

Annex 1. Guidance on the Review Principles

The quality of a programme is demonstrated by reference to eight quality features. These quality features tie in with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG, 2015). In addition, the review panel verifies how the programme, in the pursuit of continuous quality enhancement, has safeguarded the involvement, on the one hand, of internal and external stakeholders, and on the other hand, of independent experts. If applicable, the panel verifies whether the programme meets the regulations with respect to the admission of graduates to corresponding posts or professions. In this way, the review is conducted in accordance with internationally accepted practice.

The quality features do not constitute separate standards that must each independently lead to a judgement. Rather, the assessment of programme quality is based on four interrelated questions:

1. What does the programme intend?
2. How does the programme realise its intentions ?
3. How is the achievement of these intentions demonstrated?
4. How is the programme investing in continuous quality enhancement?

These questions determine the scope of the inquiry conducted for the purpose of the review. The scope of the inquiry has been specified by VLUHR QA. It serves as a point of reference for both the programme and the panel and provides a further elaboration of the quality features, allowing for closer alignment with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). It forms an integral part of the manual and the underlying review procedures.

In the text below, each question is accompanied by a bullet-point list of the various elements that may be understood to fall within its scope. These elements serve as points of reference in the review process and are by no means intended to constitute an exhaustive list of criteria.

In the context of a review of a short learning experience, additional elements are specified.

Introduction

In the introduction, you highlight how the self-evaluation report (SER) came about. Here, you can go into detail about the division of tasks within the programme and how the input of those involved (management, students, staff, professional field, ...) helped drafting the report. You can provide an organisational and historical outline of the programme and highlight its uniqueness.

This is supported by an annex with a schematic overview of the programme's organisational structure.

Question 1 - What does the programme intend?

You explain the mission and vision of the programme, including how it is profiled (ESG 1.2).

In the SER you explain how the intended learning outcomes provide a clear and programme-specific interpretation of international requirements regarding level, content and orientation (ESG 1.2). You explain:

- the extent to which the intended learning outcomes of the programme are aligned with the Flemish Qualifications Framework or with relevant domain-specific learning outcomes;
- the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are in line with requirements set by the (international) disciplinary field;
- the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are in line with requirements of the (international) professional field.

You show how the intended learning outcomes were conceived, including how internal and external stakeholders, as well as external and independent peers were involved in the process (ESG 1.1, 1.2).

You explain the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are communicated to (potential) students in a complete and accessible manner (ESG 1.8).

You can highlight the relevance of the programme for society at large (ESG 1.2).

If relevant, you should indicate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are aligned with existing laws and regulations regarding access to the corresponding positions or professions (ESG 1.2).

This question is supported by an annex that illustrates the alignment between the programme-specific learning outcomes and the domain-specific learning outcomes.

In the context of a review of a short learning experience, you should also explain the extent to which the profile and intended learning outcomes of the learning experience:

- address new and emerging societal or labour-market needs (ESG 1.2);
- align with policy initiatives, e.g. the green transition or digitalisation (ESG 1.2).

Question 2 - How does the programme realise its intentions?

In the self-evaluation report you explain the content and design of the programme (ESG 1.2, 1.3):

- the relationship between (the parts of) the programme and the intended learning outcomes;
- the conception of the content and design of the programme, including the involvement of internal and external stakeholders, as well as external and independent peers;

- the general structure of the programme, paying attention to its internal coherence (both vertical and horizontal);
- the alignment of the content of the programme with the most recent developments in the disciplinary and professional fields;
- the teaching and learning methods, highlighting in which way they contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
- the quality of the educational tools and the electronic learning platform;
- in relation with characteristics of the student intake and through-flow;
- the involvement of the programme in community service;
- the active role students take during their learning process.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the study load related to the programme (ESG 1.3):

- the division of the student workload over the whole programme;
- the correspondence between the budgeted student workload and the actual workload;
- the enhancing and impeding factors for study progress.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the international dimension of the programme (ESG 1.3):

- the international aspects of the programme (both staff and student exchanges, international cooperation, international excursions and company visits, international guest lecturers, ...);
- policy, actions and results regarding internationalisation.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the quality and quantity of staff involved in the programme (ESG 1.5):

- staff management policy and factors that may hinder the implementation of an effective staff management policy;
- the size of the workforce, in relation to student numbers as well as in relation to the programme and the intended learning outcomes;
- policy regarding staff professionalisation;
- the professional and educational expertise of the staff (taking the various staff categories into account) in relation to the programme and the intended learning outcomes;
- the educational input of external parties.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the student support services (ESG 1.3):

- the student counselling and learning path guidance, related to the intake, through-flow and the intended learning outcomes;
- the effectiveness of student counselling and learning path guidance;
- the accessibility of student counselling.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the facilities (ESG 1.6):

- the physical infrastructure (library, laboratories, study areas, ...) relevant for the programme and the intended learning outcomes;
- the accessibility of these facilities.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the students' study progress (ESG 1.4, 1.7):

- the admission requirements and the characteristics of the intake;
- the alignment of the programme with prior education;
- key figures related to intake, progression rate, outflow and drop-out;
- measures taken as a response to these key figures;
- policy regarding the recognition of prior learning.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the learning pathways of students (ESG 1.3, 1.4, 1.7):

- the organisation and structure of flexible learning pathways;
- the support offered in the context of these flexible learning pathways;
- the way in which all phases of the learning pathway are communicated to (potential) students in an accessible manner.

This question is supported by the following annexes with:

- the progression opportunities and further study options (for associate degree or bachelor's programmes), or the required prior qualifications and admission requirements (for master's programmes);
- a schematic overview of the complete curriculum;
- a description of all course units, including the intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods, study materials, and number of credits (ECTS course descriptions);
- the educational vision, educational policy, and assessment policy;
- access to the electronic learning environment, including study materials.

In the context of a review of a short learning experience, you should also explain:

- the extent to which the learning experience supports flexible learning (ESG 1.3, 1.4);
- the extent to which the learning experience take into account the heterogeneity and diversity of the incoming learners (including broader target groups, inclusion and equal opportunities, refugees, etc.) (ESG 1.3, 1.4);
- how the content and design of the learning environment are geared towards, on the one hand, (re)orientation and, on the other hand, a smooth transition to the labour market (ESG 1.2);
- how the learning experience promotes the professional development and mobility of working learners (lifelong learning) (ESG 1.2, 1.3);
- the policy with regard to the validation of qualifications acquired via informal learning (ESG 1.7).

Question 3 – How is the achievement of these intentions demonstrated?

In the self-evaluation report you explain the system of assessment, testing and examination (ESG 1.3, 1.7):

- the types of assessment used in relation to the intended learning outcomes, the learning process and the learning content (validity);
- the methods of quality assurance regarding testing (validity and reliability);
- the way in which the types of assessment are communicated (transparency);
- the involvement of external parties in assessment, testing and examination.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the achieved quality of the dissertations (master's theses, bachelor's theses, internship reports, ...), giving attention to following aspects (ESG 1.3):

- the content and concept of the dissertation;
- the position of the dissertation in the programme and the workload related to it;
- the monitoring of the level of quality of the dissertation;
- the process for preparation and supervision related to the dissertation;
- the cooperation between students and researchers;
- the assessment process related to the dissertation.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the employability of graduates in the current labour market or their progression to a consecutive study programme (ESG 1.3, 1.7):

- the preparation of graduates for entry into the professional field;
- the employment profile of graduates;
- the relevant sectors of employment;
- the content and level of employment;
- the contribution of the programme towards their current employment;
- the appreciation of graduates by the professional field.

This question is supported by an annex that contains a sample of final product (such as bachelor's theses, master's theses and portfolios) on the basis of which the panel can assess the level achieved by graduates.

In the context of a review of a short learning experience, you should also explain:

- how learners' achieved qualifications are documented and maintained (ESG 1.7).

Question 4 – How is the programme investing in continuous quality enhancement?

In the self-evaluation report you explain the QA policy and the related starting points (ESG 1.1, 1.7):

- the instruments and systems used, highlighting the periodicity and the systematics;
- the verifiable targets and how these targets are realised.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the improvement measures taken (ESG 1.1, 1.8):

- the recently implemented actions for improvement, including the allocation of resources, the allocation of responsibilities, planning and follow-up;
- the attention paid to recent educational developments;
- the way in which the previous assessment results were followed up (ESG 1.9, 1.10).

In the self-evaluation report you explain the involvement of internal and external stakeholders and external and independent peers and experts (ESG 1.1):

- the methods of consultation within the programme;
- the involvement of students, alumni and staff;
- the involvement of the professional and the disciplinary fields.

In the self-evaluation report you explain the accessibility of the information about the quality of the programme:

- the way in which information about the quality of the programme is publicly accessible (ESG 1.8, 1.9).

This question is supported by an annex with relevant minutes and reports of consultative bodies evidencing the programme's operation and stakeholder engagement.

In the context of a review of a short learning experience, you should also explain:

- how transparent information is provided on the stackability, recognition and portability of the learning experience (ESG 1.7).

Conclusion

In the conclusion you summarise the main strengths and the working points of the programme, as well as the fundamental future policy options and ambitions of the programme.

Update self-evaluation report

In case important developments have occurred between the time of the submission of the self-evaluation report and the site visit, you can provide an update to the panel. This update is limited to a maximum of five A4 pages and must be available to the panel prior to the start of the site visit.