PEER REVIEW ASSESSMENT TOOL

Evaluating phase 4 of the quality cycle and improving the Peer Review process

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

What is the Peer Review Assessment tool?

The Peer Review Assessment tool is a product of the project "Peer Review Impact"[1] which seeks to promote the use of findings generated in the Peer Review thus enhancing the overall impact of Peer Review on the reviewed VET provider. The main users will be VET Providers who have already conducted a Peer Review.

The Peer Review Assessment tool aims to support these VET providers in their efforts to follow-up on the Peer Review and ensure that the Peer Review has a positive effect by providing a framework for assessing phase 4 of the Peer Review. Additionally, it also helps to determine the quality of the Peer Review process as a whole in order to improve the Peer Review process. The Peer Review Assessment tool thus supports a metaevaluation of the Peer Review and an evaluation of its impact in "phase 5" of the Peer Review (cf. Peer Review Impact Guidelines p. 10 and 16).

Peer Review Assessment tool

➡ assessing phase 4 of the Peer Review „Putting plans into action"
➡ determining impacts of the Peer Review
➡ evaluating and improving the whole Peer Review process

Phase 5 Review

• Evaluation of the Peer Review process and assessment oft he impact of the Peer Review
• Improvement of the process

The Peer Review Assessment tool is complementary to the "Peer Review Impact Guidelines" developed in the project "Peer Review Impact" and to the "European Peer Review Manual for initial VET"[2] developed in the three earlier European Peer Review projects.[3]

It is based on the research and reporting guidelines used during a case study analysis of 14 transnational Peer Reviews at the beginning of the "Peer Review Impact" project [4]. The research guidelines and questionnaires were reviewed and adapted to the terminology, information needs and capacities of VET providers in order to enable them to conduct their own assessment of the Peer Review carried out in their institution.

What can the Peer Review Assessment tool be used for?

The guide leads through an assessment of the Peer Review process including measures and activities undertaken as a result of the Peer Review and their impacts. While institutional

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[1] LdV TOI Peer Review Impact, 2009–2011, 2009-1-FI1-LEO05-01584

[2] Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria; Lassnigg, Lorenz; Stöger, Eduard; de Ridder, Willem; Strahm, Peter; Strahm, Elisabeth; Koski, Leena; Stalker, Bill; Hollstein, Rick; Allulli, Giorgio; Kristensen, Ole Bech (2007): European Peer Review Manual for initial VET. Vienna, June 2007.

[3] Peer Review in initial VET, AT/04/C/F/TH-82000, 2004-2007; Peer Review Extended, LE-78CQAF, EAC/32/06/13, 2007; Peer Review Extended II, LLP-LdV/TOI/2007/AT/0011, 2007-2009

[4] Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria (2010): Peer Review Impact Analysis Report. Analysis of 14 transnational European Peer Reviews carried out in eight European countries 2006-2009. Final Report, LdV TOI Project "Peer Review Impact, Vienna.

preconditions and the quality of the Peer Review are also taken into account in this endeavour, the main focus lies on what happened after the Peer Review and how the results of the Peer Review were used to engender improvement and change.

Administration ex-post or ex-ante

The main function of the assessment guide lies in the (meta)evaluation of the Peer Review some time after the Peer Review has been conducted. In addition, the Peer Review Assessment tool can also be employed proactively during the planning phase of the Peer Review.

So the Peer Review Assessment tool can be used
- "ex-post" to determine the quality of the Peer Review and the follow-up process and to investigate and assess effects or
- "ex-ante" to highlight important factors and activities to be considered when planning and implementing a Peer Review.

Timing

If the assessment is conducted ex-post, timing is important:
- If the quality of the Peer Review process including the follow-up in phase 4 is to be investigated, the assessment should take place half a year to a year after the Peer Review: Should the assessment be postponed to a later date, people involved might not remember the Peer Review precisely and students – the ultimate beneficiaries – might even have left the VET Provider already.
- If an assessment of the impacts is conducted, the time frame must in some cases be extended depending on how fast the improvements concerned take effect in the institution. Especially when long-term effects are under investigation, it may be conducive to carry out the metaevaluation of the quality of the Peer Review first (i.e. up to one year after the Peer Review) and then follow-up with an investigation of the impacts later on (e.g. two years after the Peer Review).

Primarily for internal use – possibility for external comparisons

The assessment tool is primarily meant for internal use in the VET provider. Main users will be managers (directors, principals, department heads etc.), quality managers, quality teams and/or Peer Review facilitators.

If comparison with other institutions is sought, however, the assessment tool may furnish a common grid ensuring comparability of assessment. Comparison may be initiated by VET providers. Additionally, in cases where the Peer Reviews are funded and supported through an agency, the grid can also serve as a point of departure for common monitoring and evaluation.

Formative and summative function

If used ex-post, the guide can support two purposes. It may have a "formative" function stimulating reflection and learning with a view to improving the Peer Review process for the future and tracing developments over time. Comparing experiences with other VET providers can enhance this learning process.

On the other hand, the guide can also assume a "summative" function assessing and comparing changes brought about by the Peer Review in terms of accountability of VET providers to different stakeholders like students, staff or funders.

How can the Peer Review Assessment tool be used?

Two parts with different foci

The guide encompasses two sections: The first part focuses on the preconditions of the Peer Review (phase 0) and the quality of the Peer Review in phases 1 to 3. Users can skip this part if they only want to assess what happened after the Peer Review Report had been handed in. They can go directly to Part II which deals with the assessment of phase 4, i.e. the dissemination of the results, follow-up, implementation of improvement measures, and the effects of the Peer Review.

Quantitative and qualitative assessment

The Peer Review Assessment tool offers a quantitative and qualitative assessment grid: Each question should be rated on a five-point scale ("very much" to "not at all") which will be merged to an assessment profile of the overall process in the end (see 9. Assessment profile). In addition, qualitative comments are asked for to shed light on the circumstances and the factors (positive and/or negative) which led to the rating.

Depending on the needs of the institution, a quick check can be carried out using only the quantitative assessment, or a more thorough qualitative investigation can be conducted. In order to fully benefit from the assessment in terms of learning and organisation development, it is recommended to include qualitative comments: They will indicate why things went well (or not so well) thus providing a basis for future improvements.

Assessment process

It is up to the VET provider to conceive and implement the assessment process. Depending on time, resources and aims (in-depth investigations vs. quick check) different options can be chosen. The assessment may be carried out e.g.
- by a single person (e.g. the director or the quality manager)
- by a small group (e.g. director with Peer Review facilitator and quality team)
- in a process which involves large(r) parts of the institution.

Basis for the assessment should be an analysis of the documentation created throughout the Peer Review and its follow-up in phase 4. Concerning the consideration of personal experiences and views, the assessment can be based 1) mainly on the recollection of the people involved in the assessment (and their perception of how others experienced the Peer Review) for a quick check or 2) on additional data on the Peer Review process and its follow-up gathered within the institution (e.g. through questionnaires, personal interviews, focus groups) for richer and more comprehensive feedback. A short description of the process should be given at the beginning of the assessment (I Basic Data) to ensure transparency.

Different uses of evaluation

Within the Peer Review Impact project, a distinction was made between
- a "formal instrumental use" of Peer Review findings – i.e. the official follow-up – and
- other more "informal uses" like conceptual use of finding – enhancing ones understanding – or learning through various inputs gleaned during the Peer Review.

Informal uses encompass e.g. learning about evaluation and developing evaluative thinking, widening ones perspectives or obtaining useful practical information from the Peers during the process (not only during the feedback session, but also during interviews etc.). These uses can be considered spin-offs of the process ("process use") and depend to a large extent on "exposure", i.e. the participation of larger parts of the staff in the Peer Review.

Both instrumental and conceptual/process uses have been taken into consideration in the assessment guide. In order to assess individual (process) uses of evaluation and the impacts they have, a more comprehensive assessment must take place in which staff are encouraged to describe their experiences and report on what kinds of changes they have made in their daily practice following the Peer Review.

PEER REVIEW ASSESSMENT

Basic data

To be filled out by all users to ensure that the Peer Review can be identified and basic data is available, i.e. for comparisons (over time, with other VET providers)

Responsible staff	Name
Director	
Other managers responsible	
Peer Review Facilitator	
Other persons responsible (and function), if applicable	
Peer Review follow-up assessment carried out by	

Scope of Peer Review

☐ Review of entire institution	☐ Review of part of institution which?

Quality Areas:

Time Frame

Date of Peer Review:
Date of Peer Review follow-up assessment:

Relevant changes in personnel since the Peer Review, if any:

Peer Review follow-up assessment process

How was the Peer Review follow-up assessment process carried out? (e.g. document analysis, questionnaires, interviews/focus groups, group assessment)

Who was involved (list)?
Possible involved staff and students
- Management: Name, gender, function
- Facilitator: Name, gender, subject, additional function, if applicable
- Quality manager/quality team: Name, gender, subject, function*
- Educational staff involved in Peer Review:
  Name, gender, subject, additional function, if applicable
- Other Staff (administrative/technical) involved: Name, gender, function
- Educational staff (teachers/counsellors) not involved in Peer Review:
  Name, gender, subject, function
- Other Staff not involved (administrative/technical): Name, gender, function
- Union representative: Name, gender, subject, additional function, if applicable
- Students: Name, gender, study programme, form/class

List of documents and sources used

PART I: PRECONDITIONS AND QUALITY OF PEER REVIEW

Fill out this part if you want to reflect on
- *preconditions in your institution and*
- *the quality of the Peer Review (phases 1-3)*
If you only want to assess the follow-up, please continue with Part II.

1. Organisational features

Commitment and attitudes

1.1 Was the responsible management fully committed to the Peer Review, particular to possible changes resulting from the Peer Review?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments (esp. if commitment between managers varied)

1.2 Was there a positive attitude towards change in the institution at the time of the Peer Review?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

1.3 Were there (hidden or open) conflicts between staff hindering the utilisation of the Peer Review results (i.e. conflicting opinions, antagonistic "parties" within the staff with relevance to the Peer Review)?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes: Were these conflicts tackled in a constructive way during the Peer Review and its follow-up?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

Support for change

1.4 Was the Peer Review (including the quality areas chosen) in line with the overall quality strategy of the institution?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

1.5 Was there a pressure to improve in one (or more) quality areas?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If yes, which kind and where did it come from?

1.6 Was there a systematic process for change established in the institution at the time of the Peer Review?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What kind of systematic process was this? How did it work? Other comments

1.7 Were their enough time and resources to tackle the results of the Peer Review?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Were there other projects and activities going on at the time? How did the Peer Review fit in with those projects and activities? Were there synergies? Or did they distract attention and resources from the Peer Review and its results? Other comments

Purpose and intended users

1.8 Was a conscious decision taken for Peer Review as a formative, i.e. improvement-oriented evaluation by the responsible managers?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

1.9   Were the "intended users" of the Peer Review, i.e. the people responsible for follow-up of the Peer Review, clearly defined before the Peer Review?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

2. Quality of the Peer Review (phases 1-3)

Expertise and competences of Peer Team

2.1 Do what extent did the expertise and competences of the Peer Team fulfil the requirements?
(i.e. necessary expertise and institutional backgrounds)

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

Information and involvement of staff

2.2 To what extent was the formative function of Peer Review, i.e. Peer Review as a procedure for stimulating improvement and not as a control instrument, known and accepted throughout the institution?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

2.3 To what extent was staff involved in preparatory activities concerning the self-evaluation/ self-assessment (if applicable) and the self-report?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

Relevance and understanding of quality areas

2.4 Were the quality areas and special evaluation questions chosen relevant to the intended users?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
e.g. overall relevance of quality areas to staff and other stakeholders at the time, esp. for those intended to follow-up on the results

2.5 Did the Peers have a clear understanding of the quality areas and specific evaluation questions (if applicable)

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
e.g: How clear was the self-report? In what other ways was a common understanding of the quality areas and specific evaluation questions ensured?

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Peer Visit

2.6 How appropriate was the agenda of the Peer Visit for evaluating the Quality areas/specific evaluation questions?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
E.g. the quality areas and specific evaluation questions were tackled in an appropriate manner (enough time allotted for each area/evaluation question, all relevant questions were covered; appropriate methods were chosen; relevant stakeholders were involved and the instruments developed were appropriate

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2.7 To what extent were staff and other stakeholders involved in the Peer Visit?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
i.e. substantiated assessment on the extent to which relevant staff was involved in terms of
• A rough percentage
• To what extent important opinion leaders (managers, unions etc.) were involved
• To what extent a representative cross-section of staff was involved?

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2.8 To what extent could staff voice their experiences and opinions during the interviews?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

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Feedback from Peers

2.9 How useful was the feedback provided by the Peers?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Give a substantiated assessment on how useful, i.e. credible, clear, relevant (for further action) and acceptable the feedback had been. Distinguish between the oral feedback and the Peer Review Report, if necessary.

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PART II: FOLLOW-UP AND IMPACT

3. Dissemination

3.1 To what extent was the Peer Review feedback disseminated to the intended users?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Consider participation in the feedback session, distribution of Peer Review Report,
other dissemination activities

4. Follow-up

4.1 To what extent was there an official follow-up to the Peer Review i.e. were measures undertaken to
act upon the findings and recommendations of the Peer Review?

Consider the scope and intensity of activities

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
In what areas were activities undertaken, to what degree did they cover the quality areas reviewed

4.2 How systematic were these follow-up activities?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Were actions prioritised and integrated into general planning? Were specific objectives and
targets defined? Were actions planned and equipped with personnel and other resources?

4.3 To what extent was the follow-up supported by management?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Consider personal promotion by management, definition of clear responsibilities, competences of
responsible staff and resources provided.

4.4 To what extent was the follow-up monitored?

Describe how the VET provider monitored the follow-up:

5. Other uses (process use, conceptual use, informal mutual learning)

5.1 How much did people involved in the Peer Review learn during/from this experience – apart from the official follow-up?

Very much   **Not at all**

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Consider different kinds of uses/learning: Eye-openers, better understanding; new perspectives, new ideas, new procedures, new materials etc.
Describe in what areas they occurred (e.g. teaching and learning, quality management and evaluation, VET management, personal and professional development)
And analyse the (groups of) people who showed higher or lesser degrees of this kind of learning (who were they? How much were they involved during the Peer Review?)

6. Improvements in the quality areas chosen

6.1 To what extent have the planned activities led to improvements?

Very much   **Not at all**

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Shortly describe the improvements

6.2 How much impact have these improvements had so far?

Very much   **Not at all**

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Describe what kind of impacts (e.g. teachers' behaviours and attitudes; pupils'/students' behaviours, attitudes, learning achievement, etc…..) have been determined and how they were assessed:

7. Effects concerning quality management and evaluation

7.1 To what extent has Peer Review promoted a quality culture and/or capacity building in evaluation?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Give a full account, if applicable, and be as specific as possible:

7.2 To what extent has Peer Review been used further?

Very much				Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Further use of Peer Review may include e.g.
- Conduct of further (national) Peer Reviews
- Peer Training of staff
- Staff members involved in Peer Review of other organisations as Peers (national and transnational Peer Reviews
- Establishment a permanent cooperation (or network) on Peer Review
- Peer Reviews as a part of the systematic quality assurance/management system

Give a full account, if applicable, and be as specific as possible:

8. Other (intended and unintended) effects

8.1 To what extent were other positive effects prompted by the Peer Review?

E.g. improvements in quality areas not tackled during the Peer Review; establishment of new contacts and new cooperation schemes (for internationalisation see below 8.2) etc.

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Give a full account, if applicable, and be as specific as possible:

8.2 If you conducted a transnational Peer Review: To what extent were positive effects concerning internationalisation prompted by the Peer Review?

Effects may be new transnational cooperation, internationalisation of the institution etc.

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments
Give a full account, if applicable, and be as specific as possible:

8.3 Have negative effects resulted from the Peer Review?

Very much   Not at all

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments

OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

9 Assessment profile

Part I

Rating/Question	Very much				Not at all	Not relevant
1. Organisational features *Commitment and attitudes*						
Commitment of management to Peer Review, particular to possible resulting changes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Positive attitude towards change in the institution at the time of the Peer Review	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Possible conflicts tackled in a constructive way	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support for change						
Peer Review in line with quality strategy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Pressure to improve	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Systematic process for change established	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Time and resources to tackle results	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Purpose and intended users						
Conscious decision for Peer Review as improvement-oriented evaluation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
"Intended users" clearly defined before the Peer Review	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Quality of the Peer Review (Phases 1-3) *Expertise and competences of Peer Team*						
Expertise and competences of Peer Team fulfil requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Information and involvement of staff						
Formative function known and accepted	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Staff involved in preparatory activities and self-assessment/self-report	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Rating/Question	Very much				Not at all	Not relevant
Relevance and understanding of quality areas						
Quality areas relevant to intended users	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Peers have clear understanding of quality areas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Peer Visit						
Peer Visit agenda appropriate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Involvement of staff and other stakeholders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Experiences and opinions of staff voiced during interviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Feedback from Peers						
Usefulness of feedback from Peers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Part II

Rating/Question	Very much				Not at all	Not relevant
3. Dissemination						
Dissemination of feedback	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Follow-up						
Official follow-up implemented	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Systematic procedure for follow-up	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Support from management for follow-up	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Monitoring of follow-up	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Other uses						
Learning of participants in Peer Review	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Rating/Question	Very much				Not at all	Not relevant
6. Improvements in the quality areas chosen						
Improvements achieved in chosen quality areas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Impact of these improvements so far	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7. Effects concerning QM and evaluation						
Quality culture and evaluation capacity promoted	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Peer Review used further	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Other (intended and unintended) effects						
Positive effects in other quality areas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Internationalisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Negative effects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	