



# **GUIDELINES FOR ENQA TARGETED REVIEWS**

**enqa.**

European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education



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## I. Introduction

An external review against the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*<sup>1</sup> is a prerequisite for application to become a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and a requirement for quality assurance agencies wishing to apply for listing on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). Agencies need to undergo such an external review at least once every five years. Over the years, as several agencies have undergone their third or subsequent review against the ESG, a need was raised to continue providing something meaningful as part of a review process while avoiding a possible evaluation fatigue.

On the other hand, there remains a need to provide for the accountability of quality assurance agencies. The guarantee of compliance with the ESG plays a significant role in improving trust among quality assurance agencies, facilitating the recognition of quality assurance decisions, and reducing opportunities for “accreditation mills” to gain credibility. The recognition of credible agencies is meant to enhance the confidence of students, institutions, the labour market, and society more generally in the quality of higher education provision in Europe.

Following this, ENQA and EQAR jointly developed a proposal for targeted reviews in early 2021. The proposal was approved by the ENQA Board and the EQAR Register Committee and is effective from July 2021.

With targeted reviews, ENQA provides an ESG review to QA agencies that focuses on the remaining challenges in reaching ESG compliance, while at the same time further strengthening the enhancement part of the review, thus offering a shorter and more resource-minded review process. The targeted review against the ESG is designed to result in the same type of decision on agencies' renewal of membership in ENQA or registration in EQAR as a full review<sup>2</sup>. Should the agency prefer not to engage in a targeted review, the option of undergoing a full review against the ESG remains, following the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews<sup>3</sup>.

As the primary provider of external reviews of agencies in the EHEA, ENQA operationalises the review methodology for targeted reviews through the present Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews. The guidelines are built upon the review model and the main principles of ENQA's existing work on external reviews of quality assurance agencies<sup>4</sup>, and they serve as a practical handbook for agencies and external reviewers involved in the review process for targeted reviews.

The targeted review is open to all ENQA member agencies wishing to renew their membership who have been through at least two full ESG reviews, and a targeted review can be used as an alternative to a full review every ten years (with a full ESG review in between, five years after a targeted review). The procedure is available for all EQAR-registered agencies that have had at least two consecutive external reviews against the ESG that led to a registration/renewal decision by the EQAR Register Committee before engaging in the targeted review. The ESG form the basic framework for quality assurance in the EHEA and continue to serve as the reference for all ENQA's external quality assurance activities, including the targeted reviews.

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<sup>1</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). (2015). Brussels, Belgium. Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area/>

<sup>2</sup> A full review is an external review of a quality assurance agency against all standards of Part 2 and 3 of the ESG and covers all external quality assurance activities of the agency that fall under the scope of the ESG.

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/ENQA-Guidelines-2021.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

## 2. Purpose and scope of the ENQA Targeted Reviews

### 2.1 Purpose and eligibility

ENQA membership criteria laid out in ENQA's Statutes<sup>5</sup> and Rules of Procedure<sup>6</sup> require all member agencies to undergo an external review against the ESG at least once every five years. ENQA membership is open to QA agencies based in the EHEA that can demonstrate compliance with the ESG through the review process. The targeted review complies with such requirements, including ENQA's requirements for membership renewal and EQAR's requirements for external reviews.

The targeted review is primarily designed to be used as a basis to reapply for membership in ENQA and for renewal of registration in EQAR (if applicable and if the eligibility conditions are met). The principal aim of a targeted review is to provide the agencies that have successfully undergone at least two full ESG reviews with an alternative way to assess their compliance with the ESG.

The purpose of the targeted review is to ensure the agency's compliance with the ESG by using the preceding full review report and the current processes of monitoring ESG compliance (i.e., reporting of substantive changes to ENQA and EQAR, and third-party complaints). Based on these, the review: a) identifies focus areas (see section 2.3 below) that will need to be evaluated in-depth (i.e., standards that were only partially compliant with the ESG during the last full review, new external quality assurance activities of the agency, and substantial changes that could impact the ESG compliance of the agency), and b) if there are no changes within the agency and unless new evidence points to the contrary, transfers the status of the ESG standards that were found to be in compliance with the ESG during the last full review to the targeted review. In addition, to ensure a strong enhancement focus, the targeted review requires agencies to address ESG 2.1 and additionally one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement.

The focus of the targeted review is on the remaining challenges in reaching ESG compliance (i.e., standards with partial compliance in the preceding review), new or changed external QA activities, and substantial changes within the organisation, while at the same time further supporting the agencies in their efforts to continuously review and enhance their work.

As such, the targeted review will result in:

- the same type of overall evaluation of the agency's compliance with the ESG as a full review, based on the acknowledgment of the preceding assessment of the agency's ESG compliance, with the additional assessment of certain areas;
- EQAR's decision on compliance with the ESG (if applicable) as in a full review; and in the same type of decision on the agency's renewal of membership in ENQA.

To be eligible for a targeted review, an ENQA member agency should have been through at least two successful full ESG reviews. The targeted review can be used as an alternative to a full review every ten years (with a full ESG review in-between, five years after a targeted review). The procedure is also available for all EQAR-registered agencies when an agency has had at least two consecutive external reviews against the ESG that have led to a registration/renewal decision by the EQAR Register Committee.

Note that an agency that has been a member of ENQA for ten years, but registered in EQAR only for five, should still undergo a full review if it wishes to reapply for registration in EQAR.

<sup>5</sup> The ENQA Statutes are available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/ENQA-Statutes-2021.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The ENQA Rules of Procedure are available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/ENQA-Rules-of-Procedure-2021-1.pdf>

Should an agency need, for whatever purpose (e.g., as part of national requirements), to undergo a full review against the ESG every five years, this remains an option, following the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. The same option applies to agencies that do not wish to engage in a targeted review.

## 2.2 Principles

The targeted review will be based on the principles as stipulated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. In addition, the following principles apply:

- The targeted review is available only to agencies that are ESG compliant and fulfil the eligibility criteria.
- The targeted review is highly trust based as it acknowledges the agency's compliance with the ESG following its last review, unless evidence (e.g., meetings with stakeholders during the site visit) points to the contrary.
- The targeted review is a process of evaluating the agency's remaining challenges in reaching ESG compliance and an opportunity for enhancement.

## 2.3 Scope

The targeted reviews will address the below listed focus areas, as follows:

Focus areas	Applicability
All the standards with a 'partial compliance' conclusion in the EQAR Register Committee's last renewal decision, or in ENQA's review report (relevant only for agencies that are not registered in EQAR) <sup>7</sup>	Applicable to all
ESG 2.1	Applicable to all
One further enhancement area selected from among standards of Part 2 or 3 of the ESG that is not yet included in the targeted review (i.e., no standard with a 'partial compliance' conclusion from the last full review can be selected as an enhancement area)	Applicable to all
Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the external QA activities that were newly launched or changed since the agency's last full review against the ESG	If the case
Any standards affected by other substantive changes (organisational identity or structure, other fields of activity and separation of activities among themselves)	If the case
Any other matters regarding ESG compliance that come up during the targeted review <sup>8</sup>	If the case

Standard 2.1 of the ESG is always reviewed and graded as part of the targeted review and cannot be selected as a separate enhancement area.

The current processes of monitoring ESG compliance of ENQA members and the agencies registered in EQAR, i.e., reporting of substantive changes and third-party complaints, form the basis of identifying focus areas for the targeted review.

<sup>7</sup> This applies to all external QA activities of the agency as included in the last full review against the ESG.

<sup>8</sup> If during the targeted review process panel members notice issues outside of the focus areas as specified in the terms of reference, but that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG, they should investigate the matter further and provide an analysis and conclusion on each of the ESG standards that are affected by these issues, so that it can be further considered by ENQA, and EQAR (if applicable).



The targeted review will require clear evidence of results in focus areas and should reflect progress from the last full review. This is a mandatory element in both the self-assessment report and the external review report.

The panel is not expected to review all standards of Parts 2 and 3 of the ESG, but only those that relate to the identified focus areas. Nevertheless, should the agency be implementing an external QA activity that was not previously reviewed against the ESG, the review should evaluate this activity against all standards of Part 2 of the ESG.

For standards considered to be partially compliant with the ESG in the last full review, special focus is given to the improvements made/implemented at the agency under review.

For ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement, the review should be put into the context of the agency's ongoing major developments (e.g., in accordance with the agency's strategic plan and the submitted SWOT analysis).

## 2.4 The main steps of the ENQA Targeted Reviews process

In line with the requirements of the ESG, the targeted review is composed of four main elements: self-assessment, external evaluation, external review report, and follow-up. The steps of a targeted review build on and follow (as applicable) the review steps that are indicated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. This section provides a short overview of the difference in relation to the full reviews, while a more detailed description of each review step can be found in later sections of these guidelines (see sections 4, 6, 7 and 9).



See the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, pages 7-8.

### *Getting started*

The targeted review is an alternative to a full review, which can be requested by any agency seeking to renew ENQA membership, and if applicable, its registration in EQAR (for eligibility see section 2.1 above). The review process is somewhat shorter than the full review and lasts for up to 9-11 months from the request to the completion of the procedure (i.e., validation of the review report by the Agency Review Committee).

For the agency renewing its registration in EQAR, the drafting of the terms of reference (ToR) starts with EQAR's examination of the agency's last review against the ESG, its reporting of substantive changes, and the consideration of third-party complaints. Based on this, EQAR proposes a final draft of the ToR to ENQA, including the potentially new external quality assurance activities to be covered in the review. Following this, ENQA engages in a dialogue with the agency regarding the choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement, and the overall timeline of the review, and finalises the document.

For the agency that is not renewing its registration in EQAR, ENQA will take care of the process of drafting the terms of reference.

### *Self-Assessment*

The first main stage of the targeted review process is the production of the self-assessment report (SAR) by the agency. The SAR should clearly address focus areas as defined in the ToR, including the ESG 2.1 and one ESG standard specifically selected for enhancement. The SAR follows the guide of content provided in these guidelines. Additionally, the agency provides a SWOT analysis to support a more comprehensive understanding of the agency's organisation and functioning. The SAR must be

analytical in nature, and the agency is expected to make explicit reference to the recommendations from the last full review, underlining the related developments. It must also highlight other substantial changes and developments at the agency since the last review (e.g., new external QA activities, new structure of the agency, etc.).

#### *External evaluation*

A panel of three independent reviewers (one quality assurance professional, one academic, and one student) will carry out the review process. The mandate for the panel is to review the remaining challenges (i.e., standards with partial compliance in the preceding full review), assess whether the agency is acting in compliance with the ESG, and provide suggestions for further enhancement on ESG 2.1 and in the self-selected standard. The panel will be able to do so by thoroughly assessing the SAR, studying additional material, and attending a site visit to the agency. The purpose of the site visit is to not only verify and expand on the information provided in the SAR but to allow for identification and discussion on any potential unexpected issue as raised by internal or external stakeholders. Should the panel identify issues outside the focus areas that are specified in the terms of reference, and which may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG, the panel should investigate the matter further and provide an analysis and conclusion on the matter. The targeted review is also an opportunity for the agency to engage in a developmental conversation regarding ESG 2.1 and the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement. All internal and external stakeholder groups will be invited to take part in the site visit as for any ENQA review process (see section 6).

#### *Review report*

As for the full reviews, the review panel of a targeted review drafts the external review report (ERR) based on the information collected from documentation and the site visit. The ERR is written using a specific template (available on ENQA's website and provided to panels by the review coordinator). It provides the panel's judgement on compliance only on the standards that have been judged as partially compliant during the preceding full review (the following grading is used for this purpose: compliant, partially compliant, and non-compliant). For the self-selected ESG standard, no grading is provided, but the panel is asked to evaluate the progress, comment on the implemented changes, and provide suggestions for further development. The report provides the standards that are not graded by the panel in a separate section. The remaining ESG standards that have not been covered by the targeted review are acknowledged in the review report through the panel's statement that no change has been observed at the agency following the panel's engagement with stakeholders during the site visit (if the case). The rest of the review steps related to the review reporting follow the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

#### *Follow-up*

A follow-up is an integral part of the review process. Due to the nature and purpose of the targeted review that already reviews the identified challenges to the agency's ESG compliance, a follow-up rather focuses on the element of the review that supports the agency in its continuous reflection and enhancement. All agencies that have undergone a targeted review are thus required to attend a follow-up seminar where the topics of enhancement are further discussed and shared among the participating agencies. The ENQA Secretariat will organise such a seminar once every two years. To prepare for the seminar, the agency will be asked to demonstrate changes or developments following the targeted



review, in particular in relation to any eventually remaining standards with partial compliance with the ESG.

### 3. Terms of reference for the targeted review

Immediately after the ENQA Secretariat has accepted the request to coordinate a targeted review, ENQA and the agency draft and agree on the terms of reference (ToR) and the preliminary timetable for the review. Should the agency also wish to apply for EQAR registration using the same review report, a tripartite agreement on the ToR is made between ENQA, EQAR and the agency. In this case, the agency first applies for the review process by using EQAR's online application form<sup>9</sup> and reports its substantive changes since the last full review, any third-party complaints, and other updates relevant for the review (such as any potential new external QA activities). The agency additionally marks its self-selected ESG standard for enhancement in the form. Based on the information received, EQAR performs an eligibility check<sup>10</sup> (i.e., examines the submitted documents together with the agency's last review against the ESG) and proposes a final draft of the ToR to ENQA. Following this, ENQA reviews any possible substantive change reports and third-party complaints it has received and engages in a dialogue with the agency regarding the choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement, and the overall timeline of the review, and finalises the document. The final version of the ToR is sent to the agency for agreement, and afterwards to EQAR for information.

In all cases, the agency under review is responsible for informing ENQA (and EQAR, if applicable) of all its external QA activities, including highlighting which of these activities started after the last full review. The agency is also expected to notify ENQA (and EQAR, if applicable) of any other changes that may have taken place at the agency since the last full review but have not been reported so far. Should any substantive changes or new external QA activities come to light during the site visit or any other part of the targeted review process that were declared to ENQA (and EQAR, if applicable) prior to the start of the review, the review could switch to a full review, with additional timing and costs implied.

ENQA will publish the ToR on its website. The agency is encouraged to publish the ToR on its website as well.

The terms of reference shall:

- Clearly identify that the primary purpose of the targeted review is to evaluate how the agency complies with the ESG on focus areas as defined in the terms of reference, and based on this, whether there is a change in overall compliance with the ESG of the reviewed agency since its last full review. Equally relevant, the review provides an opportunity for an agency to engage in the discussions on enhancement of its external QA activities. As such, the targeted review is used for ENQA membership renewal purposes, for renewal of registration in EQAR, and/or for other purposes.
- Precisely list the activities of the agency that will be the subject of the review. All external quality assurance activities of an agency that fall under the scope of the ESG, and even more importantly, all newly introduced external quality assurance activities of the agency, should be included in the review, whether they are carried out in the agency's own jurisdiction or in other countries/systems and whether the activities are of an obligatory or voluntary nature (each of the quality assurance activities that are included in the ToR need to be addressed clearly in the SAR and the ERR).

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<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://www.eqar.eu/register/online-application-form/>

<sup>10</sup> To be eligible for a targeted review, the agency should ensure that it has submitted to EQAR - within a reasonable time before its application for a targeted review - any substantive changes (if applicable) in the agency's legal form and status, amendments to the statutes and substantial changes in the agency's activities, processes or methodology that was evaluated during the last review against the ESG. For more information see <https://www.eqar.eu/register/guide-for-agencies/reporting-and-renewal/>

- Outline how the review will be carried out: the review process, number of reviewers, approximate timing, other administrative arrangements.
- Mention any relevant background information/preceding events (e.g., previous reviews or membership applications) concerning the review.

The terms of reference, including the timetable of the review, form the basic outline of the review process itself. For ENQA Targeted Reviews they are an annex to the contract between ENQA and the agency. The contract also specifies the fee payable and procedures for payment.

## 4. Production of the self-assessment report

### 4.1 Form and content of the SAR

A thorough preparation of a self-assessment report (SAR) for the targeted review is an essential component of the review process. It requires that the agency comprehensively, yet efficiently:

- present what changes occurred within the agency since the last full review that might have an impact on the agency's compliance with the ESG. For instance, the agency might have introduced a new external quality assurance activity<sup>11</sup>, reorganised its organisational structure or introduced a new body. The SAR should elaborate and critically reflect on such changes;
- reflect on how it aligns with the ESG on the focus areas as defined in the terms of reference of the review, and to gather key documentation to support this;
- initiate the discussions on the agency's current approach to ESG 2.1 and the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement.

As the SAR normally provides a substantial portion of the evidence for the review panel in forming its conclusions, it is important that the report provides clear and comprehensive information, sufficient reflections, critique, and analysis, and that its contents can be corroborated by documentary evidence. This allows the review panel to achieve a good understanding of the agency in advance of the site visit and enable it to prepare lines of enquiry for the visit.

The contents of SARs may vary depending on each agency's range of changes since the last full review; the number of ESG standards included in the review; the number of external quality assurance activities covered in the review; and on the nature of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement. For instance, should the agency introduce a new external quality assurance activity to be reviewed against the ESG, the SAR should, in addition to covering all standards of Part 2 of the ESG for that specific activity, elaborate on all other aspects of the agency that influence the implementation of the activity within the agency (e.g., possible impact of this activity on the agency's resources). Similarly, the reflections on the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement might require the panel to understand some other aspect of the agency's functioning that should thus be covered in the SAR apart from the related ESG standard (e.g., the agency's strategy for the current period). In all cases, for each ESG standard of the defined area of focus, the agency should explain how they address and comply with the ESG standard in question, including evidence and analysis of the effectiveness of the agency's approach. The identified areas for development from the last full review are expected to be followed up on and included in the SAR, with an explanation of how the agency has acted on the recommendations. The SAR is also expected to introduce any eventual changes in the higher education system and quality assurance system in which the agency predominantly operates, as well as the changes in the agency's quality assurance activities abroad (where relevant), should this be significant for the targeted review. The SAR should normally be around 20-30 pages in length (excluding annexes).

ENQA expects that the SAR not only states what has been achieved, but also provides a reflection on the practices which could contribute to enhancing the agency's activities in the future. In other words, the SAR should be both backward and forward looking and should provide an accurate picture of the current situation.

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<sup>11</sup> ESG (2015): The term "quality assurance" is used in this document to describe all activities within the continuous improvement cycle (i.e., assurance and enhancement activities).

In order to make the contents of the SARs consistent across the targeted reviews in terms of level of detail, thoroughness, and evaluative character, agencies are expected to follow the guide of content provided by the ENQA Secretariat<sup>12</sup>. The SAR should contain the following elements:

- A description of the self-assessment process and the production of the SAR;
- A description of changes occurred within the agency since the last full review, including any eventual changes in the higher education system and quality assurance system in which the agency predominantly operates, the agency's structure, funding, its list of external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG<sup>13</sup>, as well as the changes in the agency's quality assurance activities abroad (where relevant);
- A section that addresses the focus areas of the review, including standards that were considered to be partially compliant with the ESG in the last full review as well as ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement.
- A SWOT analysis of the agency as a whole.

The agency may enclose the most crucial documentation it believes may help the panel in its analysis of the report as annexes to the report, or as links in footnotes. Further documents may be prepared, within reason and in consideration of time available during the site visit, by the agency for the site visit or may be requested by the review panel before or during the site visit. The SAR, annexes, and additional documents for the site visit should be in English and made easily available to the panel.

The SAR should be read in conjunction with the external review report from the last full review of the agency. The main purpose of the SAR is to provide an overview to the key changes at the agency since the last review and how the focus areas of the targeted review have been addressed. In addition, the document is a key reference point for the panel's discussions on ESG 2.1 and the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement.

The process of screening the SAR and the related timeline follows the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.



See the  
Guidelines  
for ENQA  
Agency  
Reviews,  
page 11.

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<sup>12</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/targeted-reviews/>

<sup>13</sup> If the agency has created a new external QA activity since the last full review, this activity needs to be introduced in a separate chapter (i.e., its aims and objectives, why the activity was created and how it fits into the agency's scope of activities, including the external QA activities within the scope of the ESG), and then elaborated more in detail through standards of Part 2 of the ESG.

## 5. Appointment and tasks of the review panel

Each panel for an ENQA Targeted Review includes at least three external reviewers who among themselves have a wide range of professional experience in higher education and quality assurance, including:

- A quality assurance professional that is currently employed by a QA agency and has been engaged in quality assurance within the past five years;
- An academic from a higher education institution; and
- A student.

When requested by the agency under review or when considered particularly pertinent, a second quality assurance professional or other stakeholders (for example, a representative of the labour market) may be included in addition to the three panel members.

One of these reviewers will be appointed as the panel's chair and one as its secretary.

The principles and procedure for nomination and training of experts are explained in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

The reviewers are expected to be fluent in English (both written and spoken), as it is the main working language of the targeted review.

### 5.1 Appointment of reviewers

The selection and appointment of reviewers for a targeted review is always carried out by the review coordinator and the Agency Review Committee (ARC) respectively (and not by the agency being reviewed) to avoid conflicts of interest and to preserve the integrity of the process.

When appointing reviewers, the key requirement is that the 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. Invited reviewers are required to notify the review coordinator in writing of any connection or interest which could result in a conflict, potential conflict, or a perceived conflict of interest related to the review. Furthermore, appointed reviewers are required to notify the review coordinator as soon as possible of any changes in, or additions to, the interests already disclosed that occur during the review process. If experts are unsure as to whether an interest should be disclosed, they should discuss the matter with the review coordinator.

For ENQA Targeted Reviews, one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the quality assurance professional), one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either EUA or EURASHE (representing higher education institutions), and the student<sup>14</sup> is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from among the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. An additional panel member may be added at the request of the agency under review. In this case, an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

When appointing a panel for a targeted review, the same criteria are applied as for ENQA Agency Reviews (see section 5.3 of the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews). For ENQA Targeted Reviews, at least two panel members come from outside the national system of the agency under review (if relevant).

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<sup>14</sup> Students should be enrolled in higher education at the time of their appointment to the review panel.



Review panels must be approved by the Agency Review Committee. The Agency Review Committee is provided with the CVs of all panel members as well as a brief explanation about how the panel meets the requirements for ENQA Agency Reviews in terms of composition, profiles, experience, and skills as described above.

The agency under review is given the opportunity to signal any possible conflicts of interest or biases in relation to the selected panel members prior to their appointment. Should the agency be applying for registration in EQAR as well, the proposed panel composition and their CVs are sent to the EQAR Secretariat for a check on conformity with EQAR's Procedures for Applications (the check-up is performed within one week).

All appointed reviewers sign a contract with ENQA and commit to the ENQA Code of Conduct for Reviewers<sup>15</sup>.

After the panel has been established, the review coordinator introduces the panel members to each other and facilitates contact between the review chair, review secretary and the agency's contact person for the review process.

## **5.2 Review panel members' roles and responsibilities**

The review panel is composed of at least three members, of which two are assigned the specific duties of the review chair and the review secretary.

### **5.2.1 Review chair**

The review chair has overall responsibility for the review and the production and quality of the report. The chair is also in charge of ensuring that the terms of reference of the review are respected. In addition to all tasks as listed in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, for the purposes of the targeted review the review chair shall:

Before the site visit:

- Ensure that the site visit includes interviews with the full range of stakeholders (as in a full review) and reserve adequate spare time for the panel to address any additional ESG-compliance related issues that might arise during the site visit.
- Collect the preliminary statements from the review panel summarising their views on opportunities and challenges related to the agency's self-selected ESG standard for enhancement and consider possible direction of discussions and stakeholders involved during the site visit.

In relation to the site visit programme:

- Ensure an opportunity for an exchange regarding the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (e.g., in a specific session with the agency's leadership, staff and with specific groups of stakeholders as relevant and appropriate).
- Separate the compliance check on the focus areas and ESG 2.1 that need judgement on compliance, from the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement as chosen by the agency that does not need to be judged on compliance against the ESG.
- Make time provisions (to the extent possible) that will allow the possibility to investigate additional topics that may arise during the site visit regarding agency's compliance with the ESG.

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<sup>15</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/ENQA-Code-of-Conduct-for-reviewers.pdf>



After the site visit:

- Review the draft report to make sure that the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement of the agency is presented in a separate section, with reference to the other focus areas of the targeted review as applicable.

At all times:

- Stay alerted of the issues outside the focus areas specified in the terms of reference, but that question the agency's compliance with the ESG. Should this occur, further investigate the matter together with the rest of the panel and provide an analysis and conclusion so that it can be considered by ENQA and by EQAR (if applicable).

### 5.2.2 Review secretary

The review secretary is a full member of the panel of equal status to the other members, but with specific and different duties. The work of the review secretary requires an experienced person (having a good knowledge of international quality assurance in higher education and of the ESG, as well as excellent communication and English writing skills), with adequate time available to carry out the tasks both before and after the site visit.

In addition to all tasks as listed in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, for the purposes of the targeted review, the secretary of the review panel will:

Before the site visit:

- Work with the review chair to produce a preliminary report using the ENQA Targeted Reviews Report Template<sup>16</sup>, with special attention paid to the comprehensive presentation of changes within the agency since the last full review.
- Prepare the first draft of the site visit programme ensuring that the site visit includes interviews with the full range of stakeholders and an opportunity for an exchange regarding the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (e.g., separate sessions with the agency's leadership, staff and specific groups of stakeholders as appropriate); liaise with the chair and the agency to set up the schedule for the site visit.

During the site visit:

- Keep a record of matters which require further clarification (e.g., issues outside the focus areas specified in the terms of reference, but that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG) and bring these to the attention of the panel.

After the site visit:

- Produce a draft of the review report, with the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement of the agency being presented in a separate section (with references to the other focus areas of the targeted review as applicable).

At all times:

- Keep the review coordinator informed of progress throughout the review, and of possible methodological challenges related to the implementation of the targeted review.

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<sup>16</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/targeted-reviews/>





### 5.2.3 Panel members

It is the responsibility of all members of the review panel to:

Before the site visit:

- Attend the joint briefing call between the panel, ENQA and EQAR (if applicable) to clarify the requirements of the terms of reference.
- Review the external review report of the agency's last full review against the ESG, and all other possible documents that could help to understand the agency's current compliance with the ESG (e.g., EQAR's decision on the renewal of registration, decisions following substantive change reports).
- Study the documentation, including the SAR and any other information available prior to the site visit, considering all focus areas included in the review process. For this, panel members will each prepare a preliminary statement (one page) summarising their own views on opportunities and challenges related to the selected enhancement area, and the possible direction of discussions and stakeholders to be involved during the site visit. The statements should be sent to the review chair.

During the site visit:

- Keep an eye out for matters which require further clarification (e.g., issues outside the focus areas specified in the terms of reference, but that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG).
- Keep an eye out for other changes that occurred within the agency since the last full review that were not reported by the agency.

As in ENQA Agency Reviews, each member of the panel for targeted reviews forms a fundamentally important part of the process by providing their specific viewpoint and expertise, and they are therefore expected to actively contribute to the work of the team. For this reason, reviewers are advised to carefully consider their workload before accepting the assignment. Failure to actively contribute to the panel and its duties, for whatever reason, is deemed a breach of the ENQA Code of Conduct for Reviewers<sup>17</sup> and may lead to a reduction of the expert fee proportionate to the work not completed/contribution yet to be provided. The Agency Review Committee will assess the need for intervention on a case-by-case basis and will take feedback from the review coordinator and/or the review chair into account.

### 5.2.4 Review coordinator

ENQA assigns a trained and experienced staff member of the ENQA Secretariat as a review coordinator for each of the targeted reviews coordinated by ENQA. The main tasks of the review coordinator are listed in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Review and apply to targeted reviews. In addition, the review coordinator will:

- Hold an online meeting with the agency to discuss the selection of the ESG standard for enhancement prior to the conclusion of the terms of reference.
- Organise a joint briefing call between the panel, ENQA and EQAR (if applicable) to clarify the requirements of the terms of reference.
- Support the panel and the agency on the specificities of the methodology related to targeted reviews.

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<sup>17</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/ENQA-Code-of-Conduct-for-reviewers.pdf>



The review coordinator is not a member of the panel. They will thus not participate actively in the interviews during the site visit, contribute to the actual drafting of the report, nor carry out any other tasks assigned to the review secretary or other panel members.

## 6. The site visit

### 6.1 Objectives

In addition to the general objectives of a site visit as listed in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, the site visit of a targeted review has several specific objectives:

- To enable the review panel to verify how the agency aligns with the ESG in the focus areas as defined in the terms of reference (i.e., for standards that need to be judged on the level on compliance against the ESG);
- To identify and explore through the interviews other changes that occurred within the agency since the last full review and that were not reported, and any other issues that might have an impact on the agency's compliance with the ESG;
- To engage in a developmental dialogue with the agency and its stakeholders on ESG 2.1 and the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement.

For the site visit to reach these (additional) objectives of the targeted review, it is essential that the visit is well prepared and that the process and the panel's time are managed efficiently and effectively. One of the requirements for the targeted review is thus a request to all panel members to prepare the preliminary statement of their views on opportunities and challenges related to ESG 2.1 and the agency's self-selected ESG standard for enhancement. Such preparatory work identifies key stakeholders that should be involved during the site visit for this purpose and supports the discussions that remain focused on the selected area.

The length of the visit should be determined after the review panel has received and analysed the self-assessment report, and once the panel and the agency agree on the draft programme of the visit. In most cases, it is likely that the visit duration will be somewhat shorter in comparison to the full review, since not all standards of Part 2 and 3 of the ESG are addressed in the targeted review. Therefore, the site visit is expected to last around 2 days, with minor variations depending on the specificities of the review in question. While the precise structure of the site visit – and the number and types of people to be interviewed – will depend on the terms of reference for the targeted review, the quality of the SAR, and the number and types of issues that need special attention during the site visit, the suggested outline may provide support in designing the site visit programme<sup>18</sup>.

Prior to the physical site visit, the panel attends a joint briefing call between the panel, ENQA and EQAR (if applicable) to clarify the requirements of the terms of reference (see section 6.2.2). In addition, the panel attends an online meeting with the agency's resource person to better understand the agency's changes since the last full review, and the agency's decision regarding the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement as agreed in the terms of reference (see section 6.2.4).

The approach to the conduct of interviews during the site visit, an option for an online site visit due to force majeure<sup>19</sup>, and the possibility to include an external observer<sup>20</sup> remain the same as in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

### 6.2 Before the site visit

#### 6.2.1 Preparation and review of available information

Well ahead of the site visit, the agency under review submits its SAR and related annexes to the review coordinator for distribution to the panel. In addition to the SAR, the agency should also submit to the

<sup>18</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/targeted-reviews/>

<sup>19</sup> Available at: <https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ENQA-protocol-for-online-site-visits.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/ENQA-protocol-for-external-observers.pdf>



review coordinator the last review report against the ESG (i.e., for the full review) and the related follow-up report (unless coordinated by ENQA).

The panel should carefully study all material available before the site visit and use it to determine the main lines of enquiry for the site visit and to draft a preliminary review report. The agency should facilitate access to any further information requested by the panel before and during the site visit.

The documentation to be considered by the panel includes (but may not be limited to):

- The agency's SAR, including annexes;
- The external review report from the last full review (submitted by the agency unless coordinated by ENQA) and the related follow-up report;
- EQAR's registry-related documents, such as Substantive Change Reports (if relevant);
- Other documents from the agency related to ESG 2.1 and the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (e.g., arising from thematic analyses, research, or studies, if any); and
- Publicly available information, such as the agency's website.

To identify possible issues outside the focus areas specified in the terms of reference, but that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG, panels should review the complaints that the agency may have received since the last full review.

It is recommended that the review chair and review secretary, with input from the other panel member(s), request additional documentation when deemed necessary in advance of the visit. Other additional documents for which the need arises in the meeting, or which may not be available electronically, may be requested and should be provided on the spot during the site visit. The main source of information during the site visit should be the interviews with the leadership, staff, agency bodies, and stakeholders.

### **6.2.2 Panel's preparatory briefing**

A preparatory online briefing will be organised between the review panel, the review coordinator and EQAR (if applicable) to discuss the entire review process, and more specifically the:

- Purpose of the targeted review;
- Roles and responsibilities of panel members, including those that are specific to the targeted review;
- Use and understanding of the ESG and judgement on compliance for the focus areas;
- Expectations related to addressing the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement;
- Identification of matters which require further clarification (e.g., issues outside the focus areas specified in the terms of reference, but that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG);
- Timeline and management of the site visit;
- Link between evidence and information, analysis, and conclusions in the review report, and the drafting of the report; and
- Submission of the final review report and the decision-making process.

The preparatory briefing also presents an important opportunity for the panel members to be introduced to each other, create a list of initial documentation to be requested from the agency under review, and prepare for the site visit (e.g., discuss sharing of tasks and practicalities related to the site visit). Additionally, should the site visit be conducted online, the preparatory briefing is used to get acquainted with the specificities of an online site visit.

The preparatory briefing is compulsory and usually takes place three to four weeks before the site visit. The meeting lasts about 90 minutes and is organised and chaired by the review coordinator.

In addition to the preparatory briefing, the review panel is expected to be in regular contact with each other and with the review coordinator as the need arises. Separate preparatory online meetings or calls usually take place between the review secretary and the review coordinator soon after the appointment of the panel for the purpose of a smooth overall organisation of the review process and to discuss the practical aspects, as well as specifics of a targeted review. Furthermore, it is recommended that the review chair and review secretary meet or hold an online meeting after having both independently reviewed the SAR. This is useful to tease out specific issues and to prepare a list of matters on which clarification is needed.

### **6.2.3 Preparation of material and setting the programme of the site visit**

Preparation of the site visit programme and the supporting material for targeted reviews (e.g., the mapping grid<sup>21</sup>) follows the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. In addition to these general guidelines, the secretary of a targeted review is asked to ensure that the site visit includes interviews with the full range of stakeholders (as in a full review) that cover all focus areas and to reserve adequate spare time for the panel to address any additional ESG-related compliance issues that might arise during the visit. The schedule should also include sufficient time and dedicated sessions for an exchange regarding ESG 2.1 and the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (e.g., with the agency's leadership, staff or specific groups of stakeholders related to the topic). The panel might also consider other approaches to stimulating the agency in its conversations and reflections on enhancement, e.g., by organising a brief workshop or focus group meeting as part of the visit.

### **6.2.4 Online meeting with the agency's resource person**

In order to ensure that the panel reaches a sufficient understanding of the agency's changes since the last full review against the ESG and understands the background and motive of the agency's choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement as agreed in the terms of reference, the panel should make use of an 'agency resource person' prior to the site visit itself. This person would typically be a senior member of staff with sufficient knowledge on the history and present situation of the agency and the strategic discussions within it.

The panel should organise an online meeting with the agency resource person well before the start of the on-site visit (ideally at least two weeks before). Such a meeting will namely help the panel to achieve a good understanding of factual and contextual matters ahead of the actual site-visit, enabling them to use the full time during the interview sessions of the site visit for the key purposes of the review process (see section 2.1).

The online meeting with the agency's resource person is organised by the review coordinator in coordination with the review panel and the agency. The exact date of the meeting should be defined before the site visit schedule is finalised.

The agency resource person may additionally be invited to provide further clarification on the evening before the site visit, in between interview sessions of the site visit, or at the end of the first day of the site visit.

## **6.3 During the site visit**

Activities during the site visit of a targeted review follow the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Review, including the instructions for the panel's kick off meeting, list of meetings or interviews to be held with key agency personnel and stakeholders, language of the site visit, use of interpreter, confidentiality of interview sessions, size and structure of interview groups, possibility to use online interviews during

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<sup>21</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/targeted-reviews/>



the physical site visit, typical structure of each session, and purpose and value of breaks in between the sessions as well as private panel discussions.

Other additional documents for which the need arises in the meeting, or which may not be available electronically, may be requested and should be provided on the spot during the site visit; however, the main source of information during the site visit should be the interviews with the leadership, staff, agency bodies, and stakeholders.

Just before the end of the site visit, the panel holds a final meeting to draw together its conclusions based on the information presented. At this point it is useful to take time to work through each aspect of the ESGs included in the review and confirm the panel's key findings and any areas of concern. Moreover, the panel should at this point agree on the preliminary findings related to ESG 2.1, the agency's self-selected ESG standard for enhancement, and any other arising matters (if the case).

The site visit concludes with a final debriefing meeting involving the panel members, staff, and Council/Board members of the agency, as decided by the agency. The review chair should outline the panel's impressions on the agency's compliance with those standards that are listed as the review's focus areas, as well as highlighting key good practice and key areas for further development in relation to ESG 2.1 and the agency's self-selected ESG standard for enhancement. The review chair or the review coordinator can also explain the next steps in the review process. The purpose of the final meeting is to provide some immediate feedback to the agency without pre-empting the formulation of compliance on the evaluated standards in the final report or the ENQA Board's decision on membership in ENQA.

#### **6.4 After the site visit**

All relevant information should be provided to the review panel either before or during the site visit. After the site visit, only factual comments on the draft review report are possible. The agency should also refrain from contacting the panel members or the review coordinator on matters related to the content of the review report prior to its completion.

The agency cannot submit new information to the panel after the site visit.

## 7. Production and publication of the external review report

The main outcome of the review process is the external review report (ERR) by the expert panel. The ERR is drafted by the review secretary, in collaboration with the review chair and the rest of the panel members, on the basis of the SAR, the site visit, and the review panel's findings.

The purpose of the ERR, specific to the targeted review, is to:

- Provide sufficient information on the ESG compliance of the agency under review for the focus areas as defined in the terms of reference and report the compliance statements of the preceding full review. Following this, the purpose of the ERR is to enable the EQAR Register Committee (or the ENQA Board if the agency chooses not to apply for EQAR listing) to decide on the overall ESG compliance of the agency.
- Provide the agency with recommendations and suggestions for the focus areas to support its further development.
- Elaborate on the developmental dialogue that took place with the agency and its stakeholders on ESG 2.1 and the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement.
- Serve as a source of reliable and transparent information for the agency and all interested stakeholders.

### 7.1 Structure of the external review report

The external review report should follow the template as available in Word-format on the ENQA website<sup>22</sup>. The template gives more detailed guidance on what subsections should be included in each of the sections, among others:

- Executive summary, including a table that summarises the scope of the review (following the ToR) and grading on compliance as provided in the targeted review (column one), while also providing an overview of the transfer of the standards from the last full review that were not addressed in the targeted review (column two);
- Introduction, including the background of the review and an outline of the review process (brief information on the purpose and methodology of targeted reviews, reasons for commissioning the review of the agency, scope of the review, including the listed focus areas, including ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement, panel engaged, timeline of the review, information on the self-assessment process and site visit);
- Main findings from the last full review, and in particular a statement regarding the presumed continued compliance of the agency with the standards that are not specifically included in the current review process;
- Changes within the agency (this chapter should describe all changes that occurred within the agency since the last full review, including: any potential change in the higher education system and quality assurance system in which the agency predominantly operates; the agency's structure or funding; its list of external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG; and the changes in the agency's quality assurance activities abroad, where relevant);
- Findings on the agency's compliance with the ESG standards (as listed in the terms of reference, including the grading on compliance for each of these standards);
- Panel's reflection on ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement;
- Additional observations (optional section);
- Conclusion (with a summary of findings for the focus areas);

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<sup>22</sup> Available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/targeted-reviews/>

- Annexes (programme of the site visit, terms of reference of the review, glossary, list of documents that supported the review).

Aside from following the purposes of a targeted review (see section 2.1), the review panel may include in its report any additional reflections or developmental advice that it may wish to offer. If these are extensive, they can be included in the optional additional section of the report, or if brief, as part of the conclusions. The agency is not required to implement or to follow up on these additional suggestions and advice.

## 7.2 Writing up findings

To enable the EQAR Register Committee or the ENQA Board to decide whether the agency is in compliance with the ESG and to reach a sound conclusion, it is important that the findings section is written in a way that reveals both the evidence for and the reasoning/analysis behind the panel's conclusions. Under each standard the panel should carefully describe the relevant evidence available and provide an analysis of the evidence and an assessment of compliance. The reports must be written in clear and correct English, be well structured, and use correct terminology for compliance assessment.

The following main elements should be kept in mind:

- All ESG standards that are listed as the focus areas in the terms of reference need to be fully covered.
- Each ESG standard should be discussed separately.
- Under each ESG standard, the report should include:
  - a) **EVIDENCE:** a short description of the evidence gathered – making reference to meetings or documentation explored and – where relevant – to changes implemented since the last full review;
  - b) **ANALYSIS:** a consideration of how far, based on the evidence available, the agency does (or does not) meet the ESG standard and eventual reasons or explanations for any lack of compliance;
  - c) **CONCLUSION (judgement on compliance):** an explanation of how compliant the agency is, in the opinion of the panel (based on the evidence and analysis), with the ESG standard. For this purpose, the panel should refer to EQAR's general policy on use and interpretation of the ESG<sup>23</sup>.
  - d) **RECOMMENDATIONS and SUGGESTIONS (if any) and COMMENDATIONS (if any).** The recommendations logically follow the ESG standard and derive from the judgement on compliance, whereas the panel can additionally suggest areas or issues for further improvement of the agency in the form of suggestions. The agency has no obligation to follow up on suggestions (only on recommendations). The role of commendations, in addition to recommendations and suggestions, is important to highlight and promote good practice and excellence in external quality assurance, and the panel is thus asked not only to highlight areas that require further development but also areas in which the agency has excelled.

The link between evidence, analysis, and conclusions should be mutually supportive and provide a reader with clear information on how the panel reached its conclusion on compliance. In other words, the judgment must clearly follow from the evidence and analysis provided, and statements

<sup>23</sup> Available at:

[https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2020/09/RC\\_12\\_1\\_UseAndInterpretationOfTheESG\\_v3\\_0.pdf](https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2020/09/RC_12_1_UseAndInterpretationOfTheESG_v3_0.pdf)



such as “the panel is convinced that the agency is fully compliant” or “it was clear from the interviews that the agency complies” are not sufficient, if not supported by evidence and analysis. Furthermore, the recommendations should logically follow from the judgement on compliance.

Progress in respect to any preceding review should be clearly indicated through analysis on how the agency has addressed the provided recommendations (both by the panel and by the ENQA Board, where applicable).

ENQA uses the following scale for the judgement on compliance:

- Compliant: The agency is entirely or to a large extent in alignment with the ESG standard, which is implemented in an effective manner, and the principle/spirit of which is followed in practice.
- Partially compliant: Some aspects or parts of the ESG standard are met while others are not. The interpretation of the ESG standard is correct, but the manner of implementation is not effective enough.
- Non-compliant: The agency fails to comply with the ESG standard.

As the judgement on compliance with each ESG standard is either compliant, partially compliant or non-compliant, wordings such as “compliance has not been achieved” or “not yet compliant” should not be used.

For the the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement, no assessment of compliance is provided, but the panel is asked to evaluate the progress, comment on the implemented changes, and provide suggestions for further development.

### **7.3 Overall judgement on compliance**

The panel is expected to comment whether the agency is in compliance with the ESG after consideration of the outcomes of the preceding full review and the findings of the targeted review. For an agency to renew its membership in ENQA, the agency needs to be overall compliant with Parts 2 and 3 of the ESG.

The overall judgement on compliance will result from consideration of the judgements of standards that were part of the focus areas for the targeted review, and for the rest of the standards the findings from the last full review (provided that the panel does not discover any other issue related to the ESG compliance during the targeted review). The overall judgement on compliance does not result from a mathematical calculation. However, a case of non-compliance for any individual standard would normally lead to a judgement that the agency is not compliant with the ESG overall.

### **7.4 Drafting process and internal quality assurance of ENQA Targeted Reviews**

The drafting process of the ERR for targeted reviews follows the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, including the requirement for a check of the report by the review coordinator, the agency’s comment on factual accuracy, and the provision of an informal feedback letter to the Agency Review Committee on the review process.

The final report of a targeted review should normally be around 20-30 pages in length (excluding essential annexes).

The internal quality assurance of ENQA Targeted Reviews is conducted by the ARC and follows the procedure for ENQA Agency Reviews (see section 7.4 of the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews),



See the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, pages 26-27.

including the process of scrutinising the review reports, provision of an option to request additional (documentary) evidence or clarification if needed, use of surveys and other IQA tools and methods<sup>24</sup>, and verification of the review report by the ARC in case an agency applies for ENQA membership on the basis of an external review coordinated by another organisation and does not apply for EQAR listing.

The Agency Review Committee does not take a decision on overall compliance of the agency with the ESG.

The report is not final and thus may not be used by the agency until the Agency Review Committee has validated it. The decision on the validity of the report is independent from any eventual decision on ENQA membership (the Agency Review Committee also validates reports that are not used for ENQA membership if the review was coordinated by ENQA).

Following the validation and scrutiny of the external review report by the Agency Review Committee, the agency can use the report to apply for EQAR listing or for any other purposes it wishes.

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<sup>24</sup> A detailed description of all processes and tools for planning, implementation, assessment, and improvement of ENQA's external quality assurance activities is available in the policy document available at: <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Policy-on-the-IQA-of-ENQA-Agency-Reviews.pdf>

## 8. Application for ENQA membership

The application procedure for ENQA membership for the targeted reviews follows the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews. After completion of the ERR, the agency may apply for renewal of its ENQA membership by submitting the required documents and following three different pathways as elaborated in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews (see section 8).

The possible outcomes of the Board's decision on whether an agency can be reconfirmed as a member of ENQA are the following:

- Following the targeted review, the agency is considered to remain in compliance with the ESG and is reconfirmed as a member of ENQA.
- The agency is considered as not in compliance with the ESG. In this case, the agency will be designated as a "member under review". The agency continues to be an ENQA member (and maintain its membership rights) for a grace period of maximum two years, within which they need to make the necessary changes to reach overall compliance with the ESG and undergo a full review to verify this. The details of the procedure for a full review are described in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

The Board communicates its decision on membership in the form of a letter addressed to the agency's legal representative. The letter emphasises the aim and methodology of the targeted review that formed a basis of the Board's decision, and how an overall compliance with the ESG was assessed (see section 7.3).

If the agency is not listed on EQAR, the Board makes its decision in light of the gathered evidence and is not obliged to follow the recommendations of the review panel or findings of the Agency Review Committee. Should the Board deviate from the recommendations of the panel and/or the findings of the Agency Review Committee, the reasons shall be specified in the Board's letter to the agency. The Board will conclude with a negative decision when it considers that there is non-compliance with any standard. Other than that, the decision is based on a holistic assessment and is not the result of a mathematical equation.

The Board's powers with respect to membership matters, and the rules relating to appeals against a decision of the Board, are contained in the ENQA Statutes.

After the completion of the review, the final report, the agency's SAR, and the Board's decision letter with the related recommendations and areas to be addressed (applicable only to agencies not listed in EQAR) are published on the ENQA website. The reviewed agency is expected to publish the ERR on its website as well.

Request for additional information or site visit<sup>25</sup> for the purpose of decision making on membership by the ENQA Board remains an option in the targeted reviews, following the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

### 8.1 Targeted reviews coordinated by other organisations

To ensure continuity and build on institutional knowledge in the external review process, the coordinator of the targeted review should normally be the same organisation that has coordinated the last full review of the agency against the ESG. In such cases ENQA accepts targeted reviews coordinated by other entities for membership renewal. Importantly, it is the responsibility of the

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<sup>25</sup> This possibility applies to the reviews when the agency is not registered in EQAR, regardless of what organisation coordinates the review.



See the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, pages 28-29.



See the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, page 30.

agency under review to ensure that the requirements of the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews, and of EQAR (if applicable) are met should they opt for another coordinator. At a minimum, the agency should check at the start of the review that:

- The terms of reference and the panel composition proposed by the coordinator are in line with these guidelines;
- The coordinator will organise the obligatory preparatory meeting between the panel and EQAR (if applicable);
- The review will sufficiently elaborate and critically reflect on changes occurred within the agency since the last full review;
- Approaches will be used to determine whether there are any other issues outside the focus areas specified in the terms of reference that might affect the agency's compliance with the ESG; and
- The review report will elaborate how the panel's decision on whether the agency is in compliance with the ESG was made.

In case of a targeted review coordinated by another entity, a report drafted in a language other than English should be translated under the supervision of the review chair before submission to ENQA.

In cases when the review process is coordinated by another organisation and the agency is not registered in EQAR, the ENQA Agency Review Committee shall, before the application for membership renewal is submitted to the ENQA Board, analyse the report and assess the integrity of the review process, the quality of the report, and its conformity with the requirements for membership renewal. For this purpose, the Committee will produce a letter to the ENQA Board stating whether the review report has been conducted in line with the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews and provides sufficient, clear and verified evidence to be used as the basis for a decision on ENQA membership.

The key requirements for the review to be acceptable for ENQA membership renewal purposes include the following:

- The management of the review process must be completely independent of the agency itself.
- All parts of the review's management and process must be transparent and therefore easily open to examination by the Agency Review Committee and, if required, the ENQA Board.
- The report produced must be sufficiently detailed to provide satisfactory assurance of the review's robustness.
- The report must provide sufficient, verified information which clearly shows how the agency understands the requirements of the ESG and complies with them.

A reciprocal review process, where two agencies organise the review of each other, is not permissible, because this method is unlikely to meet the requirements of externality and independence and may give rise to conflicts of interest.

In case of reviews not coordinated by ENQA, the Secretariat will not provide personalised support to the agency under review and/or the review panel.
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## 9. Follow-up

A follow-up is an integral part of the targeted review process. Due to the nature and purpose of the targeted review that already reviews the remaining challenges to the agency's ESG compliance, a follow-up focuses on the element of the review that supports the agency in its continuous reflection and enhancement. All agencies that have undergone a targeted review are thus required to attend an online follow-up seminar where the topics of enhancement, as self-selected by the reviewed agencies, are shared, and further discussed among the participants. The participants of the seminar are expected to include the agencies' resource person, lead author of the SAR, or leadership representative(s). The seminar envisages to provide an arena for strategic conversations that allow the agencies to reflect on their key challenges, opportunities, and priorities. The following questions will guide the design of the follow-up seminar:

- What changes did the reviewed agencies encounter since their last full review and what was their impact?
- What are the reviewed agencies' key priorities and challenges in pursuing their mission in future? How did the self-selected ESG standards for enhancement of the targeted review support this?
- What opportunities have the agencies identified through the targeted review and do they plan to engage in these opportunities? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What self-selected ESG standards for enhancement were most discussed during the targeted reviews (to be used in the thematic part of the seminar)?

The ENQA Secretariat will organise such a seminar once every two years. To prepare for the follow-up seminar, the agency will be asked to demonstrate changes or developments within the agency following the targeted review (e.g., in the form of a poster).

The follow-up seminar does not have the objective of checking the agency's ESG compliance or how the agency has followed up on the recommendations on the focus areas.
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## 10. Appeals and complaints procedure

The appeals and complaints procedure for the targeted reviews follows the procedures as set in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews (see section 10).

## 11. Financial issues

### 11.1 Review fee

ENQA charges the agency a fee to meet the full costs of the targeted review. This includes the expert fees, travel and subsistence costs, a fee for the coordination of the review and a contribution to the Experts Training Fund, as presented in the table below.

Fee of the chair	3,000 EUR
Fee of the secretary	3,000 EUR
Fee of the third panel member	1,500 EUR
Administrative and coordination costs of the ENQA Secretariat (including preparation and implementation of the follow-up seminar)	6,200 EUR
Experts Training Fund	900 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses	3,000 EUR
Approximate total	<b>17,600 EUR</b>

Should the targeted review include an evaluation of the agency's new external quality assurance activity (or activities) against Part 2 of the ESG, the fee is increased by 2,400 EUR. In this case, each panel member additionally receives a fee of 800 EUR. The total review fee in this case amounts to 20,000 EUR VAT excl.

The amount of the fee is stated in the review contract between ENQA and each panel member. The expert fees and ENQA administrative overhead are determined by the ENQA Board; travel and accommodation expenses are charged at cost. The approximate total of the whole review is payable by the agency to ENQA on signature of the contract. ENQA does not undertake any further preparations for the review until the payment has been received.

In the event of a second, short site visit aimed at completing the assessment of compliance (see section 8), an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert is recoverable from the agency to compensate the additional work, as well as all travel and subsistence costs.

The travel costs for the site visit will be paid as real costs. Should the travel costs remain under the provision, the agency will be reimbursed the difference. Should the travel costs be above the provision, the agency shall pay the difference to ENQA.
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### 11.2 Financial guidelines for reviewers

The financial guidelines for reviewers follow the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews (see section 11.2).



See the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, page 34.



See the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, pages 35-36.

## 12. Timeline for ENQA Targeted Reviews

The following timeline gives an indication of the schedule that a targeted review might follow. A specific timetable is established for each review undertaken. It should be noted that the review process may take 9-11 months from the first request by the agency to the completion of the procedure (i.e., validation of the review report by the Agency Review Committee).

The agency informs the ENQA Secretariat that it wishes to undergo a targeted review by sending a review request letter. A review coordinator is assigned to the review.	Month 0
<p>The terms of reference – which includes clarification of the focus areas to be addressed in the targeted review – are drafted and agreed to by ENQA, the agency, and EQAR (if relevant).</p> <p>ENQA will hold a discussion with the agency on the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement and the overall timeline of activities.</p> <p>The agency is encouraged to publish the ToR on its website.</p> <p>ENQA and the agency sign a review contract.</p> <p>The agency starts to produce its SAR.</p>	Month 1
<p>The review coordinator composes the review panel and sends it for approval to the Agency Review Committee. The agency under review is given the opportunity to signal any possible conflicts of interest or biases in relation to the selected panel members prior to their appointment.</p> <p>In case the agency is applying for registration in EQAR, the proposed panel composition is sent afterwards to the EQAR Secretariat for a check on conformity with EQAR's Procedures for Applications.</p> <p>The review coordinator distributes the initial preparatory material (i.e., the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews, Code of Conduct, ESG 2015, various review templates, the ToR, and EQAR's Use and Interpretation of the ESG for the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies) to the panel members.</p>	Month 2
The agency submits its SAR, along with any other documentation of relevance, to the review coordinator.	Month 3
<p>The review coordinator carries out a screening of the SAR to ensure the document meets the requirements of these Guidelines.</p> <p>If the SAR meets the requirements, it is sent – together with the additional documentation of relevance supplied by the agency – to the review panel.</p> <p>If the SAR does not meet the requirements, the agency is requested to make the necessary modifications and re-submit the SAR within two weeks from the request by the review coordinator. After that, the SAR – as well as the additional documentation of relevance supplied by the agency – is forwarded to the review panel.</p> <p>The SAR is published on the agency's and ENQA's websites.</p>	Month 4
The panel reviews the documentation provided by the agency and makes an initial identification of lines of enquiry considering the terms of reference of the review and other information received from the agency.	Month 5
<p>An online briefing of the review panel, EQAR and the review coordinator takes place to discuss the overall review process, ensure a shared understanding of the tasks of the review panel and the objectives of the review, and to point out any specific issues related to the review.</p> <p>In consultation with the review panel, the review secretary may request that the agency provide any additional documentation considered relevant to the review.</p> <p>The review secretary drafts the site visit schedule and agrees on it with the review panel and the agency.</p> <p>The panel joins the online meeting with the agency's resource person.</p> <p>If the agency wishes to use the interpreters during the site visit, it must inform the review secretary and receive approval of the person engaged from the review coordinator before the site visit schedule is finalised.</p>	Month 6

The review secretary drafts a preliminary report and a mapping grid in collaboration with the review panel.	
<p>The review panel conducts the site visit according to the agreed schedule while also carrying out the following requisite meetings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Before the site visit begins, the panel meets to make any final adjustments to the schedule and agree how the lines of enquiry will be pursued.</li> <li>2. After the first day of the visit, the panel meets to assess the gaps to be covered in the remaining interview sessions and to identify any additional documents or interviews that may be required.</li> <li>3. A panel meeting takes place as the penultimate session of the site visit. At this point the panel reviews the evidence presented, drawing together any preliminary findings and, if possible, organises these into a “skeleton” report.</li> <li>4. The panel conducts a debriefing meeting with the representatives of the agency. During this meeting, the panel’s immediate feedback or overall impressions is communicated.</li> </ol>	Month 7
<p>The review secretary produces the initial draft review report and circulates it to the review chair and panel members.</p> <p>Within two weeks of receiving the draft report, the panel members review the report and provide their comments to the review secretary.</p>	Month 8-9
<p>The review secretary produces a revised draft which, after agreement from the panel, is submitted to the review coordinator to verify its compliance with the Guidelines for Targeted Reviews.</p> <p>The review secretary produces a revised draft (if required) and, after agreement from the panel, submits it to the agency for comment on factual accuracy.</p>	Month 9
<p>Within two weeks of receiving the report, the agency submits any amendments (relating only to any factual inaccuracies) to the report to the review secretary for consideration, and the review secretary produces a final version of the report.</p> <p>The review secretary submits the final review report to the review chair, who in turn shares it with the review panel and submits it to the review coordinator.</p> <p>The review chair must submit an informal feedback letter about the review process to the review coordinator for the attention of the Agency Review Committee by this time at the latest.</p>	Month 10
<p>The review coordinator submits the report to the Agency Review Committee to scrutinise it for internal quality assurance purposes. The review report is considered to be final once validated by the Agency Review Committee, for which the Committee will issue a statement that is annexed to the report and published on ENQA’s website. Note that possible clarification requests may be made by the Committee prior to their meeting (to the agency, panel, or the review coordinator).</p> <p>The agency can at this point use the external review report for EQAR listing.</p> <p>The review coordinator asks the panel members and the agency to complete a feedback questionnaire on the review process – to be completed before the date of the Board’s expected decision on membership.</p>	Month 11
EQAR Register Committee holds a meeting to decide on the registration in EQAR (if relevant). Note that possible clarification requests may be made by EQAR prior to the meeting of the Register Committee (to the agency, panel, or the review coordinator).	EQAR Register Committee meeting
<p>The Board takes a decision on ENQA membership. Note that possible clarification requests may be made by the Board prior to the meeting (to the agency, panel, or the review coordinator).</p> <p>Should the agency be listed in EQAR, the agency’s application for ENQA membership comprises only of the confirmation of listing in EQAR and the agency’s application letter.</p> <p>In cases where the agency is not applying for EQAR listing, the agency submits a letter requesting re-confirmation of membership no less than 40 days before the Board meeting at which the membership is expected to be discussed. This – together with the review report and statement from the Agency Review Committee – comprise the agency’s application for membership.</p> <p>In cases where ENQA is not the review coordinator and there is no EQAR application or the application has been unsuccessful, the agency submits the review report to the ENQA Secretariat, which in turn asks the Agency Review Committee for the report scrutiny. Following this, the application for ENQA membership is decided by ENQA Board on basis of the application letter, review report and letter from the Agency Review Committee.</p>	ENQA Board meeting
ENQA informs the agency of the Board’s decision and publishes the letter containing the Board’s membership decision on its website.	After ENQA Board meeting



The agency attends an online follow-up seminar organised by ENQA.	Two to three years after the validation of the final external review report.
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THIS PUBLICATION contains a detailed description of the review process for ENQA-coordinated targeted reviews against the ESG.

**enqa.**

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