

ENQA peer review report: the perspective of a panel member

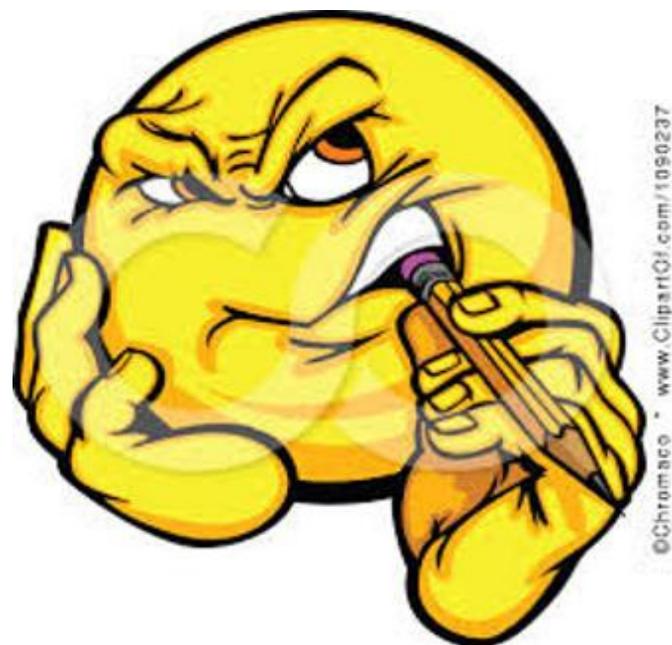
Brussels
2/3 June 2014

Paul Mitchell
HE Consultant
Mega Mitchell Consulting Ltd
UK

mega.mitchell@btinternet.com

www.megamitchell.com

+44-7770-385349



The Final Report

- ***The Report*** (about 40 pages) is the main outcome of the review process and ***must...***
 - Accurately reflect the findings of the Panel
 - Provide **evidence**, analysis and conclusions against each ESG/ENQA membership Criterion
 - Ensure the requirements of the exercise are met: Type A and/or Type B
 - Provide a clear account of the evidence collected by the Panel for the ENQA Board to make its decision on membership
 - ***Provide a useful tool for the ongoing development of the Agency itself. (For second+ cycle reviews, comment constructively also on any developmental/enhancement issues raised by, or with, the Agency)***

Centrality of the SER (1)

- Provides the core documentary evidence to support conclusions
- It should therefore
 - be well structured with a section covering the ENQA framework and addressing each standard in turn
 - be comprehensively referenced (hyperlink, Dropbox etc)
 - be in fluent English
 - include a clear description of the history and legal framework of the relevant secondary and HE systems, including any national legislation which prescribes a particular approach.

Centrality of the SER (2)

- A key advance task for all Panel members is analysis of the SER
- ENQA says to Agencies: “.... important that the SER provides clear information, sufficient reflections, critique and analysis, and that its contents can be corroborated by documentary and/or oral evidence about the ways in which the Agency meets the ENQA membership criteria”
- Agencies sometimes not used to writing SERs themselves - balance of description: evaluation can vary considerably!
- Poor SER → harder task = grumpy team

Centrality of the SER (3)

- For **second cycle reviews**, same basic membership criteria, but additional opportunity for Panel to comment on **development and enhancement**
- Panel will read previous ENQA Report(s) on the Agency under review and expect a progress update in current SER – Agency should list previous recommendations, actions since taken, and a critique of their effectiveness
- Not just ENQA - try to convey the Agency's strategic direction of travel
- Allow enough preparation time and involve key stakeholders

Five personal thematic reflections on the process.....



Typical issues (1)

Independence

- The relevant national law -is it restrictive or permissive about:
 - Agency's corporate status
 - Its longer-term planning and financial horizons
 - Its operational independence from Government and Ministers in developing procedures and decision-making
 - The Agency's operating procedures, including recruitment, selection and training of experts
 - Clear separation of powers on decision making
 - The freedom to publish reports
 - The integrity of the Appeals process
- Capacity of the Agency to influence national policy and developments? Can too much legal regulation actually limit effectiveness and the dynamics of change, particularly on second cycles?

Typical issues (2)

Governance

- Does the Agency have an effective Governance structure, which:
 - sets strategic direction over a coherent planning period
 - provides independent and constructive challenge
 - supports a capacity for self reflection
 - monitors the performance of the Agency and Chief Executive
 - oversees the Agency's own QA structure ?
- Is there an appropriate balance of input from Government/funders, HEIs, students, professional bodies/civil society?
- Meeting legal requirements/delivering procedures **versus** the Agency's broader purpose and impact

Typical issues (3)

Accountability

- Is there strong internal QA?
- Increasing centrality of students at both strategic and operational levels – is this recognised?
- Strong consultative and feedback mechanisms for internal (e.g. panel reviewers), and external stakeholders?
- Is there confidence in the value of student and international reviewers?
- Is there a code of ethics and a conflict of interest mechanism?

Typical issues (4)

The spectrum of quality assessment to quality enhancement activity

● Assessment or enhancement?

- The Agency's capacity for a broader sector QA role
- Its standing and capacity to influence national policy
- Its capacity to deliver sector wide analysis and to disseminate best practice
- Do the Agency's reporting procedures identify best practice?
- Does the Agency develop its own staff?

Typical issues (5)

Finance

- Is there an appropriate financial plan and planning period?
- How is performance monitored and reviewed – how is risk managed?
- Is there sufficient financial independence from stakeholders, and are safeguards in place?
- Is the Agency's funding base secure in the medium term?

QUESTIONS?

