

ENQA

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

External reviews of Agencies in Europe. The Experience of ENQA

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Sitges 2003: the starting point for the trip

“Taking our own medicine: how to evaluate QA agencies to create trust”

To develop a QA system for agencies based on defined criteria.

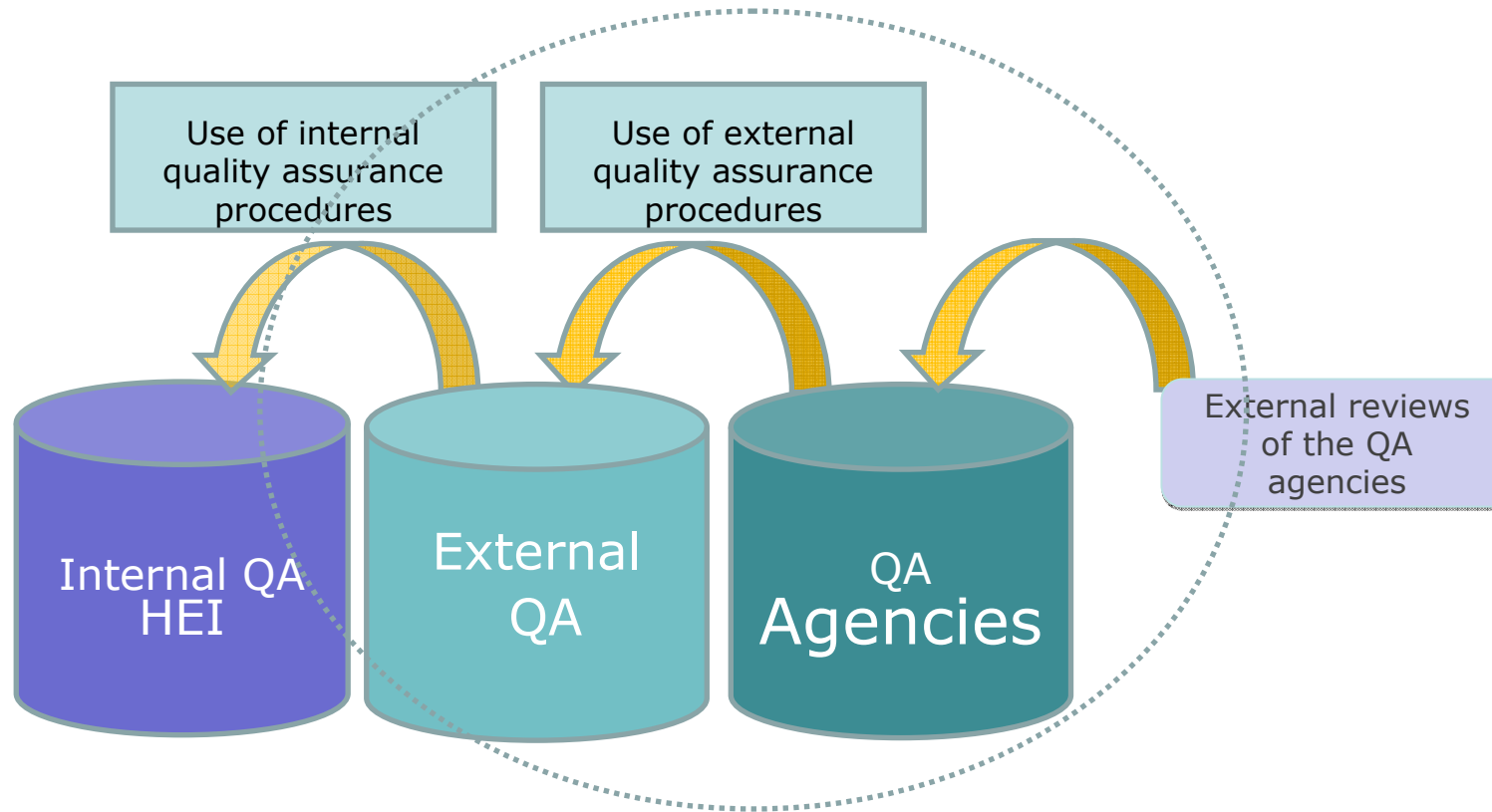
With transparency in goals, clearly defined processes and clarity of outcomes.

Agencies internal QA should include: Stakeholders, HEI, students...

Independent external reviews of agencies cyclically



ESG scheme



QA agencies in Europe

The legal contexts vary enormously and include:

Single national agencies:

- Single national agencies under **national requirements**.
- A single agency that is established within and under the legal requirements of **2 countries** (e.g. NVAO)
- A single national agency that is also working under **regional legal requirements** (e.g. Switzerland)

Multiple agencies working within a country on:

- an autonomous **regional basis** (e.g. Spain)
 - a '**competitive market**' basis (e.g. Germany),
 - a basis of the **differentiated HE sector** (e.g. Austria)
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ENQA Membership structure

	Full Members	Candidates	Associates	Affiliates
QA agencies	37	11	23	
European Organisations	2		3	4
Non European Organisations			3	

Full Membership: QA agencies from EHEA member states that have been operating for at least two years fulfilling criteria (ESG)

Applicant agency does not meet the criteria for Full Membership, but is likely to be able to meet the criteria within two years of the Candidate Membership is granted.

Associate members: bona fide organisation or agency with a demonstrable interest in the quality assurance of higher education.

Affiliate member: network of bona fide quality assurance agencies or other bona fide umbrella organisation concerned with the quality assurance of higher education.

Purpose of the reviews

Member agencies are required to undergo external reviews, at least once every 5 years, against the **membership criteria (ESG)**.

Review processes might be developed for **additional purposes**.



Working with the
ESG

ENQA Criteria: ESG plus additional points

- Agency Staff.
 - Externally reviewed cyclically-
 - Requirements and processes are managed professionally and judgements and decisions are reached in a consistent manner.
 - If the Agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure.
 - The Agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.
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3 main strands for QA agencies

Legitimacy of the agency to undertake evaluations of HEI's

Official Status
Mission statement
Independence

Activities of the agency in its evaluation work

Activities *
Accountability of the QA agency

Sustainability of the agency to continue with its work

Resources
Accountability of the QA agency

Key features of the reviews

Coordinated at national level (national authorities) or at **international level** (ENQA, an international QA agency or an international organisation).

The management of the review must be **independent** of the agency itself.

Review's management and process must be **transparent**.

The review report must be **sufficiently detailed** to provide satisfactory information of the **robustness of the review**.

The report must provide **sufficient, verified information** showing that the ENQA membership criteria / **ESG have been met**.

Review panels

Wide range of source to nominate reviewers.

Selection of reviewers done by the coordinator (not the QA agency)

The review panel composition is communicated to the ENQA Board for consideration.

Composition: International and national members (5 – 6 members)

1 or 2 QA experts

Representatives of HEI

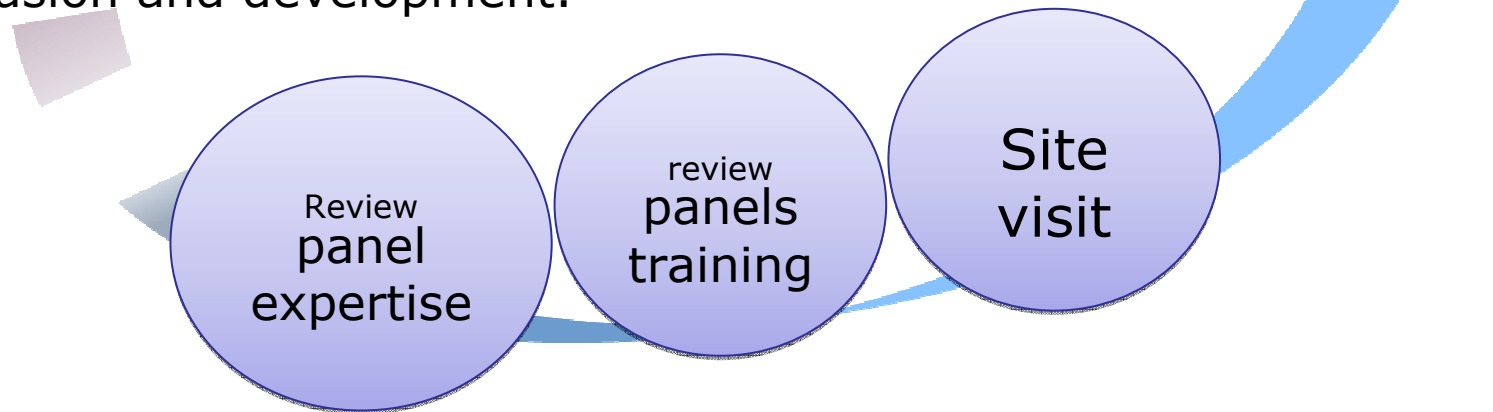
Students members

Stakeholders members (for example, an employer)



The review report: a cornerstone of the process

1. The Agency in the QA structure of its jurisdiction.
2. Main functions of the agency.
3. The engagement of the agency with the ESG (ENQA requisites).
4. How was the review carried out.
5. National / international context.
6. Findings (each membership criterion discussed separately).
7. Conclusion and development.



Judgements of the review panels 2005-2009

Standards compliance	FC	SC	PC	NC
The use of external QA procedures	15	6	1	0
Official status	23	0	1	0
Activities (regular)	23	1	0	0
Resources	16	5	3	0
Mission statement	16	8	0	0
Independence	16	5	5	0
External QA criteria and processes used by agencies	14	8	2	0
Accountability	15	7	1	0

Values are included when a clear judgement is made in the report

Some examples of the judgements:

- **Resources:**

The panels express concern about the impact of the evolution of missions on agency resources, workloads and other cost factors. External QA, particularly at programme level can be costly.

- **Independence:**

Operational independence (legal frameworks)

Financial independence (who is funding?)

Organisation (Governance, appointment of experts...)

Prevention of conflicts of interests (procedures)

Conclusions:

The ESG have had a major impact on the QA of HE within the EHEA.
(Focus against which agencies can assess their own activities)

But QA is (should be) a journey and not a destination but ESG seems to provide a destination.

There are clear differences in where different agencies and HE Systems they are assessing are within a shared (but not identical) journey.

How we have to recognise this and determine whether all should be judged to the same standard irrespective of their experience and "maturity"?

Or whether the contextual background within which an agency operates can mitigate the extent of compliance required by the ESG?

The role of the panel and its training is really important, they need to interpret the border between std and guidelines.

Thank you for your attention
