

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT: ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION



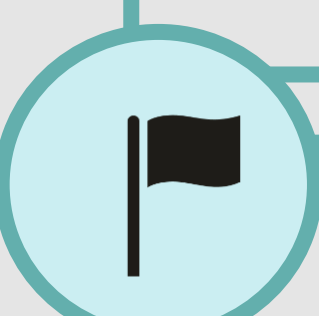
OBJECTIVE

External quality assurance (QA) involves students as key stakeholder and partners in higher education (HE). QA agencies carry out the assessment of study programs and HE institutions against the ESG. Here, they apply various standards and procedures regarding their expert panels. In this research project, we focus on the differences regarding the selection, training and composition of the panel groups, as well as the report writing, remuneration and complaint management of different QA agencies from the German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland). Therefore, we conducted a survey among QA agencies and student experts to take both perspectives into account. We compared the results of these surveys with the information from the reports on the QA agencies available in the DEQAR Database.



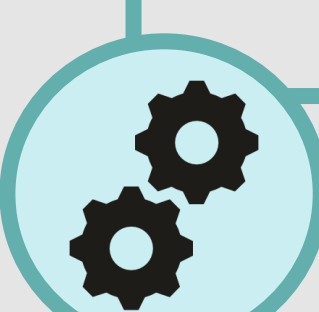
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the current status of student participation allowing students to actively act as partners in QA reviews?
- Do students have the same rights and obligations as the other panel members?
- Which information is publicly available about student involvement in external QA reviews?
- To which extend do the perceptions from students overlap with the data found in DEQAR and the agency surveys?



RESEARCH AIMS

- Give evidence regarding student involvement in reviews from the QA agencies' point of view and concerning how students perceive themselves within review panels as students are rarely asked about their perspective on this issue
- Compare these evidences to the publicly available data on DEQAR
- Draw conclusion about the informative value of both the surveys and the DEQAR Database



METHOD

Surveys: Open and closed questions
1) Student QA experts
2) QA agencies

- Distributed via mailing lists of national students' QA expert pools
- Direct Email contact to 12 agencies' CEOs and secretariats

DEQAR Database:

Analysis of agency reports (AAQ, ACQUIN, AQ Austria, AQAS, ASIIN, EAEVE, evalag, FIBAA, IEP and ZEvA)

ESG 2.4, 2.7 and 3.6

2.4: Peer Review Experts

Focus: Selection, skills and training and/or briefing

2.7: Complaints and Appeals

Focus: Clarity of complaints and appeals procedures

3.6 Internal QA and professional conduct



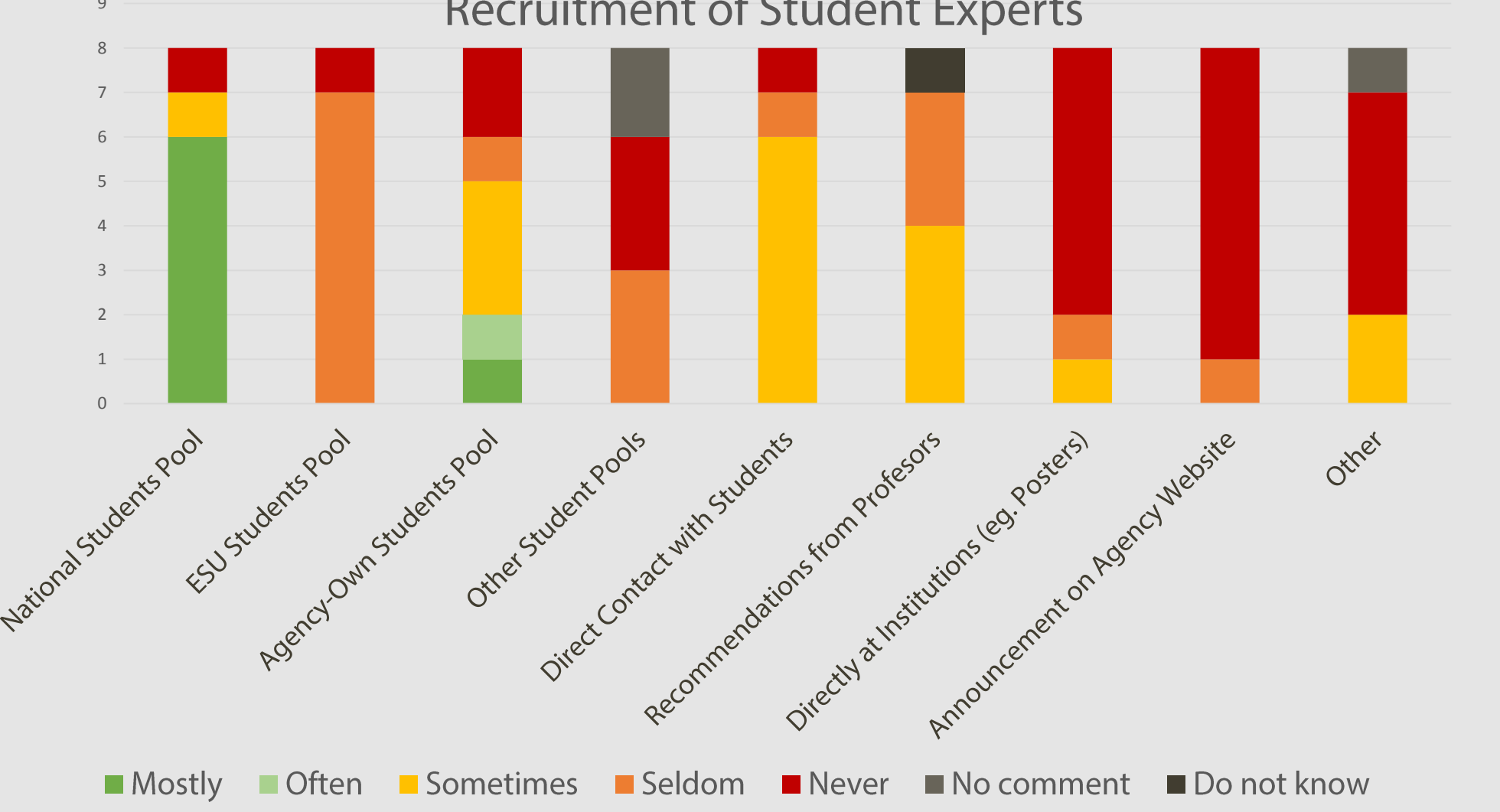
FINDINGS

GENERAL

78 student surveys were received and of those 6 surveys were disqualified due to premature termination of the survey. 72 surveys were used in the analysis. 82% of the student experts study/studied in Germany, 18% in Austria. No responses were received from students in Switzerland. The respondents were predominantly male (60%; female: 35%) and studying in a master's program (54%; bachelor: 26%, PhD: 11%, no active studies: 4%, multiple answers allowed). The majority of the students study/studied engineering (29%), natural sciences (26%), social sciences and humanities (24%) or economics (21%) (multiple answers allowed). 8 out of 12 agencies from the 3 target countries answered the survey. The student experts conducted reviews with 9 of the 12 target agencies.

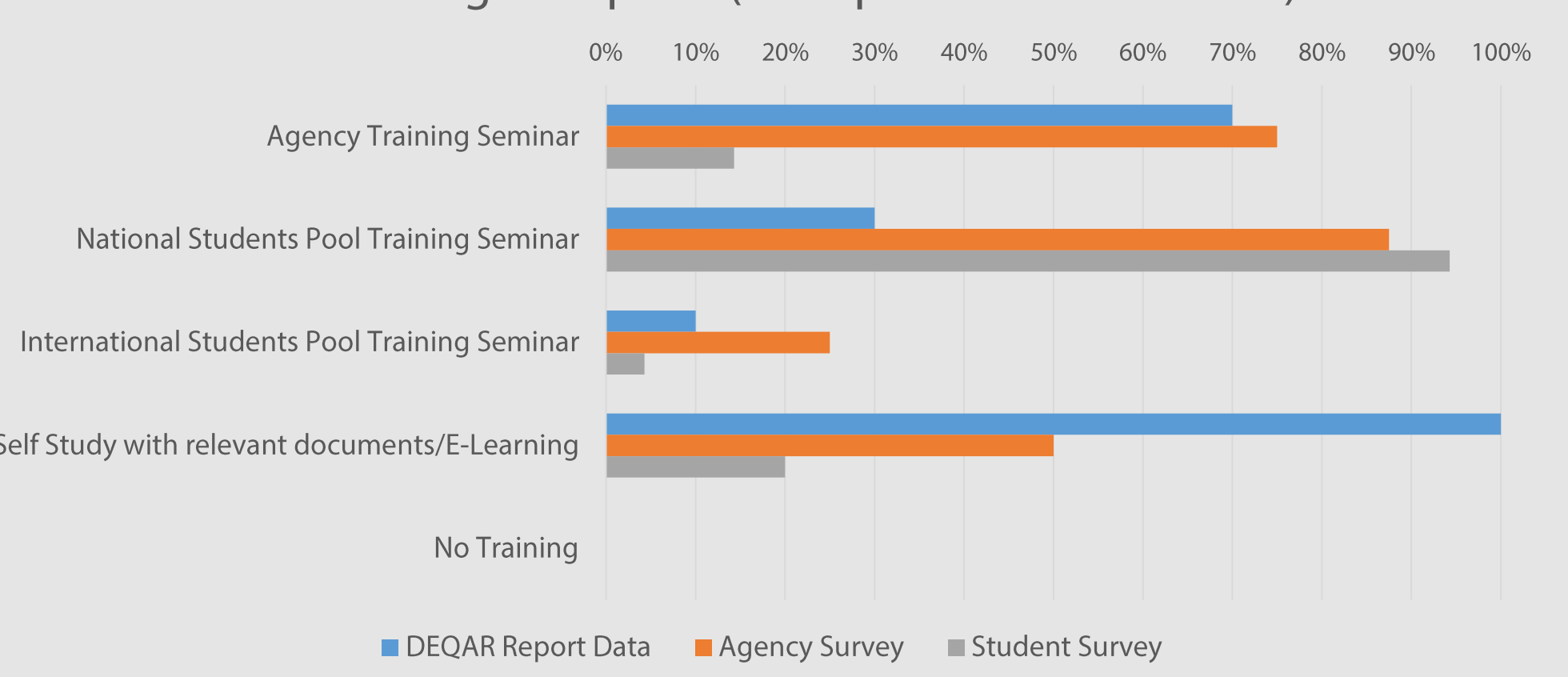
RECRUITMENT OF STUDENT EXPERTS

The most commonly used strategy to recruit student experts are the national students' QA expert pools. Other ways of recruitment were also applied as stated by the QA agencies e.g. agency intern pools as well as other student pools. However, some agencies contact students directly as well. Note, that the results from the student survey are biased in the sense that we disseminated the survey via the national students' QA expert pools.



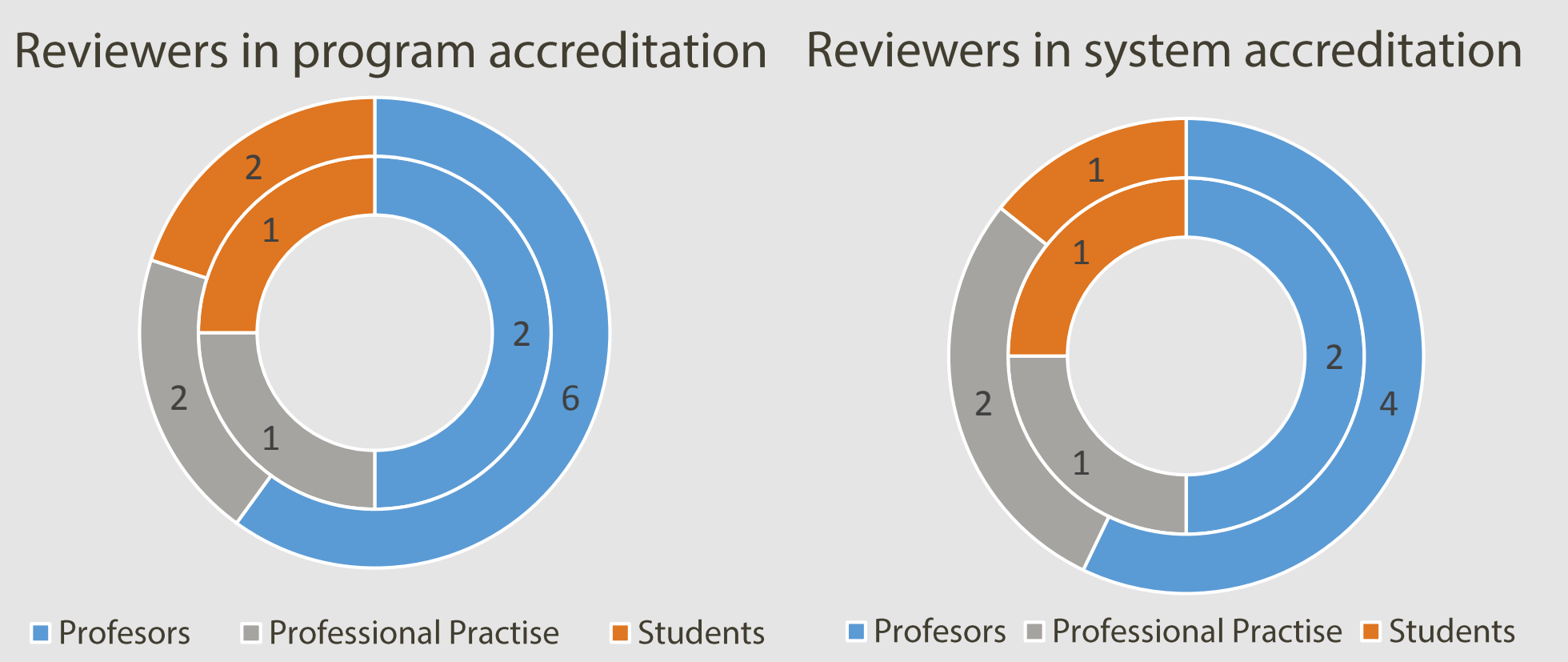
TRAINING

Both the students and most of the QA agencies stated, that their student reviewers were trained by the national students' QA expert pools. The trainings were almost exclusively conducted as workshops/seminars. Note, that the results from the student survey are biased in the sense that we disseminated the survey via the national students' QA expert pools.

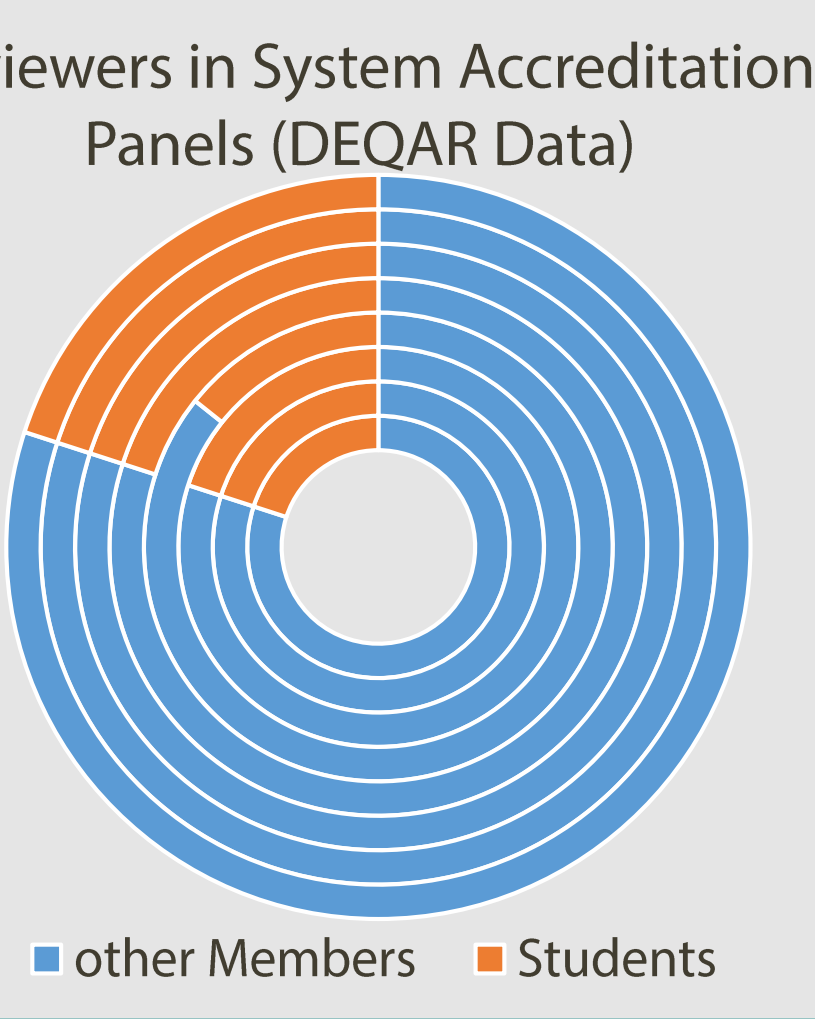


STUDENT REPRESENTATION IN PANELS

All the agencies had, being compliant with ESG 2.4, student reviewers in their expert teams. However, if the size of the panel grew, most agencies did not introduce additional student experts. The following charts show the distribution of stakeholder groups in panels in different agencies as well as the changes per expert group (inner circle: minimal composition of expert groups, outer circle: maximum composition of expert groups – data from the agency survey).



This shows that when the complexity of the procedure is growing, there is still only one student expert in the team – a concern which was also voiced in the student survey. The chart on the right shows the standard team composition for program accreditations per agency. This data was gathered from the DEQAR reports.

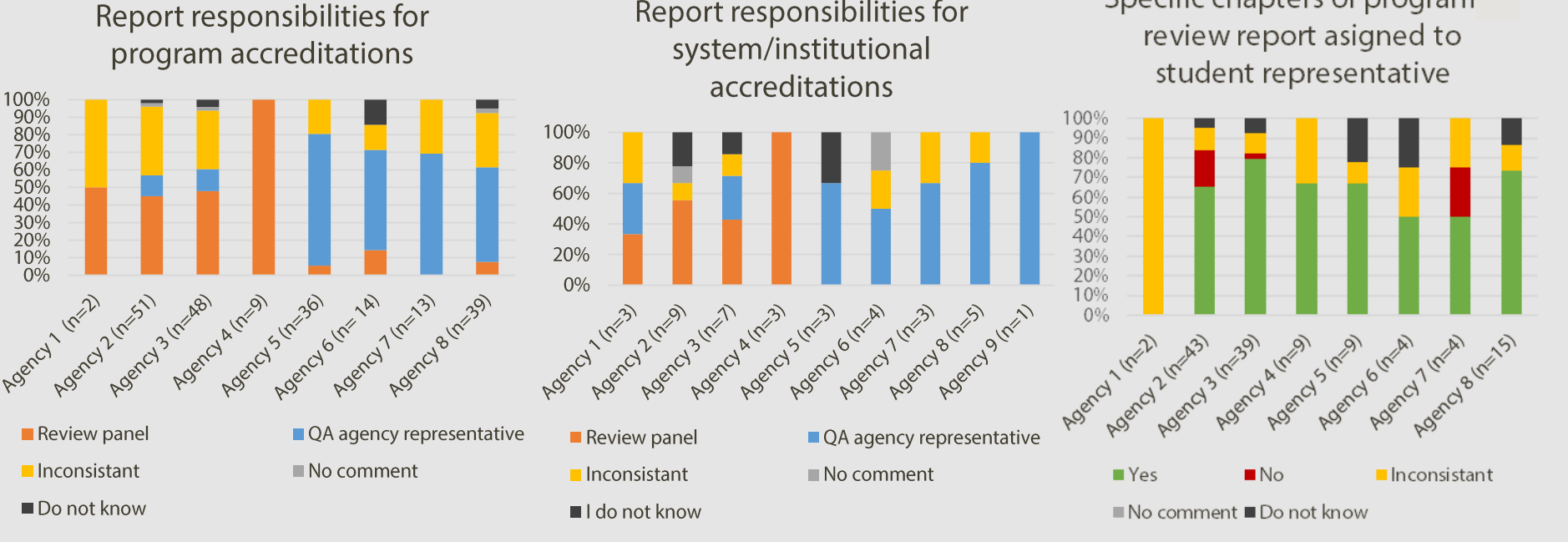


REMUNERATION

The remuneration for student experts differs between QA agencies and review formats. The QA agencies state that all members of the review panel receive identical remunerations unless there are task divisions within the team e.g. panel chair.

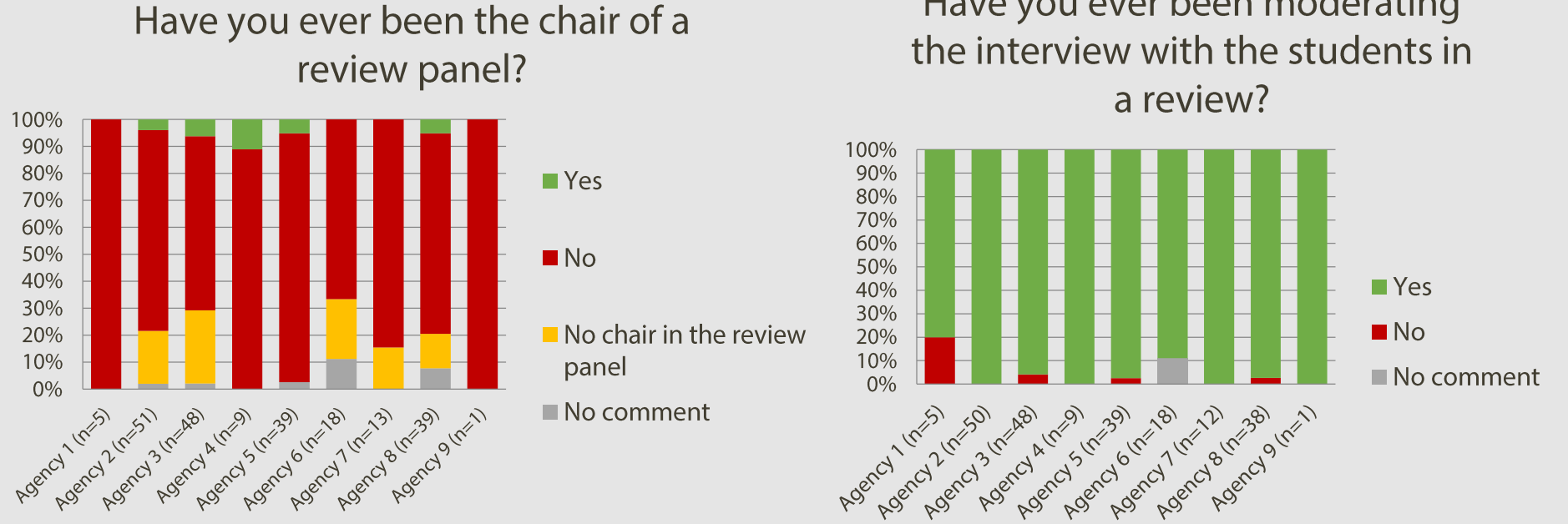
REPORT WRITING

According to the results from the student survey there are different practices regarding the task distribution between and within agencies. The students state that there are specific chapters of the program review reports that are mainly designated to student experts such as quality management, successful studies and study conditions. In contrast, all the agencies stated that there are no areas specifically designated for the student reviewers.



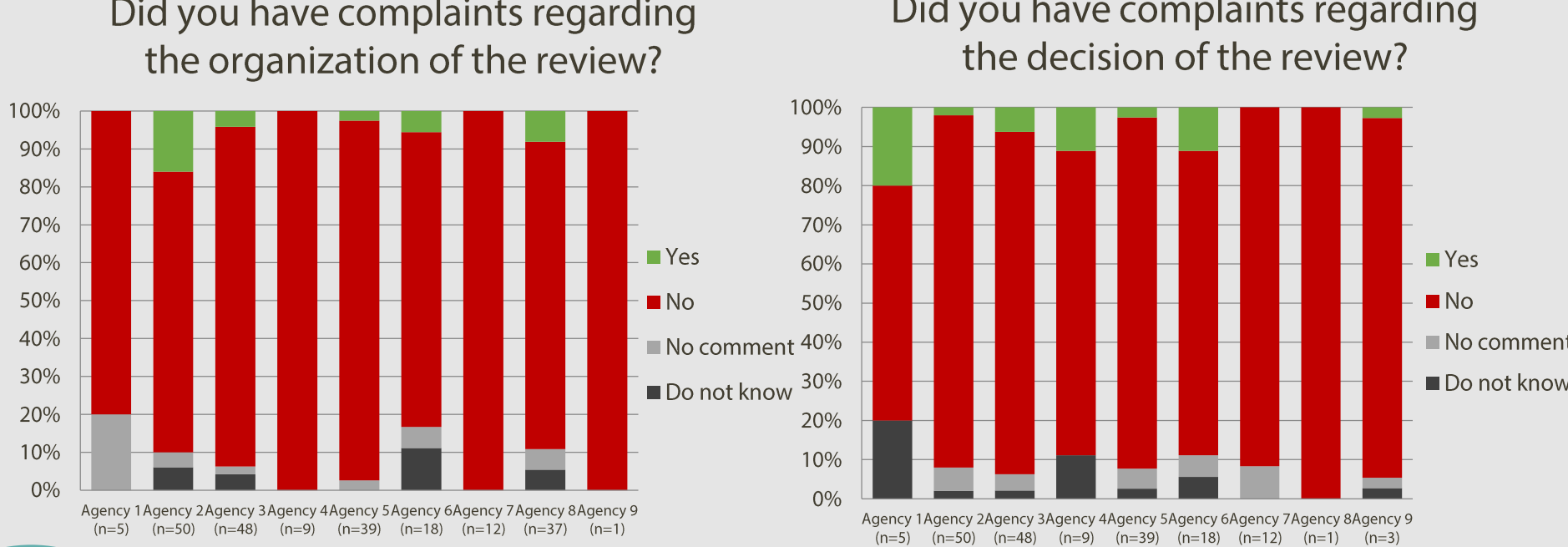
RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

According to all agencies, which answered the survey, students have the same voting rights as the other members of the panel and the same obligations concerning the report writing. 3 out of 9 agencies stated that the student member can chair the team, which happens in 0-5% of the cases. 3 agencies stated, that it is not possible for the student to chair the team and in the case of one agency, there is no chair position in the panel. This can also be seen in the results of the student survey. The student survey showed that a diminishingly small minority of them carried out the position of a chair in one of the reviews. However, the opposite was observed when it comes to moderating the interview with the students on the site visit. Here, the vast majority of the students took the position of the moderator.



COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

As seen in the charts below, the student experts had very few complaints concerning the organization of the review as well as the decisions of the review. However, in the open questions of the survey, students voiced concerns about the size of some cluster accreditations, number of students in the expert panels of large reviews and the preparation and training of the other expert panel members.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Reports on agencies differ strongly in depth of information
- Students state that there are certain parts of the report appointed to them. In contrast, agencies state that there are no specific parts of the report intended for student reviewers
- There is no difference between the remuneration of the student experts and the other experts
- Student experts are not granted to, or rarely take the role of the chair



FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

- Extend analysis to other countries in the EHEA
- Focus: Internal procedures of QA agencies regarding student expert feedback and complaints
- Provide inspiration for key stakeholders in HE for setting future goals

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REFLECTION

AND FURTHER

QUESTIONS

- What is your personal experience with student involvement in external QA (incl. best practices)?
- To which extent should student involvement be covered in QA agency assessment reports?
- Which personal conclusions do you draw from the presented data?