

IEP follow-up report

In the Terms of Reference of the external review coordinated by ENQA, IEP committed to working on a follow-up plan that would address the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to ENQA Board within two years of the Board's positive decision on membership, i.e. in early 2021. The report below presents a summary of decisions and actions taken by IEP in response to the received recommendations.

ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Recommendation: The Board call upon stronger involvement of practitioners and other stakeholders (apart from students, teachers and higher education professionals) in the governance of IEP.

Actions taken:

From its foundation, the mission of IEP has been to support higher education institutions and entire national higher education systems in developing strategic leadership and capacity to change at institutions, seeing these as self-governing, both academically and socially responsible organisations. As this philosophy stands at the core of IEP, it is therefore reflected not only in IEP's institutional approach to quality enhancement, which requires and implements a specifically strong focus on leadership qualities and institutional management aspects. Moreover, this philosophy is also necessarily reflected in all IEP structures, including the composition of its governing body and its evaluation panels. In practical effect, this key approach, both in terms of quality focus and choice of experts, has led the IEP to put strong emphasis on collegial experience of, and advice given and judgement made by, academic peers who carry, or have carried, leadership responsibilities in academia, i.e. rectors/presidents and vice-rectors/vice-presidents. In view of this specific hallmark of the IEP, the IEP steering committee's extensive discussion of the point raised by the ENQA panel resulted in maintaining the current composition of IEP's governing body.

ESG 3.3 Independence

Suggestion: IEP may wish to state more clearly on their website that, although it is an EUA programme, it is open to participation to all higher education institutions regardless of the EUA membership.

Actions taken:

The following information has been added to the [IEP website](#) "IEP evaluations are open to all higher education institutions regardless of whether they are EUA members or not. EUA members will however benefit from a reduced fee."

Suggestion: The IEP website notes that specific guidelines are developed for each coordinated review. It still may be beneficial to list key principles of coordinated reviews, such as those noted in the above evidence, on the [website](#).

Actions taken:

The key principles that underpin coordinated evaluations have been added to the IEP [website](#).

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Suggestion: The panel suggests to IEP to introduce additional feedback mechanism for institutions enabling them to reflect on their evaluation in a more qualitative manner. Other options can be considered such as an additional videoconference after publishing the reports.

Actions taken:

Starting with the round 2019/2020, IEP introduced a follow-up videoconference with the evaluated institutions in order to gather additional feedback. This takes the form of a semi-structured conversation between the IEP secretariat and the institutional liaison person(s) using an online videoconferencing tool in two to three months after the finalisation of the evaluation report.

Suggestion: The panel suggests that the internal quality policy and/or guidelines for institutions explicitly state the institution needs to be recognized within its own system to undergo an IEP evaluation.

Actions taken:

The following sentence has been added to the [IEP Internal Quality Procedures](#) "In order to be eligible for an evaluation, an institution must be recognised as a legitimate higher education institution in its own national legal framework." A similar sentence was added to the IEP registration form. When considering this suggestion, the IEP steering committee agreed that these two documents are more relevant for this kind of statement than the Guidelines, which are often read by institutions only once they have already registered for an evaluation.

Suggestion: The ENQA Board suggests IEP to establish formal feedback mechanisms to assess the quality of work of each individual expert and internal staff.

Actions taken:

Regarding formal feedback mechanisms for the secretariat members, there are already yearly appraisals taking place which address this matter. Concerning the feedback mechanisms to assess the quality of work of each individual expert, in addition to the long-established practice that any issue concerning the professional or personal conduct of a pool member is directly reported to the secretariat by the chair and/or the coordinator of the team, the steering committee decided to change the surveys carried out by the secretariat after each evaluation and their analysis with a specific view

towards identifying any procedural and personal issues that may impact negatively on the quality of the evaluation. This practice should suffice in the view of the IEP small-scale pool and long-standing involvement of pool members over the years.

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

Suggestion: When IEP publishes a sufficient number of reports based on the 2015 ESG, it would be useful to create a commission to elaborate a follow-up study on the way they address ESG part I.

Actions taken:

The steering committee agreed that the secretariat should explore ways to do such a study in due course. Due to limited time and number of evaluations since the original study, it was deemed best to wait longer before doing this.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

Suggestion: The panel finds that the suggestion given under standard 3.6 to provide opportunities for a qualitative feedback from institutions which would not be anonymous will also help IEP understand even better the degree in which the evaluation teams misapprehend the local and national context.

Actions taken:

Starting with the round 2019/2020, IEP introduced a follow-up videoconference with the evaluated institutions in order to gather additional feedback. Summary of the feedback received is provided to the steering committee and the team as appropriate together with results of the feedback from the revised post-evaluation survey to the institution and evaluation teams.

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes

Recommendation: IEP should continue its efforts to increase and promote the usefulness of progress reports and encourage all evaluated institutions to submit them.

Actions taken:

IEP continues to send reminders to institutions about the progress reports nine months after an evaluation report is finalised. In addition, the oral report template provided to the teams has been updated a slide being added about the progress report. Also, the IEP secretariat reminds institutions about the progress report during the follow-up videoconference.

Suggestion: The Board calls IEP for a reflection on providing a consistent follow-up to its quality assurance activities.

The follow-up videoconference also has the role to strengthen IEP's follow-up procedure by addressing questions about the evaluation process and outcomes and exploring how the institution is taking up the recommendations.

Suggestion: IEP might consider including the follow-up price in the initial price of the evaluation or consider other ways of encouraging follow-up.

Actions taken:

After considering this suggestion, the steering committee did not find it suitable to include the follow-up price in the initial price as this would go against the voluntary nature of IEP.

ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals

Suggestion: The panel suggests that the complaints policy is revised so that the Steering Committee is informed of the complaint and able to suggest action.

Suggestion: The ENQA Board notes the need to handle the complaints in a more professional and consistent manner, i.e. by informing the whole Steering Committee of the complaint. The agency should also consider establishing a permanent complaints committee for the purposes of processing the complaints.

Actions taken:

The steering committee has reviewed IEP's current complaints and appeals procedures leading to the following decisions concerning changes in IEP practice: (1) All complaints and appeals will be passed on by the secretariat to the whole steering committee without delay. (2) The steering committee discusses and decides on the course of action, which can be, as seems fit in view of the case, (a) immediate remedy or rejection of the complaint or appeal, either as a whole or in part, (b) requiring the secretariat to enquire the matter further, or (c) decision to establish a complaints and/or appeals committee consisting of three IEP pool members without prior link to the case whose task it is to decide on the matter after due investigation and discussion.

The steering committee did not opt for establishing a permanent committee. The reasons were as follows: (1) Complaints and appeals have been, and will therefore most likely be in the future, very rare, which means that the benefit of standing committees to gain experience in handling complaints and appeals through routine, which may have a positive effect as regards enhancement of quality of judgement, is very unlikely to materialise in the case of IEP. (2) The establishment of an ad-hoc complaints and/or appeals committee allows for fit-for-purpose composition of panels with due regard to the focus of the complaint and/or appeal, while the risk that ad-hoc committees may be selected with a case-related bias to the detriment of the higher education institution under scrutiny is duly minimised by IEP's practice to invite the higher education institution to raise any objection to the choice of panel members at the onset of the complaints and/or appeals process.