

ENQA partial reviews of “members under review”

Background – ENQA members under review

In order to be granted membership or to be reconfirmed as member of ENQA, quality assurance (QA) agencies are required to successfully undergo an external review against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) every five years. Members which, according to the ENQA Board, do not demonstrate substantial compliance may be assigned the status of a “member under review”. This status allows the member to benefit from its membership rights within ENQA for a transitional period of a maximum of two years, signaling however the agency’s less than substantial overall compliance with the ESG. A new applicant to ENQA may not make use of this arrangement.

Context for the additional reviews – ENQA Rules of Procedure

Regarding the status of “member under review” the ENQA Rules of Procedure state the following:

- (2) *“A further, partial review shall be carried out by reviewers nominated by the ENQA Board, at the latest at the end of the two-year period and shall focus on the deficiencies mentioned in the review report and/or those highlighted by the Board in its letter.”*
- (3) *“The Board will take a decision regarding the renewal of membership based on the outcomes of the review (partial or full). Should the outcome of the review (partial or full) be positive, membership shall be valid for five years from the date of the Board’s decision on the outcome of the latest full review.”*
- (4) *“An agency that, in the opinion of the Board, following the further review (partial or full), still does not comply with the ESG and thus ENQA’s criteria for membership shall, by confirmation of the General Assembly, be debarred from ENQA.”*

(ENQA Rules of Procedure, Article 7)

- The Rules of Procedure **leave the timing open** to accommodate the wishes of the agency and enables anticipating the process to any moment within the two-year period.
- The Rules of Procedure **do not make any requirements regarding the panel members** (number, position, etc.).
- The **content of the review will focus on the deficiencies mentioned**. There are no references to whether and to what extent other standards should be looked at. Interpretation might be that they need not be looked at, unless perhaps if they have direct connection to the standards under scrutiny.

Main features of an additional partial review

The content and extent of the additional partial review will depend on the deficiencies or problem areas in the previous review report. Indeed, some agencies may have only one or two elements where change/progress needs to be shown, while others may need a more comprehensive approach (compare e.g. a hypothetical case of an agency substantially or fully compliant on all elements but non-compliant in one, to an agency whose system is overall not built in alignment with the ESG).

Consequently, the number of reviewers, the extent of the self-assessment report (SAR) and the additional review report, as well as the need for a site visit (and its duration) may vary between the partial reviews. Consequently also the cost of the partial review will vary taking into considerations these elements, and in particular the costs of a site visit.

Content

All elements identified as causes of concern by the ENQA Board as well as all elements identified by the panel as partially or non-compliant will be covered by the additional partial review. The Agency shall also indicate in the SAR should there have been significant changes regarding any other standards since the last full review, and also these elements will be included in the review process.

The SAR and additional review report by the experts will address the identified elements/standards. Should the evidence be easily and reliably gathered without a site visit, this part of the process will be omitted.

Panel

A review panel of 3-4 people will be employed for the task. The panel will include at least one academic, one student, and a quality assurance professional. Wherever possible, one or more of the panel members will have participated in the previous full review, in order to facilitate the acquisition of a comprehensive picture of the agency.

Reviewers will come from the ENQA pool of trained reviewers.

Site-visit

The duration and the programme of the site visit will depend on the number of type of elements to be looked at by the review panel. In practice this is likely to mean a visit of 1-2 days. Other arrangements such as a visit by the panel chair only, or no visit at all (only study of the SAR and additional documentation) may also be considered if appropriate.

Validity of the report and of ENQA membership

The additional review report will be annexed to the latest full review report. The validity of ENQA membership and of the report is limited to five years from the completion of the previous full review report, independently of when the additional partial review will have taken place.