

Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Quality Assurance

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Training/Briefing of Panel Members

- Training/briefing of panels members in order to prepare them for the accreditation/audit work which they will be expected **to carry out in an effective and professional way**
- Presentation based on the experience/approaches AQ Austria is applying in practice

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

- Why is the training/briefing of panel members important?
 - Trust-building potential of external quality assurance procedures depends upon the quality and professionalism of the external experts involved
 - External quality assurance strives for accountability of higher education institutions and programmes. Therefore, it should provide evidence that the quality of HE delivered is the best possible
 - Highly competent, experienced, trained, professional expert panel members guarantee fair decision-making and finally contribute to the safeguarding of national academic standards for HE in line with EHEA

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

- Does the ESG refer to the need for trained experts?
 - ESG 2.3: Criteria for decisions
 - Guideline: "... decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a *consistent manner*". Conclusions should be based on *recorded evidence* and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions ..."
 - **LINK to training:** ... knowledge of how to apply the assessment criteria ...panels have to be informed/prepared/trained to meet this expectation!
 - ESG 2.4: Processes fit for purpose
 - Guideline: "... Insistence that the experts undertaking the eQA activities have appropriate skills ... competent to perform their tasks; ... provision of appropriate briefing of training of experts" < **clear link to the need for briefing/training of experts engaged** > **QA agencies have to provide adequate approaches; there are no blueprints on how to deliver briefings/trainings**

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

- Does the ESG refer to the need for trained experts?
 - ESG 2.5: Reporting
 - Guideline: "... reports should meet the identified needs ... require careful attention to structure, content, style, tone ..."
 - **LINK to training:** ... knowledge/skills of how to write evidence-based reports ... panels have to be informed/prepared/trained to meet this expectation!
 - ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes by the agency
 - Standard: "... processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined... an external assessment by a group of experts ..."
 - **LINK to training:** ... QA agencies should also have in place methods for training/briefing as part of the whole process

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

- Does the ESG refer to the need for trained experts?
 - ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures
 - Standard: "... procedures for their own accountability..."
 - **LINK to training:** ... QA agencies should also have in place methods for constant quality improvement of their own procedures, non-conflict of interest mechanism in the work of their experts / feedback / evaluation procedures that also include the work of the experts / but also include the experts' feedback on the work with the agency

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

AQ Austria

- What are we doing when we train/brief the panel members?
 - Introduction of panel members to the actual quality assurance process (institutional or programme accreditation, audit)
 - Explanation of the ethos and expectations of the agency
 - Provision of knowledge and skills and attitudes to carry out the procedure effectively and professionally
- Who is doing the training/briefing of the panel members?
 - QA Staff (project manager)
 - Assure that the PM has extensive knowledge of the subject – external quality assurance, legal background
 - Assure that the PM has experience with the practicalities of the procedure but also that she/he has experience with the specific task: providing training/briefing > **Converting the knowledge into a training/briefing session**

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

AQ Austria

- What does converting of QA knowledge mean?
 - Planning/designing/delivering a successful training/briefing requires specific knowledge/skill of the PM (**HR development issue > ESG 3.4 Resources**)
 - Knowledge in the field of (national/international) quality assurance; dynamics, current trends; substantial experience in quality assurance procedures (criteria – assessment etc.)
 - Communication, presentation skills, stress/time management, self-awareness, assertiveness, facilitation of discussions, observation skills etc.
 - Supported by various – documents / templates that have been developed in advance (**ESG 3.8 – Accountability - internal QM of agency – tools for preparation/briefing of expert panels**)

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

AQ Austria

- Preparation of the panel members via a Skype meeting prior to the site visit
 - At least one Skype meeting two weeks before the site visit
 - Skype meeting is scheduled for 1 ½ hours
 - Administrative support is organising the meeting (**> use of standard e-mail text**)
 - PM is setting up and submitting the agenda for the Skype meeting (**> use of prepared template**)
 - After the Skype meeting, the PM writes minutes with the agreed findings and submits it to the panel members (**> use of prepared template**)
 - In addition, if further clarification is needed, the PM gets in contact with the HE contact person for the specific procedure



Training/Briefing of Panel Members

AQ Austria

- What are the aims of the Skype meeting?
 - introduction of PM – and brief introduction of other panel members / getting in touch with the other panel members
 - familiarisation with various roles of the panel members and assignment of individual tasks (> **use prepared document**)
 - familiarisation with the ethos and expectation of AQ Austria, but also with the needs of the panel members familiarisation with adequate questioning techniques
 - familiarisation with the background of the specific procedure and the Austrian higher education system, legal requirements
 - sharing the first impressions concerning the HEI's application/SER and creating common understanding
 - providing clarification of content-related open issues
 - reaching an agreement on the list of documents that the HEI needs to prepare/deliver in addition to the already submitted document(s)
 - providing clarification on organisational questions concerning the site visit
 - discussing (draft) agenda for the site visit (> **use of prepared template**)

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

AQ Austria

- Preparation of the panel members for the site visit
 - Administrative support submits the final agenda incl. all additional information on the preparatory meeting if needed (**> use of document and send an e-mail**)
 - Preparatory meeting is scheduled for at least 3 – 4 hours
 - Meeting is held in a hotel meeting room or at the HEI (**> adequateness checked in advance, refreshments, IT, etc.**)
 - After the preparatory meeting, the panel + PM have a joint lunch/dinner - (**> social component is important**)

Training/Briefing of Panel Members

AQ Austria

- What is the aim of the on-site preparation?
 - face-to-face introduction of the PM and all panel members – reminder of the aims of the preparatory/briefing session
 - recapping the ground rules and confidentially (> **use prepared document**)
 - recapping the knowledge of the Austrian HE system and the legal requirements (> **use prepared presentation**)
 - recapping the assessment criteria/standards – interpretation AQ Austria – expectation towards use (> **use prepared document / presentation**)
 - recapping various roles of the panel members and assignment of individual tasks – reminder: peer review is a team task (> **use document**)
 - finalisation of the division of questioning / lead in various sessions / responsibilities during the site visit (> **use document**)
 - reaching an agreement on the division of labour for report writing – agree on the time schedule, clarification of content-related open issues (> **use template and document**)

Thank you for your attention!

Hvala Vam na pažnji!

Хвала Вам на пажњи!