

# Purpose and main stages of the review process

**Agnė Grajauskienė**

Reviews Manager

ENQA

# Purpose of the review

## ENQA membership

An external review against the ESG is a prerequisite to become a member of ENQA / for renewal of ENQA membership (every 5 years).

To be eligible, the agency should have been operational in quality assurance for at least **2 years** and should have completed at least **5 review reports**.

## EQAR registration

An external review against the ESG is also a requirement for agencies wishing to apply to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

# Purpose of the review

## Enhancement and development

an external review provides feedback to improve the agency's processes and activities



# Remit of the review

- ✓ **The first ESG review:** specific attention to the **policies, procedures, and criteria in place**. Full evidence of concrete results in all areas may not be required at this stage e.g. completed reports of thematic analyses. However, the agency must be able to document (as in action plans with timetables) how they are able to achieve results according to all standards by the next review.
- ✓ **The second and subsequent reviews:** clear evidence of results in all areas. Further reviews will need to acknowledge progress from the previous review - mandatory element in both the SAR and the panel report.

## ALL REVIEWS –

whether first, second, or subsequent – must always have a **developmental approach** and **aim at constant enhancement** of the agencies.



# Main stages of the review process



# Initial stage

- ✓ **Request**: review is initiated by a request from an agency that wants to be granted or to renew ENQA membership.
- ✓ **Coordinator**: each review is assigned to an ENQA Secretariat staff member who will act as the review coordinator. This person serves as the main contact person for the agency and the review panel throughout the process and will support all those involved during the different stages.
- ✓ **Terms of reference (ToR)**: ENQA and the agency agree on the Terms of Reference of the review, including the **activities** to be subjected to the review as well as the **overall timeline**.
- ✓ **EQAR Eligibility Confirmation** (if applicable): agencies also wishing to apply to EQAR will need to contact EQAR prior to the finalisation of the ToR and thus before the formal start of the actual review process.

# Stage I: before the site visit

- ✓ **Review panel**: coordinator composes the review panel which is approved by the ENQA Board in accordance with ENQA policy.

At least **4** external reviewers, including:

- one or two **quality assurance professionals** (at least one should be currently employed by a QA agency and both having been engaged in quality assurance within the past 5 years)
- **academic** at a higher education institution
- **student member**

When requested or when considered particularly pertinent, other stakeholders e.g. **representative of the labour market** may be included instead of the second quality assurance professional or in addition to the four panel members.

# Review panel





- ❑ All panel members must have been **trained by ENQA**.
- ❑ At least **2** panel members from **outside the national system** of the agency.
- ❑ The review chair and the review secretary may not come from the same country
- ❑ The review chair should not come from the country of the agency under review
- ❑ At least one member has good **knowledge and understanding of the higher education and quality assurance system** in which the agency (predominantly) operates.
- ❑ At least one panel member has **fluent knowledge of the main working language** of the agency and/or the language of the country in which the agency (predominantly) operates.
- ❑ **Gender balance** is taken into consideration. A panel never has only male or only female members.
- ❑ No current nor former members (last five years) of staff of the agency under review can take part in the review panel.
- ❑ Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers in ENQA Agency Reviews.
- ❑ The review chair will have **previous experience** taking part in an ENQA Agency Review.
- ❑ The review secretary will normally have previous experience taking part in an ENQA Agency Review.
- ❑ Whenever possible, at least one panel member will **not have previously participated** in an ENQA Agency Review.

# Stage I: before the site visit

- ✓ **Self assessment report (SAR)**: agency submits its SAR + any other documentation of relevance (annexes). The review coordinator carries out a pre-screening of the SAR to ensure it meets the requirements.
- ✓ **Briefing (video conference)**: gathering the panel and the review coordinator 3-4 weeks before the site visit – to discuss the process, to ensure a shared understanding of the tasks and objectives, to point out any specific issues, to share responsibilities.
- ✓ **Preparation**: highly important part, all panel members should be actively involved.



# Preparation

- ✓ **Documentation review:** SAR + other documents from the agency/ENQA
- ✓ **Timetable** of activities for the site visit
- ✓ **Division of the tasks**
- ✓ **Mapping grid** of the ESG
- ✓ **Additional documents** to be requested from the agency prior to the site visit
- ✓ **Lines of enquiry**
- ✓ **Outline report**
- ✓ **Practical arrangements**

"Before anything else, preparation  
is the key to success."

Alexander Graham Bell

## Stage II: the site visit

- ✓ **Panel's pre-meeting** : to discuss the schedule of the visit and to agree how the lines of enquiry will be pursued.
  
- ✓ **Meeting with agency's resource person** (if requested): to clarify elements related to the overall system and context, so that time during the interview sessions may be used in full for verification of the agency's ESG compliance.
  
- ✓ **Site visit** (usually 2.5 days; conducted in English): to reflect on and fully validate the information in the SAR, as well as to clarify any points at issue.
  - Interviews with the agency's personnel and stakeholders
  - Final de-briefing meeting - immediate feedback/overall impressions
  - "Skeleton" report

**N.B. No information can be provided after the site visit**



## Stage III: writing the final report



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- ✓ **Draft by secretary**: review secretary is in charge of providing the first post-visit draft of the report.
- ✓ **Panel's comments**: all panel members should carefully read and comment on the draft report.
- ✓ **Pre-screening by coordinator**: finalised draft is sent to the coordinator to verify its compliance with the guidelines.
- ✓ **Factual accuracy**: report is submitted to the agency for comment on factual accuracy.
- ✓ **Final report**: final version is then submitted by the review chair to ENQA Secretariat for the attention of the Board.

# Stage IV: decision making

- ✓ **Letter:** agency submits a letter explaining its reasons for applying for/requesting to renew its ENQA membership.
- ✓ **Scrutiny of the report:** to facilitate its decision making, the ENQA Board relies on the support of Review Committees for the initial scrutiny of the ERR.
- ✓ **Decision:** ENQA Board takes a decision on the basis of the ERR and the scrutiny by the Review Committee.

The ENQA Board is not, however, obliged to follow the recommendations of the review panel nor of the review committee. The Board makes its decision in light of the gathered evidence.

When the agency also applies for registration on EQAR, the same review report will be used by the EQAR Register Committee for its separate decision.

# Stage IV: decision making

## Possible outcomes of the Board's decision:

1. The agency is considered to be **in substantial compliance** with the ESG and is admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA.
  
2. The agency is considered as **not substantially compliant** with the ESG.
  - A. New applicants:** The minimum period before a next review after an unsuccessful one is **2 years**. Recommendations and areas to be addressed before a new review.
  
  - B. Current members:** a “**member under review**”. Maximum 2 years to make the necessary changes to reach a sufficient level of compliance and undergo an additional **partial review** to verify progress.



# Stage V: follow-up

- ✓ **Follow-up report:** agency is requested to submit a follow-up report within 2 years of the Board's positive decision on membership. This may be reduced to 1 year in cases where urgent action is considered necessary.
- ✓ **Progress visit:** additional service, non-investigative nature. Voluntary progress visit is aimed to generate a stronger enhancement-oriented dialogue. In about **2 years after the completion of the review** process, by 2 reviewers from the original review panel (when possible).







Thank you!

