

# Characteristics of a Balanced Review Report

Based on ESG 2015

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# Aim of presentation

- Gain an understanding about the key elements to appear in an evaluation report
  - Brief run through the ENQA report template
- Look more closely at evidence-analysis-conclusion-judgement using two Standards as examples:
  - 3.5 Resources
  - 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

*The texts are from an existing evaluation report but the excerpts are not complete!*

# ENQA report template -1-

- The **ENQA Guidelines for Agency Reviews**<sup>1</sup> contains the main chapters and explanations on what should go into them
  - **Executive Summary**
  - **Introduction:** reason for commissioning the review, background (text provided)
  - Main findings since the **previous review** (description & list of standards compliance levels)
  - Review **process:** work method, panel consensus, list of panel members
    - SAR impressions e.g. informative, analytical or descriptive
    - Site visit summary & stakeholders interviewed
  - **HE system** and **QA system**, including by the agency under review
    - Longer chapter describing the context and the organization and activities of the agency in detail

<sup>1</sup><http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Guidelines-for-ENQA-Agency-Reviews.pdf>

# ENQA report template -2-

- **Findings:** compliance with ESG
  - **Part 3**
  - Part 2: as detailed description of ESG 3.1
- Compliance with standards, including the parts **set down in their respective guidelines**
- Provide references to documents and/or site visit interviews (without naming names)
- Optional **additional observations:** commendations in which the agency excels, the panel's recommendations for development
- **Conclusion:**
  - Commendations and then recommendations each per standard
  - Statement on overall compliance or non-compliance (text provided)
    - List of standards where full compliance was not achieved:
    - = list of standards with substantial, partial and non-compliance

# To keep in mind

- Report serves **two functions**:
  - Document from which the **ENQA Board** makes a decision on the agency's overall compliance with the ESG and therefore its membership in ENQA (and optionally the same for the EQAR Review Committee)
  - Informs the **public** about the agency
- *"External reviews may have serious consequences for agencies ... also in terms of indirect judgments on credibility, quality, and other predications of entire external review systems, or even the higher education system of a country or region."* (ENQA Guidelines 2015)
- If there was an earlier review, the report should make reference to any progress made or not made in relation to the recommendations and findings

# Therefore

- The Report must be clear and **evidence-based**
  - Follow the **evidence-analysis [incl. commendations, recommendations]-conclusion [=judgment on compliance]-format**
  - As part of the evidence it should make reference to agency documents, changes implemented since the previous review, minutes of agency meetings, etc.
  - **Recommendations should logically follow** the review panel's judgement on compliance
  
- The review panel is a **group of peers** who provide their **expertise** on quality assurance for the agency and the public. Therefore
  - The optional chapter on **commendations** on an agency's good practices and **recommendations** for development not strictly related to the standards might be useful

## 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

From 2011 presentation by Helka Kekäläinen, ENQA vice-president

# Chapters on compliance with a standard: ESG 3.5

- **ESG 3.5 RESOURCES**
- **Evidence:**
  - resources provided to Agency have always come from public funding
  - the Agency has suffered less than the overall public sector from the economic crisis as the Agency's resources have grown since 2010 by X%
  - **Strategic Plan indicates that further growth is expected** in the coming years
  - Regarding **human resources, Agency has seven employees** – one Director, three technical staff members and three administrative staff members



# Chapters on compliance with a standard: ESG 3.5

- **ESG 3.5 RESOURCES**
- **Analysis:**
  - This **budget and the number of staff are modest** in comparison to other Agencies [?!] and several of the interviewees have noted the **enormous challenges** this represents to the Agency
  - Agency has been very efficient in using its resources and has optimized them extremely well. However, the **panel is concerned about the sustainability** of the level of dedication it requires from each member
  - the panel finds that the agency at the moment of the assessment has demonstrated that it has carried out its tasks with great professionalism and commitment

# Chapters on compliance with a standard: ESG 3.5

- **ESG 3.5 RESOURCES**
- **Recommendations:**
  - The panel recommends that Agency **reflects about the necessary resources** in the light of longer term achievement of strategic goals and the expansion of activities. Hence, the panel recommends that the agency tries to anticipate the impact of those activities on staff, not only in terms of staffing levels but also with regard to the need for staff development and training
- **Panel's conclusion: substantially compliant**

# Chapters on compliance with a standard:

## ESG 2.1

- **ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE at HEIs**
- **Evidence:**
  - The activities of Agency are subject to national regulation
  - Apart from the compulsory programme accreditation procedure, various voluntary procedures have been put in place ... in order to **foster the enhancement of quality management** systems [at HEIs]
  - Agency's evaluation protocols take into account the institutions' internal quality assurance systems and consider the evidences produced by those systems. These protocols are designed in consultation with the higher education community in order that the Agency's methodologies are coherent and **reinforce institutions' quality assurance systems in their efficiency and efficacy**
  - **all the activities related to programme accreditation contribute to the 10 issues raised in ESG Part 1**, although the extent to which those topics are evaluated differs

# Chapters on compliance with a standard:

## ESG 2.1

- **ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**
- **Analysis:**
  - Listed by ESG 1.1 to 1.10. E.g.
    - *1.1 Policy for quality assurance:* Agency has procedures in place to check whether higher education institutions have a policy for quality assurance in place. ... Voluntary **Audits**, that started as a pilot scheme in 2013, aim at helping Departments and Faculties to develop robust internal quality assurance systems.
    - *1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment:* The panel appreciates that in the case of programme accreditation a specific criterion relates to the assessment of students, namely the extent to which the learning and assessment methodologies are adjusted to the profile of the students accepted and the objectives of the study programme. However, **no explicit mention is made to whether programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process**

# Chapters on compliance with a standard:

## ESG 2.1

- ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
- **Recommendations:**
- The panel recommends that Agency continues to work with the university system to further develop the relationship between standard 2.1 and the development of effective internal quality assurance processes at institutional level. Among the possible areas for further attention, the panel would highlight the following ones:
  - ...
  - More schools ... should be encouraged to strengthen their internal quality systems through external reviews such as the **audit**;
  - More attention should be given to a **student-centred learning** and assessment practices.
- **Panel's conclusion: substantially compliant**



Thank you!

