

Recommendations for External Reviews

(as of September 2010)

The following recommendations have been drawn from 'good practice' evident in the applications considered by the Register Committee. These recommendations aim to be useful to all those involved in the external review of quality assurance agencies, and the Register Committee invites them to take these recommendations into account.

The recommendations express what the Register Committee has considered helpful in making a judgement on an agency's compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Their aim is to promote the development of clear and comprehensive external review reports that form a reliable basis for fair and consistent decision-making on applications.

The recommendations do not aim to be exhaustive. External reviews of quality assurance agencies frequently have additional, other purposes than assessing compliance with the ESG and serving as a basis for inclusion on EQAR, and these additional purposes may require other features.

The recommendations should be seen as good practice which might require adaptation depending on the profile and context of the individual agency under review. They should not narrow the room for different approaches and methodologies to give effect to the ESG.

1. While the review might have various purposes, it should be clear that evaluating the extent to which the agency complies with the ESG is one of the review's purposes. The ESG should be clearly mentioned as a reference point of the review.
2. Where an agency also performs activities that might not be considered external quality assurance in the sense of the ESG, this should be pointed out in the review report. In order to enhance transparency the review report should specify all activities which were not considered "ESG-relevant" by the panel and thus were disregarded in the review.
3. Where an agency operates in several countries, the review report should normally address the agency's activities in all countries, and not be limited to its "home" country. For the sake of clarity the review report should specify which activities in which countries the panel took into account, and if any were disregarded for specific reasons.

4. The review report should explicitly address all standards of parts 2 and 3 of the ESG. It benefits readability and comprehensibility if the report contains for each standard:
 - A summary of the evidence reviewed
 - A weighing analysis of the agencies' activities in the light of the standard
 - An argued conclusion as to the agency's substantial compliance with the standard

For those standards that refer to activities rather than organisational aspects (ESG 2.1 to 2.7 and ESG 3.7), the report should address each activity/quality assurance scheme separately.

5. If an agency is already registered on EQAR, it should ensure that the review panel is informed of the matters flagged in the acceptance letter. These should be addressed in the review report.

These recommendations should be considered in conjunction with and in addition to the mandatory requirements for external reviews, as set out in the Procedures for Applications:

- The review has to be coordinated by an organisation that is independent of the applicant. The coordinator has the responsibility to appoint an independent review panel. (see Art. 5)
- The review panel has to include at least four persons who possess sufficient knowledge, experience and expertise. The panel has to include at least one academic staff member, one student and one international member. (see Art. 6)
- The self-evaluation report has to be a critical self-reflection on the applicant's compliance with the ESG. (see Art. 7)
- The review report has to be agreed by all panel members. It has to provide sufficient evidence for substantial compliance with the ESG. (see Art. 8)

References for further information:

- Guide for Applicants (Version 2.1 of January 2010)
http://www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/EQAR_GuideForApplicants_current-version.pdf
- Procedures for Applications (adopted 6 August 2008)
http://www.eqar.eu/fileadmin/documents/eqar/official/RC_01_1_ProceduresForApplications_v1_0.pdf