

# Role of the Review Secretary

**ENQA TRAINING**  
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# ROLE OVERVIEW

## Finding your way ....



# ROLE OVERVIEW

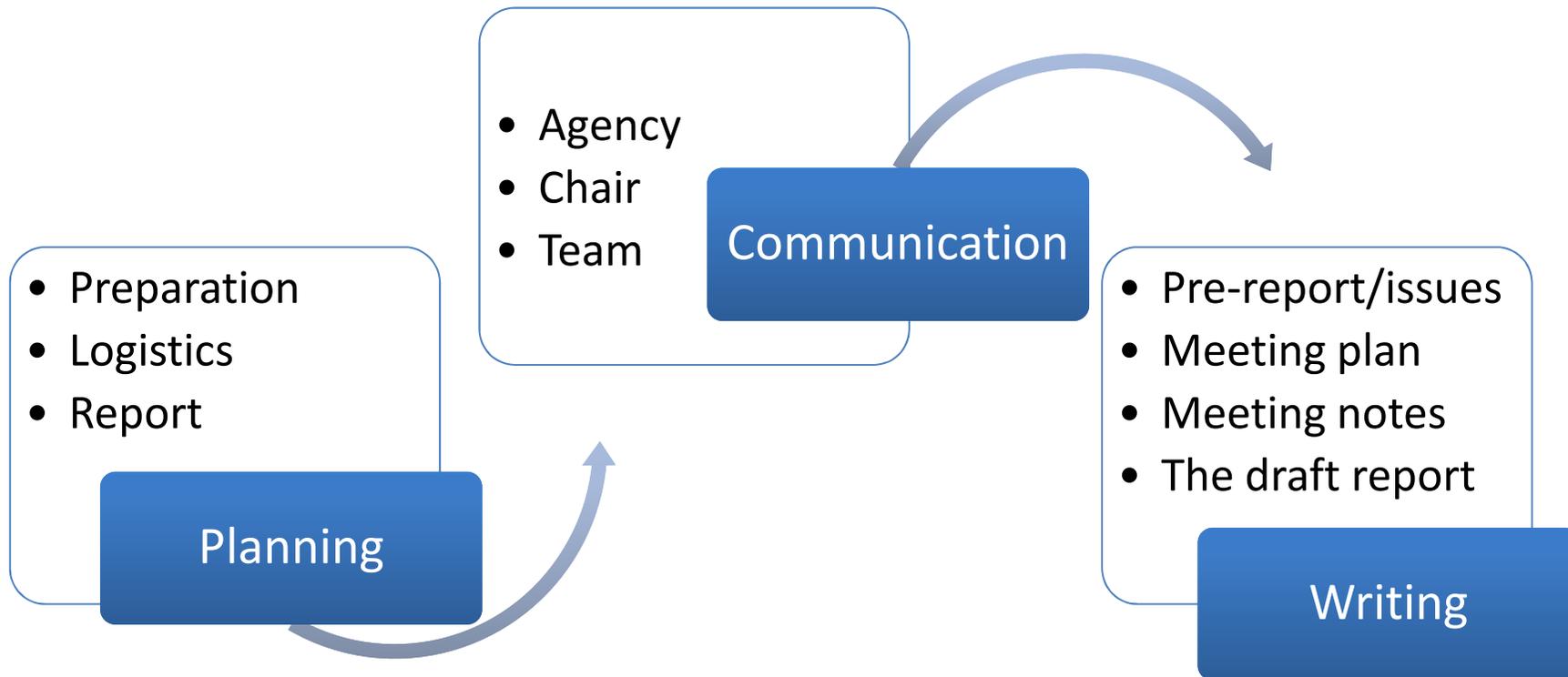
- Overall approach should be **teamwork**
- Formal role of Secretary set out in ENQA handbook and in your contract
- "The Secretary is a full member of the Panel of equal status with the other members, but with specific and different duties from theirs."
- Chair and Secretary have particular roles...



# ROLE OVERVIEW

## The Secretary's specific roles in managing the review process

(Ack. P Findlay)



# ROLE OVERVIEW

## Importance of pre-planning



- **Preparation, preparation, preparation!**
- Start at the end! What does the required structure of the final Report demand from the process?
- Use the final Report framework as your planning tool to ensure:
  - ✓ that you cover the ground properly (what needs to be clarified, where are the gaps, what further evidence/information is needed?)
  - ✓ that you meet the right people on site visit
  - ✓ that you see all the right documents
  - ✓ that by the end of the visit you will have assembled robust oral and documentary evidence to support each conclusion

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Communication



- Take the initiative to make first contact with the Agency's nominated contact, the Chair, and the Panel, as soon as ENQA confirms Panel membership and date of site visit
- Establish a good, confident working relationship with Agency's nominated contact
- Act as the single conduit between the Panel, ENQA and the Agency throughout the exercise
- Work with the Chair throughout via regular consultation
- Manage expectations on all sides!

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT



## The pre-visit steps

- Confirm the **timeline** for the whole review (see ENQA handbook) and agree milestones/deadlines with Panel (both pre- and post-site visit)
- Review the **SER** (see below)
- Gather **information** (see below)
- Meeting of **Chair, Secretary and Agency Chief Executive** (see below)
- Manage the **timetable** and visit **content** for site visit (see below)
- Manage **logistical arrangements** (see below)
- Combine Panel **commentaries on SER**
- Prepare a short **briefing/issues paper** for the Panel
- Compile an agreed core set of possible **lines for enquiry**
- Draft **the standard sections** according to the review Report template

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Your knowledge base (1)

- Get to know the ENQA guidelines (Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA) (latest edition, 2012)
- Get to know the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA and the additional ENQA criteria
- Note the agreed Terms of Reference and requirements for this particular Agency review (e.g. is it 'Type A or B')
- Read ENQA Code of Conduct



# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Your knowledge base (2)

- Read previous ENQA Report(s) on the Agency under review and cross reference to progress update in current SER
- Try to get an early understanding of the history and legal framework of the relevant HE system, including any national legislation which prescribes a particular approach
- Read ENQA review Reports on other Agencies

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## The SER (1)



- Key advance task - analysis of the SER, working with all Panel members.
- 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

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## The SER (2)



- Co-ordinate (with deadline) Panel commentaries
- Collate Panel member reactions, questions and comments, using a simple mapping grid  
(ENQA Handbook Annex 6 – or similar)
- Are there obvious omissions or gaps?
- For **second cycle reviews**, same basic membership criteria, but additional opportunity to comment on **development and enhancement**

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Information gathering

- SER as core evidence source –what else is needed?
- Examine Appendices and references to Agency website
- Examine any relevant National Documents
- Any key items which need translation?
- Ask for any further information/ documentation via a composite list in good time.

**Remember that the whole process relies on EVIDENCE BASED FINDINGS**



# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Meeting of Chair, Secretary and Agency Chief Executive



- Chair and Secretary can meet after having both independently read the SER to tease out issues and prepare a list of matters for clarification
- This meeting can be timed to include a preliminary meeting with the Chief Executive of the Agency under review.
- Provides briefing for Chair and Secretary and may be used to highlight gaps in the SER

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

Planning visit content and timetable



# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Planning visit content and timetable (1)



- Propose (or review) a draft programme of meetings
- Plan the schedule of meetings to ensure coverage of key areas/stakeholders
- Keep in mind any lines of enquiry already evident
- **Manage** this process! Pre-plan for busy people with busy diaries from outside the candidate Agency

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Planning visit content and timetable (2)



- See same person once only (or by agreement)
- Limit standard group size (normally) to about 6
- Resolve any language/translation issues. Arrange interpreter if needed (sometimes only in part)
- Be clear on policy on Agency hospitality

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Planning visit content and timetable (3)

- Typically a review schedule for the visit (check for externality dimension) includes inputs from:
  - ❖ Chief Executive and managers
  - ❖ Chairman and some members of the Board
  - ❖ Agency staff operational groupings
  - ❖ Cross-section of Agency staff (HR, developmental and resources dimension)
  - ❖ Selection of Agency-appointed Reviewers (inc. student and international)
  - ❖ The Ministry / funders
  - ❖ External University/HEI staff involved in QA with experience of Agency's procedures (the consumers!)
  - ❖ Students / Officers of national student associations with knowledge of Agency's work
  - ❖ Stakeholder representatives of civil society, employers, professional bodies

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Planning the practicalities (1)

### Get it right....!



- Ensure Panel have made travel arrangements and they know latest arrival and earliest departure times
- Share information of Panel members' travel plans, mobile phone numbers etc.
- Hotel recommendations from Agency and any travel advice
- Dietary requirements/allergies from Panel
- Meeting room/space for arrival evening
- Dinner options during stay
- Daily taxi/minibus transfers hotel/Agency/hotel
- Agree sandwich/buffet style lunch to be provided by Agency

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

## Planning the Practicalities (2)



- Agree tea, coffee, water, juices, fruit/biscuits to be provided by Agency in meeting room throughout visit.
- Agree nameplates both (for Panel and all interviewees) to provided by Agency in meeting room and small supply of basic stationery
- Agree Agency to provide separate composite list of all attendees with full job titles attending meetings
- Agree Agency to provide access to Agency Wi-Fi and sufficient power sockets for Panel laptops in meeting room (freestanding PC with printer also helpful)

# BEFORE THE SITE VISIT

**By the time of the site visit the Review Secretary will have:**

- ✓ Compiled the agreed core set of possible lines for enquiry
- ✓ Finalised the detailed timetable for the site visit
- ✓ Fixed all logistical arrangements
- ✓ Shared a short briefing/issues paper with the Panel
- ✓ Drafted the standard sections of the review Report template
- ✓ Communicated to all parties clear expectations of the requirements, deliverables and timelines of the process



# The Site Visit.....



# THE SITE VISIT

## Panel pre-meeting



The whole Panel meets on the day before the site visit.

- Further impressions gained from the pre-visit information
- Confirmation of lines of inquiry which the Panel wish to focus on (whilst still covering *all* of the ENQA membership criteria/ESG)
- Any additional information which it would like to have access to during the site visit (keep reasonable and proportionate)
- The agenda for the first meetings and tentative outline agendas for the other meetings.
- Agrees who will pursue which themes in which meetings, and in what order.

**Check all the angles/issues are covered!**

# THE SITE VISIT

## During the Visit (1): the basics



- Keep to time – essential!
- Professionalism - ensure the Agency recognises the Panel is here to assist not hinder – tone is rigorous but not combative
- Stay close to the nominated Agency Link person
- Acknowledge the efforts made by the Agency to accommodate the Panel
- Uphold the courtesies and good atmosphere
- If necessary, help to set a comfort level for operating in English
- Keep team on track and use time wisely

## THE SITE VISIT

### During the Visit (2): gathering the evidence

- Work efficiently and effectively to collate accurate oral and written evidence
- Ensure that attendance lists per meeting are accurate
- Keep notes of formal and informal discussions - and keep them secure!
- Ensure that a list of reference materials accessed during the visit is maintained
- Ensure that any outstanding documents requested by the Panel are provided
- Use the Checklist of key issues and keep it updated
- Keep a running record of issues which have been 'closed down' in discussion, or which remain unresolved - periodically check with Panel
- Triangulate the evidence / help team to spot and avoid 'unsafe' conclusions. Any unscheduled/repeat meetings?

## THE SITE VISIT

### During the Visit (3): job done?

- Check that sufficient **evidence** has been gathered at the end of each session and at the end of each day to produce the oral and written reports
- Work with the Chair on the penultimate evening to agree any headlines to be presented to the Agency on the final day
- After the 2nd day, take care to go through the individual criteria with the Panel members and make sure they agree with both the judgements and the overall flavour and direction of what will be written

# THE SITE VISIT

**OUTCOMES** By the time you leave the premises you must have achieved these key outcomes:

- Gathered sufficient **evidence** (oral and written) against **each** Criterion
- Agreed a **judgement** on compliance for **each** Criterion (fully/substantially/partially or non)
- Agreed a **recommendation** on **overall compliance**
- Addressed **any other aspects** of the review (e.g. Type B)
- Agreed a **timetable** for post-visit actions (Report production)
- Agreed an **oral report** reflecting key outcomes and nuances such that the final written Report will not be a surprise



# AFTER THE SITE VISIT.....

First, do something else...!



# AFTER THE SITE VISIT

## Second, the feedback letter



- An initial feedback letter to ENQA from the Chair and Secretary on the overall process and experience

# AFTER THE SITE VISIT



## Third, 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)

# AFTER THE SITE VISIT



## Manage delivery of the Report

- Draft standard sections beforehand – eases the task!
- Block out a solid week
- First agree draft with the Chair and then circulate to Panel members in ‘near-final’ form
- Ensure fellow Panel members and the Agency stick to their deadlines for comments – keep them on track.
- The Agency under review is provided with a copy of the draft Report and given sufficient time (? 2 weeks) to check its contents for errors of fact.
- The final version is ‘signed off’ by the Chair, in the light of comments received from Panel members
- Send final to ENQA, Agency and Panel members (remains a ‘closed’ document pending consideration)

# WATCHWORDS

## The softer side....

- Operate with an open mind and integrity
- Build a good, open relationship in advance and during the visit with the candidate Agency
- Maintain impartiality, confidentiality and trust
- Avoid / be alert to any conflicts of interest
- Show cultural awareness
- Avoid the 'not invented here' syndrome
- Enjoy the experience – and learn from it!



# QUESTIONS?

