

**OPEN CALL FOR TENDER:  
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)**

**External review of ENQA's agency reviews  
Deadline: 23 February 2024 at 17.00 CET**

## **I. Background**

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) is a membership association of quality assurance agencies in [the European Higher Education Area \(EHEA\)](#). The [membership criteria of ENQA](#) is compliance with Parts 2 and 3 of [the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#). Bodies that do not wish to, or for whatever reason are unable to, apply to become members of ENQA may request affiliate status. Affiliates are bona fide organisations or agencies with a demonstrable interest in the quality assurance of higher education.

ENQA's mission is to represent the interests of the membership internationally, support them nationally and provide them with comprehensive services and networking opportunities. Under ENQA's umbrella, the community of agencies drive innovation in quality assurance and refine quality assurance processes.

One of the core services offered by ENQA is external reviews of quality assurance agencies. An external review against the ESG is a prerequisite for an applicant agency to apply for or renew its membership of ENQA. It is also a requirement for agencies wishing to apply for registration in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). Since 2011, most reviews of agencies wishing to apply for or renew their membership in ENQA and/or listing in EQAR are coordinated by ENQA.

ENQA manages all aspects of the review process. The ENQA Secretariat coordinates the reviews, manages the database of experts, organises trainings for the experts participating in reviews, coordinates the site visits to the agencies and oversees the preparation of the review report. More detailed information about the ENQA agency review process can be found on the [ENQA website for reviews](#) and in [the Guidelines for ENQA agency reviews](#).

As part of its own quality assurance cycle, ENQA is preparing for an external review of the agency review process and is seeking an external body to coordinate this. This Call for Tender is open to quality assurance experts and organisations who can conduct this external review independently and accurately, according to the requirements set out below.

The external review follows the principle set out in ESG 3.7, that "agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG". ENQA should be able to demonstrate it meets the same requirement as set for its member agencies, and thus undergo a new external review against the ESG in 2024, following a [previous review in 2019](#)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The review in 2019 was coordinated by NIFU (the Nordic Institute for Studies and Innovation, Research and Education) and conducted by an international expert panel of quality assurance stakeholders.

## 2. The Review Steering Committee

The external review of the ENQA Agency Reviews is overseen by the Review Steering Committee (henceforth referred to as the Committee). The Committee is composed of the following representatives of ENQA's members and partners:

Hillar Bauman, Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA, Estonia)  
Ailsa Crum, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, UK)  
Dagmar Röttches, Evaluation Agency of Baden-Württemberg (evalag, Germany)  
Jakub Grodecki, European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)  
Maria Kelo, European University Association (EUA)  
Horia Onița, European Students' Union (ESU)

The Committee is chaired by its members on a rotating basis.

The Committee is coordinated by Anna Gover, ENQA Director.

## 3. Scope and process of the review

The purpose of the external review is to evaluate the various activities and procedures of the ENQA Agency Reviews with the intention to support the improvement of its usefulness and fitness-for-purpose. In order to do so, the review process and its final report should assess, on the one hand, how the principles outlined in the standards of ESG Parts 2 and 3 for quality assurance agencies are reflected in the reviews of agencies (while adapting them to the context and work of ENQA) and, on the other hand, how far the ENQA Agency Reviews contribute to the improvement of quality assurance agencies and allow for innovative approaches to quality assurance processes.

The external review should analyse all activities of ENQA that are within the scope of the ESG, namely activities related to the ENQA Agency Reviews. This is regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA. This includes:

- Full reviews of quality assurance agencies (including its more focused version, named 'partial reviews'<sup>2</sup>);
- Targeted reviews.

Specifically, the external review should:

- Reflect upon ENQA's methodologies and practices for its full, partial and targeted reviews, and evaluate these activities against the standards of Parts 2 and 3 of the ESG. The specifics of the standards may be adapted to reflect that ENQA reviews agencies and not institutions or programmes. Judgements against the standards should be made using the same 3-point compliance scale as used by ENQA when reviewing quality assurance agencies;
- In particular reflect upon the new activities and practices introduced since the last review (e.g., the new compliance scale, ENQA Agency Review Committee, targeted review methodology);
- Reflect upon ENQA's collaboration with EQAR, including the existing challenges and opportunities for further enhancement of joint work on the agency reviews;
- Reflect upon how ENQA Agency Reviews connect with and contribute to the association's [key strategic goals 2021-2025](#) and its overall aims and objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> See ENQA's policy on partial reviews as available here: <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/ENQA-partial-reviews.pdf>

It is important to note that the majority of quality assurance agencies use the ENQA coordinated review as a basis for their application to be listed in EQAR. This means that ENQA's review reports are also expected to fulfil the expectations set by the EQAR Register Committee. Therefore, any recommendations made by the panel of experts in the scope of the external review of ENQA Agency Reviews should be contextualised and include an analysis of any impact that the proposed changes may have on the relationship between ENQA, EQAR, and the quality assurance agencies.

The review process is expected to include the following steps:

- Selection of the review coordinator based on an open call for tender;
- Finalisation of the review methodology;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by ENQA, including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- An in-person site visit by the review panel to ENQA's office in Brussels (some interviews may be conducted online/hybrid as required);
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Approval of the final evaluation report by the Review Steering Committee;
- Publication of the review report.

#### **4. Role of the review coordinator and ENQA**

Once selected, main tasks of the review coordinator are:

- Finalise the review methodology, in consultation with the Review Steering Committee;
- Submit a proposal for the review panel to the Review Steering Committee;
- Contract and train the approved review panel;
- Oversee the liaison between the review panel and ENQA regarding the site visit;
- Coordinate the site visit, expected to last 2-3 days, including logistical arrangements, and oversee the preparation and implementation in cooperation with the review panel and ENQA;
- Ensure delivery of the draft and final review report (maximum 70 pages) by the review panel to ENQA;
- Ensure the external review runs according to the agreed timeline;
- Ensure proper financial management of the external review within the agreed budget.

ENQA is responsible for:

- Approving the review panel;
- Preparing and submitting a self-assessment report;
- Preparing a draft proposal for the site visit programme, providing a venue for the site visit (including video-conferencing equipment when needed) and necessary information for logistical arrangements, ensuring attendance of interviewees at the site visit;
- Reviewing the draft review report for factual accuracy;
- Publishing and following up on the final review report.

Full specifics of the review process will be agreed between the selected review coordinator and set out in writing through the contract and terms of reference.

#### **5. The review panel**

The external review should be conducted by a panel consisting of at least four experts, each with experience in external quality assurance, including at a minimum:

- One external quality assurance professional, with experience of managing reviews/accreditations;
- One student;
- One academic.

The panel as a whole should also fulfil the following criteria:

- At least one expert with a broad understanding of the European higher education policy context;
- Overall good understanding of the higher education sector;

Diversity of gender and geographical representation (panel members should come from at least three different countries and ideally one panel member should come from outside Europe).

Current members of the ENQA Board, the Agency Review Committee, or current or recent employees of the ENQA Secretariat should not serve as reviewers.

## **6. Requirements for the tender**

To be considered by the Committee, the tender must include the following:

1. Name and contact information of the applicant review coordinator;
2. Evidence of relevant experience, expertise and capacity of the applicant to carry out a review process according to the requirements;
3. Written commitment to follow the anticipated review timeline outlined in this Call for Tender (see below);
4. Guarantees of independence of the applicant review coordinator and transparency of the procedure;
5. Outline of a convincing and reliable review methodology that takes into account:
  - a. the specific role of ENQA,
  - b. the requirements of the ESG for external reviews (independence, transparency, stakeholder engagement, etc.),
  - c. current good practice,
  - d. and expectations of stakeholders;
6. Precise indications of how the review process would be carried out and who would be involved;
7. An explanation of the procedure used for the selection of experts. If possible, the tender may include a preliminary list of potential experts for the review panel, but this is not required. In any case, the tender should demonstrate that a panel could be formed with the requirements found in Section 5 of this Call for Tender;
8. An explanation of how the panel of experts will be trained and briefed;
9. Indication of the expected length and structure of the final report;
10. Total price for conducting the external review (see also 'budget' below).

The tender may also include a list of any (additional) requirements or expectations related to: ENQA's self-assessment report; the organisation of the site visit; or any other areas where ENQA's contribution is needed.

The length of the tender document should not exceed 40 pages.

The Committee reserves the right to ask for further information and additional clarification on the tender.

### *Working language*

The review should be conducted in English. The tender must also be submitted in English.

### *Budget*

The maximum price for the review is set at €30,600 excluding VAT. This price must include: the review coordinator's fee; the fees for the reviewers; the travel, accommodation, and subsistence costs for the site visit; training and briefing costs of reviewers and any other eventual costs related to the coordination and execution of the review process.

Please note: the venue for the site visit and the participation of interviewees in the site visit are guaranteed and paid for by ENQA outside of this budget.

### *Timeline*

The tender must be submitted to the Review Steering Committee by 23 February 2024, 17.00 CET. The selection of the review coordinator will take place during the Committee's meeting in March 2024 and the result will be announced shortly thereafter.

The review coordinator is expected to propose a panel of experts for the review in April 2024, for approval by the Steering Committee. However, the tender may include a list of potential experts in order to give the Committee an idea of capacity of the review coordinator to identify suitable experts.

ENQA will submit its self-assessment report in July 2024.

The site visit of the external review panel is expected to take place in Brussels, Belgium in December 2024.

The external review report from the panel of experts is expected to be completed and approved by the Committee by March 2025.

Please note: ENQA will have ownership of the final external review report and the right to publish it.

## **7. Eligibility criteria**

The applicant:

- May be an individual or an organisation;
- Must have over five years of experience in quality assurance;
- Must not have had an active working relationship with ENQA for the ENQA agency review process over the last three years. NB: Organisations or individuals that have only worked with ENQA on projects or events may be considered, but they should make sure to include an explanation of their independence for the process in the tender;
- Must not be, or work for, an ENQA Member or Affiliate;
- Must not be, or work for, an agency registered on EQAR.

The tender must:

- Have a budget equal to or under €30,600, excluding VAT;
- Cover all items listed under point 6 above;
- Be received by the deadline of 23 February 2024 at 17.00 CET.

Applicants and tenders that do not meet the requirements above will be automatically disqualified.

Note that this call is a re-opening of a call originally published in September 2023. Previous applicants need not apply.

## 8. Basis of selection

The selection of the tender will be based on the following criteria:

- a) The tender must respect the €30,600 budget (excluding VAT). Within this limit, the price has no further impact on the selection, which will be based on quality of the proposal;
- b) Experience of the applicant review coordinator;
- c) Fitness-for-purpose of the proposed methodology;
- d) Capacity for selecting and training the review panel and fitness-for-purpose of the proposed training.

## 9. Submission and deadline

The tender must be submitted to the ENQA Review Steering Committee by email to [secretariat@enqa.eu](mailto:secretariat@enqa.eu).

The deadline for submission is **23 February 2024 at 17.00 CET**.

Any further questions or inquiries can be directed to the ENQA Secretariat at [secretariat@enqa.eu](mailto:secretariat@enqa.eu)

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