



ENQA TRAINING Brussels

22/23 October 2009

**Paul Mitchell
HE Consultant, UK**

mega.mitchell@btinternet.com

www.megamitchell.com

Part 1

Role of the Review Secretary

Desirable features of the Secretary role (1)

- Operate with an open mind and integrity
- Build a good, open relationship in advance with the candidate Agency
- Maintain impartiality, confidentiality and trust
- Avoid / be alert to any conflicts of interest
- Show cultural awareness/ avoid the 'not invented here' syndrome
- Set a comfort level for operating in English

Desirable features of the Secretary role (2)

- Triangulate the evidence / help team to spot and avoid 'unsafe' conclusions
- Keep full notes and records - and keep them secure!
- Make it fun – and learn from it!

Key points in planning the review (1)

- Start at the end!
- If you have planned and covered the ground properly, the Agency and ENQA Board should not be surprised by your conclusions
- Use the final report framework and the self evaluation as your planning tool to ensure
 - that you meet the right people
 - that you get the right documents
 - that by the end of the visit you have assembled full, dispassionate evidence

Key points in planning the review (2)

- Key task - analysis of the self evaluation by Chair and Secretary, working with Panel members. Dissect the self-evaluation report, which provides a substantial portion of the evidence which the Panel will draw on in forming its conclusions. ('It should be full, frank and thoughtful, and provide clear information. Its contents should allow corroboration by documentary and/or oral evidence about the ways in which the Agency meets ENQA membership criteria')
- Identify possible issues and gaps
- Ask for any further documentation

Key points in planning the review (3)

- Have a good look at the Agency website
- Make sure you ask in good time about any missing key material if necessary
- Plan the schedule of meetings to ensure coverage of key areas/stakeholders, but also any lines of enquiry already evident. Pre-plan for busy people with busy diaries from outside the candidate Agency

Key points in planning the review (4)

Understanding the local context

- The Secretary can really help with this
- Try to get an early understanding of the history and legal framework of the higher education system in the country where the Agency is based
- There may be occasions where national legislation requires a particular approach, or where an alternative way of achieving an objective is used. The Panel therefore needs to develop a thorough grasp of the local context in approaching its work.

Key points in planning the review (5)

Panel meeting on the day before the site visit

Chair and panel members meet to discuss

- Review schedule for the visit
- impressions gained from the pre-visit information
- possible lines of inquiry which the Panel wish to focus on (whilst still covering *all* of the ENQA membership criteria/ESG)
- any additional documentation which it would like to have access to during the site visit.
- Panel agrees agenda for the first meeting and formulates tentative outline agendas for the other meetings. Agree who will pursue which themes in which meetings, and in what order.

Part 2

Planning for the final report

Pre-planning

Example based on **ESG 3.6**

'Independence

Standard:

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

Guidelines:

An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as:

- its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts)
- the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence
- while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency'

QAA (UK)

'Independence'

Inputs from:

- Chairman of the Board of QAA
- Higher Education Funding Council
- Senior University officers
- national student officers

AGAE (Andalusia)

'Independence'

Inputs from:

- Secretary General for the Regional Ministry of Innovation, Science and Enterprise
- Senior university officers
- Board members
- Students

The Report as principal outcome

- The main outcome of the review process is a report of about 40 pages
- The review report is drafted by the Review Secretary, in collaboration with the Chair and panel members, on the basis of the self-evaluation report, site visit and Review Panel's findings
- The Agency under review is provided with a copy of the draft report and given sufficient time to check its contents for errors of fact

Outline overall report structure 1

1 Executive summary

including:

- the terms of reference of the review
- the details of the timescale over which the review was conducted
- the identity of all panel members and administrative support arrangements
- a description of the main stages of the review
- any recommendations for improvement

2 Glossary of terms (if required)

Outline overall report structure 2

3 Introduction

contextual information relating to:

- reason(s) for the commissioning of the review
- the place of the Agency in the quality assurance structure of its jurisdiction
- the main functions of the Agency
- the engagement of the Agency with the ENQA membership provisions/ ESG
- how was the review carried out (e.g. what was the work method employed, how was consensus reached within the Review panel, etc.)
- the national (and international) context of the review (e.g. description of HE system and legal framework)

Outline overall report structure 3

4 Findings (*each membership criterion should be discussed separately*) (see below)

4.1	a) ESG Part 2 / ENQA criterion 1: External quality assurance processes b) ESG 3.1, 3.3 / ENQA criterion 1: Activities
4.2	ESG 3.2 / ENQA criterion 2: Official status
4.3	ESG 3.4 / ENQA criterion 3: Resources
4.4	ESG 3.5 / ENQA criterion 4: Mission statement
4.5	ESG 3.6 / ENQA criterion 5: Independence
4.6	ESG 3.7 / ENQA criterion 6: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the members
4.7	ESG 3.8 / ENQA criterion 7: Accountability procedures
4.8	ENQA criterion 8: Miscellaneous

Outline overall report structure 4

5 Any sections relating to **additional Terms of Reference of the review** (e.g. for a Type B review)

6 Conclusion and development. If the Review panel wishes to, this section might also include an analysis from both the Review panel and the Agency on how the review was conducted and the way forward.

7 Annexes (*Key pieces of evidence – i.e. extracts from legislation, policies and procedures etc. – may be added to the report in the form of appendices*)

+Can add reflections and developmental recommendations

Outline overall report structure 5

Overall compliance of the Agency

The Panel is not required to comment on overall compliance, but may do so if it wishes, in the form of a summative RECOMMENDATION.

(This should also take account of the ENQA additional membership criteria)

Focus on 'Findings' section (1)

Structure

- Parts II and III of the ESG should be fully covered
- Each criterion/ESG standard should be discussed separately

Focus on 'Findings' section (2)

4.1	ENQA criterion 1: Activities (ESG 3.1, 3.3) (n.b. including External quality assurance processes (ESG Part 2))
4.2	ENQA criterion 2: Official status (ESG 3.2)
4.3	ENQA criterion 3: Resources (ESG 3.4)
4.4	ENQA criterion 4: Mission statement (ESG 3.5)
4.5	ENQA criterion 5: Independence (ESG 3.6)
4.6	ENQA Criterion 6: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the members (ESG 3.7)
4.7	ENQA Criterion 7: Accountability procedures (ESG 3.8)
4.8	ENQA criterion 8: Miscellaneous

Focus on 'Findings' section (3)

Criterion 8: ENQA dimensions additional to ESG

- ENQA criterion 8 - Miscellaneous

1 The agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgments and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even if the judgments are formed by different groups;

2 If the agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of the agency;

3 The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.

Focus on 'Findings' section (4)

Footnote to Criteria 3 and 7: additional ENQA dimensions

- ESG 3.4 / ENQA Criterion 3 – Resources
Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes, procedures and staff.
- ESG 3.8 / ENQA Criterion 7 – Accountability procedures
[...] iii. a mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years which includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA.

Focus on 'Findings' section (5)

The 'evidence-analysis-conclusion-recommendation' format

Under each ENQA membership criterion/ESG standard, the report should include:

- **EVIDENCE:** a short description of the evidence gathered – making reference to meetings or documentation explored;
- **ANALYSIS:** a consideration of how far, based on the evidence available, the Agency does (or does not) meet the criterion/ESG standard; and
- **CONCLUSION** (judgement on compliance): in the opinion of the Panel, how compliant the Agency is with the criterion/ESG standard

Focus on 'Findings' section (6)

The CONCLUSION

The CONCLUSION (judgement on compliance) sets out the Panel's opinion on how compliant the Agency is with the individual criterion/ESG standard, using one of the following descriptors:

- **fully compliant:** the Agency is entirely in accordance with the criterion/ESG standard, which is implemented in an effective manner;
- **substantially compliant:** the Agency is to a large extent in accordance with the criterion/ESG standard, the principle/spirit of which is followed in practice;
- **partially compliant:** some aspects or parts of the criterion/ESG standard are met while others are not. The interpretation of the criterion/ESG standard is correct, but the manner of implementation is not effective enough;
- **non-compliant:** the Agency fails to comply with the criterion/ESG standard.

Focus on 'Findings' section (7)

EXAMPLE - QAA compliance

2.3 Criteria for decisions

Standard:

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

Guidelines:

Formal decisions made by quality assurance agencies have a significant impact on the institutions and programmes that are judged. In the interests of equity and reliability, decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a consistent manner. Conclusions should be based on recorded evidence and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions, if necessary.

QAA's criteria for its decision-making procedures are all widely published in its handbooks and in other operational documents. The Panel found these to be clearly and unambiguously expressed, explicit and consistent overall. The criteria themselves are based on the Academic Infrastructure and the Code of Practice and are well-founded. The peer review teams are well trained for their role through a rigorous and continuing training process. Overall management of the teams is in the hands of trained and professional assistant directors, who ensure that the judgements of the teams are defensible in terms of the evidence available to support them, and who are also responsible for exercising editorial control over the drafting of reports by the team members. All report drafts are required to include references to the sources of the supporting evidence for analyses and judgements. In essence, QAA adopts the policy of entrusting the judgements to the team members, while testing them and retaining control over the form of the reports.

Panel judgement:

Fully compliant

Issues 1

- the review is a process of verification of the information provided in the self-evaluation report and other documentation and the exploration of any matters which are omitted from that documentation
- the level of conformity with the ENQA membership criteria (and thereby, the ESG) that is expected is 'substantial compliance', not rigid adherence

Issues 2

- the review is an evidence-based process carried out by independent experts; the report produced must be sufficiently detailed to provide satisfactory assurance for the ENQA Board of the robustness of the review
- the report must provide sufficient, verified information which clearly shows that the ENQA membership criteria have been met.

Issues 3 - Gathering and recording the evidence

Consider using a simple mapping tool which:

- sets out each of the ESG/ENQA criteria individually
- allows the team in advance to record preliminary evidence against each standard and to identify possible lines for more detailed enquiry
- allows the team to map agreed issues to particular meetings and to record the outcome
- provides the factual basis for judgements

PART 1: THE EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA				Issues for discussion	For session number
Part 2: European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education	2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	2.3 Criteria for decisions	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	2.4 Processes fit for purpose	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	2.5 Reporting	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	2.6 Follow up procedures	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	2.7 Periodic reviews	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	2.8 System-wide analysis	Standard:	Guidelines:		
Part 3: European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies	3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	3.2 Official status	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	3.3 Activities	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	3.4 Resources	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	3.5 Mission statement	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	3.6 Independence	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies	Standard:	Guidelines:		
	3.8 Accountability procedures	Standard:	Guidelines:		

PART 2: OTHER ASPECTS OF [AGENCY X]'S WORK FOR CONSIDERATION AS PART OF THIS REVIEW, OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA.

Activity	Sub-activity	Issues for discussion	For session number

PART 3: PLANNING SCHEDULE FOR MEETINGS

Day 1 <i>[date]</i>				
Time	Event	Person for interview	Issues for discussion	Lead Panel member

Example.....

ESG No.	Standard	Guideline	Issues for discussion	Session Number/lead member
3.3. Activities	Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis	These may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the agency	e.g. –types, frequency and cycle of review(s)	?Meetings with: w-employers x-Agency reviewers y-Agency managers z-University representatives

Issues 4 - During the visit

Ensure Panel has sufficient breaks/downtime during the visit to:

- Reflect on what they have heard and adjust the forward agenda
- Periodically check through each aspect of the ENQA membership criteria/ESG and confirm which can be signed off and those which still have any areas for concern
- Ensure that conclusion and evidence about any shortfall is agreed and recorded before conclusion of visit

Issues 5 - Manage the timetable for the report

- to work it needs to be agreed with all key players in advance of visit

Timeline (weeks)	Action
Visit + 2	Secretary sends draft report electronically to Panel
Visit + 4	Last date for comments from Panel members to secretary
Visit + 5/6	Secretary (with Chair) finalises draft and sends to Agency
Visit + 6/8	Agency comments on issues of factual accuracy
Visit + 8/12	Secretary produces final report and sends to Panel, Agency and Co-ordinating body



Questions and discussion

Paul Mitchell
HE Consultant, UK

mega.mitchell@btinternet.com

www.megamitchell.com

Paul Mitchell
• 65 Holywell Avenue • Whitley Bay •
• Tyne and Wear • UK •
NE26 3AQ

Tel: +44-(0)191-252-6611

Mobile: +44-(0)7770-385349