Learning from agency reviews (2005-2009)

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Introduction

• Purpose of the project

• The project team and the methodology

• Main outcome

• Some general observations

• Specific observations about the ESG
The project

- Formed part of ENQA’s workplan (2009-10)
- Purpose:
  - To evaluate and analyse the outcomes of reviews of agencies to date
  - To use the lessons learned to shape the second round of reviews of agencies
  - To provide information on the use and applicability of the ESG in the context of agency reviews, with a view to feeding in to any review of the ESG (MAP-ESG project)
- Project team: 3 ENQA board members, 2 external experts, 2 agency experts
- Methodology
- Main outcome: By and large, everything is good! (Of course, there are always a few ‘butst...’)
General observations

• Consistency
  ➢ The need for fair and comparable information
  ➢ The issue of compliance
  ➢ The idea of the intention or spirit of a standard v. the letter of the law

• Enhancement
  ➢ As yet nothing specific in the ESG but...
General observations on the standards

• Some standards cause agencies more problems than others (e.g. 3.2 (Official Status) and 3.3 (Activities) relatively problem-free whereas 3.6 (Independence) and 3.8 (Accountability) tend to be cause for more debate amongst panels)

• Variation in provision of guidelines (e.g. 3.4 (Resources) has no guidance attached

• Overlap between some of the standards, in particular 3.2 and 3.5 (Mission Statement). Also between 3.3 and 3.5

• The sub-headings within some of the standards, in particular 3.6 (Independence)
Observations on individual standards

- Structure of the report:

  - Legitimacy
    - 3.2 Official status
    - 3.5 Mission statement
    - 3.6 Independence
  - Activities
    - 3.1 Use of external QA procedures – part 2
    - 3.3 Activities
    - 3.7 External QA – the processes & criteria used
    - 3.8 Accountability procedures
  - Sustainability
    - 3.4 Resources
    - 3.8 Accountability procedures
Legitimacy

- Further emphasis on the overlap between 3.2 and 3.5 (Official Status and Mission Statement). Also possible overlap with 3.6 (Independence)

- 3.6: bear in mind the difference kinds of independence that might be considered:
  - Legal, operational, financial, prevention of conflicts of interest
Activities

• 3.3 (Activities) Bear in mind the huge variation in agencies (size, scope, remit etc.) For example, the range of HEIs that an agency might be responsible for reviewing is from 5 – 1,500!

• 3.7 (External QA criteria and processes used) There were various reasons for not achieving full compliance (these could be structural, developmental or size-related). Remember that many agencies are also constrained by the legal context in which they work.

• 3.8 (Accountability procedures) Again, several reasons for not receiving full compliance. Some variation of interpretation of this standard – does it refer to internal accountability or analysis of the impact the agency is making externally? Certainly, for the purpose of review, the former should be expected.
Sustainability

• 3.4 (Resources) bear in mind the impact of the evolution of mission statements

• 3.8 (Accountability) Remember the age of the agency – this will have a bearing on how developed any internal QA policy might be.
For further information...

...please read the report!

Not yet published but will be found at:

www.enqa.eu/publications

THANK YOU!