

A closer look at the review reports

Christina Rozsnyai

3rd ENQA Reviewers' Seminar

Topic of this session:

With a focus on review reports, how can we ensure that they are consistent in


- presenting the content and evidence on the ESG Parts 2 and 3, AND
- making a corresponding recommendation of compliance, AND
- based on which the ENQA Board makes its decision on substantial compliance and subsequently the agency's ENQA membership
- and based on which the Register Committee of EQAR reaches – hopefully – a similar decision regarding the agency's listing in the Register.

Not a topic here:

Other mechanisms that contribute to consistency – and comparability, although they are also important

- role of ENQA coordinator,
- workshops on reaching a common understanding of the ESG,
- training of experts, etc.
- see ENQA Occasional Papers 21 on the EQArep project (2014)
(= Transparency through publically available reports)

Why is consistency a key word in quality assurance?



- No QA without consistency – because quality judgement must be based on a common understanding of quality
- BUT flexibility in interpretation – peers are individuals
- good guidelines and thorough expert training are crucial
- so is the link between judgement and evidence to back it up

The role of the report

It is an instrument to convey a message

- to the ENQA Board /EQAR Register Committee to make judgment
- the agency to get feedback on its various aspects of quality
- external stakeholders of the agency and the EHEA about the agency's quality

Now to the reports themselves: What contributes to their consistency and comparability

- Consistently addressing various other aspects of reports,
 - such as style to suite a specific readership;
 - who owns the report;
 - who produces it (officer, peer team ...)
- reports should use key terminology consistently (EQArep recommendation)
- consistent format important for readability - the ENQA report template
 - provides the chapter outlines
 - Focus on (previous review recommendations) – evidence – analysis – commendations – recommendations – conclusion
- **Crucial: consistency of recommendations**
 - depth, number, when given/when not
 - Should relate to judgment

Questions?

- What is your experience about the link between recommendations and judgement?
 - Esp. with full compliance?

Now to examples from three published ENQA reports

(all three examples are good reports!)

- to analyse consistency between them and
- in relation to each judgement
- Will take the easiest as well as the currently most challenging two Standards from two perspectives:
 1. With the same judgement for the standard in all three reports, and
 2. different judgments for the standard in each report

Full compliance with Standard 3.2: Official Status – *easy enough!*

Agency 1

– evidence

- registered by the Department of Justice, operates on the basis of the 2001 Law, included in the Ministry National Register of Accreditation Bodies which are authorised to conduct accreditation reviews,

– analysis

- It is evident to the panel that Agency 1 has a clear legal basis for its EQA activities, fully recognised by the relevant national authorities, the panel had access to the Ministry Registers during the review.
- *The panel's discussion with representatives of the national authorities confirms that Agency 1 is highly valued for its professional standards in accreditation activities*
= *Not strictly related comment, or is it??*

– recommendation

- none

Full compliance with Standard 3.2: Official Status

Agency 2

- evidence
 - was established by the national Framework Law for HE in 2007... [describes at length the national system and related challenges for a coordinated QA in the country]
- analysis
 - Albeit in practice the [...competent educational authorities]s work with Agency 2 in different ways, it can be said that Agency 2 is legally and morally recognised as a QA agency, as the national agency responsible for a good part of the HE QA processes
- commendation + recommendation
 - Agency 2 is trying to be a proactive HE actor in its complex environment
 - There is a general and wider problem of governance in the country ...encourage Agency 2 to continue striving for dialogue between various parties

Full compliance with Standard 3.2: Official Status

A short question before we go on:

Do you think full compliance for
Agency 2 is warranted?

Why?

Full compliance with Standard 3.2: Official Status

Agency 3

– evidence

- an autonomous public body created by virtue of ... Act ..., ...Its Statute was approved by Decree ...

– analysis

- The panel found that Agency 3 is a formally recognised professional body established by law.
- *The decisions of the agency on evaluations of programmes and of teaching staff are made independently, following the procedures detailed in the guidelines and documents of the agency, and are binding. The representatives of the higher education institutions interviewed by the panel were very supportive of this role of Agency 3 and, in addition, of the purpose of the agency in assisting the universities to develop an enhanced internal quality culture.*

= Not strictly related comment??

– recommendation

- none

Full compliance with Standard 3.2: Official Status

Common in all three reports

- all cite the concrete legislation that establishes the legal status of the agency
- different legal environments were considered by the panels
- compliance substantiated in all three cases
- two reports also added how stakeholders perceive the agency

Taking **Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis** – *not easy at all!*

Agency 1: **PARTIAL**

– evidence

- The agency publishes annual reports and reports or studies entitled ‘thematic analyses’ (SAR; Agency 1 website), a series of thematic analyses produced so far includes: [the content is described],
- research activities to produce thematic analyses are not yet sufficiently developed due to lack of funding from ministry and limited human resources, representatives of HEIs acknowledged that HEIs still had much to learn about and needed more guidance on QA, recommendations made by expert panels are useful in designing reforms
- employers interviewed emphasised that panels’ conclusions did help to push forward changes, and that not only HEIs but also the general public would need to know more about findings from accreditation processes

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

Agency 1: **PARTIAL**

– analysis

- Evidently, Agency 1 has taken considerable effort, especially in view of its limited human resources, to collect and analyse quantitative data for the two survey-based publications
- The study ... is a welcome first step towards thematic analyses insofar as it identifies areas where Agency 1's accreditation processes have had impact. However, there is no publication which would analyse the wealth of information available in xx institutional review and xxx programme review reports. There is, obviously, both demand for, and the need to produce, such analyses
- At the same time, the panel notes that expectations under this ESG for relatively young agencies undergoing their first ENQA review are not as high as for ENQA members. The panel is also confident that Agency 1 will engage more extensively in research activities ... is one of its strategic objectives.
- Staff have a research background, and the agency is likely to have more funding for this purpose in the coming years.

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

Agency 1: **PARTIAL**

– recommendation

- analyse the material available in accreditation review reports and produce on this basis (a) thematic analysis(es) to support further development of quality assurance

Stop for a moment:

- Do we have enough evidence and analysis to judge compliance?
- Is the partial compliance judgment justified based on the evidence and analysis?

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

Agency 2: **FULL**

– evidence

- Agency 2 has been active in analyses since its establishment. At the beginning Agency 2 was a member of international projects analysis, later analysed the national system against the EHEA. Later Agency 2 continued with reflection and analyses of particular QA or HE practices
- So far Agency 2 produced 10 thematic analyses, out of which four are published on its webpage. These different analyses were conducted for various purposes, for example ...,
- Agency 2 includes analyses in its work plans, one of the key aims, which is also quantified in that Agency 2 plans to produce three such reports in 2017

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

Agency 2: **FULL**

– analysis

- Agency 2 has used results of the analyses for updating its own rules and procedures. Importantly, it has also used the results for informing HE community more generally. It seems common that Agency 2 organises workshops and seminars to which it invited stakeholders
- However, the analyses are mainly about HEIs opinions and satisfaction with the accreditation process and the HE analyses are mainly about formal legal compliance. There has been only one analysis so far examining the results of accreditation procedures as such
- The panel believes that the analyses could improve in the critical approach ...
- It would be useful to make analyses that would in fact learn from the hitherto accreditation procedures and that would critically examine the reports to analyse the state of the national HE system

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

Agency 2: **FULL**

– recommendation

- The panel recommends Agency 2 to use the review reports and other available information to analyse the actual findings of evaluations and the state of the national HE system more systematically and generally. ...

Stop for a moment:

- Do we have enough evidence and analysis to judge compliance?
- Is the full compliance judgment justified based on the evidence and analysis?
- AND with respect to partial compliance of Agency 1?

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

Agency 3: **SUBSTANTIAL**

– evidence

- The agency issues a number of types of reports aimed at providing useful and interesting information to stakeholders ... published on the agency website
 - Annual Reports on the status of external evaluation of quality at universities ... There is an emphasis in the reports on quality improvement ...
 - Statistical reports on the Agency 3 Data Bank of Statistics issued annually on the figures and indicators in the agency's external evaluation activities
 - Stakeholders are provided with public and systematic information on the evaluation activities, provide useful information on evaluation procedures **for** detailed analysis
 - Reports on the review and enhancement of the evaluation procedures are issued periodically following an in-depth analysis of each of the procedures
 - Additional reports on specific themes described

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

Agency 3: **SUBSTANTIAL**

– analysis

- The reports published to date cover core areas of responsibility and activity of the agency. The reports are welcomed by stakeholders and reference was made to their value in contributing to the development and enhancement of a quality culture in institutions
- ... discusses each type of report and how these contribute to Q enhancement
- Stakeholders expressed their respect for the work of the agency, the value it brings to enhancement
- The panel was of the view that, while Agency 3 is indeed substantially compliant with this standard, that more could be done by the agency to deliver reports on quality whose topics span the system and cover issues related to evaluations, and perhaps providing guidance to institutions as to best practices

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

Agency 3: **SUBSTANTIAL**

– recommendation

- The panel recommends that Agency 3 continues to analyse the data and information emerging from evaluations conducted and in particular the evaluation of programmes, and to expand the range of thematic reports published on the national quality assurance system.

Stop for a moment:

- Do we have enough evidence and analysis to judge compliance?
- Is the substantial compliance judgment justified based on the evidence and analysis?
- AND with respect to partial compliance of Agency 1 and full compliance of Agency 2?

Standard 3.4: Thematic Analysis

- Common points
 - good reports: all produce clear evidence and analyses, and the two are distinct
 - includes perception of stakeholders towards agency and its work, incl. reports

So: questions for further discussion

- Is the variety in analysis/recommendations vis-à-vis the judgment inconsistency or different context?
- What can panels do to aim for as much consistency between what they write and how they judge a standard?



Thank you!

