

ENQA review training session: background to the ESG

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(absent friend)

.. going to cover ..

- 1. a bit of background / 'history' of the ESG**
- 2. on the ESG themselves**
- 3. an overview of an overview – on the use of the ESG in ENQA reviews**
- 4. some thoughts /questions for your discussions**
- 5. .. and the future .. ?**

1. a bit of background .. (1 of 3)

**2003 – the *Berlin Communiqué* (of European HE ministers)
called upon ENQA to work (with others) to develop ..
an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines to
explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system
for .. [quality assurance in Higher Education]**

And given 2 years to ‘report back (2005 !)

1. a bit of background .. (2 of 3)

**the Bergen ministerial meeting (2005) approved the concept
etc of the European Standards and Guidelines ..**

.. in 3 parts –

- ESG for Internal QA within HEIs**
- ESG for external QA of HEIs**
- ESG for review of external QA agencies**
(*quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* ... ! ..)

**but .. the range, the scope and the ‘legality’ of the proposals
were ?? !!**

1. a bit of background .. (3 of 3)

Bergen also 'suggested'

- the **cyclical review of QA agencies** ..
 - successful completion requirement to join ENQA
- a **Register** of (bone fide) QA agencies .. (became EQAR)

ENQA and EQAR

- successful completion of the cyclical review
 - is required for full ENQA membership .. and also
 - gives opportunity for application to EQAR

membership of ENQA does not automatically confer inclusion in EQAR (or vice versa)

2. on the ESG themselves (1 of 4)

ESG consists of 3 parts

- 1. for the internal QA of HEIs**
- 2. for the external QA of HEIs**
- 3. for the external QA of QA agencies**

an obvious issue for an ENQA review is :

to what extent - in practical terms - does Section 3 require a detailed analysis how Section 2 Standards are used ?

2. on the ESG themselves (2 of 4) the ESG (section 3) for QA agencies

.. consists (primarily) of 8 Standards:

- 3.1 [the QA agency males] Use of external QA procedures for HE *
- 3.2 [the QA agency has an] .. Official status
- 3.3 [the QA agency has a well defined set of ..] Activities
- 3.4 [the QA agency has appropriate ..] Resources
- 3.5 [the QA agency has a clear ..] Mission Statement
- 3.6 [the QA agency has ..] Independence
- 3.7 [the QA agency has ..] External QA criteria and procedures
- 3.8 [the QA agency has ..] Accountability procedures

* should involve application of Section 2 Standards

2. on the ESG themselves (3 of 4) and the .. *Guidelines*

the Guidelines add some '*flesh to the bones*' ..

.. the sorts of things to look for / to look at ..

.. what is important .. / .. what is – desirable

BUT .. *CONTEXT* is (ALL?) IMPORTANT ..

what is the legal situation ? *certainly NOT the same everywhere*

what is the financial situation ? *and again !*

how far are things developed ? *and again !*

so .. just how do we interpret / apply **the Standards ?**

2. on the ESG themselves (4 of 4)

do the Guidelines ..

indicate or direct (?)

how the Standards

should / could (?)

be applied ?

3. an overview of an overview – on the use of the ESG in ENQA reviews (1 of 5)

Analysis of reports for 26 ENQA reviews (2005 to Dec 2009)

the Purpose a 'self evaluation' by ENQA itself to:

- support an analysis and reflection on the work to date
- provide collated (evidence-based) information about the **progress/impact of the Bologna action line:**

Promotion of European co-operation in Quality Assurance

- inform the second cycle of ENQA reviews
- inform any review / revision of the ESG

3. an overview of an overview (2 of 5)

some predictable messages (and successes)

from the 'headlines' .. it is clear that

- the ESG (parts 2 and 3)
 - have had a very significant *impact* ..
 - have been a significant success in providing
 - *support for the Bologna action line on QA*
- the ESG were drawn from/on sensible principles
 - that *have led to shared / improving practice and successful agency reviews*

BUT ...

- all is not 'perfect' ..
 - there are some (recurring) problems and difficulties

3. an overview of an overview (3 of 5)

some predictable messages (cont)

- **most agencies were found to be compliant with the standards ..**
(approx %with substantial/partial compliance)

3.1 use of external QA procedures for HE (30% S/P)

3.2 official status (5% S/P)

3.3 activities (5% S/P)

3.4 resources (30% S/P)

3.5 mission statement (30% S/P)

3.6 independence (35% S/P)

3.7 external QA criteria and processes used by agencies (35%)

3.8 accountability procedures (30% S/P)

... BUT ... are panel judgements consistent !!??

3. an overview of an overview (4 of 5) **some predictable messages (cont)**

- the 'understanding' and use of language in the USG
does not appear to be absolutely consistent !

.. are there consequences ? do they matter ?

remember

- agencies are different ! in terms of their
 - background contexts in which they work
 - constituencies and responsibilities
 - size (is important)
 - 'maturity'

*should CONTEXT be a factor
when judging COMPLIANCE ? !*

3. an overview of an overview (5 of 5)

some more predictable messages

- *'QA agencies ask for too much' / 'HEIs provide too much' !*
- *Self Evaluation Reports/ Documents don't .. 'self evaluate'*
- *there are huge inefficiencies/duplications / omissions in what is asked for / provided*

is QA focussing on

the necessary and the sufficient ?

4. some thoughts /questions for discussion (1 of 4)

some awkward 'issues' from the overview

3.1 use of external QA procedures for HE (30% S/P)

how much detail is required on use of the Section 2 Standards

3.4 resources (30% S/P)

constantly changing missions and roles –

at a time of financial uncertainty

3.5 mission statement (30% S/P)

the 'context thing' .. often only implicit and / or not succinct

often aspirations for future rather than the reality of now

wording of the Standard –

is ANY Mission Statement OK - even if it is inaccurate ?!!!

4. some thoughts /questions for discussion (2 of 4) some more awkward 'issues'

3.6 independence (35% S/P)

a 'biggy' .. and a problematic one at that !

overlaps with 3.2 Official status

the Analysis included looking at coverage of

organisational independence .. heavily context dependent

operational independence .. more often OK

financial independence .. *'he who pays the piper' !?*

and ... the 'conflict of interest' issues ..

(the reports / the grapevine gossip / what's the reality?)

(LOTS of discussion here!)

4. some thoughts /questions for discussion (3 of 4) some more awkward 'issues'

3.7 external QA criteria and processes used by agencies (35%) *
another 'biggy' .. and a problematic one at that !

contexts are again important .. including

- the legal context
- the age / 'maturity' thing
- structural aspects

on the 'plus side' *agencies* recognise the difficulties

but ... *panels* vary in their application of 'mitigating circumstances'

4. some thoughts /questions for discussion (4 of 4) yet more awkward 'issues' .. general

It would appear that

- *there is context dependent interpretation of the ESG*
 - *not necessarily 'a bad thing' .. BUT*
- *panels vary in the extent to which they apply 'the context argument'*
 - *could/should panel judgements consistent !!??*
 - *how might this be brought about ?*

5. .. and the future .. ? (1 of 2)

where now for the ESG .. a review ..

- **making the ESG and ENQA review more effective**
 - even if ESG unchanged better emphasis on how they should be used .. and not used !!
- **is there a reasonable level of consistency in ENQA reviews ?**
 - how best to secure and demonstrate that?
 - (more) training (or a more radical approach) ?
- **greater [overt] emphasis on independence**
 - reduce the (perhaps only perceived) conflicts of interest of peer review

5. .. and the future .. ? (2 of 2)

where now for the ESG .. and their review ..

- **links to the Bologna Process**
 - certainly .. but only that directly linked to the QA of HE !
NOT the ‘social engineering’ (‘political’) aspects
- **the public information agenda**
 - but be clear about providing *Information!* (not the T word)
- **clarifying the bases of standards .. (inputs and / or outputs?)**
 - the Learning Outcomes / Competencies conundrum ..
 - QA includes external moderation of assessment (oh dear!!)
- **the improvement / enhancement agenda ..**
 - but of what ?! the QA of HE or HE itself (they are different)?

**really sorry I couldn't be there but
please contact me if you have any thoughts / comments /
questions ..**

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