

Purpose and main stages of the review process

Nathalie Costes
Project Manager
ENQA

ENQA training on agency reviews
10 February 2011

The review process and its purpose



Coordination of the review process

- **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
 - ▶ First review for ENQA membership purposes is to be coordinated by ENQA, not by another body

Purpose of the 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



Beware! 2 types of reviews:

Type A (1 purpose: ENQA membership / EQAR listing)

Type B (several purposes)

- statutory functions
- ECA Code of Good Practice
- special context (e.g. bi-national character, NVAO)

Principles of the review



- ▶ The review is an **evidence-based process** carried out by independent peer 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

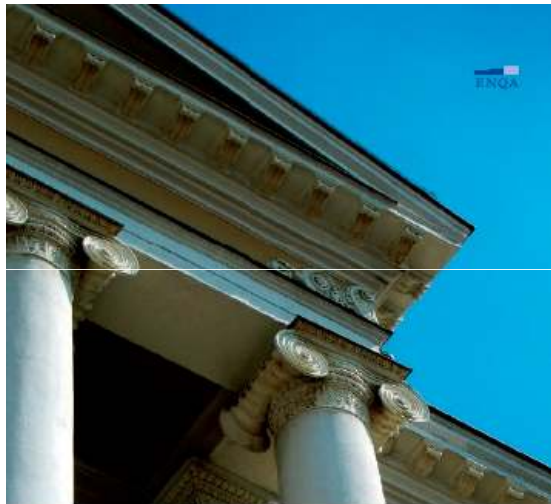
Key features of the review process

- ▶ management of process must be completely **independent** of the Agency itself
- ▶ all parts of the process must be **transparent** (easily open to examination by the ENQA Board)
- ▶ the report must be sufficiently detailed to provide satisfactory assurance 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?

Purposes of the ESG



Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
in the European Higher Education Area



- ▶ to improve the education available to students in HEIs in the EHEA
- ▶ to assist HEIs 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

The ESG were not originally intended as a reference for establishing compliance for ENQA or other membership purposes

The main stages of the review process



Stage 1: before 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>

Stage 1: before the site visit

Composition of the panel

- selection process must be carried out by the Coordinating body (and not by the Agency being reviewed)
- When a review is carried out for ENQA membership purposes, panel composition and terms of reference need to be approved by the ENQA Board
- non-conflict-of-interest agreements
- Panel normally includes
 - ▶ one or two **quality assurance experts** from outside the national system being reviewed
 - ▶ **representatives of HEIs**
 - ▶ **students**
 - ▶ **stakeholders** (for example, an employer)



Stage 1: before the site visit

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.

Stage 1: before the site visit

The self-evaluation report (SER)

- ▶ opportunity to reflect on how an agency measures up to the ENQA membership criteria/ESG
- ▶ basic source of information for the panel
- ▶ clear information, full, frank and analytical
- ▶ its contents can be corroborated by documentary and/or oral evidence
- agency may attach as annexes the most crucial documentation (preferably not more than 15 to 20 annexes) it thinks may help support its analysis
- The panel and/or the ENQA Board are also entitled to request an agency for more documentation at any stage of evaluation

Stage 2: the 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

Stage 2: the site visit

Meetings and interviews with Agency's staff and stakeholders to:

- Explore the Agency's performance
- Gather and evaluate additional information onsite
- Formulate the Panel's preliminary findings and communicate these to the Agency
- Produce a material for the draft report

Regular panel meetings

Final debriefing meeting with the agency (optional)



It is essential that the process and the panel's time are managed efficiently and effectively

Stage 2: 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



Stage 3: after the site visit, writing the report

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

After the site visit

- The 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
-

Stage 3: writing the final report – Outline report structure

cf. chapter 3.6.1, ENQA Review Guidelines document, p. 13f.

- Final report should not exceed 40 pages in length
- Form of the report is likely to depend on the type of review that has been carried out

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction
3. Findings

ENQA membership criteria 1 to 8 (ESG 3.1- 3.8) have to be fully covered

- 4+ Any sections relating to additional Terms of Reference of the review
5. Conclusion
6. Annexes

Stage 3: writing the final report – Outline report structure

The findings section is crucial! The report has to reveal both evidence for and reasoning behind Panel's conclusions:

- "Description of evidence, analysis, conclusion"
- Each membership 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 is the Agency with the criterion?
 - ☑ **Recommendation** (if any)

Stage 3: 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)!

Stage 3: writing the report - Conclusions

The ENQA Board will have to make a yes/no decision based on the review. Therefore, **the conclusions have to be clear!**

Conclusions:

The agency is **fully compliant**
substantially compliant
partially compliant
non-compliant

with the membership criterion.

Panel may comment on overall compliance with membership criteria if it wishes

Transparent motivation of conclusions is of utmost importance in order to facilitate consistent Board decisions.

Stage 4: decision making by the ENQA Board

The review report analysis and Board decision are based on three principles:

- **Process:** review was conducted to the required level of independence, integrity and robustness
- **Content:** the review report provide sufficient, verified evidence that the agency meets the ENQA membership criteria and thereby ESG
- **Discrepancies:** there is no discrepancy between the panel's conclusions and the evidence brought forward in its report

Stage 4: decision making by the ENQA Board - judgement on compliance

- 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
-
- compliance with criteria/ESG can be adequately judged on substantial, but not necessarily exhaustive, evidence
 - ▶ any areas of total non-compliance are unacceptable
 - ▶ some element of compliance would be necessary against all criteria in order to provide an overall judgement based on 'sufficient' compliance

Stage 4: decision making by the ENQA Board

The conclusion and recommendation will fall into one of these five categories:

1. Full Membership granted / reconfirmed
2. Request further information in relation to the findings
3. Request further information in relation to the evidence of the review process
4. Full membership is not granted / reconfirmed
 - ▶ agency is given two years to conform to criteria
 - ▶ agency is losing membership
 - ▶ applicant is granted Candidate membership
5. Review is rejected as unacceptable
 - ▶ agency can reapply within limited period
 - ▶ agency is not granted membership

Thank you for your attention!
