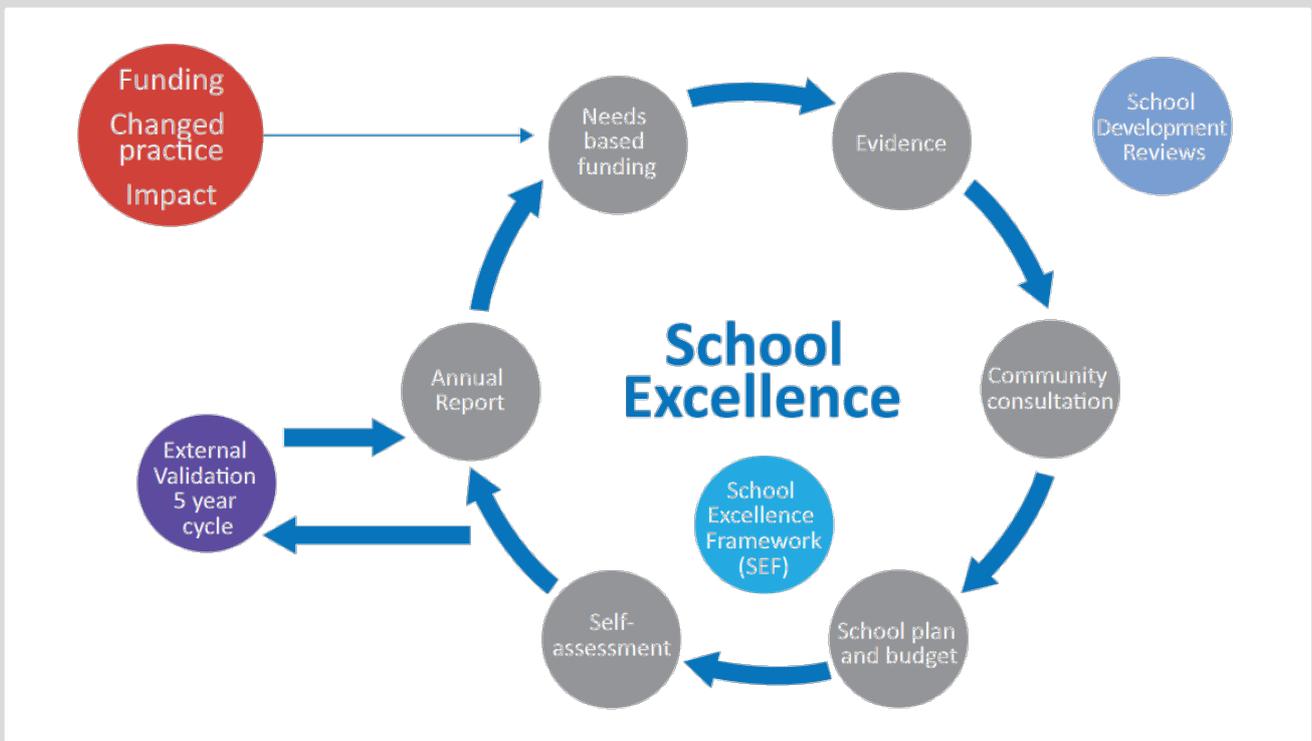


School Excellence implementation guidelines

External validation



Implementation document for School Excellence policy

Approval date: 09 June 2017

Document history

Date	Description of update	Approved by
14/06/2017	Initial publication	Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance
23/08/2017	Adjustments to policy references	Director, High Performance
31/01/2018	Adjustments to linked documents and sample templates	Director, High Performance
22/02/2019	Update Director, Educational Leadership. Adjustments to align to updated information and resources.	Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance

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Context

Objectivity, transparency and consistency are important elements for ensuring a system-wide approach that supports schools in their continuing improvement. While improvement efforts are designed, driven and assessed on an ongoing basis by each school, an external process is important for providing an assurance to the school and the system that the progress being made aligns with the expectations articulated in the School Excellence Framework.

General information

The approach to school excellence involves validation of ongoing self-assessment practices, led by the school leadership team, which inform school planning and annual reporting.

External validation is not an inspection. External validation provides an opportunity for schools to discuss their judgements about the school's practice – and the evidence that underpins them – with a panel of peers. Schools selected for external validation will be notified of their participation and the date of their panel meeting during Term 1 each year of the cycle. Each year approximately 20% of schools will be selected as a representative sample across the Operational Directorates.

Once during a five-year cycle, schools undergo an external validation of the evidence of their school's assessment of progress. An independent panel comprising of a Principal, School Leadership (PSL) and a peer principal considers the school's evidence using the standards articulated in the [School Excellence Framework](#) (SEF).

Schools, panels and Directors, Educational Leadership use the School Planning and Reporting Online (SPaRO) software to complete the external validation process*. SPaRO is available through the Department of Education staff portal and provides an online integrated process for schools to efficiently plan, self-assess and report.

The school leadership team will complete the external validation submission in SPaRO. Directors, Educational Leadership, PSLs and peer principals involved in the external validation process will be provided read-only access to the external validation submission for a school.

*see Appendix 1 – External validation using SPaRO

Enquiries

Contact Leadership and High Performance

E: validation@det.nsw.edu.au

T: 9244 5713

For PSL Support

E: PSLcoord@det.nsw.edu.au

T: 02 7814 3603

1. External validation process

External validation consists of four key steps:

Key step	Description
School Submission	<p>School leadership teams prepare and complete a submission in SPaRO (see Appendix 1) comprising evidence and an executive summary.</p> <p>Two school weeks before the panel meeting the principal will complete and finalise the executive summary in SPaRO and move relevant evidence into the submission folder.</p> <p>The external validation report, prepared by the external validation panel, includes 'School determined next steps in the self-assessment process'. School leadership teams prepare statements for inclusion in the external validation report to be discussed with the panel.</p> <p>Once submitted, the external validation submission is unable to be edited.</p>
Affirmation	<p>As a result of having engaged in regular professional conversations with the school, the Director, Educational Leadership affirms the school's external validation submission in SPaRO as being an accurate representation of the school's planning, self-assessment and reporting processes.</p>
Panel Meeting	<p>An independent panel considers whether the evidence presented supports the school's assessment and prepares the external validation report.</p>
Follow-up actions	<p>Aspects of the external validation report may be used as supporting evidence in updating the current school plan and producing the school's annual report.</p>

2. External validation submission

External validation is not an inspection. It part of ongoing self-assessment which engages school leadership teams in evaluative thinking, enabling them to discuss their evidence, judgements and next steps with a panel of peers. External validation provides quality assurance to the process of self-assessment.

Schools are encouraged to develop a submission format that supports their school context. Schools may find the [School Excellence Framework evidence guide](#) useful as a reference when developing their submission. Directors, Educational Leadership and Principals, School Leadership are available to provide professional learning and support in preparing for external validation.

Evidence

In order to complete the external validation submission the school leadership team reviews the evidence gathered through ongoing self-assessment. This evidence will include:

- current published three-year school plan, including implementation and milestone monitoring (automatically uploaded to the evidence bank in SPaRO)
- current published annual report (automatically uploaded to the evidence bank in SPaRO)

- completed External Validation School Excellence Framework Self-assessment Survey (SEF S-aS)
- Scout reports*, including measures of the percentage of students in the top two NAPLAN bands (where applicable)
- other significant evidence as determined by the school (no more than 7-10 annotated evidence sets)

*For information about capturing Scout data for inclusion in the submission please contact: <mailto:Scout.support@det.nsw.edu.au>

Selecting other significant evidence

To prepare the body of evidence, schools select the most significant pieces of evidence. Through annotation and analysis the school leadership team identify how the selected pieces of evidence support the school's self-assessment judgements across all elements of the SEF.

Due to the integrated nature of the SEF, multiple elements can be addressed by the same set of evidence. The submission requires no more than seven to ten (7-10) annotated sets of well-selected, significant evidence **per submission**.

Questions which should be considered by the school when selecting evidence are:

- Have we analysed and synthesised the data sets to create significant evidence?
- What does this evidence demonstrate? How do we know?
- Have we provided a clear annotation to articulate why this matters, how it demonstrates school growth and how it links to the SEF?
- Is the evidence aligned to the school plan and strategic directions?
- Is the evidence reflective of the school's monitoring processes and the achievement of annual milestones?
- Does the evidence support the on-balance judgement made by the school for each element of the SEF?

Privacy statement

All evidence should be carefully reviewed to ensure that the inclusion of information is consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Caution should be exercised to ensure that the information provided does not enable individual students or staff to be identified.

Annotation and Analysis

Annotating and analysing evidence is an important aspect to consider when preparing the school submission. Further information about annotation and analysis can be found in the School Excellence Framework evidence guide.

Annotation: The annotation is a statement that provides the context for the selected piece or group of evidence. It describes the what, when, how and why the evidence is significant.

Analysis: An analysis is a summary that provides explanation, evaluation and clarification of a collection of evidence. It provides links to practices across the school and validates the school's on-balance judgement for identified element/s of the SEF.

Executive Summary

The executive summary provides a brief narrative of the school's point-in-time judgements in the three SEF domains: learning, teaching and leading. It is a synthesis of the school's self-assessment.

The executive summary is entered into four text boxes in the SPaRO software under the relevant headings. This information can be used to inform the 'Self-assessment and school achievement' section of the school's annual report. The recommended length for an executive summary is one to two pages.

3. External validation panel process

The external validation panel is made up of two principals: a lead panellist and a peer principal. The lead panellist will be a Principal, School Leadership (PSL). The peer principal will be a substantive principal of another school. The role of the panel is to determine whether the school's evidence supports the judgements made in the School Excellence Framework Self-assessment Survey for each element of the SEF and to prepare the report. Prior to the panel meeting, the lead panellist and peer principal meet to consider the school's evidence.

Panel meets with the school leadership team

The panel will meet with the school leadership team for up to two hours, either at the school or via video conference. The school may request a 30 minute extension prior to the panel meeting.

The following table provides a possible scaffold for the external validation panel meeting:

Process	Description
Framing	Introduction. Intention and scope.
Overview	The school leadership team discusses the school context, vision, strategic directions and school planning process.
Illustration	The school leadership team discuss how they made on-balance judgements using the SEF. They elaborate on how the body of evidence demonstrates their self-assessment.
Inquiry	Seeking further understanding, the panel asks questions to clarify their understanding and make connections between the evidence presented and the school's on-balance judgements.

During the panel meeting, schools may share additional evidence. This evidence will not be added to the submission but will be taken into consideration by the panel.

The external validation panel thoroughly considers information provided by the school including the on-balance judgements. The panel determines whether the school's on-balance judgements, supported by evidence, align with the expectations articulated in the SEF.

Panel members may take notes during the panel meeting to ensure accuracy when preparing the panel report. All panel materials and notes will be collected by the lead panellist and securely disposed of following the external validation process.

4. External validation report

A report will be prepared as a record of the panel meeting. The report is made available to the principal, Director, Educational Leadership and the Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance.

Validation panel comments

A statement is generated for each domain of the SEF based on the school's on-balance judgements and the external validation panel's response.

School determined next steps in the self-assessment process

The school has the opportunity to reflect on their self-assessment processes and determine how these may be improved and embedded in their future practices. This information may be provided by the school for inclusion in the report or may occur as a result of discussions with the panel. The lead panellist will include this text in the 'School determined next steps in the self-assessment process' section.

5. Action following external validation

Following external validation, schools should use the submission and panel report:

- to inform their annual report (Self-assessment and school achievement section)
- to adjust future practices, products and milestones as part of the school planning process
- for collaborating with the Director, Educational Leadership and PSLs
- for professional conversations.

As per requirement 5.1 of the [School Excellence Policy](#), 'The Executive Director, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation will liaise with the Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance to provide a report to the Secretary on data from the online School Excellence Framework Self-assessment Survey and outcomes of the external validation process'. Data compiled from the external validation process will be aggregated and no individual schools will be identified in this report.

6. Directors, Educational Leadership information

Directors, Educational Leadership will support schools in their network throughout the validation process.

Directors have read-only access to SPaRO for schools in their principal network. Directors are required to affirm the school's submission as being an accurate representation of the school's processes in planning, self-assessment and reporting as per requirement 4.3.6 of the School Excellence policy.

The Director, Educational Leadership will receive an email notification of the timeframe for completing the affirmation for each of the schools participating in external validation.

7. PSL and peer principal information

Panels will comprise of a Principal, School Leadership (PSL) and peer principal. The Principal, School Leadership who supports the school will not participate as a panel member for that schools external validation. The peer principal will be a substantive principal of another school.

Panel members will be supported by the Leadership and High Performance directorate. This support includes a dedicated email address as well as online and face-to-face professional learning.

Accessing the school's submission and panel report

The external validation panel will be provided access to SPaRO (see Appendix 1) to view the list of their schools. The panel can select a school, view the evidence and complete the external validation report.

Following the panel meeting, the lead panellist will use SPaRO to:

- complete the external validation panel report
- collaborate with the school to develop the 'School determined next steps in the self-assessment process'. The text will be finalised when the report is submitted in SPaRO

After the panel meeting the lead panellist discusses the draft panel report with the principal. The report is then finalised and submitted through SPaRO.

8. Variation to scheduling

Panel meeting dates are not negotiable except in extreme circumstances. The process for requesting a change of date is:

1. The school contacts the Director, Educational Leadership who will consider the merits of the request.
 - a) If the Director, Educational Leadership, concurs that a change of date is warranted, the Director advances the request to the Executive Director, School Performance for the operational directorate.
 - b) If the Director does not support the request, the Director advises the school of this.
2. The Executive Director, School Performance will consider the merits of changing the date.
 - a) If endorsed, the Executive Director, School Performance forwards the request to the Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance.
 - b) If not endorsed, the Executive Director, School Performance advises the Director, Educational Leadership, who advises the school.
3. The Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance considers the merits of the request.
 - a) If the Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance concurs, a change of date will be arranged and the Leadership and High Performance directorate will advise the school.
 - b) If the Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance does not concur, the request will be advanced to the Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance for a final decision.

9. Further information

All schools have access to the [School Excellence Framework evidence guide](#). This website supports schools with their self-assessment practices by:

- outlining the reflective practices involved in self-assessment
-
- helping schools to identify appropriate data sources
- equipping schools with the skills and knowledge to collate and critically analyse evidence.

Directors, Educational Leadership and Principals, School Leadership (PSLs) are available to provide support with self-assessment and external validation. Schools that have an established relationship with a PSL may choose to access that PSL to provide support. A PSL contact list arranged by geographical location is available on the [Professional Learning](#) website.

Additional support regarding external validation includes:

- [School Excellence Framework](#)
- [Evaluation Resource Hub](#)
- [5 Essentials for Effective Evaluation](#)
- scout.support@det.nsw.edu.au
- Telephone: 02 9244 5713 for urgent enquiries (during the week of your panel meeting).

This guide provides information for principals, schools, Principals, School Leadership (PSLs), peer principals and Directors, Educational Leadership (DELs) as they prepare for and participate in the external validation process using School Planning and Reporting Online (SPaRO).

System requirements for viewing the SPaRO software are Internet Explorer 11, Microsoft Edge, Chrome or Safari. Schools should ensure that they are using the Department of Education's (DoE) Standard Operating Environment (SOE). Schools that do not have the latest operating system and its associated software are advised to use the department's software catalogue to bring their machine/s into line with DoE standards. Schools should contact their field services IT team or EdConnect for assistance.

SPaRO is accessed through My Applications in the staff portal. Within the Access Management Utility (AMU), principals can assign themselves access at the **principal** level. Principals then assign **contributor** access (editing rights) or **staff** access (read-only rights) to other users in their school.

For external validation:

- Open the SPaRO application
- Go to your school or select a school by typing the school name or code into the text box
- Select the 'Self-assessment' tab – the 'Evidence Bank' in the left menu is the default page under this tab
- Select the 'External Validation' tab in the left menu to view the sub-menu.

The help menu icon ? in the top right corner of the screen will display help text outlining the information for each section of the page.

Principal

Principals manage staff access to SPaRO through AMU.

Principal users are able to:

- upload files to the submission folder
- edit the executive summary
- create, approve and submit the External Validation School Excellence Framework Self-assessment Survey (EV SEF S-aS)
- delegate contributors to the EV SEF S-aS
- 'submit' the executive summary and 'finalise and lock' the submission folder
- edit the 'school determined next steps in the self-assessment process'.

Contributor users are able to:

- view and upload files to the submission folder
- edit the executive summary
- edit the 'school determined next steps in the self-assessment process' section
- contribute to the EV SEF S-aS (once delegated).

Staff users have read-only access to the evidence bank and submission folder.

Note: For external validation, principals should review the status of all staff permissions in AMU ensuring appropriate access for the submission.

School leadership team

School leadership teams prepare and complete their external validation submission in SPaRO. Evidence sets, complete with annotations, need to be uploaded to the '<calendar year> Submission' folder.

Folders:

- are in the 'Evidence Bank'
- specifically for external validation are set up in SPaRO to allow schools to organise and manage their submission. Relevant evidence will be stored in the 'External Validation/<calendar year> Submission' folder
- can be used at any time by a school to collect data, evidence and annotations.

To move or copy files:

- select the cog ⚙ to the right of the folder or file for options to move or copy.

To upload files:

- open the appropriate folder and select 'Upload'
- select the 'click here to upload' bar to open the computer file manager to select the file. The selected file will be displayed on the current page in SPaRO
- select 'Upload Files'.

Note: It is recommended that schools make use of PDF files for optimal access to uploaded evidence by the panel. There is no limit on the number of files uploaded however, individual file size limit is 20MB.

To upload a link to a website resource:

- open the appropriate folder and select 'New Link'
- enter a file name for the link in the 'New Link Title' text box
- enter the full URL in the 'Enter Website Address' text box
- select 'Add Link'

To create a hyperlink to a resource saved in SPaRO:

- open the folder where the file is saved
- select the cog  to the right of the file
- select 'view' from the cog menu. This will open the file in a new browser window.
- copy (Ctrl+c) the full URL of the open file
- return to SPaRO
- highlight the text where the resource will be linked
- select the 'Insert link' icon  at the top of the text box
- paste (Ctrl+v) the full URL of the external link in the pop-up box
- select 'Insert' to create the hyperlink.
- click on the hyperlinked text to view options to open, edit or remove the link.

To create a hyperlink to a website:

- highlight the text where the resource will be linked
- select the 'Insert link' icon  at the top of the text box
- select the full URL of the external link in the pop-up box
- select 'Insert' to create the hyperlink.
- click on the hyperlinked text to view options to open, edit or remove the link.

Note: Schools that choose to include video content as part of their submission should load media files to YouTube, ensuring that the privacy setting selected is 'unlisted'.

To complete the External Validation SEF S-aS:

- select 'SEF S-aS' from the left menu
- select 'Create New Survey' and select the survey from the drop down menu
- select 'OK' in the pop-up dialogue box
- open the survey from the 'Pending' folder
- read the information on the instruction page. Select 'Next 

Once submitted, the External Validation SEF S-aS is unable to be edited.

To edit the executive summary:

- select 'External Validation' from the left menu
- select 'Executive Summary' from the sub-menu
- the template text should be included
- select ' Save'.

To finalise the submission the principal will (two weeks prior to the panel meeting):

- submit the EV SEF S-aS
- select ' Submit' on the executive summary page. Once submitted, the executive summary is unable to be edited.
- select the padlock icon  to the right of the '<calendar year> Submission' folder to finalise and lock the submission. Once finalised, no further evidence can be added to the '<calendar year> Submission' folder.

Note 1: A copy of the most recent annual report, school plan and milestones is automatically uploaded to the submission folder when it is locked.

Note 2: The DEL and external validation panel are unable to view the school's submission until the submission is finalised.

To complete the 'school determined next steps in the self-assessment process':

- select 'External Validation' from the left menu
- select 'Next steps' from the sub-menu.

Note: This section can be edited up to and on the meeting date. It will be locked/finalised at the same time as the panel report.

External validation panel

The external validation panel is able to view the school's submission, including the executive summary, evidence and annotations two weeks prior to the meeting date.

To view the school's submission:

- select 'External Validation' from the left menu
- select 'Executive Summary' from the sub-menu
- open the 'External Validation' folder in the 'Evidence Bank'
- open the '<calendar year> Submission' folder to view sub-folders and files
- select the cog  to the right of a file and select 'View' to open the file or 'Visit Link' to open a website resource.

To check for DEL affirmation:

- select 'External Validation' from the left menu
 - select 'Director Affirmation' from the sub-menu.
- Note:** If the submission is not available, the DEL should contact the school. If the affirmation is not visible the lead panellist will email the validation mailbox.

To complete the external validation panel report:

- select 'External Validation' from the left menu
- select 'Panel Report' from the sub-menu
- identify members attending the external validation meeting by selecting '+Add EV team'. Enter the panel member's email, select the correct option from the drop-down list and confirm their role. For non-SPaRO users, the lead panellist will enter the first name, surname and email address, select '+Add non-SPaRO user' and confirm their role. Select ' Save' and ' Close'.

- affirm the school's on-balance judgements by selecting the appropriate statement from the drop-down menu against each element.

Following the panel meeting the lead panellist:

- discusses and confirms the report with the principal and panel. The principal may make further changes to the 'school determined next steps in the self-assessment process' section, if necessary
- finalises the external validation report by selecting '➔ Finalise EV Panel Report' on the 'Panel Report' page.

Director, Educational Leadership

The DEL is able to view and affirm the submission two weeks prior to the meeting date.

To view the school's submission:

- select 'External Validation' from the left menu
- select 'Executive Summary' from the sub-menu
- open the 'External Validation' folder in the 'Evidence Bank'
- open the '<calendar year> Submission' folder to view sub-folders and files

- select the cog  to the right of a file and select 'View' to open the file or 'Visit Link' to open a website resource.

To affirm the school's submission:

- select 'External Validation' from the left menu
- select 'Director Affirmation' from the sub-menu
- select 'Save' 
- select the 'Affirm the external validation submission' checkbox and select 'OK' in the pop-up box.

Note: If the submission is not available, the DEL should contact the school.

Enquiries

Contact Leadership and High Performance

E: validation@det.nsw.edu.au

T: 02 9244 5713

W: [School excellence and accountability](#)

Appendix 2 - Timeline for schools participating in external validation

Timeline	Description
Term 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools selected for external validation will be notified by email to the school account.
Prior to submission date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools consider their self-assessment to determine appropriate evidence which is analysed and annotated for inclusion in the submission.
Two school weeks prior to panel meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools access and complete the School Excellence Framework Self-assessment Survey for the current year through SPaRO. School ensures their external validation submission is available in SPaRO including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> current school plan and annual report Scout data annotated evidence (no more than seven to ten sets) External Validation SEF S-aS report executive summary.
Prior to panel meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director, Educational Leadership affirms the school's submission in SPaRO (see Appendix 1) School considers points for discussion/writes text for inclusion in the 'School determined next steps in the self-assessment process' section of the external validation report.
Prior to the panel meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead panellist contacts the principal to discuss the external validation meeting. Panel meet to review the school's submission.
Day of panel meeting between 10:00am and 12:00pm*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel members meet with the school leadership team. <p>*The school may request a 30 minute extension prior to the panel meeting.</p>
Day of panel meeting – exit interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the panel meeting, the principal reviews the draft external validation panel report.
Following panel meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead panellists finalises external validation panel report. External validation panel report available in SPaRO to the principal and Director, Public Schools.
After the external validation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principal and school leadership team share and acknowledge the school's impact, progress and achievement with the school community Plan implement and action the next steps

Appendix 3 – Sample Executive summary template



External validation - Executive Summary 2018

School:

Principal:

School Code:

Director, Educational Leadership:

On <date> our school will participate in external validation. In preparation for this meeting, the required body of evidence has been prepared, reviewed and annotated. The Executive Summary synthesises the annotated information provided in the body of evidence.

Learning

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Learning:

Teaching

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Teaching:

Leading

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Leading:

Appendix 4 – External validation panel checklist

Before the panel meeting:

Lead panellist

- Contacts the school to discuss
 - arrival times
 - meeting location
 - internet access requirements
 - post-panel meeting requirements
 - meeting protocols (outline of the meeting structure and post-meeting activities)
- Alerts the principal to the 'School determined next steps in the self-assessment process' section of the report.
- Accesses the school's submission in SPaRO (see Appendix 1) two weeks prior to the panel meeting.
- Checks for Director, Educational Leadership affirmation immediately prior to the panel meeting in the submission folder in SPaRO – emails the validation box if affirmation is not visible.
- Meets with the peer principal to consider the school's submission using the SEF.
- Confers with the peer principal to prepare for the panel meeting.

Peer principal

- Accesses the school's submission folder two weeks prior to the panel meeting.
- Meets with the lead panellist to consider the school's submission using the SEF.
- Confers with the lead panellist (PSL) to prepare for the panel meeting.

At the panel meeting:

Lead principal

- Meets with the school leadership team (Tuesday/Thursday) 10am-12pm with a possible extension of 30 mins at the school's request.
- Prepares the external validation panel report
- Finalises the external validation report in SPaRO

Peer principal

- Meets with the school leadership team (Tuesday/Thursday) 10am-12pm with a possible extension of 30 mins at the school's request.
- Plays an active role in the panel meeting and in the drafting of the report.
- Affirms the final external validation report.

Appendix 5 – Sample external validation panel report



School Excellence - External validation panel report 2018

School: School Code:
 Principal: Director, Educational Leadership:
 Lead Panellist: Peer Principal:
 School team members:

The external validation process is an important component of a system-wide approach to school excellence. Schools regularly self-assess their improvement efforts using evidence to support their reflections and an external validation panel considers the school's evidence, providing assurance to the school and the system that the process being made either through the school plan or as part of their ongoing school focus areas, aligns with the standards articulated in the School Excellence Framework.

Domain	Validation panel comments
Learning	<p>In the domain of Learning the school's self-assessment is consistent with the evidence presented in 4 element/s and is validated using the School Excellence Framework.</p> <p>In the element of Wellbeing the evidence presented indicates the school is operating at the Excelling stage.</p> <p>In the element of Student performance measures the evidence presented indicates the school is operating at the Delivering stage.</p>
Teaching	<p>In the domain of Teaching the school's self-assessment is consistent with the evidence presented and is validated using the School Excellence Framework.</p>
Leading	<p>In the domain of Leading the school's self-assessment is consistent with the evidence presented in 3 element/s and is validated using the School Excellence Framework.</p> <p>In the element of School planning, implementation and reporting the evidence presented indicates the school is operating at the Excelling stage.</p>

School determined next steps in the self-assessment process

School determined next steps in the self-assessment process – 2018