

Listen, talk and team up!

Considerations for panel members in external quality assurance

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Fighting for students' rights since 1982



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The project

A project of:

- European Students' Union
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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Student
representatives

QA and HE
professionals

QAA
representatives

Background

- Conversation, investigation and presentation skills are essential for value-added and open discussions external quality assurance
- Promote trust in, and enhancement and development of evaluation procedures
- Reflections on attitude and behaviour are important as the QA reviewers are responsible for the impact of their review activities
- Different stakeholders represented on each panel must bring their own points of view, while building on the views and interests of their peers

Why is effective communication relevant and should be considered in EQA procedures?

- **Transparency** and **integrity** of the panel and their work
 - Open information-sharing
 - Improves the quality of evaluation procedures through inclusivity and equality of panel members and interviewees
- Increased **functionality of the panel** by communicating the relevant targeted information swiftly and showing mutual support towards other panel members
 - **Validation of the diversity in opinions/approaches** and supporting equal levels of engagement and understanding
 - Open and communicative working environment
 - Shared **ownership and responsibility**

Dos of effective communication



When preparing a site visit

- Organise a **panel briefing meeting** to build team spirit
- Agree on a clear set of **rules, responsibilities and deadlines**
- **Take time and prepare carefully** for the introductory meeting and the evaluation
- **Ask the other panel members** if anything remains unclear

Dos of effective communication



During a site visit between panel members

- Remember to **not act independently**
- Refer to and **build on what others have said** and encourage others to participate in the evaluation process by **giving them the floor**
- **Be aware of the different higher education and QA systems** the reviewers, the agency and institutions come from/operate in
- Be flexible and adaptable during the review process when interviewing different stakeholder groups. **'Read the room'** and adjust your communication technique accordingly
- **Consult with each other regularly** between meetings with stakeholders
- Give everyone the **space to finish their sentences and train of thought** without interruption, regardless of their experience or position
- Make sure that all panel members are **equally treated**
- **Stay focused** on the conversations and tasks at hand – don't try to also focus on work outside the evaluation

Dos of effective communication



During a site visit panel members and interviewees

- Start with a brief **introduction of panel members, interviewees and the objective and context** of the evaluation
- **Listen actively** to the interviewees and your panel colleagues
- Address interviewees and panel members **by name**
- Use **easy-to-understand and concise questions** in interviews and **avoid QA-specific terms**
- **Ask open questions**
- **Triangulate your evidence** by asking the same question in different interviews
- Be aware of **language barriers**
- Be aware of your **non-verbal communication**
- Communicate **openly and respectfully about sensitive issues**
- Give the interviewees the opportunity at the end of the meeting to **make any final points**
- Save your internal panel discussions and any kind of individual preliminary evaluation for the **breaks and private meetings**



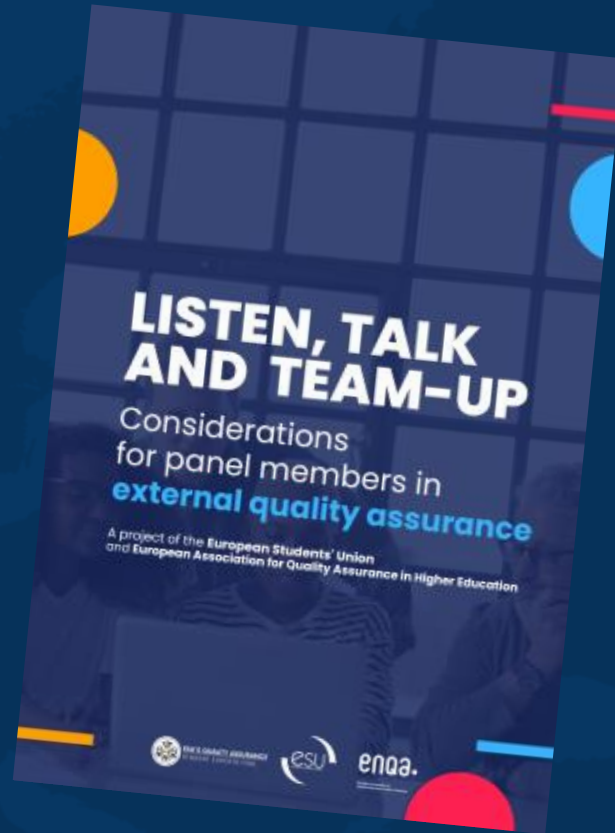
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The bottom line: Everyone brings valuable knowledge and experience to the table!

It is not about comparing who has the ‘better’ input, but about the value of the complementarity of the panel’s knowledge and experience as a whole.

What's more?

- Identifying and addressing the **expectations** of all involved parties for effective communication
- Looking at an institution's "**history of review experiences**"
- Impact of **hybrid/online evaluations** on the panel's communication and dynamic
 - Challenges of digital site-visits and potential mitigation strategies



Why is effective communication highly relevant for trainees' future work with ENQA?

International and diverse teams

Asset - Different fields and level of familiarity/expertise:

- National higher education context and language
- QA agency's operations and approach
- QA reviews
- Internal and external QA
- Stakeholder representation

Build on each other's experience and knowledge!



Stay connected!

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