# Terms of Reference (ToR): Guidelines for Self-Evaluation Report (SER) Writing Teams

## Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences (PGIHS) University of Peradeniya

## 1. Aim and Rationale

The Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences (PGIHS), University of Peradeniya, is dedicated to fostering academic excellence through rigorous self-reflection and adherence to national quality assurance standards. In keeping with this commitment, the PGIHS undertakes systematic program reviews of its MPhil and PhD programs, as guided by the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) of the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka.

The primary aims of the program review and the associated Self-Evaluation Report (SER) process are to:

- Assess how effectively the academic programs meet their intended learning outcomes.
- Examine the quality and relevance of teaching, learning, and assessment methods.
- Evaluate the adequacy of infrastructure, facilities, and student support services.
- Ensure the sustainability, integrity, and alignment of postgraduate offerings with national development needs.
- Promote continuous improvement through data-driven decision-making and stakeholder engagement.

The SER serves as a comprehensive, evidence-based, and critical reflection of the quality of PGIHS's postgraduate programs. It not only documents achievements but also identifies challenges and proposes concrete strategies for enhancement.

This Terms of Reference (ToR) is designed to guide all individuals and teams involved in the development of the SER. It outlines their roles, responsibilities, reporting structures, and expected outputs. In case of ambiguity, reference should be made to the UGC's Programme Review Manual (PRM), 2021.

## 2. Key Terms

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER): A systematic and comprehensive document prepared by academic institutions to critically assess the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of academic programs. The SER should include institutional context, detailed narratives, evidence-based claims, and improvement plans.
- External Program Review (EPR): A formal evaluation conducted by independent peer reviewers appointed by the UGC to assess academic programs against nationally approved quality benchmarks.
- Internal Program Review (IPR):An internally conducted review by the PGIHS to monitor performance, ensure compliance with internal standards, and prepare for EPR.

- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC): The designated unit within PGIHS tasked with promoting a culture of quality through internal reviews, training, and coordination of SER development and evidence management.
- Programme Review Manual (PRM): A comprehensive manual issued by the UGC detailing the criteria, indicators, methodologies, and templates for SER and program reviews.
- Program of Study: A structured set of academic components—courses, assessments, research work—leading to a recognized postgraduate qualification (e.g., MPhil or PhD).

## 3. Responsible Parties and Their Responsibilities

### a. PGIHS Administration

- Initiates the review cycle based on UGC timelines and internal strategic planning.
- Appoints SER writing teams and ensures representation across all relevant degree programs.
- Ensures availability of administrative, technical, and financial resources for SER preparation and documentation.
- Coordinates with the IQAC to ensure timely execution of tasks and milestones.

### b. Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)

**Director (Chairperson of IQAC):**

- Provides leadership in ensuring adherence to the PRM framework.
- Endorses strategic decisions regarding timelines, team composition, and SER structure.
- Liaises with the PGIHS Director and BOM to ensure institutional-level commitment.

**IQAC Coordinator:**

- Acts as the operational lead for the SER writing process.
- Designs and disseminates templates, formats, and checklists for SER teams.
- Organizes orientation sessions, workshops, and mock reviews for capacity building.
- Tracks progress through regular updates, reviews draft sections, and ensures overall consistency.
- Works with program coordinators to align data collection and analysis processes.
- Maintains a digital evidence repository with controlled access for SER teams.

### c. Boards of Study (BOS)

- Serve as content experts in the SER writing process.
- Provide program-specific data such as curriculum revisions, graduate outputs, student evaluations, and curriculum mapping.
- Support verification of claims made in the SER.
- Ensure that the SER reflects the academic rigor and strategic intent of the postgraduate offerings.

## 4. SER Writing Team Structure

### a. Criterion Subcommittees

The SER will consist of the following sections to ensure comprehensive coverage of all required criteria and standards:

1. Introduction to the Study Programmes
   - o Overview of the programmes offered at PGIHS.
   - o Objectives and goals of the programmes.
2. Process of Compilation of the Self-Evaluation Report
   - o Methodology and approach used in preparing the SER.
   - o Stakeholder involvement and data collection processes.
3. Compliance with the Criteria and Standards
   - o Programme Management: Governance, leadership, and administrative structure.
   - o Programme Design and Development: Curriculum design, learning outcomes, and alignment with national and international standards.
   - o Human and Physical Resources and Learner Support: Availability and adequacy of faculty, infrastructure, and student support services.
   - o Teaching-Learning and Research: Quality of teaching, learning methodologies, and research activities.
   - o Student Assessment and Award of Qualification: Assessment methods, fairness, and transparency in awarding qualifications.
   - o Programme Evaluation: Mechanisms for continuous improvement and feedback systems.
   - o Innovative and Healthy Practices: Unique initiatives and best practices adopted by PGIHS.
4. Summary
   - o Key findings and conclusions from the SER.
   - o Recommendations for future improvements.

**Each criterion team will:**

- Be led by a Criterion Chairperson appointed by IQAC.
- Include representatives from academic and administrative staff, as appropriate.
- Be supported by a rapporteur to document discussions, collect evidence, and maintain records.

### b. Program-Level Teams

Program-level SER support teams are responsible for:

- Validating the accuracy of program-specific information in SER sections.
- Coordinating evidence gathering related to student intake, graduate tracking, course evaluations, supervision records, and thesis outcomes.

- Liaising with teaching faculty and department staff to collect teaching plans, assessment rubrics, and feedback summaries.

Members include:

- Head of the relevant academic department.
- Coordinator(s) of MPhil and PhD programs.
- Active teaching staff and supervisors of postgraduate students.

## 5. Responsibilities of SER Writing Teams

### a. Criterion Subcommittees

- Study and interpret the relevant criterion from the PRM.
- Engage in collaborative drafting of the narrative using data and examples.
- Ensure each section includes:
    o Institutional context
    o Process descriptions
    o Performance analysis
    o Good practices
    o Challenges and risks
    o Proposed improvements
- Identify missing evidence or weak areas and propose remedial measures.
- Maintain and submit an evidence matrix referencing specific documents (e.g., Course Handbooks, Student Feedback Reports).
- Adhere to timelines for submission and revision cycles.

### b. Program-Level Teams

- Actively support the writing of cross-cutting content (e.g., graduate output trends, research culture, alumni engagement).
- Facilitate access to original records, administrative forms, and reports.
- Ensure completeness of the Evidence Bank for each criterion.
- Review drafted SER content for factual accuracy and program integrity.

## 6. Review and Approval Process

- Upon completion of individual sections, the IQAC compiles the full draft SER.
- The draft is shared internally for:
    o Technical review (by IQAC core team)
    o Peer review (by staff external to the program)
    o Validation workshops (involving program stakeholders)
- Feedback is consolidated, and necessary revisions are made collaboratively.
- A final draft is submitted to the Board of Management (BOM) for formal approval.
- Once approved, the SER is formatted, signed by relevant authorities, and submitted to the UGC-appointed External Review Panel.

- All records of review meetings, comments, and responses are archived by the IQAC.

## 7. Timeline and Reporting

- The entire SER process is expected to be completed by 15th of May, 2025.
- A detailed Gantt chart will be prepared by IQAC showing:
    - Training and orientation phase
    - Evidence collection deadlines
    - Drafting timelines for each criterion
    - Internal review and feedback phases
    - Finalization and approval deadlines

**Milestone Reports:**

- Criterion teams submit biweekly updates.
- IQAC holds monthly progress meetings.
- Program-level reviews are conducted at midpoint and final draft stages.

## 8. Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

- All individuals involved in the preparation of the SER are expected to uphold and protect the confidentiality of all related information
- Use of personal data, student records, and faculty evaluations must comply with institutional data protection policies.
- Ethical integrity must be upheld in all analysis and presentation of information.

## 9. Conclusion

The preparation of the Self-Evaluation Report for MPhil and PhD programs at PGIHS is a collective endeavor that reflects the institute's values, achievements, and aspirations. This ToR aims to provide a structured, transparent, and collaborative framework for delivering a high-quality SER. By adhering to these guidelines, PGIHS ensures that its postgraduate offerings are not only compliant with national standards but are also continuously evolving to meet global expectations in higher education.