

WORKSHOP REPORT

3rd SEQA-ESG peer-learning workshop Role, selection and training of external review experts Budva, Montenegro. 12-13 May 2022

The third peer-learning workshop focused on the **role, selection and training of external review experts**. It gathered representatives from all of the participating project partners and featured renowned experts from ENQA and ESG-compliant quality assurance systems. The programme mainly tackled ESG 2.4 “Peer-review experts”.

Day I

On the first day of the workshop, the main topics discussed were connected to the definition of the peer review process, selection procedures, training of reviewers, and in this regard, the challenges in reaching compliance with ESG 2.4. The discussion was led by Fiona Crozier, an independent consultant (former Head of International, QAA, United Kingdom) oriented toward **key elements related to peer reviews** (as listed below). In addition, various elements to be considered regarding the **selection and appointment of experts** were covered, and what was most important, participants were provided with an overview of methods and good practices from other QA agencies.

The following points were highlighted:

- The **involvement of international experts** is suggested as a good practice in accordance with the guidelines of ESG 2.4.
- **Students** are **mandatory members of the panel** and should be paid the same amount for their work, bearing in mind that his/her focus of the evaluation is different from the scientific discipline evaluated by the expert/university professor, yet not less significant.
- The practice of having a **secretary vs. coordinator** in the evaluation procedure was an important topic of the workshop as well. The secretary takes care of the information and evidence provided in the report and has the mandate to influence its content in accordance with the results of the visit. On the contrary, the coordinator takes care of the evaluation process, and screens the documentation to be in line with the agency’s internal regulations but does not have the mandate to affect the content of the report.
- The **independence of peer reviewers** is crucial in the evaluation process. For instance, small countries such as Montenegro are dealing with the problem of familiarity of all involved stakeholders, even though the reviewers are not formally in a conflict of interest. Therefore, the importance of engaging international reviewers was highlighted as a good practice.
- Regarding the **selection of experts**, one of the main questions and discussions around it was how to choose an expert. The conclusion was that this **depends on the type of evaluation** meaning that when choosing experts for the evaluation of study programmes, the emphasis should be on the disciplinary angle of these programmes. Contrary, when choosing experts who will evaluate an institution, it is important to employ experts that have experience in quality assurance on the overall organisational/institutional level.
- The **distinction between training and briefing** was also an important segment of the discussion. The main difference between briefing and training is that during training experts work on practical examples or simulations, both of which are of paramount importance for the quality of the evaluation process. However, briefings are mainly related to being informed

of the review steps and procedures and overall rules of the agency coordinating the activity. The rules are explained to panels prior to their engagement in the external QA activities.

- Trainings of experts are organised for individual peer reviewers and/or for groups of experts. Training for such groups is organised (usually) once or twice a year, lasting a day or two. The training sessions are attended by **new experts** that will be engaged in future external QA activities of the agency. A training is managed by employees of the agency, professional trainers, or in specific cases by experts who have participated in previous procedures of the agency and have shown professionalism and dedication to the process. The training can be implemented online, held physically, or held in a hybrid format.
- The question of a **follow-up** was also raised during the workshop. It was recommended that at least one member of a panel should be the same as in the initial panel to **provide for continuity in the review process**. In addition, it is also important to consider a survey on the satisfaction of the higher education institution with previous panel members, which should be taken into account in the follow-up.

At the conclusion of the first day, the workshop hosts held a presentation on **challenges in reaching compliance with standard 2.4** from the perspective of their countries – Montenegro and Albania.

ACQAHE (Montenegro) introduced the participants to the following main challenges in regard to standard 2.4:

1. Legally defined independent, objective, and impartial procedure for selection of experts in review panels.
2. Student plays an important role in this process, as well as the business representatives.
3. Involvement of students and business representatives should be precisely defined through the legal framework.
4. Periodic training for all experts from the experts' pool, not only for concrete peer reviewers that are employed for a particular exercise.
5. Training of trainers.

ASCAL (Albania) stated the following challenges:

1. Since Albania is a small country, it is hard to find independent experts. Even though the agency has measures in place to fight possible conflict of interest, e.g. by asking experts to sign a declaration of non-conflict of interest, or by giving a possibility to the HE institution to state their view on possible conflict of interest with the employed experts, the independence of the reviewers is still hard to reach.
2. Maintain a high standard of trained and experienced experts. To tackle this, the agency is taking measures in introducing new methods and procedures in training.
3. Covering a large number of academic areas, t.i., the lack of qualified experts in the agency's pool of experts. For this reason, the agency contracts foreign experts.

Reactions from participants

Most of the participants pointed out the importance of employing independent **experts**. In this regard, most representatives highlighted the challenge of **small countries**, when experts are formally not in a conflict of interest, but they still know each other very well. Hence, the **need for international experts was emphasised as one of the possible solutions**.

The **difference between training and briefing** was discussed again. Most of the participants did not seem to understand nor practice the difference between the two terms. The joint conclusion was

that **training is essential**, and preferably should be conducted physically, whereas briefings can be short, online meetings with all involved parties. Periodical, continuous training for all experts, not just the one for the concrete evaluation procedure, is important as it will influence the quality of future procedures (i.e., experts are being kept up-to-date on the latest developments in external QA in the particular context).

As a side note, participants also pointed out that students should be paid the same amount as the rest of the panel.



Pictures from Day 1

Day 2

During the second day of the workshop, most of the discussion was oriented toward the **experience of one of ENQA's members (ANVUR) in achieving compliance with standard 2.4**. The presentation was led by Alberto Ciolfi, former Head of Institutional and Study programmes assessment and accreditation (AVA) unit, ANVUR, Italy. The presentation included the following topics:

- Procedures to become an expert and profiles required
- Selection criteria used by the agency
- Training methods
- Composition of panels
- Main challenges in complying with ESG 2.4, such as the inclusion of students in each assessment procedure, remuneration for student experts in comparison to other profiles, and engagement of international experts.
- Ongoing challenges at ANVUR, such as keeping experts regularly updated, and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

This session was followed by a practical session in which each of the participant organisations presented a poster summarizing the main challenges related to compliance with standard ESG 2.4. The main challenges highlighted were:

- **Czech Republic:** their challenges can be summarised in the following points: expert panels may be composed from the pool only, inability to involve ad hoc experts for specific academic cases, motivation of experts to engage in EQA once receiving an invitation from the agency, active engagement in panel activities. Regarding training, the project partner emphasised the following main challenges: should the agency use training upon adding the person into the pool, or rather provide ad hoc training for

each panel. Next, should there be a separate training in place for academics, labour market experts, and students. The agency also reiterated that it is difficult to fill in all categories in some academic disciplines, and to find labour market experts.

- **Malta:** how to attract local peer reviewers as Malta has a small academic community with many licensed providers, how to involve employers/professional practitioners and how to attract student peer reviewers.
- **Moldova:** the main challenges listed were attracting international experts, empowering students to formulate and express their opinions, involve employers with adequate knowledge of the legal framework and how to ensure that experts are fully aware of the peculiarities of the educational system.
- **Slovakia:** the main challenges listed were how to do the direct targeting of experts in the particular fields, the cooperation with other agencies and how to improve trainings of experts for more specific academic fields.
- The representatives of the **Albanian and Montenegrin QA Agencies** highlighted similar challenges to those included in the presentations from Day 1.



Posters presented in the practical session

The practical session was followed by a presentation from Alberto Cioffi about the **evaluation of experts and feedback mechanisms**. Participants agreed that evaluating experts is an important source of information for the agency, especially for the processes of composing panel experts. However, it was highlighted that agencies need to have processes fit for purpose (e.g., a 360-degree evaluation might be resourceful in terms of understanding well the pool, but human resource intensive for the agency). In addition, project partners emphasised the need to consider that panels are always

made up of people, thus the human angle to the work in external QA will always have an impact on the performance of these same experts. The final session of the workshop was a presentation on the [guidelines](#) made by ENQA and ESU (European Students Union) on **engagement and effective communication in panels**. It was highlighted that effective communication can contribute to the transparency and integrity of the panel and their work. In addition, it can also increase the functionality of the panel by communicating the relevant information swiftly and showing respect towards other panel members. Participants also had the opportunity to hear about possible tips and recommendations to promote a fruitful and appreciative working environment and engagement of all parties involved.



Group picture on Day 2

Authored by: Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education, Montenegro (ACQAHE), and Albanian Quality Assurance Agency, Albania (ASCAL)

Annexes

- Annex 1: Agenda of the workshop
- Annex 2: List of participants
- Annex 3: Posters presented in the practical session

Annex I: Agenda of the workshop

3rd SEQA-ESG peer-learning workshop **Role, selection and training of external review experts** **(Budva, Montenegro) 12 and 13 May 2022**

Project: Supporting European QA Agencies in meeting the ESG (SEQA-ESG)

Call: EPLUS-2019-09-EHEA - Initiatives to support the implementation of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) reforms

Venue:

Hotel Budva, Slovenska obala, Budva, Budva County, 85310 Montenegro

Outline of the workshop:

This workshop will address the methods and criteria for the recruitment, selection and training of peer review experts, including issues related to the impartiality and independence of the experts. In particular, standard 2.4 of the ESG will be discussed and addressed. Experiences from compliant agencies who have recently aligned their criteria to the ESG will also be shared.

Programme:

Day I, 12 May 2022

From 12:45 on *Participants arrive at the venue*

13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch**

14:00 – 14:05 **Welcome**

14:05 – 14:10 **Icebreaker**

14:10 – 14:20 **SEQA-ESG project timeline and extension – where do we stand?**
Goran Dakovic, ENQA Reviews Manager

14:20 – 14:30 **Aims and objectives of the workshop**
Alexis Fábregas, ENQA Project Officer

14:30 – 15:00 **Common notions**
Fiona Crozier, Independent consultant (former Head of International, QAA, United Kingdom)

This introductory presentation aims to ensure that all the participants have a common understanding of key elements (definition of peer review process, external expert, and different categories of experts) related to peer reviews that will be discussed during the rest of the workshop.

Following the presentation of 15 min., participants of the workshop will be invited to ask questions and discuss these common notions (15 min.)

15:00 – 16:00 **Selection and appointment of experts – criteria, methods & good practices**

Fiona Crozier, Independent consultant (former Head of International, QAA, United Kingdom)

This presentation will cover different elements to be considered regarding the selection and appointment of experts: selection procedures and criteria, the composition of panels, involvement of international experts, independence, and non-conflict of interest mechanisms. Participants will be provided with an overview of methods and good practices from other QA agencies.

After the presentation (30 min.), the participants of the workshop will be invited to ask questions and discuss (30 min.)

16:00 – 16:15 Short break

16:15 – 17:15 Training of experts

Fiona Crozier, Independent consultant (former Head of International, QAA, United Kingdom)

This presentation will cover different aspects to be considered regarding the training of experts including formats and methodologies, guidelines and other support materials, the distinction between training and briefing of experts and the importance of consistency in EQA procedures.

After the presentation (30 min.), the participants of the workshop will be invited to ask questions and discuss (30 min.)

17:15 – 17:45 Challenges in reaching compliance with ESG 2.4 – Examples from the hosts (Montenegro and Albania)

Tijana Stanković, Deputy director, ACQAHE (Montenegro)
Muhamed Prezja, Program officer, ASCAL (Albania)

The two participating countries that host the workshop will present their challenges in reaching compliance with ESG 2.4 in 10 min. (each), followed by a discussion (10 min.)

17:45 – 18:00 **Wrap-up**

Day 2, 13 May 2022

From 08:45 on Participants arrive at the venue

9:00 – 10:00 Example of an agency that is compliant on 2.4

Alberto Ciolfi, former Head of Institutional and Study programmes assessment and accreditation (AVA) unit, ANVUR, Italy

The presentation will look at the different aspects (external experts, selection, training, composition of panels) that were considered by ANVUR when working on achieving compliance with standard 2.4, the challenges overcome and further enhancement since achieving compliance.

After the presentation (30 min.), the participants of the workshop will be invited to ask questions and discuss (30 min.)

10:00 – 10:45

World café – addressing key challenges with 2.4 (part I)

Fiona Crozier, Independent consultant (former Head of International, QAA, United Kingdom)

Alberto Ciolfi, former Head of Institutional and Study programmes assessment and accreditation (AVA) unit, ANVUR, Italy

Goran Dakovic, ENQA Reviews Manager

Participants will engage in a brainstorming session on the key challenges regarding standard 2.4.

Before the workshop, each agency will be required to prepare a summary (for example in the format of a poster – A1) describing the main challenges faced by them.

At the start of this session, six participants (one per agency) will be appointed as “hosts”. These hosts will be responsible for explaining the poster to the “visitors” and exchanging with them possible ideas to address the challenges. The rest of the participants, acting as visitors, will be mixed, and split into groups. Each group will analyse the poster and discuss it with the host. After 10 min, the groups will rotate, and another group will start analysing the poster. Each host should receive the visit of the 6 groups of visitors (10 min for each).

At the end of the session, the hosts (with the help of the moderator) should then summarize the ideas received. The rest of the participants will be invited to ask questions and discuss (20 min.)

10:45 - 11:00

Short break

11:00 – 11:40

World café – addressing key challenges with 2.4 (part II)

(See information on the previous point)

11:40 – 12:00

Evaluation of experts & feedback mechanisms

Alberto Ciolfi, former Head of Institutional and Study programmes assessment and accreditation (AVA) unit, ANVUR, Italy

This short presentation is aimed at launching a debate on the importance and complexity of this topic and the need to tackle it considering the quality culture of each agency.

After the presentation (10 min.), the participants of the workshop will be invited to ask questions and discuss (10 min.)

12:00 – 12:30

Engagement in the panel

Goran Dakovic, Reviews Manager, ENQA

This presentation is aimed at presenting the recently released guidelines on engagement and effective communication that have been jointly developed by ENQA and ESU (European Student Union). These guidelines provide tips and recommendations to promote a fruitful and appreciative working environment and engagement of all parties involved – both within the external expert panel and between the panel and the institution under evaluation.

After the presentation (15 min.), the participants of the workshop will be invited to ask questions and discuss (15 min.)

- 12:30 – 13:00 **Conclusions and information on upcoming activities**
Goran Dakovic, Reviews Manager, ENQA
- 13:00 – 14:00 *Lunch*
- 14:00 *End of the workshop*

Annex 2: List of participants

#	Name and Surname	Position	Organisation
1	Felicia Banu	Head of Department of Higher Education Evaluation	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC)
2	Dunja Bulajic	International Relations Officer	Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ACQAHE)
3	Andrei Chiciuc	President	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC)
4	Alberto Ciolfi	Expert	Former Head of Institutional and Study programmes assessment and accreditation (AVA) unit, ANVUR, Italy
5	Fiona Crozier	Expert	Independent consultant, (former Head of International, QAA, United Kingdom)
6	Goran Dakovic	Reviews Manager	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
7	Tamara Đuričković	Advisor in Sector for Quality Control	Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ACQAHE)
8	Alexis Fábregas Almirall	Project Officer	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
9	Stela Guvir	Head of Public Relations and International Cooperation Office	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC)
10	Milica Kavedžić	International Relations Officer	Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ACQAHE)
11	Viktoriiia Maltseva	QA Manager	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)
12	Rene Matlovič	Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board	Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAHE)
13	Fiona McCowan	QA Officer	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)
14	Muhamed Prezja	Program Officer	Albanian Quality Assurance Agency (ASCAL)

15	Robert Redhammer	Chairman of the Executive Board	Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAHE)
16	Ermira Sela	Specialist, Sector of Higher Education Development	Ministry of Education and Sport, Albania
17	Jiří Smrčka	Director	National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB)
18	Tijana Stanković	Deputy Director	Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ACQAHE)
19	Martina Vidláková	Head of Quality Assurance and Evaluation	National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB)
20	Nada Vuksanović	Senior Advisor	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, Montenegro
21	Erjon Xhako	Program Officer	Albanian Quality Assurance Agency (ASCAL)
22	Andrea Zacharova	Head of Accreditation Department	Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAHE)

Annex 3: Posters presented in the practical session

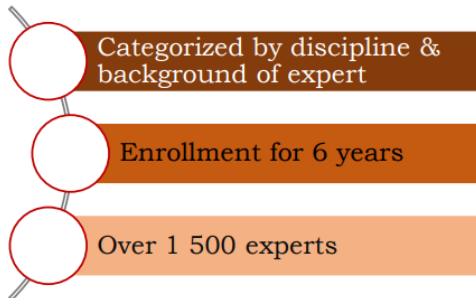
Albanian Quality Assurance Agency – ASCAL (Albania)



National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education – NAB (Czech Republic)

National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education

Pool of Evaluators

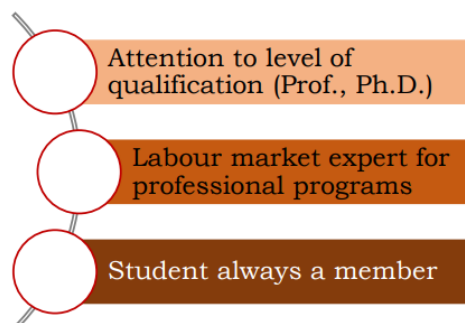


International experts:
language barrier, service in public interest

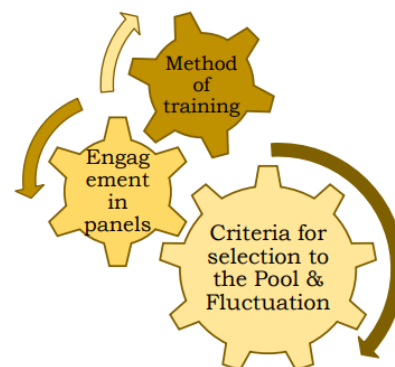
Challenges related to ESG 2.4

Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Expert panels may be composed from the Pool only •Inability to involve ad hoc experts for specific cases
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How to motivate experts in the Pool to accept nominations to panels? •How to support their active engagement in panel activities?
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Training upon enrollment to the Pool OR ad hoc training for each panel •Separate trainings for academics, labour market experts, students?
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Variation by discipline – difficult to fill all categories in some disciplines (labour market experts etc.)

Criteria for panel composition



Student experts



Malta Further and Higher Education Authority – MFHEA (Malta)



Malta
Further & Higher
Education Authority

MFHEA challenges related to peer review experts (ESG 2.4)



External Quality Assurance (EQA) audits in Malta are carried out by panels of external peer review experts, that include at least one student member.

How the MFHEA creates a pool of experts:

- Invitation to take part in annual training for peer review experts with sufficient knowledge of English
- Training session that includes a mock audit (evaluation of SAR, interviews, report writing)
- Candidates that successfully complete the training become members of the MFHEA pool of experts.
- Foreign peer reviewers can be added to the pool based on their expertise and experience in EQA

Challenges:

- attract local peer reviewers as Malta is a small academic community with many licensed providers
- attract student peer reviewers
- involve employers/professional practitioners
- CPD for existing peer reviewers



Selection of peer reviewers for EQA audits:

- Proposal of experts
- Approval by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)
- Invitation of the chosen experts
- Signature of declaration of non-conflict of interest
- Provider has the right to object to the members of the panel
- Briefing and induction meeting for approved experts
- Signature of the contract

Challenge:

- Limited pool of local peer reviewers for small institutions

Involvement of student reviewers in EQA and accreditation of programmes:

- Institutional and programme EQA process includes at least one student peer reviewer
- Programme accreditation does not yet involve a student reviewer

Challenge:

- Involve student reviewer in the process of accreditation of programmes at MQF/EQF level 5 and above.

Contact Us

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mfhea.mt

National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research – ANACEC (Moldova)



ANACEC • National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

**AFFILIATE OF
ENQA**



PEER REVIEW

Composition of the external evaluation panel/ Statistical data



Representatives of the academic environment with a scientific / didactic title (329)

Representatives of students (102)

Representatives of employers (179)

International experts (38)

Composition of the external evaluation panel:

- Representatives of the academic environment - 2-3 members;
- Representatives of employers - 1-2 members;
- Representatives of the students - 1 member;
- International experts - 1-3 members;
- ANACEC coordinator - 1 member

Rights and obligations of experts

Rights:

- to participate in the evaluation of study programs and/ or higher education institutions;
- to act under the legislation in force and apply correctly the quality assurance procedures;
- to use professionally, objectively and with honor their professional skills and academic expertise in the evaluation missions.

Obligations:

- to be independent;
- to keep the confidentiality of the information;
- to examine carefully the information and data provided by the institution under review;
- to know the context of functioning of the educational institution;
- to make conclusions/ judgments on the data presented in the report and during the visits.

Criteria for selecting experts

- Teaching staff**
 - hold a scientific/ scientific-didactic title;
 - have experience in quality assurance in higher education;
 - know the Romanian language/ one of the languages of international circulation.
- Employers' representatives**
 - have experience in the field of quality assurance and/ or managerial in the field of expertise;
 - know the Romanian language/ one of the languages of international circulation.
- Student representatives**
 - have the status of student (full-time education) in one of the three cycles (Bachelor, Master or Doctorate);
 - have good academic results;
 - know the Romanian language/ one of the languages of international circulation.
- International experts**
 - hold scientific/ scientific-didactic title;
 - have experience in quality assurance in higher education;
 - know the Romanian language/ one of the languages of international circulation.

Training of experts

- 1 Training course (3 credits ECTS)
- 2 Training sessions (before each evaluation mission)
- 3 Thematic sessions

Involvement of experts in external quality assurance activities

- 1. External evaluation for:**
 - accreditation of study programs;
 - accreditation of educational institutions;
 - authorization for provisional operation of study programs;
 - authorization for provisional operation of educational institutions;
- 2. Consultation on updating the regulatory framework developed by the Agency;**
- 3. Collection of feedback on the external evaluation process.**

Main challenges



Teaching staff

- knowing the peculiarities of the educational system, increased interest in becoming experts;
- the tendency to impose institutional experience, the dose of subjectivism.

Employers

- connection with the educational process, dissemination of best practices from labour market;
- inadequate/insufficient knowledge of the normative framework in the field of education.

Students

- openness, activism, desire for change;
- hesitation in formulating and expressing their own opinions.

International experts

- unattractive salary, insufficient knowledge of the national educational normative framework and of the Romanian language.



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Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education – ACQAHE (Montenegro)

PEER REVIEW EXPERTS IN MONTENEGRIN QA REALTED TO ESG 2.4

CONTRIBUTION

- ✓ Evaluation report with (re)accrediting recommendation
- ✓ Decision on (re)accreditation is based on peer review experts' recommendation
- ✓ Recommendation for improvement of each criteria

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- ✓ Recognized in the Law on Higher Education
- ✓ Agency is in charge of adopting the list of experts based on pre-defined criteria
- ✓ **University professors** were the only peer review experts elected, until 2019
- ✓ **Students** are mandatory members of peer-review experts in institutional evaluation (2019). The procedures for institutional reaccreditation are adopted by ACQAHE
- ✓ **Students** are voluntary members of the peer-review experts in procedures for programme evaluation (2020). The procedures for study programme accreditation are adopted by the Ministry
- ✓ **Representatives of business sector** are voluntary peer-review experts in external

CRITERIA

- ✓ Academic background
- ✓ Working experience
- ✓ Specialization in expertise required (only for academic staff)
- ✓ QA experience
- ✓ Language proficiency
- ✓ Motivation letter (only for students)

SELECTION IN STEPS

- ✓ Each of the three peer-review expert lists has its own criteria for: academic staff, students and business sector
- ✓ The public call for application on peer-review expert list is open on ACQAHE web site 365 days per year
- ✓ Director nominates the working team for selection of experts for the three peer-review expert lists
- ✓ Updated peer-review expert lists are published quarterly
- ✓ Director is in charge of experts selection
- ✓ The experts are re-grouped according to the type of evaluation and the science field to be evaluated
- ✓ Peer-review experts for institutional evaluation are consisted of minimum five members (at least two international experts)
- ✓ Peer-review experts for programme evaluation are consisted of minimum three members (at least one international expert)

TRAINING IN STEPS

- ✓ Director nominates the coordinator of external evaluation procedure
- ✓ Coordinator provides all the necessary materials and information to the peer-review experts
- ✓ The training is provided by the coordinator, one day before the site visit

ACQAHE has organized ad hoc events like round tables and workshops, where the procedures had been discussed.

INDEPENDENCY

- ✓ Legal framework defines situations when experts are in conflict of interest.
- ✓ Signed Statement on Conflict of Interest is mandatory.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ The selection of peer-review experts is performed in independent, objective and unbiased way.
- ✓ All the procedures are adopted by ACQAHE
- ✓ Student is an expert too!
- ✓ Involvement of a student and a representative of the business sector should be mandatory.
- ✓ Periodical trainings for all experts from the peer-review expert list.
- ✓ Training of trainers.

Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education – SAAHE (Slovakia)



3rd SEQA – ESG workshop, Montenegro, 12 – 13 May 2022

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES RELATED TO PEER REVIEW EXPERTS



Founded: 2018 **Legal status:** Public body, Law 269/2018 Col.

Mission: contribution to improvement of the higher education quality assurance; change the „central“ accreditation of study programs to quality assurance through implementation of the ESG

Tasks: (1) to issue the accreditation standards (2020), (2) to help of the introduction of the internal assurance system through the consultations and seminars and (3) to execute the external quality assurance

LAST YEAR ACCREDITATIONS

- 177 study programs, 160 passed
- 65 proceedings, review panels

Reviewers:

- 1442 in total, 383 involved
- 107 students in total, 58 involved
- 305 experts academic, 53 involved
- 362 international (foreign) experts 105 involved
- 65 proceedings, review panels

EXPERIENCED ISSUES (PROGRAM ACCREDITATIONS)

EXPERT POOL

- Pool size vs. usability/expertise
- Inhomogeneity among fields

IMPROVEMENTS

- Direct targeting of experts in particular fields
- Cooperation with other agencies
- Training improvement (narrower focus)

HIDDEN BONDS (LOCAL EXPERTS)

- Small country challenge
- Cross-institutional „collegiality“
- Praise instead of assessment
- Involvement of more foreign expert: even one foreign expert in panel makes the difference

IMPROVEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

- Language barrier (bilingual documentation, communication)
- Insufficient knowledge of Slovak legal framework

POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

- Specific trainings focusing on Slovak legal framework
- Targeting experts on recommendation
- Narrower task specification

NEXT ROUND

HEIs EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATIONS)

- The fairest assessment of the HEIs internal quality assurance system
- New challenge: too large panels (system as well as field expertise)
- 32 HEIs; 32 proceedings, review panels
- 5000 study programs

MODUS VIVENDI

PANEL COMPOSITION MIX

- Chair of the panel
 - 1-2 students
- 1-2 employers experts
 - 2-3 system experts
- >1 of them international
- 1 field expert (or related field) as specialist
- Field consultation sub-pool

Authors: Andrea Zacharova, Lucia Bittnerova
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