Preparing for an external review of a quality agency for ENQA

A review secretary's perspective

Dr David Cairns
Quality Assurance Research for Higher Education Ltd

Outline of the presentation

- Part 1: preparing for the review
  - From the agency's perspective
- Part 2: preparing for the review
  - From the review secretary's perspective
- Part 3: questions
  - From your perspective!

Tempus Fugit

[*Time flies!*]

The clock starts well before the review!

Five years before the review (!)

Your agency has previously had an external review

- After that review
  - record
    - what went well
    - what could have been organised better

    [For the benefit of whoever organises your ENQA review]
- attend to the recommendations
- build on the good practice
- use the experience to plan for your ENQA review

No previous external review?

- An independent review of your agency well before your ENQA review might be helpful.
  - An opportunity to test
    - how to write a self evaluation report
    - how to compile the evidence the review team will need
    - how to translate the evidence into English
      - and provide it to a geographically dispersed review team and your own participants
    - how to work with a review team
      - to prepare the schedule of meetings for a site visit and during a site-visit
      - how to work with the text of the report after the review

Overall principle: 'Do as you would be done by'

ENQA CRITERION 7 – ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES (ESG 3.8)

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

These procedures are expected to include the following:

i. a published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website;

ii. documentation which demonstrates that:

- the agency's processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance;
- the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts, Committee/Council/Board and staff members;
- the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are subcontracted to other parties;
- the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. a means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/board); an internal refl ection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.

iii. a mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years **which includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA**.

Four years before the review

http://www.enqa.eu/

- Set your preferred date for the review, the review type (A or B), and agree them with ENQA
- Step up your monitoring of the ENQA web site
  - Familiarise yourself with
    - review reports for other agencies
    - ENQA documents, particularly the ESG
    - perhaps offer one of your staff to act as a reviewer or review secretary to see what it's like from the inside

Three years before your review

- Continue monitoring the ENQA web site
- Confirm the body in your country that will manage the review process for you
- Confirm what type of review it will be (Type A or Type B)
- Confirm your choice of review manager with ENQA

Two years before your review

- Agree who will manage the writing/write the self evaluation report (SER)
  - a time consuming responsibility; there will be many drafts!
- Share the ENQA Part II and Part III criteria with your board and key external stakeholders
- Author of SER collects evidence
  - identifies gaps
  - tests availability of evidence
  - tests translation services (for written document and for meetings)
- Let ENQA know that you are preparing for the review and remind them what type of review it is (A or B)
- Attend any available ENQA review training events...

The self evaluation report

- ENQA's guidance is full and helpful
  - Use the ESG Part 3 Criteria and guidelines as your framework
- Make sure you provide the necessary contextual information, including legal, financial, and resources information including staffing.
- For a Type B review, make sure that all the necessary information is provided <u>in addition</u> to that for a Type A review

Sharing information

- Can your website support document sharing with privacy?
- or
  - Commercial services

Microsoft Office Live

ShareFile
WHERE COMPANIES CONNECT.

Dropbox

One year before your review I

- Author prepares a draft SER and archive of evidence
- Draft SER is shared with your agency's board and key stakeholders, including higher education institutions
- Hold one or more meetings to discuss the SER
  - to test whether your stakeholders recognise the portrayal of your agency in the SER
  - to brief them on the review process
  - remind them that some of them may be invited to meet the review team and why
- Revise the SER if necessary

One year before your review II

- Identify possible team members and suggest them to the body organising your review
  - Pay special attention to the Chair and Secretary
  - you may have to defer identifying the student member until later
- Criteria
  - Credibility with ENQA and with the organising body
    - independence
    - experience
- Ask the body organising your review to submit the names of your proposed team to ENQA 12 months BEFORE the proposed review dates and get ENQA's agreement
- Agree who will translate the SER (if necessary)
  - How will you handle any late policy or other changes?

9-8 months before the review visit…

- Agree who will be the principle contacts between your agency and the organisers, and your agency and the review team
  - Make sure your contact people are free of other commitments for the week of the site visit
  - do you need to plan for a briefing at the beginning of the visit on the context for the review?
- Finalise the SER and send it to be translated into English (if necessary)
  - Check the translation of the SER
- Send the SER to the body organising your review with any key documents not available electronically
- Ensure your archive of evidence is ready
- Check that the body organising the review has made arrangements for the travel and accommodation of the team
  - any travel or other permissions/visas required?
- Work out who the team might want to meet <u>and you might want the team to meet</u> and provide them with the dates of the review

Who might the team want to meet?

- In your agency
  - board members and members of key committees
  - CEO and deputy
  - those who organise your reviews
  - those who lead development work for your agency
  - reviewers
- Stakeholders
  - bodies that rely on your agency's information
    - government departments and funding agencies
    - students
    - employers
  - bodies that you review
    - (some) heads of universities and colleges

From six months before the review visit

- make contact with your review team and agree how information will pass from the review team to your agency and vice-versa
  - aim to build a good and professional relationship with your review team
- check the review team has received the SER
- answer queries from the review team and provide additional evidence as requested
  - do ask why the review team needs the information it asks for!
- suggest a schedule for the review visit
  - ask whether review team members have any special dietary needs
- agree internally how and when you are going to brief those who the team is to meet and who is going to do it

Schedule for the site visit

- Don't overload the meeting schedule
  - No! to vanity meetings
  - a meeting with the contact person at the beginning and end of the day can be useful
- Can you make more than one room available?
  - one for the review team to use for private meetings
- Do allow for
  - time between sessions for the team to discuss what it has just learned and prepare for the next meeting (a minimum of 15-30 minutes between meetings)
  - lunch (the review team will normally want this to be a private session for up to 30 minutes)
- If you provide new information during the visit, when is the review team going to read it?
  - you may wish to allow some breaks in the schedule for this possibility
- Can you provide a PC and printer and a photocopier for the team to use?

Immediately before the review visit

- Confirm arrangements
  - check the body organising the review has arranged accommodation, internal travel, and permissions (if necessary)
- Check that the venue(s) for the review visit are ready
- Check your own arrangements for briefing and de-briefing those who are to meet the review team

During the review visit

- Be cool, calm and collected!
- Check that all is going as it should be
  - what do your debriefings tell you?
  - is more information needed?
- At the end of the visit, confirm the schedule for receiving the draft report

Advice from Karen Jones

- Evidence
  - gather all the evidence you need; websites should be as accessible, populated, and up-to-date as possible
- Engage
  - with a wide range of your stakeholders, with your staff and with the review team
- Enthuse
  - this is a demanding process: make sure your staff see it as something positive and that agency benefits from it
  - if you have proud achievements make sure you tell the team about them
  - http://www.enqa.eu/eventitem.lasso?id=347

Advice from Paul Mitchell

- Context
  - in the SER and any briefings take time to set out the local context and legal framework including on finances
- Evidence
  - expect the review team to check the reliability of the evidence you provide
- SER
  - read reports from other agencies and (where possible) their SERs and learn what is a good SER and one that is not
  - if your agency has shortcomings know and describe how you plan to tackle them
  - http://www.enqa.eu/eventitem.lasso?id=305

End of Part 1

Part 2

The review secretary's perspective

Key requirements

- Professionalism
  - Communication
  - Preparation
  - Good relationships
  - Timeliness

Communication

It's about email and wordprocessors ...

- Email is the thread that holds the team together and allows it to work as an entity
- At the beginning, check your team's email habits
  - team members have to read and respond quickly to emails
  - if one or more members do not respond quickly (or at all) to emails this can jeopardise the review
    - the secretary needs to check this and address it right at the beginning of the review process
  - Wordprocessors
    - Does everyone have MS Office -- if not, what workarounds are there?
    - Open Office?
    - Google Docs?

Preparation I

- The secretary gets to know their fellow team members
  - especially theChair
- Prompts discussions to agree how the teamwill communicate
  - email
  - phone
  - Skype
- Schedules 'virtual meetings' with the Chair
  - after the SER has been received and the team has read it
  - after the secretary has collated the team's comments, to suggest meetings to the agency
  - before the visit, to agree which members of the team will lead on which sections of the ENQA/ESG criteria and discuss the agendas for each meeting
  - blocks out a week after the review visit to draft the report

Preparation II

- The secretary
  - [If necessary] Provides a template for the team to review the SER against the ESG Part III Standards and guidelines
  - Receives, reads, and analyse the SER against the ESG Part III Standards and guidelines
  - Collate the team's responses to the SER Part III Standards and guidelines
  - Compile the team's suggestions for questions, people to meet and additional information required and moderate these as necessary

Before the visit

- The secretary
  - builds a list of the documents received and considered by the team including national, EU, and ENQA documents, and their locations
  - discusses and agrees the programme for the visit with the agency and the body organising the review
    - this may or may not require succesive iterations
  - works with the Chair to prepare outline agendas for each of the meetings that build on the team's analyses of the SER (these are not normally shared with the agency)
  - liaises with the Chair to make sure that preparations for the review are progressing as s/he expects and adjust as necessary
  - liaises with ENQA to make sure that the review is progressing as ENQA expects
  - checks that arrangements have been made for travel, accommodation, and the venue

During the visit

The days can be VERY long

- The secretary
  - keeps meetings to the agreed schedule
  - keeps a record of each meeting and who attended
    - includes the team's discussions between meetings
  - notes any additional information cited in a meeting or provided for the team
  - liaises with the contact person for the agency
  - helps the team at the end of the day to reflect on what it has learnt and to prepare for the next day's meetings
  - reminds the team of the the criteria and text of the ESG Part III Standards and guidelines

At the end of the visit

And before collapsing....

- The secretary
  - confirms the schedule for producing the draft report with the Chair and other team members
  - checks that they and all team members have any tabled papers
  - gets the team to remove notes etc and take them home
  - [giving feedback on the outcomes of the review at this stage is VERY unwise]

After the review visit...

- The secretary drafts the review report
  - checks items with team members
  - keeps the Chair informed how drafting is progressing
    - Skype is good....
  - responds to new information and suggestions from the team
  - revises the draft report
  - gets the Chair's approval before sending the draft report to the agency for checking
    - factual accuracy only
- The secretary reviews the agency's comments and prepares the finalised report for the Chair to sign off

Karen Jones's advice to a review secretary

- Prepare, prepare, prepare!
- Keep your eye on the purpose of the review: gathering evidence to show ENQA why the agency should become a member or continue in membership

Paul Mitchell's advice to a review secretary

- Prepare, prepare, prepare!
- Establish a good working relationship with the agency being reviewed
- Be professional, keep to time, and make sure the team doesn't lose control of the agenda
- Remain open to different ways of doing things

Thank you!