

# **ENQA training on agency reviews**

## **Purpose and main stages of the review process**

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## ENQA Guidelines

- Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area
  - ▶ <http://www.enqa.eu/files/Guidelines%20for%20external%20reviews%20of%20quality%20assurance%20agencies%20in%20the%20EHEA.pdf>

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## Purposes ESG

- ESG have a number of purposes and were not originally intended as a reference for establishing compliance for ENQA or other membership purposes
    - ▶ to improve the education available to students in higher education institutions in the EHEA
    - ▶ to assist higher education institutions in managing and enhancing their quality and, thereby, to help to justify their institutional autonomy
    - ▶ to form a background for QA agencies in their work
    - ▶ to make external QA more transparent and simpler to understand for everybody involved
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## Purpose review

- to evaluate whether or not an agency meets the ENQA membership criteria, and thereby the ESG
  - applicable irrespective of a nationally or internationally coordinated review
- national level
  - ESG underpinned by the principle of subsidiarity
  - normally initiated and coordinated at national level
    - national authorities, as part of their routine quality assurance arrangements
- international level
  - national level is not appropriate or not possible (e.g. no suitable or willing national body)
    - ENQA (limited resources; reserves the right to decline)
    - international quality assurance organisation

## Remit

- two types of external reviews
- Type A
  - sole purpose is to fulfil the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership / EQAR listing
- Type B
  - number of purposes, one of which is to fulfil the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership / EQAR listing
    - e.g. the demands of national legislation; statutory functions; follow-up on previous review
    - additional resources/information might be required



## Principles

- review will be based on the following principles:
    - ▶ evidence-based process by independent experts
    - ▶ information provided by the Agency is assumed to be factually correct unless other evidence points to the contrary
    - ▶ review is a process of verification of the information provided (mainly by SER) and the exploration of any matters which are omitted from that documentation
    - ▶ the level of conformity that is expected is “substantial compliance”, not rigid adherence
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## Key features

- necessary for the review to be acceptable to the ENQA Board
    - ▶ management of process must be completely independent of the Agency itself
    - ▶ all parts of the process must be transparent and therefore easily open to examination by the ENQA Board
    - ▶ 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 criteria have been met
  - agency under review is in an essential process of transition: can these principles be adhered to?
    - ▶ subject of the review: future developments or past performance?
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## Transparency

- ENQA should be kept informed of progress throughout the review
    - ▶ to plan its workload
    - ▶ to help ensure that the outcomes of the review process meet the requirements of the ENQA Board
  - terms of reference and protocol for the review
    - ▶ drafted well before the process starts
    - ▶ clearly identify whether type A or type B review
    - ▶ clearly state an outline of how the review is going to run
      - number of reviewers, administrative arrangements, approximate timings, language issues and arrangements for translation if necessary, etc.
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## Composition of the panel

- selection process must be carried out by the Coordinating body (and not by the Agency being reviewed)
  - ▶ to avoid conflict of interests and preserve integrity of process
- non-conflict-of-interest agreements
  - ▶ experts to notify the Coordinating body in writing of any connection or interest, which could result in a conflict of interest related to the review
- Composition normally includes
  - ▶ one or two quality assurance experts from outside the national system being reviewed
  - ▶ representatives of higher education institutions
  - ▶ student members
  - ▶ stakeholder members (for example, an employer)

## Prior to the site visit

- self-evaluation report (SER)
    - ▶ opportunity to reflect on how an agency measures up to the ENQA membership criteria/ESG and
    - ▶ basic source of information for the panel
    - ▶ SER should provides clear information, that it is full, frank and analytical
    - ▶ its contents can be corroborated by documentary and/or oral evidence about the ways in which the Agency meets the ENQA membership criteria/ESG
  - agency may attach as annexes the most crucial documentation (within reason, preferably not more than 15 to 20 annexes) it thinks may help support its analysis
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## Prior to the site visit

<p>The Agency produces its self-evaluation document and submits this along with any other documentation of relevance to the Coordinating body – then passed to the Review Secretary, along with the present Guidelines, for distribution to the other panel members.</p>	<p>8–12 weeks before the site visit</p>
<p>If appropriate, a telephone briefing gathering the Review panel and the Coordinating body takes place to discuss the process of the whole review.</p>	<p>6–8 weeks before the site visit</p>
<p>The Review Chair reviews the documentation provided by the Agency and makes an initial identification of lines of inquiry with reference to the terms of reference of the review and the information received from the Agency.</p> <p>These are developed further in consultation with the rest of the Review panel.</p>	<p>4–6 weeks before the site visit</p>
<p>The Review Secretary produces an outline report in collaboration with the Chair and a briefing paper – outlining the background, schedule and draft lines of inquiry for the review and circulates this to the Review panel.</p>	<p>2–4 weeks before the site visit</p>

## Site visit

- key functions
    - ▶ to share, face-to-face, the impressions gained
    - ▶ to explore in meetings and interviews the Agency's performance
    - ▶ to explore through additional documentation more information relating to the Agency's compliance
    - ▶ to formulate the Panel's preliminary findings and communicate these to the Agency
    - ▶ to produce a material for the draft report as a basis for further development after the site visit
  - it is essential that the process and the panel's time are managed efficiently and effectively
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## Site visit: Panel briefing

- discuss the schedule of the visit (including panel meetings, meetings/interviews, and time to study documentation) and impressions gained from the pre-visit information
- discuss any highlighted lines of inquiry which the Panel wish to focus on
  - ▶ i.e. what areas of the ENQA membership criteria/ESG the site visit may need particularly to focus on
  - ▶ but: the review will need to focus on *all* of the ENQA membership criteria/ESG!
- panel might identify any additional documentation which it would like to have access to during the site visit
- basic structure of meetings should preferably be decided in advance, i.e. who will ask what questions, and in what order
  - ▶ draft a mapping grid, based on the ENQA membership provisions/ESG (cf. Annex VII)



## Site visit

Action	Time
Briefing meeting of the Review panel. The panel members will discuss the schedule of the visit and agree how the lines of inquiry will be dealt with.	Day before site visit
The site visit takes place (see section 3.5).	2–3 days
A panel meeting takes place as the penultimate session of the site visit. At this meeting the team will review the evidence presented, and draw preliminary findings, and if possible put these into the “skeleton” report.	Last day of the site visit
The Panel may then have a final meeting with the representatives of the Agency in which the preliminary findings of the review are communicated.	Last day of the site visit

## Site visit

- normally conducted in English
    - ▶ if interpreters are needed by the Agency the Panel should be informed at least one month prior to the visit
    - ▶ approval of the interpreters by the panel (must be external to the Agency's operations)
    - ▶ agency will bear the cost of interpretation
      - use of interpretation may lengthen the duration of the interviews
      - may also lead to small differences in understanding of detail
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## After the site visit

- agency should not submit new information to the panel after the site visit
    - all relevant information should be provided to the Review panel only before or during the site visit
    - after the site visit, only factual comments on the review report are possible
  - final report should not exceed 40 pages in length
  - form of the Review panel's report is likely to depend on the type of review that has been carried out
  - Outline report structure
    - cf. chapter 3.6.1, ENQA Review Guidelines document, p. 13f.
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## Writing up findings: covering ESG II, III

ESG 3.1 – Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education

ESG 2.1 – Use of internal quality assurance procedures

ESG 2.2 – Development of external quality assurance processes

ESG 2.3 – Criteria for decisions

ESG 2.4 – Processes fit for purpose

ESG 2.5 – Reporting

ESG 2.6 – Follow-up procedures

ESG 2.7 – Periodic reviews

ESG 2.8 – System-wide analysis

ESG 3.2 – Official status

ESG 3.3 – Activities

ESG 3.4 – Resources

ESG 3.5 – Mission Statement

ESG 3.6 – Independence

ESG 3.7 – External quality assurance criteria and processes used

ESG 3.8 – Accountability

Membership criteria contain additional parts to the ESG (cf. p 25 Review-Guidelines document)!

## After the site visit

ACTION	TIME
The Review Secretary will produce the initial draft report and circulate it to the Chair and panel members (see section 3.6 for drafting and structure guidance)	2 weeks after the site visit
The panel members will review the draft and suggest any comments, or amendments, and provide these to the Review Secretary.	3 weeks after the site visit
The Review Secretary will produce a revised draft which, after agreement from the Panel, is submitted to the Agency for comment on its factual accuracy.	4–6 weeks after the site visit
The Agency will submit any amendments to the report relating to factual accuracy to the Review Secretary for consideration.	6–8 weeks after the site visit
The Review Secretary will produce a final version of the report.	8–10 weeks after the site visit
The Review Secretary will submit the final review report to the Review panel, the Agency and the Coordinating body.	10–12 weeks after the site visit
The Coordinating body (if not ENQA) will submit the final review report to the ENQA Secretariat.	10–12 weeks after the site visit
The ENQA Secretariat will ask the panel members and the Agency to fill in a feedback questionnaire on the review process.	12–14 weeks after the site visit

## Writing up findings

- the findings section of the final report is crucial!
  - it should be written in a way that reveals both the evidence for and the reasoning behind the Panel's conclusions
- ENQA membership criteria 1-8 (parts II and III of the ESG) should be fully covered
- Each criterion/ESG standard should be discussed separately
- Under *each* criterion, the report should include:
  - Evidence: a short description of the evidence gathered
  - Analysis: a consideration of how far the Agency does (or does not) meet the criterion
  - Conclusion: (judgement on compliance): in the opinion of the Panel, how compliant the Agency is with the criterion
  - Recommendation (if any)

## judgement on compliance

- will be dealt with more thoroughly by Fiona
  - ENQA Board is not requesting judgement of the panel on the granting or (re)confirmation of Full Membership
  - Board reserves the right to deviate from the opinion of the Panel
    - ▶ if the review process was not carried out properly and independently
    - ▶ if the evidence in the report was not supporting the judgements
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## ENQA board

- Board will seek to answer three fundamental questions:
  - ▶ process: review was conducted to the required level of independence, integrity and robustness?
  - ▶ content: sufficient, verified evidence that the agency meets the ENQA membership criteria and thereby ESG?
  - ▶ discrepancies: panel's conclusions and the evidence brought forward?
- compliance with criteria/ESG can be adequately judged on substantial, but not necessarily exhaustive, evidence
  - ▶ Board agreed that any areas of total non-compliance were unacceptable
  - ▶ some element of compliance would be necessary against all criteria in order to provide an overall judgement based on 'sufficient' compliance



Thank you very much for your attention

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