

SUMMARY REPORT

ENQA Staff Development Group Seminar 11–12 February 2016 Gloucester, United Kingdom

About the seminar

The purpose of this seminar was to share the outcomes of the work of the ENQA Staff Development Group (SDG), which was formed in 2012 at the request of the ENQA Board to identify common values and characteristics of professionalism in quality assurance; to build a mentoring scheme for heads of QA agencies; to analyse the key competencies of QA (reviews) staff; and to collect good practice in the effective induction of new staff. The seminar was attended by around 30 ENQA members, affiliates and international colleagues, and the full programme is provided as an annex to this report. Copies of presentations can be found on the seminar page of the [ENQA website](#).

Session summaries

Session 1 title: Introduction and recapping on the work of the Staff Development Group
Presenter: Douglas Blackstock, QAA, United Kingdom and SDG Chair

- The SDG was established in June 2012 and undertook four main phases of work:
 - Phase I: initial exploration and information sharing
 - Phase II: development of a model
 - Phase III: population of the model with effective practices
 - Phase IV: experience sharing
- Key activities and outputs of the group included: a survey of ENQA agencies; research and analysis; [outcomes report](#) (April 2014); and a series of short papers on topics including induction, recruitment, staff performance management and competencies.

Session 2 title: Common mission, values and expected professional behaviors

Facilitator: Aurelija Valeikienė, SKVC, Lithuania

Presenters: Kate Beachus, QAA, United Kingdom and Manon Wortel, NVAO, Netherlands

- Before coming to the seminar, delegates were asked to be prepared to discuss their organisation's strategic goals and objectives, vision, mission and values
- Strategy development and implementation: the ESG is a central reference point, particularly Standard 3.1 (activities, policy and processes for quality assurance). Most delegates indicated their agencies undertook a 'bottom-up' approach to strategic planning. In all cases, stakeholder consultation and engagement with Councils (the highest level strategic bodies) was undertaken
- Values: analysis by the SDG of publicly available agency documents (for example, strategic plans, mission and internal ethics/values statements) identified commonalities in the values of agencies (with some differences as well). Two broad types of values were identified: institutional and personal level

- Group discussions identified clusters of personal values and organisational ways of working including:
 - independence and integrity
 - professionalism, quality and dedication
 - transparency and accountability
 - efficiency and efficacy, usefulness for the audiences/stakeholders served, proactivity
 - respect for institutional autonomy and diversity, alongside dialogue and cooperation with higher education stakeholders
- Important but identified less often was the capacity of agencies to engage in self-reflection, demonstrate sharpness and curiosity in thinking, and to be open to innovation
- Discussion also took place about the importance of values, behaviours and competencies in job design, assessment of applications, staff training and development
- Case studies were presented from NVAO (Netherlands), QAA (United Kingdom) and SKVC (Lithuania)

Session 3 title: **The essential competencies for QA professionals (Part 1): what are they and how can they be assessed in recruitment?**

Facilitator: **Caty Duykaerts, AEQES, Belgium**

Presenters: **Julien Lecocq, HCERES, France and Oana Sarbu, ARACIS, Romania**

- During the session, questions were posed to delegates and the responses are summarised below
- *Question: When recruiting new staff members, which top three competencies do you look for?*
 - The most frequently mentioned competencies were:
 - Managing and coordinating work (time management and project management)
 - Initiative and autonomy
 - Communication (including languages)
 - Analytical skills and problem solving
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Knowledge (and/or experience) of HE and QA systems (a bonus: knowledge of the European dimension of QA)
 - Interestingly, there was a tension between two viewpoints: some groups ranked knowledge as a high priority in the recruitment stage, whereas others agreed that knowledge could be acquired later as part of the job
- *Question: How do you refer to competencies in job descriptions? How do you (try to) assess them in the process of recruitment? [methodology]*
 - Some – but not the majority of – groups said their job descriptions were explicit about requirements
 - Several groups reported fixed processes in recruitment
 - Checking CVs before selecting applicants for a meeting/interview was common practice, but use of references differed significantly between countries, depending on the law (in some places it was not allowed – the employer may not know that the staff member is looking for another job)
 - Written tests were usually short (around 20-30 minutes)
 - All groups confirmed they used personal interviews – some included staff members to test ‘chemistry’ with the applicant (importance of team work)
- *Question: In your decision process, how do you balance knowledge, attitudes (values) and skills?*

- No group could clearly state how a balance was reached in the decision process (it appeared somewhat unstructured in most cases)
- Two groups reported that the probation period was the true test
- *Question: In order to achieve gender balance, what steps do you take to increase the number of men in agencies?*
 - Gender balance was not considered an issue by most groups
 - This was either because only qualifications mattered or because they were unsure how to address it
- *Question: How to “measure” genuine motivation?*
 - Measured by how well the applicant had prepared themselves for the interview and looked for information about the agency
 - It was suggested that this could be hard to test

Session 4 title: **Effective practice in the induction of new staff: delivering an effective induction**

Facilitator: **Marion Moser, ACQUIN, Germany**

Presenters: **Elise Cook and Marita Nanson-Cook, QAA, United Kingdom**

- Sound induction of new staff members is essential for the work and the quality of an agency (noting ESG Standards 3.5 and 3.6 on resources and internal quality assurance)
- Group discussion took place on the effective structuring of an induction programme to support new employees through their ‘emotional’ engagement with an agency, by mapping out what someone felt when they joined a business on their first day and comparing that with how it was hoped they would feel at the end of six months. Positive practice identified included:
 - The right information in the job advertisement, including the agency’s mission and strategy, as well as details of the role and responsibilities
 - A comprehensive induction information pack
 - A proper working environment from day one, helping to integrate with other staff members –further facilitated by cross-agency and team working
 - Positive behaviours, attitudes and values should be fostered during the induction period
 - Mentoring as a powerful tool to supervise the first few weeks in a new role
 - The induction phase should qualify new employees for the job – at the end of a successful induction phase, a new colleagues should feel a true member of the team, well informed, confident and empowered for their tasks
- A case study was presented by QAA on its recently launched new induction programme:
 - Two main elements – a two week programme of events/meetings and a special one day induction event
 - The two week programme included essentials for all staff (for example, meetings with their manager, health and safety, IT and information security) plus additional events/ meetings related to each new employee’s specific role and the knowledge required
 - The one day induction event was designed for groups of new employees to help them understand the role of QAA, its products and services in the wider sector, and how they contributed to that:
 - Delivered every eight weeks for all new starters

- An interactive day designed with activities including 'building' QAA's organisation chart, quizzes/challenges, combined with reflection about what had been learned and action planning. Content included an overview of QAA's core business, strategy, aims and values

Session 5 title: **The essential competencies for QA professionals (Part 2): performance review and development activities**

Facilitator: **Geneviève Le Fort, AAQ, Switzerland**

Presenter: **Mina Đorđević, ASHE, Croatia**

- The Part II session on essential competencies focused on performance review and development
- A case study from AAQ (Switzerland) outlined how the agency adapted the [ENQA Quality Assurance Professional Competencies Framework](#) to meet its specific needs and how this tool, along with the AAQ strategy, values and principles, were used to develop HR strategy and principles, and an action plan for development activities at an organisational level
- A presentation from ASHE (Croatia) focused on performance review monitoring and appraisals, objectives, how it works, who is involved and the common pitfalls
- Three questions were posed for discussion by delegates, relating to the Competencies Framework, performance review and development activities – points raised included:
 - Competencies Framework: delegates found the framework a very useful tool for enabling conversations about performance and future development, although it needed to be scaled to fit the individual context. It could also be used as a tool for self-reflection and development. As such, it was helpful for identification and improvement of staff competencies, and also various dimensions of strategic planning
 - Agencies should analyse performance requirements and standards in terms of the Competencies Framework, and then prioritise those competencies necessary to meet particular job requirements
 - In addition, the Competencies Framework could be adjusted by each agency to meet its own particular needs and structures. For example, the junior-senior division of staff may not always be very linear and some organisations had more flat hierarchical structures. The Framework could also be extended to include basic knowledge for non-QA professionals

Session 6 title: Conclusions and next steps

Presenter: **Douglas Blackstock**

- During the closing session, ideas were invited from delegates about what next steps ENQA might take to move this work forward. Suggestions included:
 - Support to disseminate the Competencies Framework further
 - A seminar to develop the ‘International Quality Assurance Professional’
 - Measuring the effectiveness of the Competencies Framework after implementation, with further enhancements as required to support agencies’ needs
 - A follow-up seminar in one or two years’ time
 - The European context – material for staff training, which individual agencies could apply to their own context
 - A toolkit/guidance on developing common competencies, HR strategies and implementation plans
 - Publication of best practice case studies
 - Possible staff development training, mentoring and/or exchange programmes (at different career levels)

ANNEX: SEMINAR PROGRAMME

ENQA seminar on staff development in QA agencies: outcomes of the ENQA Staff Development Group 11-12 February 2016, Gloucester, UK

Day 1

- 13.00 **Welcome**
Caty Duykaerts, ENQA Vice-President
- 13.15 **Introduction to the workshop and recapping on the work of the Staff Development Group**
Douglas Blackstock, Chief Executive (QAA, United Kingdom)
- 13.30 **Common mission, values and expected professional behaviours**
Uncovering the shared values of quality assurance agencies across Europe. What are they, and how can they be put into practice?
Facilitator: Aurelija Valeikiene (SKVC, Lithuania)
Good practice input presentations: Kate Beachus (QAA, United Kingdom) and Manon Wortel (NVAO, Netherlands)
- 15.30 **The essential competencies for QA professionals, Part I: what they are and how can they be assessed in recruitment?**
In 2012, the staff development working group launched a survey to the quality assurance agencies about their staff, their recruitment and induction, and their competencies profiles. The results highlighted the main competencies that agencies expect from their team managing the reviews.
Facilitator: Caty Duykaerts (AEQES, Belgium)
Good practice input presentation: Julien Lecocq (HCERES, France) and Oana Sarbu (ARACIS, Romania)
- 17.00 **Keynote speech**
Julian Ellis, Head of Higher Education Review (QAA, United Kingdom)

Day 2

- 9.00 **Effective practice in induction of new staff**
A good induction of new staff members in the work of an agency is essential for the work and the quality of the agency. In this session, core elements of induction processes, which are already implemented in agencies will be presented. Participants will have the opportunity to share experiences according the induction period in their agencies.
Facilitator: Marion Moser (ACQUIN, Germany)
Good practice input presentation: Elise Cook (QAA, United Kingdom) and Marita Nanson-Cook (QAA, United Kingdom)

- 11.00 **The essential competencies for QA professionals, Part II: performance review and development activities**
How to review the performance of the agency staff and why? What are the possible development activities available for which competencies? This session will look at performance management as an important segment of strategic management that sets methods for translating organisational objectives and results into individual tasks and standards of work performance.
Facilitator: Geneviève Le Fort (AAQ, Switzerland)
Good practice input presentation: Mina Đorđević (ASHE, Croatia)
- 12.30 **Workshop conclusions and next steps**
Douglas Blackstock

Membership of the ENQA Staff Development Group

Douglas Blackstock (QAA, Chair of the SDG)
Kate Beachus, Liz Clegg, Elise Cook (QAA)
Mina Dordevic (AZVO)
Caty Duykaerts (AEQES)
Maria Kelo (ENQA)
Genevieve Le Fort (AAQ)
Marion Moser (ACQUIN)
Julien Lecocq (HCERES)
Oana Surbu (ARACIS)
Aurelija Valeikiene (SKVC)
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