

Protocol for external observers in ENQA coordinated reviews

Background

The ENQA Secretariat receives a number of requests to observe site visits of ENQA Agency Reviews from persons interested in acquiring a broader understanding of a review process.

An individual may be allowed to observe a visit to an agency where there is a need to understand the review method and to obtain a better understanding of the process in general for any professional purposes.

After the site visit, the observer will be asked to provide feedback on the process.

The following principles apply for the observing of a visit. These principles require an agreement by the agency under review.

Guiding principles

The key principles which guide the ENQA Secretariat in enabling external parties to observe a visit are:

- Preserving the integrity of the review process;
- Ensuring minimal inconvenience to the agency being observed and prior agreement of the agency;
- Prior agreement of the review panel concerned;
- Appropriate experience and understanding of higher education by the observer;
- A clear purpose for the observation.

General principles for the conduct of observation of a visit are as follows:

- The visit should not have more than one observer;
- The observer shall receive in advance of the visit a copy of the self-assessment report (SAR);
- The observer shall have the opportunity to be briefed by the review secretary in advance of the visit;
- Any questions and/or issues arising from the visit shall be discussed with the secretary following the completion of the visit, and not during it;
- The observer may observe only those meetings, including dinners, for which attendance was agreed upon by the panel and the agency;
- The observer should remain silent throughout and not participate in record-keeping (taking written notes or using any electronic means of recording) or any other related activities; (s)he must not participate in the review panel's private meetings, nor discuss evidence and its evaluation with any panel members;

- During the course of the visit, the observer should raise any questions which arise with the chair or secretary in private, sensitive to the needs not to place demands upon these team members which will deflect them from the central role of review management;
- The observer is not allowed to have the report until the procedure has ended, i.e. before it has been approved by ENQA. (S)He is not allowed either to have notes from any panel member in the meantime;
- The observer is not allowed to make annotations upon any materials consulted during the visit and will leave behind at the agency all materials relating to the review.

Formal agreement

Protocol to be signed by the external observer in advance of observation of a visit

I hereby agree to observe the following:

- I will ensure that no annotations are made upon any materials consulted during the visit, except for those which were received in advance of the visit;
- I will leave behind at the agency all materials relating to the review. Where advance material is not retained, I must ensure that any materials upon which annotations have been made are shredded;
- I will be able to read the review report only when the procedure has ended, i.e. after it has been approved by ENQA;
- I will not use any electronic recording tools;
- I will cover all the expenses incurred for the observation visit, including meals.

Accepting that ENQA regards all information which concerns the agency being reviewed as confidential information which it is entitled to protect, I will not, at any time during or after the visit, do any of the following without the prior written consent of the ENQA Secretariat:

- disclose, by way of press release or otherwise, to any third party any confidential information;
- use, either for my own benefit or for that of any other person, any confidential information.

Name of the expert:

Agency under review:

Date:

Signature: