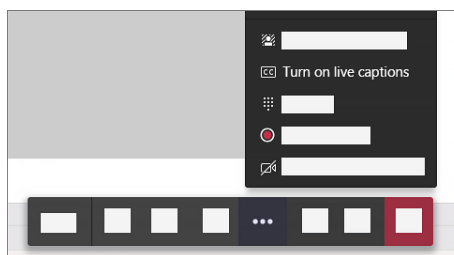	
	   To stop using live captions, go to the meeting controls and select **More options** ••• → **Turn off live captions**.
	
	   It should be noted that, depending on the version of MS Teams you are using, you may not have access to this function.
	
	2. If your internet connection supports it, keep your video turned on during the meeting. Turn your **microphone <u>on</u> when you are invited to speak** by the chair or the review team member leading the session.
	
	3. Speak clearly and in a normal voice. **Start your comment or question by stating your name (and, if applicable, the organisation you are representing).** This helps the review team and other participants to identify who is speaking and is particularly important if you are dialling into the meeting, as the review team members will not be able to see you.

4. When not speaking, **make sure your audio is muted**. This will prevent inadvertent noises, such as coughs, rattling papers, or squeaking chairs , from interrupting others.

5. Keep the chat side bar open and use it to highlight any problem that requires technical support (see image at 1 (e) above).

6. It is important to remember that, if your camera is turned on, all attendees will be able to see you and your surroundings during the meeting. It is recommended that you use background blur (accessible through 'show background effects' via the 'additional options' button) to minimise distractions.
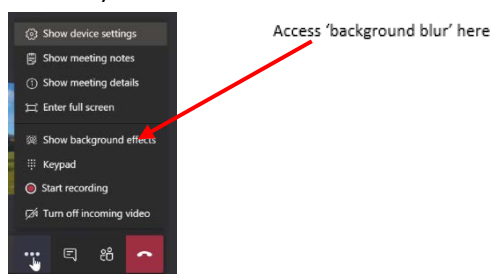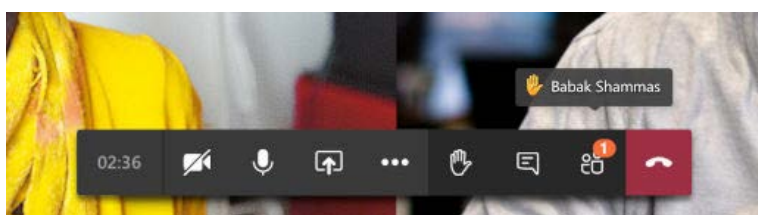

7. If you wish to raise a point or add an additional response to a question during the meeting, you can indicate your intention to the chair using the 'raise hand' function:

Select **Raise your hand** in the meeting controls.

Everyone in the meeting will be able to see that you have your hand raised.

The chair will monitor this and will invite participants to speak where appropriate.

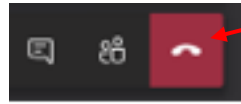8. Once you have made your point, select **Lower your hand** in the meeting controls.

After the meeting	Leave the meeting when instructed to do so by the chair.

2. Guidelines for All Review Team Members

Prior to the meeting	1. Follow the General Guidelines in respect of joining the meeting, connectivity, etc. 2. Review team members must ensure that they have all relevant meeting links prior to commencement of the main review visit. Meeting links are accessible in the Outlook calendar invitations that you will receive from QQI; they are also included in the main review visit timetable. If you need any meeting links to be re-sent, you should communicate this directly to QQI, or via the coordinating reviewer. 3. It is recommended that the review team establishes a means of communicating non-sensitive information with each other privately during the review visit (and particularly during meeting sessions). With the agreement of all team members, the coordinating reviewer may set up a WhatsApp group for this purpose. 4. A private meeting of the review team will be scheduled for a period of 30-45 minutes prior to each institutional/stakeholder session. These meetings will take place in the private review team meeting space, which will appear in your calendar as an all-day meeting invitation. 5. The lead team members and topics for discussion should be agreed by the review team. The lead team member(s) for each session is/are responsible for proposing a list of indicative questions in advance of the session. These are agreed by the team and approved by the chair. 6. It is recommended that one team member take responsibility for monitoring the chat sidebar/hands-up feature. This may be the same team member each time or it may change from meeting to meeting. In the event that the chair/lead team member appears not to have noticed a raised hand/message, this may be communicated to the chair/lead team member via the review team WhatsApp group. 7. Once the private meeting has concluded, hang up and join the meeting session with institutional representatives/stakeholders.
During the Meeting	1. Follow the General Guidelines regarding video and microphone usage. 2. If you are the team member assisting the chair/lead team member, you should monitor the chat and 'raise hand' function throughout the meeting. 3. It may be useful to identify yourself when speaking. It is easy to forget that there are virtual participants who are not able to see (or identify) the speaker. 4. Speak slowly and clearly – participants do not have access to body language and other non-verbal cues. Be explicit about thoughts and opinions and

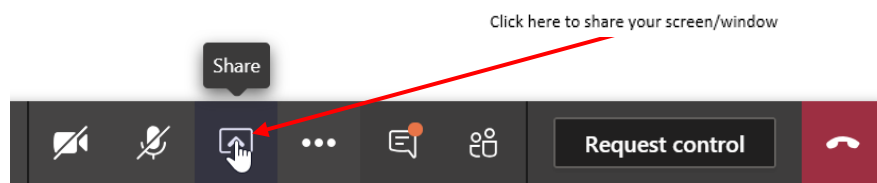|	
	ensure that your questions are clearly phrased. The only way others can know a participant's stance on something is if the participant is very clear about verbalising their opinions. 5. You should pause and allow sufficient time for stakeholders to answer any questions posed, and invite other participants contribute. Particularly if you are leading a session, you should be mindful to ensure that all participants are given the opportunity to share their views, including those who do not have their cameras on, or those who have joined the meeting by phone. (QQI will inform you at the earliest possible time if any participants have had to join a session by phone due to connectivity issues.) This may be checked several times throughout the meeting. 6. Avoid speaking while others are talking unless an interruption is necessary to clarify/correct a participant's understanding of a question or to curtail lengthy or circuitous responses**.** Ask for clarification on any point or issue that is not clear.
After the meeting	1. Once a meeting session has ended, hang up and join the private review team meeting space. 2. A 30-45 minute private review team meeting will be scheduled after each session or block of sessions. 3. Ensure that you and the other team members are in agreement on the main points of evidence gathered in the meeting. If you are not in agreement on a particular point, it is important to voice this. 4. Any outstanding questions, or areas that require further clarity should be identified and agreed by team members. Consider which stakeholder groups will be able to provide clarity on the point in question and plan to include questions on the topic in the relevant session.

3. Guidelines for Review Team Chair

The chair's role will not ostensibly alter from the overview provided in the CINNTE Review Handbook. However, virtual meetings create different situations that require a modified approach.

Prior to the meeting	1. As chair, you, along with the co-ordinating reviewer, should ensure that all relevant documentation required for the meeting is available to the review team in advance. QQI will support you in this. 2. For some meetings, the review team may decide to share indicative topics likely to be addressed during the session. As chair, you should approve these lists after agreement with team members. QQI will support you in making these lists available to stakeholders. 3. You should confirm which team member will lead questioning during the meeting session, and who will act as support. You, as chair, should nonetheless open and close each meeting session. Before each meeting, you should confirm with review team members the agreed focus of the meeting. This will include topics for discussion and indicative questions, which should be proposed by the lead team member in advance of the visit. 4. For meeting sessions involving the full review team (i.e. not meeting sessions running in parallel), a quorum of four review team members is necessary to proceed with any meeting session. This must include both the chair and coordinating reviewer. In the event that review team members are unable to connect/ dial in to the meeting, you must ensure that the quorum has been met before starting the meeting session. 5. In the case of certain meetings (such as sessions with students), you may wish to brief all participants as a group before they are split into separate groups.

QQI
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

During the Meeting	1. You should welcome the institutional representatives and stakeholders and endeavour to put them at their ease. You should highlight the focus of the meeting session (you may wish to share your screen with all participants to show the agenda/main topics for discussion during the session – if you do decide to share your screen, remember to stop sharing your screen by clicking once more on the 'share' button once you have finished providing the overview of topics). Click here to share your screen/window Share Request control 2. Where time allows, attendees may be invited to introduce themselves, sharing their name, role and affiliation. 3. You should remind the review team and stakeholders to flag any technical issues to QQI Support through the meeting chat facility. 4. Participants who wish to contribute/add further comments can request to do so through the TEAMS 'raise hand' function. Select Show participants to see a list of everyone in attendance. Anyone who has raised their hand will have an icon next to their name. When multiple people raise their hands, they will be listed in the order in which they raised them. Along with the co-ordinating reviewer, you should alternate between the chat sidebar and 'Show Participants', and, where necessary, act upon any messages from meeting participants at the appropriate time. To assist in this, for each session, you should assign one review team member the task of alerting the chair to any questions/raised hands appearing. You should be mindful to ensure that all participants are given the opportunity to share their views, including those who do not have their cameras on, or those who have joined the meeting by phone. (QQI will inform you at the earliest possible time if any participants have had to join a session by phone due to connectivity issues). This may be checked several times throughout the meeting. 5. Time for participants to make any additional comments should be built in at the end of each session, which you, as chair, should highlight and coordinate. 6. You should clearly bring the meeting to a close and indicate that all participants may leave the meeting. Where a session is followed by a

	private review team meeting, you should instruct team members to join the subsequent private meeting session.
	7. You should remind participants that, if they experience connectivity issues, they may to make a short written submission up to one hour after the session's conclusion, detailing any additional, new information that they did not have the opportunity to provide during the session. These submissions may be made via the MS Form established for this purpose. A link to the form may be requested via the MS Teams chat or from the institutional coordinator.
After the meeting	1. Confirm that all team members have joined the separate private review team meeting.
	2. You should ensure that all review team members are in agreement on the main points of evidence established during the meeting.
	3. Any outstanding questions, or areas that will need to be clarified further in subsequent meetings, should be identified and noted by the coordinating reviewer.

4. Guidelines for Coordinating Reviewer

The coordinating reviewer's role will not ostensibly alter from the overview provided in the CINNTE Review Handbook. However, virtual meetings require more administrative preparation which the coordinating reviewer will oversee.

The coordinating reviewer is the point of contact between the review team and QQI and is responsible for communicating any issues experienced by review team members to QQI, and for conveying any instructions or messages from QQI to the review team.

Prior to the meeting	1. As coordinating reviewer, you, along with the chair, should ensure that all relevant documentation required for the meeting is available to the review team in advance. QQI will support you in this.
	2. QQI will share review team members' contact details with the coordinating reviewer and the review team. It may be helpful to establish a method of communicating (non-sensitive) information quickly and simultaneously with team members – for example, a WhatsApp group. If all team members agree, the coordinating reviewer should establish the group.
	3. Ensure you have been provided with the note template for main review visit sessions, as well as the CINNTE review report template. Your QQI contact person will assist you in this regard.
	4. You should ensure that the chair has confirmed with fellow team members who will lead questioning during the meeting session, and who will act as support.
	5. Before each meeting, you should ensure that the chair has confirmed with review team members the agreed focus of the meeting. This will include topics for discussion and indicative questions.
	6. If any of the team members are absent from the meeting, contact them through the team's private WhatsApp group. If the team member does not subsequently join the session, you should contact them directly. Inform the chair and QQI of any absences.
	7. Should any participant be missing from a meeting session, QQI will contact you directly to inform you of same. You should inform the chair and review team members of any participant absences.
	8. Where possible, QQI Support will inform you if there are any participants attending by phone. You should inform the chair and lead team member. These participants do have access to the hands-up or chat facility so may need to be asked directly for their input.

During the meeting	1. The coordinating reviewer is responsible for keeping an accurate record of discussions at the meeting and ensuring that the conclusions reached and main points of evidence established by the panel are accurately noted in order to coordinate the panel in drafting the review report. 2. If you require clarification on particular points made by fellow panel members or provider representatives, interject during the meeting as necessary. 3. During private meeting slots within the meeting, ensure that you and the chair summarise the main points raised and conclusions reached at the end of the various sessions held with the provider. You should note any outstanding questions, or areas that will need to be clarified further in subsequent sessions with the institutional representatives or stakeholders. 4. Ensure that the chair has reminded participants that, if they experience connectivity issues, they are free to make a short written submission up to one hour after the session's conclusion, detailing any additional, new information that they did not have the opportunity to provide during the session. These submissions may be made via the MS Form established for this purpose. A link to the form may be requested via the MS Teams chat or from the institutional coordinator.
After the meeting	1. Along with the chair, ensure that all panel members are in agreement on the conclusions reached and main points of evidence established during the meeting and further ensure that you have noted these points for inclusion in the draft review report. 2. Stakeholders and institutional representatives who experience connectivity issues during a meeting session may make a short written submission to the review team within one hour of the meeting's conclusion. This is done through the MS Form established for this purpose. QQI Support will monitor the form throughout the day for any submissions and share these with you for immediate circulation to other review team members.

5. Guidelines for Stakeholders

Prior to the meeting	1. Follow the General Guidelines prior to the meeting. 2. You may be using the same TEAMS link for more than one meeting. if you are entering a new session via a link that has already been in use by a previous session, you will still need to be ready to join 10 minutes before the meeting. However, you will not be admitted until the previous session has ended. 3. If you have internet connectivity issues, you should contact the institutional coordinator by phone/text using the contact number provided. If the connectivity issues cannot be resolved, you may need to dial into the meeting session using the phone number and conference ID provided in the meeting invitation.
During the Meeting	1. Follow the General Guidelines regarding video and microphone usage and the 'raise hand' function. 2. Indicate any technical issues experienced through the meeting's chat facility. 3. The chair will open the meeting by introducing the review team members and the topics to be addressed during the meeting. 4. Where time allows, the chair will invite you and fellow stakeholders to introduce yourselves, sharing your names and roles/affiliations. 5. The chair/lead speaker will invite you to contribute to the meeting by addressing specific questions raised on the topic. 6. In general, it is useful to identify yourself when speaking. It is easy to forget that there are virtual participants who are not able to see (or identify) the speaker. 7. Speak clearly – virtual attendees do not have access to body language and other non-verbal cues, you should speak slowly and clearly. Be explicit about thoughts and opinions on the questions asked. 8. **Do not speak while others are talking and avoid interrupting speakers.** Ask for clarification on any point or issue that is not clear. An opportunity of time for additional comments will be built in at the end of each session. This will be controlled by the chair.
After the meeting	1. Follow the General Guidelines for after the meeting. 2. Please be aware that should you fail to remove yourself at the end of a meeting, QQI support may need to do so on your behalf. 3. In the event that you experience connectivity issues, there will be an opportunity to submit additional comments to the review team via an MS Form established for this purpose. A link to this form may be requested via the MS Teams chat or from the institutional coordinator.

	Submissions may be made up to one hour after the session's conclusion.
	4. If you are no longer required to access the chat facility, QQI Support will remove access on your behalf.

6. Guidelines for Institutional Coordinator

The institutional coordinator remains the main point of contact between the institution/stakeholders and the review team/QQI. However, virtual meetings create different situations that require a modified approach.

An optional meeting with the institutional coordinator will be retained in the timetable at the beginning of each day of the virtual review process. This provides the team with the opportunity to request additional documentation and (in exceptional circumstances) to request amendment to the main review visit timetable.

QQI will organise meeting sessions. and will attend any meeting sessions arranged by the institution to support the review team.

Prior to the meeting	1. Ensure that any documentation required by the review team has been provided to the review team in advance of the meeting. This will generally be via the SharePoint folder established by QQI for this purpose. 2. Ensure that invitations have been forwarded to all relevant stakeholders in advance of the meeting and notify the review team chair and QQI of all attendees and (if applicable) apologies in advance of the meeting. 3. Provide your contact details to stakeholders to allow them to notify you if they have any internet connectivity issues in advance of joining the meeting. If a stakeholder informs you that they will be dialling into the meeting by phone, you should inform QQI immediately. 4. Ensure that all relevant documentation has been received by institutional representatives and external stakeholders in advance of their meeting sessions.
During the Meeting	The institutional coordinator or other representatives from the institution, with the exception of agreed representation for specific meetings, will not be in attendance for the meetings.
After the meeting	1. Follow up with the review team chair and QQI on any additional documentation required and ensure that this is uploaded to the agreed SharePoint folder in good time.

	2. If you are approached by a stakeholder who has experienced connectivity issues during a meeting session, you should instruct them that they may make a short written submission within one hour of the session's conclusion, detailing any additional, new information that they did not have the opportunity to provide during the session, and direct them to the MS Form established for this purpose (QQI Support will provide you with a link).

Issue	Proposed Actions
A. Review Team	
1. Review team member(s) (ANY) unable to connect to meeting session	▪ Review team members should contact QQI Support/coordinating reviewer by phone/text as soon as an issue becomes apparent ▪ QQI Support will re-issue the session invitation to the review team member ▪ If the issue persists, QQI Support will communicate this to the institution ▪ The coordinating reviewer will communicate the issue to the chair and remaining team ▪ The review team member experiencing the problem should dial into the meeting. A conference pin will be required. This is included in the institutional review visit timetable, as well as in the calendar invitation for the meeting. ▪ The chair indicates to all attendees that a review team member is joining the meeting by phone
2. Review team member (ANY) unable to connect or dial in to meeting session	▪ The review team member affected should contact QQI Support/coordinating reviewer by phone/text ▪ The coordinating reviewer will communicate the issue to the chair and remaining team members via their review team WhatsApp group ▪ Where the review team member is not the chair/lead for a session, they may communicate by email to their team colleagues any questions relevant to the session. ▪ For meeting sessions involving the full review team (i.e. not meeting sessions running in parallel), a quorum of four review team members is necessary to proceed with any meeting session. This must include both the chair and coordinating reviewer. Where the chair or coordinating reviewer is unable to connect to a meeting session, the meeting session must be rescheduled.
3. Chair unable to connect or dial in to meeting session	▪ As per Section D.1-2
4. Coordinating reviewer unable to connect or dial in to meeting session	▪ As per Section D.1-2

5. Lead review team member unable to connect or dial in to meeting session	▪ The second lead review team member assumes responsibility for leading questioning during the meeting session. It is important that team members leading sessions are familiar with their partners' questions.
B. Institution	
1. Institutional representative/ Stakeholder (ANY) unable to connect to meeting	▪ The institutional representative/stakeholder contacts the institutional coordinator by phone/text as soon as the issue becomes apparent. ▪ The institutional coordinator re-issues the meeting invitation to institutional representative/stakeholder. ▪ If the issue persists, the institutional coordinator will communicate this to QQI Support and instruct the institutional representative to dial into the meeting, reminding the institutional representative/stakeholder that a conference pin, available in the institutional review visit timetable, as well as in the calendar invitation for the meeting, will be required.
2. Institutional representative/ Stakeholder (ANY) unable to connect to or dial into meeting	▪ The affected institutional representative/stakeholder should contact the institutional coordinator by phone/email. ▪ The institutional coordinator will notify QQI Support of the issue. ▪ The institutional representative/stakeholder affected may make a short written submission to the review team via a Microsoft Form that will be established for the purpose. A link to the form may be requested via the MS Teams chat (if possible) or from the institutional coordinator. Submissions may be made for up to one hour after the meeting session has concluded.
3. Key institutional personnel unable to connect to or dial into meeting	▪ As per Section D.1-2
C. QQI	
1. QQI Support unable to connect to meeting session	▪ QQI Support should contact their TEMRU colleagues and requests that an alternative colleague support the meeting session ('Substitute Support'). ▪ Where possible, QQI Support should then forward the meeting invitation to the Substitute Support. If this is not possible, Substitute Support can access the meeting link from the relevant section of the detailed main review visit timetable. ▪ QQI Support should ensure that all information/documentation relevant to the meeting session is communicated to Substitute Support prior to commencement of the session or – if QQI Support loses connection to a meeting during the meeting itself – directly after connection is lost. It is advisable that links to QQI Support folders be shared with all TEMRU members prior to the review.

2. QQI (all colleagues) unable to connect to meeting session	▪ As per Section D.1-2
D. **All**	
3. Microsoft Teams outage or similar prevents all participants from joining/remaining in meeting session	▪ QQI Support will create a new MS Teams meeting session for the same time as the original session and circulate its link to review team members and the institutional coordinator. ▪ QQI Support will contact the coordinating reviewer by phone/text to confirm receipt of link by review team members. The *coordinating reviewer will request confirmation of receipt by review team members via the review team WhatsApp group.* ▪ QQI Support will contact the institutional coordinator by phone/text to confirm receipt of the link. ▪ The institutional coordinator will circulate the new MS Teams meeting link to all institutional representatives/stakeholders.
4. Microsoft Teams outage or similar prevents all participants from joining/remaining in meeting session. New meeting links do not function.	▪ After consulting with the review team members and institutional coordinator, QQI Support will reschedule a meeting session via MS Teams at the earliest possible time.