



## ENQA MEMBERS' FORUM 2015 Córdoba, 16-17 April 2015

### Venue:

AAC-DEVA  
Calle Doña Berenguela s/n  
14006 Córdoba  
Spain

### Proposal for ENQA Agency Reviews

Outline of the main elements of the revised model

#### 1.1 The overall review model

The ENQA reviews are expected to verify the ESG compliance of the agency under review, while at the same time ensuring a strong(er) developmental component that makes the reviews useful and worthwhile to the agencies also in the second, third and subsequent rounds. This expectation has been discussed at length by the revision team, in the Board, and at the General Assembly in October 2015. It has become clear that it is in the interest of the members that ENQA reviews maintain the ESG compliance for the reviews in all subsequent rounds, while adding space for more developmental exchanges.

#### *\*NEW\**

The proposal is to distinguish between the first and subsequent review rounds.

**The first review** would focus on the policies, procedures and criteria in place. Full evidence of concrete results in all areas may not be required at this stage. However, the agency must be able to document (action plans with timetables) how they are able to achieve results according to all standards within the next review, where concrete outcomes are not yet fully available (e.g. system-wide analysis).

In addition to being operational in quality assurance for at least two years the applicant agency will additionally be required to have completed at least five review reports.

**The second and subsequent reviews** will require clear evidence on results in all areas. In addition, the further reviews will need to indicate progress from the previous review. This will be a mandatory element in both the SER and the panel report. How exactly this should be done will be described in more detail in the Review Guidelines.

*It should be of course underlined that all reviews – whether first, second, or subsequent - will always have a developmental approach and aim at constant enhancement of the agencies.*

**Follow-up:** In order to provide better developmental support to the agency, the follow-up report (after two years of the review decision by the Board) will be made obligatory and complemented by a small-scale site visit to the agency (two panel members of the original panel, whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered as of particular importance or challenge by the agency. As such a conversation is carried out separately from the “compliance-

review”, the benefits are expected to be higher for the agency. The price of this visit is included in the review fee (see below), so that no extra fee is charged from the agency.

In the case of agencies with conditional membership (see 1.7 below) the follow-up visit would serve the purpose of verifying whether the areas of concern have been addressed and whether the agency may continue its membership until the end of the five-year period.

The different stages of the review process are described in more detail below.

## **1.2 The (revised) four stages of the review process**

### **Self-evaluation**

The ENQA agency review is initiated by an application from an agency who wants to be granted or to renew ENQA membership. ENQA may also in the future accept applications for other than membership purposes (including reviews of agencies outside the EHEA) (see 1.8).

The self-evaluation report will follow a guide of content provided in the ENQA Guidelines, and will need to contain all elements listed in the Guidelines. Each criterion (ESG parts II and III) will be addressed individually. The SER will be analytical, and in the case of second or subsequent reviews, it will make explicit reference to the recommendations of the previous review underlining the related developments. It will also highlight changes and developments in relation to the other criteria.

The ENQA Secretariat will carry out an administrative scrutiny of the self-evaluation report to see if it meets the requirements of the Guidelines. Should this not be the case, the agency will be asked to modify the SER accordingly before being able to proceed with the review process.

### **External evaluation**

When the SER, composed in line with the ENQA Guidelines, has been received by the ENQA Secretariat, the ENQA Board will commission a panel of independent reviewers. The mandate for the review panel is to evaluate and give ENQA Board advice on whether an agency is acting in compliance with ESG. The site-visit will take place at the earliest six weeks after the ENQA Secretariat has received the completed SER.

The purpose of the site visit is to supply and verify information given in the SER and to gain new knowledge about the agency under review. An ENQA Secretariat staff member will participate in the site visit as a moderator to ensure the integrity of the process and that the requirements of the ENQA review guidelines are met. This is expected to support the consistency of the review processes (see 1.5).

### **The external review report**

The review panel drafts the external review reports (ERR) and sends it to the ENQA Secretariat. The ERR will be written using an ENQA Review Template, ensuring that all different elements are addressed similarly across the different review reports, and that ENQA Review Reports have a recognisable visual image. The panel’s judgement on compliance will be provided for each standard with the following grading: fully compliant, substantially compliant, partially compliant or non-compliant.

Before sending the report to the reviewed agency for factual corrections, the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator will check the report for consistency, clarity, and language. After the factual check by the agency the panel finalises the report, which is then submitted to ENQA. In addition to the review report, the agency applying for membership is asked to provide a letter outlining their motivation in

applying for membership and the ways in which they expect to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during their membership.

The ENQA Board will take the decision on membership based on the evaluation and recommendations given in the final ERR. When the overall conclusion of the evaluation is that the agency under review complies substantially with the ESG, the agency will be accepted or reconfirmed as a member of ENQA.

ENQA will publish all the external review reports (whether the decision was a negative or a positive one) as soon as the Board has taken its final decision. The membership is valid five years from the date of the Board decision.

### **Follow-up**

All agencies have to submit a follow-up report at the latest two years after the ENQA Board's decision. The purpose of this follow-up is to engage the agency to have a continuous awareness of its own quality and quality work.

As a new element in the ENQA Agency Review, two reviewers from the original review panel are commissioned to read and analyse the follow-up report and to carry out a one day site-visit to the agency. The specific ambition here is to generate a stronger enhancement-oriented dialogue that might be difficult to truly integrate in the ordinary site-visit. In addition, in case of conditional membership, the additional site-visit will be used to verify whether the causes of concern have been adequately addressed and whether the membership can be continued to the full five years.

Both the agency's follow-up report and the short report by the reviewers will be added to the already published ERR.

**\*NEW\***

### **Public call for concerns**

ENQA will integrate a new element to the external review process, namely a public call to express opinions/concerns on the quality of the work by the agency. Such a call will be addressed both to the "home" stakeholders (national, regional entities – HEIs, student organisations, rectors' conferences, etc.) and foreign partners (other quality assurance agencies within the EHEA, international organisations, foreign institutions reviewed by the agency, etc.). The agency will be given an opportunity to comment on the opinions both in writing (prior to the site visit) and orally (during the site visit). The aim is to assure objective judgment on the agency in question, based on a triangulation method: including the view from the agency, opinions of external stakeholders, as well independent expert judgment. It is also seen as an additional measure to give confidence that ENQA full members are professional and trustworthy agencies and that they act with integrity and professionally at all times.

### **1.3 Composition of panels**

**\*NEW\***

The future review panels would be composed of four instead of five members. This is in line with EQAR minimum requirements for review panels. In addition, the reviews will engage an ENQA Secretariat staff member as review coordinator also in the site visits (see point 1.5 below).

The panel would be composed of:

- a student (or a recent graduate)

- an academic employed currently by a higher education institution
- a QA professional
- a labour market representative where appropriate (the agency can indicate if they wish this profile to be included. If not, a second QA professional will be included).

Additional criteria, to be considered across the above categories, will be defined in the review guidelines and will include elements such as country of origin, language skills, work experience, experience in ENQA reviews, and gender.

The Chair and the Secretary would not need to be ENQA-nominated reviewers (as is currently the case).

**\*NEW\***

In the future, ENQA will continue to collect nominations from its member agencies, EUA, EURASHE, ESU, and additionally from Business Europe. Once the nominated reviewers have been trained by ENQA, they will be included in the ENQA pool of reviewers (as currently). For each review, ENQA Board will nominate four reviewers (according to the profiles listed above). The student member will be an ESU nominee, while one of the other reviewers will be a EUA/EURASHE nominee. ENQA will propose to the stakeholder organisations that it would no longer ask for individual appointments for the single review panels, but the Board would select from the nominated and trained reviewers the panel members for each review. This will make the procedure faster and more flexible for ENQA, without undermining the important role of the stakeholders in the nomination of reviewers.

#### **1.4 Criteria**

**\*NEW\***

The ENQA Agency Reviews will use as criteria the (revised) ESG Part II and Part III. Each standard shall be considered in its own right.

The agency will indicate in a separate letter to be sent to the Board, together with the review report (as an “application package”), their expectations on membership, and the ways in which they wish and commit to contributing to ENQA.

#### **1.5 Role of the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator**

In order to facilitate the work of the panel and of the agency; to bring in experience from other reviews and support thus greater consistency; and to safeguard the report’s quality (clarity, consistency, and language), an ENQA Secretariat review coordinator would have a more prominent role in the review process.

**\*NEW\***

Specifically, the Review Coordinator of the Secretariat would have the following main tasks:

- pre-check of the SER (a new step already implemented since autumn 2014)
- attend the site visit (no role in interviews, but in monitoring the integrity of the process and to ensure that ENQA expectations are met)

- check the review panel's report before it is sent to the agency (to ensure that it meets the ENQA requirements)

The work will be compensated for by the cost-saving of reducing the number of the actual panel members from five to four (see 1.6 below).

In the initial phase, and always when new staff members join the Secretariat and are to carry out review coordination, some investment in the training of the review coordinators will be necessary and require some time and financial investment.

### 1.6 Review fee

Following feedback from the members, it seems that the fee for the review is considered quite high and should not be increased. There are some elements that will need to be changed, however, also to accommodate the proposed changes (follow-up visit and ENQA staff involvement):

- reducing the experts from five to four and allocating a higher fee to the Secretariat
- reducing the expert fees slightly across the panel
- allocating an amount for the follow-up visit (expert fees and travel costs)

**\*NEW\***

#### Revised fee distribution

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Revised model</b>
<b>Fee of the chair</b>	4,750	4,500
<b>Fee of the Secretary</b>	4,750	4,500
<b>Fee panel members</b>	8,250 (3*2750)	4,000 (2*2,000)
<b>Fee two members follow-up</b>	0	1,000 (2*500)
<b>Expert training fund</b>	1,250	1,400
<b>Approximate travel expenses (including follow-up visit)</b>	6,000	7,600
<b>Coordinator fee</b>	5,000	7,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	30,000	30,000

The guidelines/terms of reference will include provisions for the reduced payment of fees in the case of uncompleted work by one of the panel members.

### 1.7 Decision making by the Board

The possible outcomes of the Board's decision on whether the agency is in substantial compliance with the ESG – and thus can be admitted or reconfirmed as a member of ENQA – are the following:

- 1) The agency is considered to be **in compliance** with the ESG and is admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA
- 2) The agency is considered as **not sufficiently in compliance** with the ESG.

In the case of **new applicants**, the agency will receive a letter outlining the main recommendations and areas to be addressed before a new review may be carried out. The

minimum period before a second review after an unsuccessful one is two years. During this time, the agency may – and is encouraged to - become (or remain) an Affiliate of ENQA.

In the case of **current members**, the agency will be designated as a “member under review”. This means that the membership is not renewed, but the agency can continue to be an ENQA member for a “grace period” of maximum two years within which they need to make the necessary changes to reach a sufficient level of compliance with the ESG and take up an additional partial review to verify progress. The details of the procedure will be provided in the Review Guidelines.

**\*NEW\***

### **3) Conditional membership**

The Board is considering the option to add a further option to the decisions: conditional membership. In the case of new applicants, the Board has often been faced with cases where there are some serious causes of concern, which however – the Board considers – could be adequately addressed within a two-year period. In such cases, an agency could be awarded conditional membership, stating clearly the conditions that will need to be met within two years (and verified through a follow-up review) in order to continue the membership for the full five-year period. Should the follow-up review be unsuccessful, the agency will lose its (conditional) membership and is allowed to apply again only after a further two-year period (as in the case of ordinary negative decisions).

This option would regard new applicants, and the related procedure would follow the main lines of the procedure and requirements of a “member under review”. The Board is yet to agree on the proposal and in a second step the details of the related procedure would need to be discussed and described in the review guidelines.

The Board will conclude with a negative decision when a non-compliance occurs at any standard. Other than that, the decision is based on a holistic assessment and is not a result of a mathematical equation.

#### **1.8 ENQA interpretation of the ESG**

Even if the ESG are generic, a specific ENQA profile may emerge through the way standards have been interpreted and used in the reviews. The SERs and the ERRs are important sources of information for quality assurance and further development of member agencies, as well as for ENQA itself. During the training of future reviewers, the question always occurs about comparable results. ENQA cannot, however, expect the panel to look into the previous reports. As a part of ENQA’s own internal quality assurance, ENQA will organise a continuous monitoring of the SER and ERR and perform comparative analysis of all standards as frequently as possible. This activity is essential to support and strengthen a clear and intended understanding of the standards. All SERs and ERRs may be scrutinised this way. This could be the task of a standing working group, such as the KP3.

The outcomes will be concretised in “ENQA interpretation of the ESG” – document which will be provided to the agency, reviewers, as well as to the ENQA Board to support consistent application of the criteria and predictability of outcomes.

## 1.9 Reviews for other than membership purposes

**\*NEW\***

ENQA Agency Reviews might become an attractive service also for agencies not wishing or not able to apply for ENQA membership, such as agencies placed outside the EHEA. Should ENQA engage in carrying out ESG-based agency reviews also in such cases?

One option, in order not to risk impacting the regular activities of ENQA, could be to determine a margin for possible extra reviews for each year, for example two extra reviews/year to be done on request for other than membership purposes, or alternatively set the maximum total number of reviews to e.g. 10/year and accept additional reviews depending on how many of these will be taken up by the membership reviews. The fee for these reviews may need to differ from the membership reviews.