

**ENQA, ESIB, EUA, and EURASHE
(E4 Group)**

**Report of the E4 Group on Quality
Assurance**

to the Bologna Follow-Up Group

Berlin, 5-6 March 2007

FINAL VERSION

28 February 2007



Preface

Ministers responsible for higher education in the Bologna signatory states welcomed in 2005 the principle of a European Register of quality assurance agencies based on national reviews. They asked ENQA, in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB (E4 Group), to develop the practical aspects of the Register and report back through the Bologna Follow-up Group.

The E4 Group accepted this responsibility and met nine times between the Bergen ministerial meeting and February 2007. It hired a consultant to carry out a round of interviews with various stakeholders around Europe and consulted with a law firm about the legal aspects of the Register.

The work of the consultant was supported by the Socrates Programme and by the EUA using funds received from the Swiss Confederation. The necessary legal consultations were similarly supported by the EUA using funds from the Swiss Confederation.

The present document is the E4 Group's final report to the London ministerial meeting. It is based on the outcomes of the E4 Group discussions, the report from the consultant, the legal advice and the feedback from the BFUG on the earlier drafts of the report. This final report also proposes a draft text for the London Communiqué.

INTRODUCTION

Ministers in Bergen adopted the European Standards and Guidelines and welcomed the notion of a Register for QA agencies working in Europe. The Bergen Communiqué (20 May 2005) states:

Almost all countries have made provision for a quality assurance system based on the criteria set out in the Berlin Communiqué and with a high degree of cooperation and networking. However, there is still progress to be made, in particular as regards student involvement and international cooperation. Furthermore, we urge higher education institutions to continue their efforts to enhance the quality of their activities through the systematic introduction of internal mechanisms and their direct correlation to external quality assurance.

*We adopt the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area as proposed by ENQA. We commit ourselves to introducing the proposed model for peer review of quality assurance agencies on a national basis, while respecting the commonly accepted guidelines and criteria. **We welcome the principle of a European register of quality assurance agencies based on national review.** We ask that the practicalities of implementation be further developed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB with a report back to us through the Follow-up Group. We underline the importance of cooperation between nationally recognised agencies with a view to enhancing the mutual recognition of accreditation or quality assurance decisions.*

The E4 Group has taken as its starting point this ministerial request.

OUTCOMES OF THE E4 DISCUSSIONS

The following sections describe the basic features of the Register which the E4 Group has prepared and agreed upon. The Group discussed all advice provided by the BFUG and prepared the following recommendations.

1 General summary

This report summarises the practicalities of establishing the European Register for Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (REHEQA) as prepared and agreed by the E4 Group.

The Register should assist in the establishment of the European Higher Education Area by providing clear and reliable information about quality assurance agencies operating in Europe which conform to the standards contained in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in

Higher Education. The Register should be easily accessible and updated as required.

As a structure it should involve a partnership of all interested stakeholders in order to gain the trust of all EHEA actors, as well as the European public and non-European countries.

The Register should rely, so far as possible, on the experience, expertise and authority of organisations and structures which already exist within the Bologna Process. The Register should make use of the evaluations carried out nationally or by ENQA, provided that they meet the criteria laid down in the European Standards and Guidelines adopted in Bergen and that they provide sufficient information. In case an evaluation does not meet the necessary criteria, a supplementary evaluation should be carried out.

The Register should be governed by the REHEQA Committee, which would consist of E4 and social partners. Governmental representatives would have observer status. The Register should have a small, dedicated and independent secretariat (about 1.5 FTE) that is accountable only to the REHEQA Committee.

The secretariat and the seat of the Register would be based in Brussels. In order to allow the Register and REHEQA Committee to work independently it should be created as a private non-profit legal entity founded by the E4 members.

The Register would not undertake reviews itself and so would not incur the costs of undertaking reviews. The secretariat supporting this structure would therefore be minimal and inexpensive to run.

The information provided by the Register would bring clear added value to the European Higher Education Area.

2 Purposes and added value of the Register

The overarching purpose of the Register is as follows:

“The Register should assist in the establishment of the European Higher Education Area by providing clear and reliable information about quality assurance agencies operating in Europe which conform to the standards contained in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.”

The Register will help to:

- promote student mobility by providing a basis for the increase of trust among higher education institutions

- reduce opportunities for “accreditation mills¹” to gain credibility
- provide a basis for governments to authorise higher education institutions to choose any agency from the Register, if that is compatible with national arrangements²
- provide a means for higher education institutions to choose between different agencies, if that is compatible with national arrangements³
- serve as an instrument to improve the quality of quality assurance agencies and to promote mutual trust amongst them

2.1 Relationship between the Register and ENQA membership reviews

ENQA is the main forum bringing together quality assurance agencies at European level. ENQA describes its aims and purposes as follows:

“the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, disseminates information, experiences and good practices in the field of quality assurance (QA) in higher education to European QA agencies, public authorities and higher education institutions.... promote European co-operation in the field of quality assurance.... sharing and developing experience in the area of quality assurance.” (<http://www.enqa.eu/>)

The criteria and procedures that ENQA has introduced for granting Full membership have been formulated on a very similar basis as those envisaged for the Register. ENQA has published ‘Guidelines for national reviews of ENQA member agencies’ (Annex 3) and undertakes a rigorous and challenging consideration of reports resulting from five-yearly national reviews.

The Register is intended to fulfil a different purpose from ENQA. Its intention is to provide clear and reliable information to all EHEA stakeholders and the general public regarding the compliance of QA agencies (whether members of ENQA or not) with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). This important function cannot be provided by any single existing organisation but requires a partnership approach based upon the involvement of all stakeholders in higher education as a way of ensuring the trust and confidence of all in the decisions taken. Hence, the Register requires its own independent structure and organisation, and should be governed by the E4 partners and the social partners jointly. It is intended as an objective information tool only and should not serve any other purpose, such as networking or sharing experiences between QA agencies, which is the role of ENQA.

¹ Accreditation mills are bogus agencies that are usually linked to diploma mills networks. The strategy of these accreditation mills is to gain credibility through the accreditation and evaluation of legitimate higher education institutions or programmes.

² Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council on further cooperation in quality assurance in higher education of 15 February 2006 (http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_064/l_06420060304en00600062.pdf)

³ Ibid

Nevertheless, it is important that the Register should not duplicate reviews undertaken rigorously, against the same criteria, by ENQA for the purpose of granting Full membership of that body. To that end, Full membership of ENQA will normally constitute *prima facie* evidence for inclusion in the Register.

3 Name and location

The Register should be called the Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (REHEQA).

It is proposed that the REHEQA is located in Brussels, Belgium.

4 Legal form of the Register

Based upon the recommendations of a leading Belgian law firm (cf. Annex 1) it is proposed that the REHEQA be established as a private non-profit association (*Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif*, AISBL) under Belgian law thus creating an 'independent legal personality'.

The establishment of an AISBL would provide a flexible framework within which different types and forms of membership could be encapsulated, allowing its members to have appropriately differentiated roles, levels of responsibility and decision making powers within the Association.

The AISBL is a flexible structure in terms of membership of the association and internal governance structure.

The law firm consulted proposes preparing a more extensive report and/or draft statutes once decisions have been taken on the above-mentioned issues, and in particular once the roles and responsibilities of the different members and membership categories have been agreed.

5 Founding members

REHEQA should be founded by the E4 organisations jointly.

6 Organisational structure

The organisational structure of REHEQA should consist of:

- the REHEQA Committee,
- an annual meeting (General Assembly)
- an independent secretariat to manage the work of the Register.

6.1 REHEQA Committee

The REHEQA Committee should be the governing body of the REHEQA. The REHEQA Committee would be responsible for all decisions regarding the Register, including which agencies would be listed in the Register.

The E4 proposal is that it should comprise:

- 2 members nominated by each E4 organisation,
- 4 members nominated by the social partners
(2 by employers' organisations and 2 by trades unions)

In addition, 5 governmental representatives would attend all meetings of the Committee as observers.

The BFUG, or any successor body, would be invited to nominate the governmental representatives. Notwithstanding their observer status, the governmental representatives would receive and have access to the same information and documents as the Committee members.

Members of the Committee should be nominated in their personal capacity and not as representatives of the organisations which nominate them. They should work for the Register as independent individuals and not represent the interests of their nominating organisation.

6.2 Annual Meeting

The Register would hold an Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting would receive a report by the REHEQA Committee and the Secretariat, and would approve the budget of the REHEQA. There would be advantage in the Annual Meeting being held in conjunction with the European Quality Forum so as to provide an opportunity for a consultation forum between the REHEQA, the BFUG and the wider QA community.

6.3 Secretariat

The REHEQA Committee should have a dedicated secretariat that is accountable only to the Committee. The Secretariat and the seat of the REHEQA should be located in Brussels, Belgium. It may, however, be co-located physically with another organisation to enable the efficient use of resources and to profit from synergies regarding office services.

The role of the secretariat will be to process applications, staff the Committee meetings and annual assemblies, manage the web site, provide information and represent the Register.

Once the register is fully operational it is estimated that the workload could be managed by 1.5 FTE staff (Secretary to the Committee, and part time administrative assistant). Should additional support be required in the start up phase then temporary staff on short term expert contracts, or on secondment, would be employed.

7 Budget and funding

7.1 Budget

The starting point of the budget calculation is the consultant's Report, which was provided to the BFUG in Helsinki. Estimates are based on costs in Belgium and specifically on EUA's experience of operating as an association in Belgium. The estimates start from the assumption that the Secretariat would consist of 1.5 FTEs. Further details are found in Annex 2.

7.2 Funding

It is estimated that the annual funding required would be a maximum of 185,000 – 245,000 Euro once the structure was fully operational, and bearing in mind that additional expert support might be required in the start-up phase.

REHEQA should be funded through a combination of sources, including, for example, application administrative fees, funding from EHEA governments and from other appropriate European organisations. The E4 organisations will contribute to establishing and maintaining the REHEQA. The preparation of an application to the EC for start up funding is envisaged.

8 Nature of the Register

Application by agencies for inclusion in the Register would be voluntary. In line with the BFUG conclusion reached in Helsinki (October 2006), the E4 proposes that inclusion in the Register should be restricted to applicant agencies that satisfy the Committee that they comply substantially with the criteria (i.e., it will be an exclusive Register). There should be no information on any other quality assurance or accreditation agencies operating in Europe. This will help exclude accreditation mills from the Register and minimise legal recourse from such bodies.

In spite of the exclusive nature of the Register it is important to point out that the non inclusion of an agency in the Register would not prevent a government from recognising or funding that agency.

9 Information to be included in the Register

The Register should consist of a database of agencies publicly available on its own website. The following general information about it should be included on the website:

- general information about REHEQA and about its organisational structure;
- information about the application procedures
- information about the approval procedures
- information about the appeals procedures
- contact information of the secretariat

The following information about the agencies included in the Register would appear on the website:

- name
- date of establishment
- date of first entry into the Register
- contact information and website address
- ownership
- field(s) covered
- type(s) of quality assurance services provided
- countries the agency operates in
- countries the agency is officially recognised in
- ENQA membership of the agency: yes/no (if yes, then also the year of having become an ENQA member should be mentioned, together with the date of the last five-yearly review)
- hyperlinks to evaluation / accreditation reports by the agency

Once in operation, the REHEQA Committee should decide whether the review reports of the agencies listed in the Register should be published.

10 Application and approval policies

The application and approval rules and procedures of the Register should be clear and transparent, so that applicants are fully informed in advance of the requirements and approval process. Applicants should be required to undergo an external review in order to be considered for inclusion in the Register.

There would be two different ways in which external reviews could be organised and applicants might apply:

1. An external review organised at the national level, either for the purpose of applying for Full ENQA membership and/or meeting national requirements, or solely for the purpose of entering the Register. A nationally recognised organisation (for example the Ministry for Education or a national quality assurance body) independent of the applicant agency would organise such a review. This would be the normal way to enter the Register.

2. A non-national review, undertaken by an organisation (which could include ENQA) that was acceptable to the Register Committee. This would mainly apply to applicants that were not affiliated to any national higher education system or where a nationally-coordinated review would not be possible.

10.1 Criteria and rules for implementation

The principal criterion for inclusion in the Register should be substantial compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for external quality assurance agencies.

A set of rules for implementation would be derived from the European Standards and Guidelines by the REHEQA Committee. They should facilitate the determination of whether satisfactory levels of compliance with the ESG have been met by applicants.

Applicants should be required to demonstrate to the Committee, through their external reviews, that they have met the principal criteria and the rules for implementation. The Committee should use the principle of "substantial compliance" to determine whether the criteria have been met.

The European Standards and Guidelines propose "a mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years" (ESG 3.8, Accountability procedures, guideline 3, p. 26). Reconfirmation by the Register Committee of an agency's continued presence in the Register should depend on a satisfactory re-review every five years.

10.2 Appeals

According to the legal advice that the E4 group received from the Belgian law firm, it is recommended that when an application is submitted which does not meet the relevant criteria for inclusion in the Register, the applicant be informed and invited to submit a revised application, pending which no decision is made. Thus, the Register Committee would technically not be taking a decision that could trigger a potential appeal.

Alternatively, the application form should clearly state that, by submitting an application, the applicant recognises that the sole channel for appealing against a negative decision of the Register Committee is the external appeals procedure set up and organised by the Committee. However, this technically would not prevent an applicant from filing a lawsuit with a national court.

Once the legal structure is agreed, further thought should be given to the setting up and organisation of an external appeals procedure as a staged process.

11 Amendments to the ESG

It is probable that the ESG will need to be revised from time to time. They should not, however, be changed during the first two years of the Register's existence, in order that there should not be uncertainty about the status of the criteria for inclusion. Care should be taken to make sure that the European Standards and Guidelines do not become a simple checklist for compliance purposes and that any revisions reflect the needs of higher education more broadly. Responsibility for commissioning revisions to the ESG should rest with the BFUG or any successor body; the BFUG should request E4 to recommend revisions when E4 considers it appropriate to do so. Alternatively, BFUG could delegate that responsibility to E4. In normal circumstances, however, revisions might be expected every five years.

12 Proposed text for the London Communiqué

The E4 Group proposes the following text about REHEQA for the London Communiqué:

"We adopt the operational model of a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies, as proposed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. We commit ourselves to the implementation of the Register in order to allow all stakeholders and the general public to freely access objective information about quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the European Standards and Guidelines. We ask the E4 Group to establish the Register and report back to us through the BFUG.

We welcome the success of the first European Quality Assurance Forum, jointly organised by EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESIB in 2006 which provided an excellent opportunity to discuss European developments in quality assurance. We encourage the four organisations to continue organising the European Quality Assurance Fora on an annual basis."

Annex 1: **Legal advice concerning the Register**

This memorandum by Mr. Bruno Hubart and Mr. Henri Tack (Belgian lawyers) summarises a discussion on December 5, 2006, held with Mrs. Lesley Wilson, Mr. John Ashton (EUA).

I. Structure

We recommend that the Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (the "Register") be organised as a non profit international association ("*association internationale sans but lucratif*" or "AISBL") governed by Part III ("*titre III*") of the Belgian law of June 27, 1921, as amended by the Belgian law of May 2, 2002 (the "Law").

The AISBL perfectly meets the key requirements that the Register be organised as a non-profit and international entity, and that there be a distinction between the founding members and the observers. In addition, the AISBL presents the additional advantage of being very flexible *inter alia* in terms of membership (several categories of members are conceivable, such as "active" members, "associated" members and "honorary members") and governance. Finally, the fact that the AISBL's legal personality is granted by royal decree is often viewed as a "quality label".

To the extent that amendments to the charter of an AISBL are subject to the prior approval of the authorities, we recommend that the charter of the Register be as concise as possible and limited to the mandatory provisions under the Law.

II. Relationships with Partners

Such relationships may generally be organised as the members see fit. For example, an internal regulation of the Register may provide that partners who are not members may nevertheless attend *ad hoc* or annual meetings of members, participate to working sessions within the Register (*e.g.*, for purposes of defining the admission criteria) and provide comments on work carried out by the Register. Partners could as well be admitted as pure "honorary members".

III. External Appeals Procedures

We recommend that when the file submitted by an applicant does not meet the relevant criteria to be included in the Register, the applicant be informed and invited to submit an improved file pending which no decision is made. Thus, the Register would technically not take a decision triggering a potential appeal. Alternatively, the application form should bear a clear mention that, by submitting an application, the applicant recognises that the sole channel for appealing a negative decision of the Register is the external appeals procedure set up and organised by the Register. However, this technically would not prevent an applicant from filing a lawsuit with a national court.

Further thought should be given on the setting up and organisation of an external appeals procedure, as it may prove to be costly (constitution a panel of experts willing to act on appeals, fees and reimbursement of expenses of experts...).

IV. Protection of the Resources of Founding Members

The Register having its own legal personality, it will act and contract in its own name and account, thereby avoiding jeopardising the limited resources of the founding members.

However, it would be unusual for the founding members of an association not to contribute at least some limited resources to the association.

Annex 2: **Cost estimate of the Register**

The starting point of the following calculation is Bastian Baumann's Report. Estimates are based on costs in Belgium and specifically on EUA's experience of operating as an association in Belgium. Furthermore, the estimations start from the assumption that the Secretariat would consist of 1.5 FTEs: 1 senior officer/Committee Secretary and 1 part time administrative assistant.

Costs that would incur are related to:

- Office rental
- Office running costs, other administrative costs and equipment
- Salary and other costs associated with the secretariat
- Travel costs: 2 annual meetings of the RC, 1 annual meeting of the responsible bodies of the Belgian association (Board, General Assembly of members), Experts carrying out external reviews?
- Information and publications, incl. website development and maintenance
- Expert fees for the external reviews carried out by the RC?

Re 1: Office rental – 2 offices for 3 people: **€20,000 - €25,000** annually

Re 2: Running costs - **€50,000 - €70,000** incl. purchase of necessary equipment, all office supplies, website maintenance etc... The costs for office and equipment could be reduced considerably if the secretariat were physically located with a Brussels-based organisation, which would agree to cover above costs or parts thereof.

Re 3: Salaries – for 1.5 FTEs as mentioned above: **€85,000 - €100,000** depending upon the seniority of the persons employed

Re 4: Travel Costs for:

- annual meetings of the RC, calculated on the basis of 10 members and 2 meetings - **€15,000 - €20,000** (and if not paid by the sending organisations)
 - -1 annual meeting of the organs of the Belgian association to take place at the same time as one of the RC meetings
1. Staff travel - **€5000 - €10,000**
 2. Expert travel for the conduct of external reviews – **for discussion**

Re 6: Expert fees - for legal advice, external auditor, IT support, etc. (for the conduct of external reviews? - **for discussion**)

Re 5: Information and Publications - **€10,000 - €20,000**

Total – first estimate: €185,000 - €245,000

Note: If the Register needed to conduct its own reviews the experts' travel and fee would be covered by the agency being reviewed.

Annex 3: **Guidelines for national reviews of ENQA member agencies**

These guidelines describe ENQA's requirements for the acceptability of national reviews of quality assurance agencies for the purpose of demonstrating compliance with ENQA's Full membership criteria.

1. Introduction

The membership regulations of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) require all member agencies to undergo an external review at least once every five years. External reviews are expected to include consideration of how far agencies meet the criteria for Full membership of ENQA. These criteria are identical with the European Standards and Guidelines in Quality Assurance (ESG) in the European Higher Education Area, adopted by ministers in Bergen in 2005. In line with the principle of subsidiarity which underpins the ESG, the five-yearly reviews will normally be conducted at national level.

2. Organisation of reviews

National reviews

External reviews of ENQA member agencies will normally be initiated and coordinated by national authorities, as part of their routine quality assurance arrangements. These guidelines are intended to help members ensure that their national reviews will produce the information needed to satisfy the requirements of ENQA membership. The guidelines build on the theoretical model presented in the annex to the ESG.

ENQA co-ordinated reviews

ENQA itself has only limited resources to co-ordinate reviews. There may, however, be instances where it is not appropriate or not possible for the review to be organised at a national level; for example where there is no suitable or willing national body to co-ordinate the review. Agencies wishing to engage ENQA to conduct their review must be able to justify why a national review would not be appropriate or possible. ENQA reserves the right to decline to coordinate an agency's five-yearly external review.

Guidance on the procedures and processes of ENQA co-ordinated external reviews of member agencies are available from the Secretariat.

3. Remit of the review

There are likely to be two types of nationally co-ordinated external review:

- a) a review whose sole purpose is to fulfil the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership; and

b) a review which has a number of purposes, one of which is to fulfil the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership.

4. Key features of the review

Certain elements will be required in a national review for it to be acceptable to the ENQA Board as a vehicle for demonstrating that the agency has met the Full membership criteria.

- the management of the review process must be completely independent of the agency itself;
- all parts of the of the review's management and process must be transparent and therefore easily open to examination by the ENQA Board;
- the report produced must be sufficiently detailed to provide satisfactory assurance for the ENQA Board of the robustness of the review;
- the report must provide sufficient, verified, information which clearly shows that the ENQA membership criteria have been met.

The review will generally consist of six phases – these are outlined below with a commentary on key features that lend themselves to the fulfilment of the above requirements.

I. Notification to ENQA

As soon as a member agency knows that a national review is to take place it should inform the ENQA Secretariat. The Secretariat should be provided with the identity and contact details of the body co-ordinating the review and vice versa. Although the review is being conducted on a national level it is advisable that ENQA should be kept informed of progress throughout the review, no matter whether it is of type (a) or (b). This is both to enable the Board to plan its workload and to help ensure that the outcomes of the review process meet the requirements of the ENQA Board in assessing compliance with membership criteria.

II. Formulation of terms of reference and protocol for the review

The terms of reference for the review should be drafted well before the process starts – and should clearly identify whether the review is intended to be a type (a) or type (b) evaluation. They should also state clearly the relationship of the review to the ENQA membership criteria.

An outline of how the review is going to run – number of reviewers, administrative arrangements, approximate timings etc – should also be clearly stated.

III. Nomination and appointment of a panel of reviewers

There is no single ideal model for the composition of a review panel. The key

requirements, however, are that members of the panel should be totally independent of the agency under review and have a sufficient level of knowledge, experience and expertise to conduct the review to a high standard.

A review panel will be able to perform its independent function most successfully when it comprises members who between them have a wide range of professional experience of higher education and quality assurance; this might well include:

- quality assurance experts from outside the system being reviewed;
- representatives of higher education institutions;
- student members;
- stakeholder members (for example, an employer).

International member(s) on the panel can provide very valuable insights for the review and help to establish its credibility, and it is therefore recommended that at least one member of the panel should be a quality assurance expert from beyond the jurisdiction of the agency under review.

The review panel should include a member who will act as secretary to the review.

No current or recent former member of staff of the agency under review should take part in the review panel or act as secretary to the review.

Nominations of experts could be sought from a wide range of sources – including agencies, stakeholders, local authorities, etc. – but the selection process must be carried out by a third party (ie, not by the agency being reviewed), to preserve the integrity of the process.

IV. Production of a self-evaluation report by the agency under review

The exact form and content of the self-evaluation report is something which will need to be negotiated between the panel and the agency under review. As, however, the self-evaluation report normally provides a substantial portion of the evidence which the panel will draw on in forming its conclusions, it is important that the report is both full, frank and that its contents can be corroborated by documentary and/or oral evidence.

The Annex to the ESG gives a detailed account of what might be included in the self-evaluation report of an agency undergoing an external review. This suggests that it is likely to be useful for a self-evaluation to contain:

- a brief outline of the national higher education system, the history of the particular agency and of the evaluation of higher education in general;
- evidence of the external quality assurance undertaken by the agency;

- details of the evaluation method applied by the agency including: the elements of the methodology; an account of the role of the external expert group;
- documentation of the agency's processes and procedures;
- details of the system of appeal;
- details of the agency's own internal quality assurance procedures;
- information and opinions on the agency from its key stakeholders.

V. A site-visit by the panel of reviewers to the agency under review

The details of the duration and schedule of the site visit may vary between reviews and may depend on whether the review is a type (a) or type (b). The length of the visit should be determined at the beginning of the review process when terms and conditions are being decided upon.

It is likely that a visit duration of at least two days will be necessary for a review panel to validate fully the self-evaluation and clarify any points at issue.

VI. Production and publication of a final report

It is essential that before publication the agency under review is provided with a copy of the draft report and sufficient time to check its contents for errors of fact.

Also see section five, below.

5. Key features of the report

The form of the review panel's report is likely to depend on the type of review that has been carried out.

Type A

Where the sole purpose of the review is the fulfilment of ENQA's membership requirements, the report should be clearly structured with this end in mind. Each membership criterion should be discussed separately.

To assist the ENQA Board to reach a sound conclusion, it is necessary for the report to include more than just a statement of compliance (or partial or non-compliance) for each criterion under scrutiny.

For each criterion, therefore, it is necessary to include:

- a summary of the evidence gathered
- an analysis of how far, based on the evidence available, the agency does (or does not) meet the criterion

- a summative conclusion stating whether the agency is fully or substantially compliant; partially compliant; or non-compliant.

Where an agency is found to be either partially compliant or non-compliant with a criterion, the reason for this should be explained. Full or substantial compliance may be impossible for some agencies, owing to restrictions placed on them by the very nature of their work and/or legislation in place in their country(ies) of operation. When considering such cases, the ENQA Board will take mitigating circumstances such as these into account.

Type B

Where a review has a wider purpose, it is recommended that the report should nevertheless include a full chapter which deals specifically with the ENQA membership criteria, written in the same manner as has been described above for type (a) reviews. This would then provide the primary source of reference for the ENQA Board when forming its conclusions. The full report should still, however, be submitted for consideration.

Further characteristics for reports type A and B

It would be useful for all reports also to include the following information: an executive summary (including an overall conclusion regarding compliance with the ENQA membership criteria);

contextual information:

- reason(s) for the commissioning of the review;
- the place of the agency in the quality assurance structure of its jurisdiction;
- the main functions of the agency;
- the engagement of the agency with the ESG;
- the terms of reference of the review;
- the details of the timescale over which the review was conducted;
- the identity of all panel members and administrative support arrangements;
- a description of the main stages of the review;
- any recommendations for improvement.

Key pieces of evidence – i.e. extracts from legislation, policies and procedures etc. – may be added to the report in the form of appendices.

6. Consideration of national review reports by ENQA

ENQA's General Assembly has delegated to its Board consideration of review reports and subsequent decisions in respect of membership. Where possible, the Board will use national reports to reach a conclusion on whether an agency has or has not met the membership criteria. If the report's contents, or the way the review has been conducted, do not, in the Board's opinion, allow it to come to a conclusion, it will decide what additional information it requires. This may comprise further documentary evidence, additional information from the review organisers or the agency itself, or information acquired during a short visit to the review organisers, review panel or agency. The Board's powers in respect of

membership matters, and the rules relating to appeals against a decision of the Board, are contained in paragraphs 3.7 and 4.2.5 of the Regulations of the Association.

Approved by the ENQA Board
21 September 2006