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Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Presentation to ENQA Seminar – Quality Assurance in the European Context

November 2016

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EQArep Project



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Background

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) is carrying out a European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

The project “Transparency of European higher education through public quality assurance reports” (EQArep) was carried out by ENQA together with four European QA agencies:

OAQ (Switzerland)

QQI (Ireland)

ASHE (Croatia)

EKKA (Estonia)



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Objectives

Aim

To develop European standards for quality assurance reports.

- better understanding on the use of and expectations of stakeholders
- overview of the current features of external review reports
- a set of recommendations on the structure, content and purpose alignment of external review reports across Europe
- if feasible, a template or templates for external review reports or their summaries



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Key elements

- Survey and workshop on stakeholders' demands
- Survey and workshop on the publication of QA results: purpose, structure and content
- A set of recommendations for the content and structure of external review reports for quality assurance agencies in Europe



Overall findings 1

- Comprehensive reports are the most common form used
- The variation between agencies in the number of publications of institutional reviews / assessments per year is high
- Reports meet different goals:
 - Comprehensive reports facilitate reviews / accreditation decisions and supply feedbacks to a HEI for quality enhancement.
 - Summary reports intend to supply information to a general public and to assure transparency.
- Different stakeholders use different reports
- QA reports are mainly written by panel of experts and require a lot of work
- Webpages are the most common medium for publication
- The majority of agencies have templates available for writing reports
- Comprehensive reports often comprise 31 pages and more



Overall findings 2

- Reports provide a wide range of information and address different requirements
- Reports vary greatly between countries and agencies, but also between programme and institutional reports.
- Comprehensive and summary reports and even editing practice, structure, content, length, readability, accessibility etc. within a single agency differ considerably.
- QA reports were not comparable





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Qualities of good and useful reports

- Clear structure
- Introduction to the framework, standards and guidelines
- Information on procedure, review and team author(s)
- Detailed information about HEI and programme
- Adequate complexity-reduction (without oversimplification)
- Careful use of terminology and language
- Pleasant layout
- Easily accessible



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Risks and challenges

- Transparency itself: misuse or manipulation of information
- Comparability and benchmarking
- Loose sight of the actual purpose of the reports
- Overrating the potential value and interest for wider public or lay reader
- Oversimplification
- Standardisation: Comparing apples with oranges
- Language issues



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Guidelines for comprehensive reports

Structure

- Strong easy to read structure
- List of contents
- Headings, sub-headings and numbered paragraphs



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Guidelines for comprehensive reports

Content

- Process
- Labelled recommendations, commendations and conditions
- Consistent terminology
- Glossary
- Identify writers



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Guidelines for comprehensive reports

Publication

- Easily accessible
- All documents published together
- Publish/link to website



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Guidelines for summary reports

Different types for different audiences

Placement: easily searchable and accessible

Drafting: written by agency staff; summary reports do not add information

Templates: clear 2-page, web and easily printable version



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Guidelines for summary reports



Language: Version in English and national language (summary)

Content: Basic contextual information, profile, type of evaluation, decisions, validity period



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Summary report contents

Item	Check
Name of agency	✓
Agency website	✓
Name of institution	✓
Institution website	✓
Type of institution	✓
Type of evaluation	✓
Date	✓
Link to comprehensive report	✓
Panel information	✓
Additional information	✓





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Questions?





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“Atticus told me to delete the adjectives and I'd have the facts.”

— Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

“ Write what should not be forgotten.”

— Isabel Allende

“Let grammar, punctuation, and spelling into your life! Even the most energetic and wonderful mess has to be turned into sentences.”

— Terry Pratchett