



# **The EQAVET Network's approach**

**to system level Peer Reviews:**

**A manual**

*October 2021*

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## ○○○ Introduction

### What is the purpose of this Manual?

This Manual has been developed as part of the methodology and procedure to carry out EQAVET Peer Reviews at VET system level and is intended to **assist you in designing and implementing peer reviews in your respective country context**.

The Manual presents the main principles of EQAVET Peer Reviews on system level; provides concrete guidance and tools for National Reference Points (NRPs) representatives to get familiar with the phases and practical steps each phase that a Peer Review entails; states the roles and responsibilities of the main parties involved; and provides the NRPs with the tools that can assist them in preparing and implementing Peer Reviews. The Manual can also be used by the broader EQAVET Network to get acquainted with the EQAVET Network's approach to system level Peer Reviews.

### What is a Peer Review?

The **2020 VET Recommendation**<sup>1</sup> defines a peer review as *'a type of voluntary mutual learning activity with the objective to support the improvement and transparency of quality assurance arrangements at system level not leading to accreditation procedures, based on a specific methodology to be developed by the European Network for quality assurance in vocational education and training'*.<sup>2</sup>

Peer Reviews aim to support the EQAVET network wide process of taking stock of "what is there" in terms of quality assuring national VET systems, where the main challenges are and decide how to take it forward in the EQAVET context – main strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

The Peer Review process enables the country hosting the peer review to reflect on its own practice, using peers, **social partners and other stakeholders** as critical friends to draw out the lessons and identify areas for learning and further improvement to meet the current and future challenges. Ultimately, Peer Reviews aim to reinforce mutual trust between the EU countries and promote further collaboration and networking between the EQAVET members.

### Who is it for?

The Manual is written for EQAVET NRPs interested in engaging in EQAVET Peer Reviews at a VET system level. The Manual can be useful both for NRPs taking the role of host, and also for NRPs acting as peer reviewers. As such, the Manual shares the benefits of participating in a Peer Review both, for hosts and peer reviewers:

- ▶ **NRPs acting as hosts** benefit from analytically self-assess the selected quality assurance measure, reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their quality assurance system and become acquainted with an external perspective and gain experience in receiving and acting feedback as well as learning from other Member States' practices **and the experience from social partners and other stakeholders**;
- ▶ **NRPs acting as peer reviewers** will get a chance to learn national quality assurance approaches and measures from other Member States, receive advice and engage in mutual learning with other peers and representatives from the host country.

Overall, the Manual outlines the main considerations in developing the peer reviews, proposes an EQAVET specific approach and serves as a practical manual or 'toolbox' that can assist the EQAVET Network members in preparing and implementing peer reviews.

1 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202(01)&from=EN)

2 Cf. footnote No 36

## How is the Manual structured and how do I navigate around the information?

The Manual is designed in a 'modular' way, so that NRPs and their representatives can get a thorough understanding of the preparation process to implement and participate in a Peer Review.

**Section 1 sets out the main principles of EQAVET Peer Reviews**, including a Peer Review definition, the aims and benefits of the peer review process for all kind of participants.

**Setting up the scope of the Peer Reviews** can follow two main approaches, these are:

- ▶ **Whole system approach**, covering the entire national (or regional) VET quality system and the whole EQAVET framework (four stages of the quality cycle, indicative descriptors at the VET system level and performance against common indicators).
- ▶ **Focused approach**, leading to less comprehensive scrutiny of the whole system.

Concerning the **nature of participation**, either an '**open-door**' or a '**closed-door**' approach can be followed. In some instances, external stakeholders and/or independent experts are also invited to the process and peer review results are usually made public ('open-door' approach) while in closed-door approaches, only institutional peers participate, and outcomes remain confidential.

To support the implementation of successful peer reviews, **the EQAVET Secretariat will support the training of EQAVET NRPs to act as hosts and peer reviewers.**

**Ahead of the Peer Reviews, regular training sessions will be offered in the form of webinars**, to explain the Peer Review process, the different roles and expectations from the hosts and peer reviewers, the work to be undertaken, the outcomes and follow up to be expected and the deadlines and process.

**Section 2 sets out the phases and steps of peer reviews.** The Peer Review process can be broken down in four main phases:

- ▶ **Phase 1: Preparation of the peer review (preparatory analysis)**
- ▶ **Phase 2: Peer review meeting**
- ▶ **Phase 3: Peer feedback**
- ▶ **Phase 4: Follow-up**

Each phase entails different steps and includes practical information, tools and templates and signposts for further information.

This Manual is developed for people in a variety of roles. You can navigate around the information in various ways depending on your role.

The Peer Review phases, and their steps are summarised in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: Overview of steps in the peer review process



Source: ICF

The sections and their contents are summarized in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1 - Content of Peer Review Methodological Manual**

| SECTION                                   | CONTENT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Main principles of EQAVET peer reviews | <p>Aims and benefits of the peer review process</p> <p>Scope of the peer reviews: focused approach</p> <p>Nature of participation: voluntary and closed doors</p> <p>Training of the peer reviewers</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 2. Phases and steps of peer reviews       | <p><b>Phase 1: preparation of the Peer Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Step 1: NRP volunteers for a peer review and selects peers</li> <li>▶ Step 2: Host develops the peer review concept</li> <li>▶ Step 3: Host prepares the host country self-assessment</li> <li>▶ Step 4: Briefing and preparation of peer reviewers</li> </ul> <p><b>Phase 2: Peer Review Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Step 5: Initial peer discussion</li> <li>▶ Step 6: Peer Review Meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>Phase 3: Step 7: Peer feedback</b></p> <p><b>Phase 4: Follow-up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Step 8: Review of peer review results and process)</li> <li>▶ Step 9: Developing an Action Plan, implementation of change process</li> <li>▶ Step 10: Self-assessment of the impact of the peer review</li> </ul> |

## ☰ 1. Section 1: Main principles of EQAVET peer reviews

In this section, you will learn:

- ▶ How we define a Peer Review
- ▶ The main aims of the Peer Review process
- ▶ The benefits of participating in a Peer Review
- ▶ How to set up the scope and nature of the Peer



The 2020 VET Recommendation<sup>3</sup> calls for the introduction of voluntary EU level peer reviews of quality assurance in VET at system level. It is stipulated that one of the tasks of the Quality Assurance National Reference Points is to *'engage in EU level peer reviews of quality assurance to enhance the transparency and consistency of quality assurance arrangements, and to reinforce trust between the Member States'*.<sup>4</sup>

In the Recommendation,

**a Peer Review is defined as** *'a type of voluntary mutual learning activity with the objective to support the improvement and transparency of quality assurance arrangements at system level not leading to accreditation procedures, based on a specific methodology to be developed by the European Network for quality assurance in vocational education and training'*.<sup>5</sup>



The methodology outlined in the following sections is based on these definitions and assumptions, and aims, in its final version, to constitute the EQAVET Network's joint methodology for system level peer reviews.

### 1.1. Aims and benefits of the peer review process

The main aim of the peer review process is to support the country hosting the peer review (=the host country) to reflect on its practice of quality assuring the national VET system. Peers from other countries will act as critical friends and provide external feedback, based on specific 'evaluation questions' developed by the host country. To prepare the process, the host country will reflect critically on (aspects of) their own VET quality assurance system by writing a self-assessment report that reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of QA systems at national level, against the 'evaluation questions', using the EQAVET framework. This report is shared with a selected group of peers and experts, who are invited to give feedback. The peers will read the host country self-assessment report, visit the host country institution, and give feedback on the selected quality assurance measures during the Peer Review meeting. Jointly, the peer reviewers and the host country will identify areas for learning and further improvement to meet the current and future challenges. This can reinforce mutual trust between the EU countries and promote further collaboration and networking between the EQAVET members.

Peer reviews will take place in a member country of the EQAVET network. Experts of the EQAVET **National Reference Points (EQAVET NRPs) are the direct target group of EQAVET peer reviews and they will take on the role of the host, on behalf of their institution, or act as a peer.** This ensures that VET quality assurance expertise is shared between EQAVET Network members: peer reviews are a chance to support the process of taking stock of "what is there" in the Member States, identifying the main strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in the national QA systems. This may allow to draw conclusions for EQAVET implementation at European level.

There are a number of important benefits to be realised from the participation in the peer review both for the hosts and peer reviewers.

<sup>3</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202(01)&from=EN)

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Article 18

<sup>5</sup> Cf. footnote No 36

| The National Reference Point that takes the role of host gets opportunities to (and thus benefits from):                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Experts of the National Reference Points taking part in peer reviews, acting as peer reviewers, will get opportunities to:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ analytically self-assess the selected quality assurance measure by writing a self-assessment report, together with an external expert;</li> <li>▶ reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their quality assurance system by collecting feedback from peers and engaging in a mutual learning process with the peers;</li> <li>▶ become acquainted with an external perspective (through the feedback from peers), and gain experience in receiving and actioning feedback;</li> <li>▶ receive advice and discover good practices to further develop the quality assurance system.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ learn about the national quality assurance approach and selected quality assurance measure(s) presented by the host country;</li> <li>▶ receive advice and discover good practices to further develop quality assurance approaches and measures in their own countries;</li> <li>▶ practise giving critical, but supportive and constructive feedback;</li> <li>▶ engage in mutual learning with peers and representatives from the host country.</li> </ul> |

To ensure the focus of the peer review process, **a maximum of 8-10 participants should take part in the peer review.**

## 1.2. Scope of the peer reviews: focused approach

As stated above, the **2020 VET Recommendation** calls for peer reviews that focus on quality assurance arrangements at system level.

For the EQAVET network, **‘a whole system approach’** covers the entire national (or regional) VET quality system and the whole EQAVET framework (four stages of the quality cycle, indicative descriptors at the VET system level and performance against common indicators). Depending on the country and the VET system, such arrangements could be very complex, which raises the question of how the scope of the peer review should be defined.

In contrast, **a focused approach** is likely to be more feasible to implement but would lead to less comprehensive scrutiny of the whole system. The focused approach could cover specific aspects of QA system that the host country would like to review and possibly reform, which are not working as well or where open questions on their effectiveness remain, using external assessment as inspiration /check for their further development.

**Given the diversity of situations in the EU countries with respect to their QA systems, the peer reviews will in most cases take a focused approach, with certain aspects of QA system being subject to the peer review. The decision which aspects of QA system to peer review will be for the host country to propose as the host country will determine the scope of the peer review.**

The host country will be asked to formulate specific questions in relation to the focus topic that they would like to discuss with their peers. To ensure that the peer reviews are based on clear ‘evaluation questions’ that are jointly understood, the EQAVET Secretariat will develop a template to support the host country in formulating these ‘evaluation questions’ (See box 2.4).



### 1.3. Nature of participation: voluntary and closed doors

For the EQAVET peer reviews, most host countries are expected to choose the closed-door approach: peers will be representatives of other NRPs and the details of the results will remain confidential to the participants. The outcomes of the peer review will be shared with the members of EQAVET network in a form of a summary report by the host country capturing the main points from the peer review.



As set out in the 2020 VET Recommendation, participation in the EQAVET peer reviews is voluntary and it is up to the concerned EU country to manifest interest.

Existing peer review concepts apply either an ‘open-door’ or a ‘closed-door’ approach. In open-door approaches, besides peers, external stakeholders and/or independent experts are also invited to the process and peer review results are usually made public. This ensures fresh perspectives from externals, which can challenge the shared wisdom of peers. In closed-door approaches, only institutional peers participate, and outcomes remain confidential. This might generate the feeling of safe space, which in turn may lead to more openness and willingness to discuss less positive aspects of the focus topic. The risk, however, is to create closed feedback loops without any external challenge and would lead to a limitation of the benefits for the wider circle of peers.

For the EQAVET peer reviews, most host countries are expected to choose the closed-door approach: peers will be representatives of other NRPs and the details of the results will remain confidential to the participants. The outcomes of the peer review will be shared with the members of EQAVET network in a form of a summary report by the host country capturing the main points from the peer review. This will enable the learning from the peer review to be shared within the EQAVET network as well as provide a basis for follow up of peer review outcomes.

However, some host countries may decide to publish the results of the peer review. Furthermore, the host country can also decide to invite the external stakeholders, such as social partners, to the peer review process, if this would add value to the peer review (depending on the national context). In addition, observers can be nominated (for example, the representative of European Commission).

The exact way to go about will hence vary. A ‘**Memorandum of Understanding**’ (MoU) will specify the basic (confidentiality) agreements for every peer review (incl. questions of data privacy etc.). This MoU will be completed and signed by all participating parties ahead of the peer review.

### 1.4. Training of the peer reviewers

To support the implementation of successful peer reviews, **the EQAVET Secretariat will support the training of EQAVET NRPs to act as hosts and peer reviewers.**

**Ahead of the peer reviews, regular training sessions will be offered in the form of webinars,** to explain the process of peer review, roles and expectations from the hosts and peer reviewers, the work to be undertaken, outcomes and follow up to be expected and the deadlines and process. These webinars will be recorded and made available at the EQAVET Teams space.

## 2. Section 2: Phases and steps of peer reviews

Given that the peer reviews in the context of EQAVET Network will target strategic aspects of QA systems,

peer reviews will adopt an approach, consisting of four steps: preparatory analysis (incl. initial discussions with peers), actual peer review meeting, peer feedback and a follow up phase.



Bringing the above suggestions together, a four -phase process for a peer review process will be based on the following steps, as shown in the diagram below.

### Overview of steps in the peer review process



Source: ICF

Across the phases of the peer review, the host country and peer reviewers will have the following roles.

#### Box 2.1 Main aspects of the host country role

An EQAVET NRP will take the role of the host country. The host country will get feedback from EQAVET peers on their quality assurance approach and the selected quality assurance measure to be reviewed within the peer review. The host country will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Select the QA system aspect to be reviewed in the peer review process.
- Prepare the concept note for the peer review.
- Prepare the MoU, sign it and request peer reviewers to sign it.
- Prepare the self-assessment report.
- Prepare the peer review agenda.
- Organise the initial discussion meeting.
- Organise the peer review meeting.
- Identify the key feedback from peer reviewers and prepare an action plan.
- Take responsibility for taking action on the results of the peer feedback, deciding how and which peer feedback will be used for further improvements of the selected quality assurance measure.
- Implement the action plan.
- Inform the EQAVET Network on the progress in implementing the action plan.
- Respect the confidentiality of peer review process and outcomes.

**Box 2.2 Note on the role of the EQAVET Secretariat**

The role of the EQAVET Secretariat is to support the host country in organising the peer review.

In consultation with the host country, the EQAVET Secretariat will:

- Identify and select the desired peer reviewers
- Identify and engage the external expert who will moderate the peer review meeting, brief and support them in their assessment work
- Develop a concept note, capturing the main aspects to take account during the process
- Organise an initial peer assessment session and assist them in the process
- Coordinate the preparation and organisation of the Peer Review
- Prepare the resource page and supporting documentation and material
- Provide technical and administrative support before, during and after the Peer Review, including the onboarding of participants
- Assist with the facilitation and chairing of the Peer Review

**Box 2.3 Note on the peer reviewer role**

Experts of EQAVET NRPs will take on the role of peers. **Their role is to give critical but constructive and supportive feedback on the quality assurance measure presented by the host country.** NRP peers are persons who are equal to, or are on equal standing with the host country NRP - persons who are given feedback to. Peers are not expected to act in a judging or controlling way or manner. They should have a clear motivation to learn about the quality assurance approach of the host country and to engage in a reflective process, with the aim to give constructive and supportive feedback.

Peer reviewers will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Accept the invitation to become the peer reviewers
- Sign the MoU prepared by the host
- Read the concept note, the self-assessment report and the agenda prepared by the host
- Reflect on the key evaluation questions formulated by the host in relation to the status quo and recent developments in their own countries
- Prepare their peer feedback in advance of the peer review meeting, reflect on the main areas for discussion and reflection during the peer review meeting
- Actively participate and provide supportive and constructive feedback during the peer review meeting
- Work together with other peers to give collective peer feedback after the peer review meeting
- Assist the host country in preparation of its action plan to follow up the conclusions of the peer review
- Think about the transferability of what they have heard and seen in the peer review into their own national context
- Respect the confidentiality of peer review process and outcomes

## 2.1. Phase 1: Preparation of the peer review (duration 2-3 months)

There are **four steps related to the preparation phase**. The specific roles and responsibilities of the host and peer reviewers are detailed below.

### Phase 1: Roles and responsibilities of the host and peer reviewers

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Host</b></p>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Select the QA system aspect to be reviewed in the peer review procedure.</li> <li>▶ Prepare the concept note for the peer review.</li> <li>▶ Prepare the MoU, sign it and request peer reviewers to sign it.</li> <li>▶ Prepare the self-assessment report.</li> <li>▶ Prepare the peer review meeting agenda</li> <li>▶ Confirm the peer review meeting dates to participants</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                               |
| <p><b>Peer reviewers</b></p>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Accept the invitation to become the peer reviewers</li> <li>▶ Sign the MoU prepared by the host</li> <li>▶ Read the concept note, the self-assessment report and the agenda prepared by the host</li> <li>▶ Reflect on the key evaluation questions formulated by the host in relation to the status quo and recent developments in their own countries</li> <li>▶ Prepare their peer feedback in advance of the peer review meeting, reflect on the main areas for discussion and reflection during the peer review meeting</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>EQAVET Secretariat</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Support host country in the choice of QA system aspect to be reviewed</li> <li>▶ Identify and select the desired peer reviewers.</li> <li>▶ Identify and engage the external expert.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

### 2.1.1. Step 1: NRP volunteers for a peer review and selects peers

Host NRPs that volunteer for a peer review would come forward with a concrete idea of which aspect(s) of their QA system they would like to subject to a peer review (such as open questions requiring improvement)<sup>6</sup>. The template for this is provided below, with the box afterwards offering guidance on how to formulate appropriate evaluation questions for the peer review.

In order to ensure a beneficial and constructive peer review, the host country has to decide on one or more quality assurance system aspects that should be the focus of the peer review.

#### Box 2.4 Template to select the QA system aspect for the peer review

When selecting the aspect to be covered in the Peer Review, the host country should consider the following questions:



- ▶ Is there a quality assurance system aspect that urgently needs to be reviewed, because there have been problems with its implementation?
- ▶ Is there a quality assurance system aspect in an area undergoing reform that may also require updating or modernisation, for which peer feedback could be helpful?
- ▶ Is there a need for a new/renewed quality assurance system measure due to new developments (e.g. institutional change, increased VET provider autonomy, labour market change)?

In order to have some orientation and guidance in relation to the selection of a quality assurance aspect for the peer review, the host country can make reference to the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET.<sup>7</sup> Examples of this are provided in Box 2.4.

6 As the EAFA benchlearning exercise already covers the aspects of quality assurance in work-based learning and apprenticeships, the scope for avoiding potential duplication needs to be considered in selecting the focus for EQAVET peer reviews

7 [Overview - EQAVET](#)

**Box 2.5 Template to formulate key ‘evaluation questions’ (with examples of appropriate peer review questions)**

Host country will formulate its key evaluation questions for the peer review. The key questions will need to reflect the particular Quality Assurance (QA) system aspect chosen for the peer review process. The number of questions will depend on the context of the peer review, typically 3-5 evaluation questions should be formulated by the host country.

Below are indicative examples of questions to support host country in developing its own evaluation questions. The examples are made referring to the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET.<sup>8</sup>

| Quality criteria                                                                                                                        | Aspects of the VET system level to be included in the peer review (examples)                                                          | Evaluation questions (examples)                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Planning reflects a strategic vision shared by the relevant stakeholders and includes explicit goals/objectives, actions and indicators | One or several goals/objectives of VET for the medium and long term are being reformed                                                | Do the current VET goals/objectives fit the labour market needs?<br><br>Do we need new VET goals /objectives to reflect the latest labour market developments?                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                         | An information policy on the disclosure of quality results/outcomes requires revision                                                 | What new procedures should be incorporated into the new information policy?<br><br>What disclosure arrangements would work best reflecting the latest stakeholder positions?                                                          |
| Implementation plans are devised in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles                                      | The process of how the implementation plans are devised needs reform, including the consultation with stakeholders and new principles | What are the best new ways to involve stakeholders in developing implementation plans?<br><br>Which new principles should be added to the implementation plans reflecting the latest VET developments?                                |
|                                                                                                                                         | VET providers' responsibilities in the implementation process need to be reformed                                                     | How should the responsibilities of VET providers be re-allocated to maximise their participation?                                                                                                                                     |
| Evaluation of outcomes and processes is regularly carried out and supported by measurement                                              | The national/regional standards and processes for improving and assuring quality require reform                                       | How should the standards be updated to fit the new labour market needs?                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                                                                                                                         | Early warning system requires updating                                                                                                | What new processes and actors should be introduced into the early warning system?<br><br>What advice can you give us on improving the early warning system?                                                                           |
| Review                                                                                                                                  | Procedures, mechanisms and instruments for undertaking reviews, defined at all levels, need reform                                    | Do these procedures require updating reflecting the latest developments at the levels covered?<br><br>Which new, if any, procedures do we need?                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                         | Information on the outcomes of evaluation which is made publicly available requires reform                                            | How should the publicly available information be presented in the future to reflect the latest VET developments, VET provider and stakeholder needs?<br><br>Should certain information categories be changed or new categories added? |

<sup>8</sup> [Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training Text with EEA relevance \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32009R0650)

**Box 2.6 Template for the Mo U**

Memorandum of Understanding

Insert: Country, peer review title, indicate dates for peer review

We, the undersigned host and peer reviewers agree to the following principles and roles and responsibilities for the host and peer reviewers.

**Key principles of the peer review process**

The peer reviews will take a focused approach, with certain aspects of QA system being subject to the peer review. The decision which aspects of QA system to peer review will be for the host country to propose as the host country will determine the scope of the peer review.

Host countries are expected to adopt the closed-door approach: peers will be representatives of other NRPs and the details of the results will remain confidential to the participants. The outcomes of the peer review will be shared with the members of EQAVET network in a form of a summary report by the host country capturing the main points from the peer review. The results of the peer review will remain confidential to its participants.

**Roles and responsibilities of the host country:**

- Select the QA system aspect to be reviewed in the peer review procedure.
- Prepare the concept note for the peer review.
- Prepare the MoU, sign it and request peer reviewers to sign it.
- Prepare the self-assessment report.
- Prepare the peer review agenda.
- Organise the initial discussion meeting.
- Organise the peer review meeting.
- Identify the key feedback from peer reviewers and prepare an action plan.
- Take responsibility for taking action on the results of the peer feedback, deciding how and which peer feedback will be used for further improvements of the selected quality assurance measure.
- Implement the action plan.
- Report back to the EQAVET on the progress in implementing the action plan.
- Respect the confidentiality of peer review process and outcomes.

**Roles and responsibilities of the peer reviewers:**

- Accept the invitation to become the peer reviewers
- Sign the MoU prepared by the host
- Read the concept note, the self-assessment report and the agenda prepared by the host
- Reflect on the key evaluation questions formulated by the host in relation to the status quo and recent developments in their own countries
- Prepare their peer feedback in advance of the peer review meeting, reflect on the main areas for discussion and reflection during the peer review meeting
- Actively participate and provide supportive and constructive feedback during the peer review meeting
- Work together with other peers to give collective peer feedback after the peer review meeting
- Assist the host country in preparation of its action plan to follow up the conclusions of the peer review
- Think about the transferability of what they have heard and seen in the peer review into their own national context
- Respect the confidentiality of peer review process and outcomes

Signed

For the host: name, institution, signature

Peer reviewer 1: name, institution, signature

Peer reviewer 2: name, institution, signature

Peer reviewer 3: name, institution, signature

Peer reviewer 4: name, institution, signature

Peer reviewer 5: name, institution, signature

**2.1.2. Step 2: Host develops the peer review concept**

The host country will capture its initial thinking in the concept note for a particular peer review, which serves as a reference document for the peer review process. This note is sent by the host country to the peer reviewers, the European Commission and EQAVET Secretariat for information.

**Template for the concept note for the peer review (to be filled in by host country)**

Country, peer review title

**1. Name and contact information of the host country institution 0.5 page**

Name of the host member institution

Contact person (name and e-mail address)

Co-ordinator (name and e-mail address), if applicable

Date and venue of the Peer Review meeting, broad time schedule

**- 2. Basic information about the selected quality assurance measure 1-2 pages**

Title of the measure, its key characteristics

Key evaluation questions for the peer reviewers (see Box 2.4)

**- 3. Aims and purposes of the peer review for the host country 0.5 page**

**- 4. Main results and outcomes expected by the host country 0.5 page**

**- 5. Other national stakeholders to be involved in the peer review**

Host country NRP could decide to invite other national stakeholders, depending on the specific context of the peer review. They could have the opportunity to take part in the Peer Review meeting and be given the chance to ask questions or comment on the findings from the peer review. Depending on the focus of the peer review, it might be conducive to involve other national stakeholders and/or institutions at an early stage. Their collaboration might be needed when it comes to follow-up measures. Early involvement raises the chances for successful follow-up because commitment to change processes is fostered.

| Name of the national stakeholder | Institution | Email |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------|
|                                  |             |       |
|                                  |             |       |

**6. Peer reviewers**

| Name of the peer | Institution, country | Email |
|------------------|----------------------|-------|
|                  |                      |       |
|                  |                      |       |
|                  |                      |       |
|                  |                      |       |

**7. Overview of the main steps in the peer review**

| Key step                | Date |
|-------------------------|------|
| Self-assessment report  |      |
| Initial peer discussion |      |
| Peer review meeting     |      |
| Follow up               |      |

**8. External expert 0.5 page**

Name, institution, email

Key experience of the expert relevant to the peer review

**9. Further comments (if necessary)**

**10. Indicative agenda for the peer review meeting (see Box 2.9)**



As part of the concept note, the host country also prepares the agenda (indicatively) which will be included in the concept note for the peer review.

The Peer Review Meeting should normally take place over 1,5 days, involving presentations on the host country policy example and self-reflections, peer feedback and discussions with the peer reviewers. Overall, the event should be highly focused and interactive. The meeting agenda allows plenty of room for interaction and critical debate, rather than focusing on long, formal presentations from host or peer reviewers.

The Peer Review Meeting should normally take place over 1,5 days. A study visit with the peer reviewers could also be organised to show to the peers how the QA measure works in practice, for example to a VET provider or a QA centre.



To frame the agenda and help stimulate discussion, three or four key evaluation questions will underpin the PR agenda. The host country will develop the evaluation questions in advance for the meeting (see box 2.4).

Please find below a sample agenda for a PR, including a description of the role of host country representatives (as chairs and speakers) and peer reviewers. Please note that this agenda is for illustration purposes only; as the host country will need to tailor it to the specific peer review.

### Box 2.7 Template for the Agenda of the peer review meeting (to be filled in by host country)

| Day 1: Key questions: Evaluation Questions 1 and 2 – to be specified by the host country |                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09:30 –<br>10:00                                                                         | Welcome (host country) (up to 10 minutes)                                                                                           |
|                                                                                          | Rationale of the peer review - Putting the QA measure in the wider context of national VET policy (host country) (up to 10 minutes) |
|                                                                                          | Scene setting (host) (up to 10 minutes)                                                                                             |
|                                                                                          | Explaining the aims, objectives and format for the 1.5 days                                                                         |
|                                                                                          | Highlighting the key evaluation questions                                                                                           |
| 10:00 –<br>10:30                                                                         | Presentation of on the host country QA measure reviewed                                                                             |
|                                                                                          | Presentation from the host country NRP                                                                                              |
|                                                                                          | Presentation from the host country external expert                                                                                  |
| 10:30 –<br>11:00                                                                         | Discussion and initial reflection from the peer reviewers                                                                           |
| 11:00 –<br>11:30                                                                         | <b>Coffee break</b>                                                                                                                 |
| 11:30 –<br>13:00                                                                         | Evaluation question 1: group discussion between the host and peer reviewers to present their views and comments.                    |
| 13:00 –<br>14:00                                                                         | <b>Lunch</b>                                                                                                                        |
| 14:00 –<br>15:30                                                                         | Evaluation question 2: group discussion between the host and peer reviewers to present their views and comments.                    |
| 15:30 –<br>16:00                                                                         | <b>Coffee break</b>                                                                                                                 |

|                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>16:00 – 16:30</b>                                                                         | Day 1 wrap-up<br>Short wrap-up session, bringing everyone together to take stock of the key outcomes/lessons/ outstanding items from Day 1 as a springboard into Day 2                                                                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                              | <b>Optional evening activity</b> (to be considered by the host country)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Day 2: Key questions: Evaluation questions 3 and 4 – to be specified the host country</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>09.00</b>                                                                                 | Start and welcome from the host to Day 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>09:05 – 10:30</b>                                                                         | Evaluation question 3: group discussion between the host and peer reviewers to present their views and comments.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>10:30 – 11:00</b>                                                                         | <b>Coffee break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>11:00 – 12:30</b>                                                                         | Evaluation question 4: group discussion between the host and peer reviewers to present their views and comments.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>12:30 – 13:30</b>                                                                         | <b>Lunch</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Afternoon</b>                                                                             | An optional study visit offered by the host (see Box 2.10), if a study visit is offered on Day 2, the final part of the meeting needs to be postponed to Day 3 morning session<br>If no study visit offered, peers proceed to the final assessment                                                                                |
| <b>13.30 – 15.00</b>                                                                         | Two parallel sessions:<br>One discussion between the peer reviewers to draw together their feedback, prepare the final feedback, identify key suggested actions for host<br>Second discussion amongst the host country representatives to reflect on the emerging findings of the peer review and first ideas for the action plan |
| <b>15.00 – 17.00</b>                                                                         | Final peer feedback: summary final group feedback from the peer reviewers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>17.00 – 17.30</b>                                                                         | Reflections from the host, supported by peer reviewers: first sketch of the action plan, key action areas and priorities, roles and responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>17.30</b>                                                                                 | Close                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

The host country could also organise a study visit with the peer reviewers, to show to the peers how the QA measure works in practice, for example to a VET provider or a QA centre. This would depend on the specific peer review context. The study visit could be offered prior to Day 1, or as an afternoon activity on Day 1. It should occur in any case before the peer reviewers draw together their final summary feedback on Day 2. Further reflections are provided in the Box below.

### Box 2.8 Organisation of a study visit

A study visit can be organised by the host country as part of the PR. Study visits can add value to the Peer Review process by giving a 'live' example of an issue or topic discussed, as well as opportunities to ask very detailed questions. Study visits are usually appreciated by participants in the PR activities, but it is important to weigh up the value of the study visit, compared to the resources and practicalities of making the study visit happen.

Given the relatively short time available for the PR (2 days), it is important that the study visit does not waste time (because participants have to travel to and from the visit site) and truly adds value to the discussion of the QA measure reviewed. Related to this, those conducting and presenting during the visit must be well briefed and be relatively fluent in English; otherwise, the interest of the participants is lost and the learning is undermined.

If the host country decides on a study visit, the host country will need to consider the following:

- Establishing the exact focus and topic of the study visit (in relation to the PR topic as a whole)
- Devising an agenda
- Briefing the visit presenters
- Facilitating the visit
- Taking notes during the visit for use in the summary report and action plan.

### 2.1.3. Step 3: Host prepares the host country self-assessment

The quality and depth of analysis of the specific host QA system aspect(s) will determine the success of the peer review. Self-assessment is useful to support the change process.

An external expert works with the host country to support their own self-assessment of the QA system prior to the peer review. The expert should have the knowledge of the host QA system, and have familiarity with the peer review process. The expert should also be familiar with the EQAVET framework, as – depending on the focus topic – the indicators and descriptors of the EQAVET framework will be used to guide and structure the assessment.

The expert will also support the organisation and facilitation of the peer review meeting and aid the host country in identifying the key action points and recommendations from the process and how are they followed up.

**The EQAVET Secretariat will contract the expert and will brief and support the experts in their assessment work, where necessary.**

The EQAVET Secretariat has an extensive database of VET experts across Europe to draw from; yet, the host country is welcome to suggest a trusted external expert with extensive country and topic experience.

The expert supports the self-assessment report of the host country, using the EQAVET framework. A standard template is developed for this assessment (see the box below, indicative length 20-30 pages, including specific headings and instructions for completing, reflecting the relevant EQAVET framework and indicators).

The self-assessment report is one of the core document of the entire Peer Review procedure. It includes information about the quality assurance measure for which the host wants to receive feedback and it serves as a reference for both the host country NRP and the peer reviewers. The host country should prepare the report supported by the external expert and if relevant and appropriate in collaboration with relevant national stakeholders.

| The self-assessment report supports the host country in:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | The self-assessment report supports the peer reviewers to:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ being clear about the topic for the Peer Review;</li> <li>▶ making a self-assessment by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the selected quality assurance measure;</li> <li>▶ establishing the selection and engagement of national stakeholders in the Peer Reviews;</li> <li>▶ thinking about and providing key evaluation questions for peer reviewers;</li> <li>▶ serving as a basis for the final organisation of the Peer Review meeting (see Box for the initial meeting agenda).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ get a clear picture regarding the topic for the Peer Review and prepare for it;</li> <li>▶ think about the answers to the key evaluation questions for peer reviewers,</li> <li>▶ think about similar quality assurance measures and examples of good practice in their own countries,</li> <li>▶ think about open questions in relation to the selected quality assurance measure, which could be asked during the Peer Review (phase 2) to get a better understanding of the host country context.</li> </ul> |

The indicative template for the self-assessment report is provided below, for completion by the host.

**Box 2.9 Template for the self-assessment report, prepared by the host country with the support of external expert**

Self-assessment report  
Country, title of the peer review, dates

**Section 1: 2-3 pages: General information on VET and quality assurance in VET in the host country**

This provides general information about the host country. In this respect, the Cedefop 'VET in Europe' database<sup>9</sup> is a good initial source and its information will be presented in a manner targeted to the topic in question. This information would also allow the peer reviewers to become aware of any cultural and institutional differences influencing the process and the feedback.

**Section 2: 2-3 pages: Focus of the Peer Review (selected quality assurance measure, reasons for its selection, key stakeholders, expected outcomes)**

Title of the quality assurance measure  
Why did you select this quality assurance in VET measure for a Peer Review?  
What are your expectations (desired/expected outcomes of the Peer Review)

**Section 3: 3-5 pages Self-assessment of the selected quality assurance measure**

Title of the quality assurance in VET measure:  
Detailed description of the quality assurance in VET measure: 0.5 pages  
What are the main strengths of this measures?  
What are the main weaknesses of this measure?  
Are improvements already planned for this measure? Specify whether the improvement measure is (a) under discussion, (b) planned or (c) already implemented  
Which national stakeholders are involved in this measure? What are their roles and positions on the improvements?

| Main national stakeholders | Their roles and responsibilities for the measure | Their views on improving the measure |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                            |                                                  |                                      |
|                            |                                                  |                                      |

**Section 4: 1 page Key evaluation questions for peers according to the selected quality assurance measure (see also Box 2.4 for advice on questions)**

Question 1  
Question 2  
Question 3  
Add if necessary

**Section 5: 1 page: First ideas/considerations for utilising the feedback after the Peer Review (Phase 4 Follow-up)**

How are you planning to use the inputs from the peer reviewers?  
Any areas of feedback which are key to you?

**Annexes**

Annex documents that will help peers to get a complete and adequate impression of the quality assurance measure to be assessed. References to these documents will allow to keep the self-assessment report short. Only annex documents or links in English language versions. Please also annex the concept note here.  
List of key documentation about the measure (in English)  
Main websites relating to the measure in English  
Concept note

9 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/vet-europe#:~:text=VET%20in%20Europe%20is%20the,common%20template%20designed%20by%20Cedefop.>

#### 2.1.4. Step 4: Briefing and preparation of peer reviewers

Once the peer reviewers from the network of EQAVET NRPs are confirmed by the host country, they will be briefed initially on their role and expected inputs for the particular peer review by the EQAVET Secretariat through a webinar.

##### Building up a Peer Reviewer Network

The EQAVET Secretariat will evaluate the needs of the peer reviewers and will further reflect on the need for more in-depth training and reflection for the peer reviewers, depending on their needs. In this way, a pool of experienced peer reviewers will emerge that will be able to work with the methodology and support NRPs with the implementation.

To prepare for the Peer Review Meeting, the peers need:

- ▶ to be acquainted with the Peer Review procedure as set out in this manual,
- ▶ to read the concept note, the self-assessment report, the Peer Review Meeting agenda and any essential additional materials provided by the host NRP,
- ▶ to identify areas for investigation and evaluation for the Peer Review Meeting,
- ▶ to consider questions for discussion sessions and criteria for observations,
- ▶ to reflect on the key evaluation questions that the host set for the peers (as set out in the self-assessment report),
- ▶ to think about similar quality assurance measures and examples of good practice in their own countries.

The following template should be used by peer reviewers to analyse the self-assessment report and prepare questions and inputs for the peer review meeting.

##### Box 2.10 Template for the peer analysis of the self-assessment report

| Section                                                                                                  | Your observations                         | Your questions to the host |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Section 1: General information on VET and quality assurance in VET in the host country</b>            |                                           |                            |
| <b>Section 2: Focus of the Peer Review</b>                                                               |                                           |                            |
| <b>Section 3: Self-assessment of the selected quality assurance measure</b>                              |                                           |                            |
| <b>Section 4: Key evaluation questions for peers according to the selected quality assurance measure</b> | Question 1:<br>Question 2:<br>Question 3: |                            |
| <b>Section 5: First ideas/considerations for utilising the feedback after the Peer Review</b>            |                                           |                            |
| <b>Annexes</b>                                                                                           |                                           |                            |

## 2.2. Phase 2: Peer review meeting (2 days)

This phase includes the implementation of the peer review, during which the peer assessment will be carried out. There are two steps related to this phase.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the host and peer reviewers are detailed below.

### Phase 2: Roles and responsibilities of the host and peer reviewers

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Host</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Organise the initial peer discussion</li> <li>▶ Finalise the peer review meeting agenda</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| <b>Peer reviewers</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Participate in the initial peer discussion</li> <li>▶ Finalise the preparation for peer feedback in advance of the peer review meeting</li> <li>▶ Actively contribute to the peer review meeting</li> </ul> |
| <b>EQAVET Secretariat</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The external expert contracted by the EQAVET Secretariat will moderate and facilitate the peer review meeting</li> <li>▶ Support the meeting organization if required by the host</li> </ul>                |

### 2.2.1. Step 5: Initial peer discussion

This takes place on the main points raised in the host self-assessment (indicative duration 0.5 day), and involves hosts and peer reviewers. It is suggested for this meeting to take place online, as it serves to prepare the actual peer review meeting, introduces the peers to the host country situation and gives them food for thought. Otherwise, we risk that peers come unprepared for the actual visit and time is not optimally used to get to know the host situation, etc. Ideally, the initial peer discussion should be organized 3-4 weeks before the actual Peer Review meeting

If host country and peers are convinced they have a sufficient level of common knowledge and shared understanding of the situation assessed in the peer review, this preparatory discussion step could be skipped.

An indicative agenda for the initial peer discussion is suggested below, reflecting 0.5 day duration. This can be extended by the host if required to cover additional agenda items.

The host organizes the peer discussion in advance, setting the time and sending the invitations out to the peer reviewers.

**Template for the agenda of initial peer discussion**

| Time            | Agenda                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9.30–<br>9.45   | Welcome by the host and tour de table amongst the peer reviewers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 9.45–<br>10.00  | Overview by the host: selected QA measure, focus for the peer review, expected results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 10.00–<br>10.30 | Peer reviewer questions and answer session: opportunity to clarify the description and status quo of the QA measure                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 10.30–<br>10.40 | Coffee break                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 10.40–<br>11.40 | First exchanges between peers and host on the strengths and weaknesses of the QA measure<br><br>Strengths: 20 minute discussion of main points raised in the self-assessment paper<br><br>Weaknesses: 20 minute discussion of main points raised in the self-assessment paper<br><br>Areas where the host is seeking to change: 20 minute discussion of main points raised in the self-assessment paper |
| 11.50–<br>12.30 | Next steps, final preparation of the peer review meeting, key action points for host and peer reviewers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

**2.2.2. Step 6: Peer Review Meeting**

The peer review meeting takes place in the host country, with around 5 peers and external expert (suggested duration 1,5 days).

Based on the initial agenda provided in the concept note, the external expert in cooperation with the host will finalise the meeting agenda and send it to the peer reviewers and any other participants at least 2 weeks in advance of the meeting.

In addition, the external expert of the EQAVET Secretariat will prepare in cooperation with the host country the facilitation plan to ensure a smooth running of the meeting. An example facilitation plan is provided below, with the same approach being repeated by the host for all agenda items. The facilitation plan stays as an internal document for the host.



**Box 2.11 Example of the facilitation plan**

| Time        | Agenda                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Roles and staff                                                      | Practical instructions |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 09:30–10:00 | <p>The aim of this session is to welcome and set the context.</p> <p>The chair from the host country welcomes the participants to the peer review. They explain the motivation for its organisation, its objectives and aims, as well as key evaluation questions.</p> <p>The host then explains how the selected QA measure fits into the wider policy context in the country.</p> <p>In principle, there is no expectation of having questions from the audience during this session but questions to the host country can be asked during the next session.</p> | <p>Chair: host country NAME</p> <p>Presenters: host country name</p> | Slides are shown       |

During the meeting, the representatives of the host NRPs and other national stakeholders or experts - following the Peer Review Meeting agenda - present the quality assurance approach and the chosen quality assurance measure. During the Peer Review Meeting, the peers check the accuracy of the information provided in the self-assessment report by gathering and assessing additional data related to the selected quality assurance measure. In general, peers should adopt an exploring attitude, which is characterised by curiosity, openness and acceptance as well as a confident demeanour. They should be prepared to deal with inconsistencies in the replies of presenters or interviewees. Peers are recommended to take notes of key information throughout the Peer Review Meeting to have some written material to refer to during the Peer Feedback session (see Phase 3).

**Box 2.12 Template for the note taking by peer reviewers during the Peer Review Meeting**

| Agenda topic                              | Key points raised by the peer reviewers | Evidence (e.g. self-assessment report, host country speakers, presentations, site visit) |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Evaluation question 1                     |                                         |                                                                                          |
| Evaluation question 2                     |                                         |                                                                                          |
| Evaluation question 3                     |                                         |                                                                                          |
| Add if necessary for additional questions |                                         |                                                                                          |

During the Peer Review Meeting, key to its success will be the group discussions between the host and peer reviewers around the key evaluation questions. A standard approach will ensure that common criteria, principles and standards for the peer discussion are followed. This global approach is illustrated below and will need to be tailored by the hosts and peer reviewers thematically, including specific headings and instructions for covering the discussion, reflecting the relevant EQAVET framework and indicators. Not all common criteria will be relevant to all evaluation questions.



**Box 2.13 Template for the group discussion between the host and peers**

| Agenda topic                                     | Common criteria to structure the discussion                                                                                                                                                                            | Instructions to hosts and peer reviewers                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Evaluation question 1</b>                     | In relation to EQAVET framework and indicators<br><br>In relation to best practice from similar measures from peer countries<br><br>In relation to improvements needed and aspects raised by key national stakeholders | Reflect how best to answer the evaluation question with respect to each common criteria |
| <b>Evaluation question 2</b>                     | Repeat as above or add new criteria                                                                                                                                                                                    | Reflect how best to answer the evaluation question with respect to each common criteria |
| <b>Evaluation question 3</b>                     | Repeat as above or add new criteria                                                                                                                                                                                    | Reflect how best to answer the evaluation question with respect to each common criteria |
| <b>Add if necessary for additional questions</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                         |

At the end of the peer review meeting, meeting participants complete Peer Review process evaluation forms, where they reflect on the success and lessons learnt from the process of undergoing a peer review, informing the approach and methodologies of next peer reviews. The host collects evaluation forms and analyses their main results.

**Box 2.14 Peer Review Meeting evaluation form**

We value your feedback and would be grateful if you would complete this feedback form and return it to a member of before leaving the meeting.

## 1) Content of the Peer Review Meeting

Please rate the relevance of the following workshop sessions.

Please circle the relevant number, remembering that 1= Very low and 5 = Very high.

| Content                      | 1 = Very low    5 = Very high |   |   |   |   |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>DAY 1</b>                 |                               |   |   |   |   |
| Session 1                    | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Add other final agenda items | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|                              | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|                              | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|                              | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <b>DAY 2</b>                 |                               |   |   |   |   |
| Session 1                    | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Add other final agenda items | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|                                |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
|                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Overall content of the meeting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## 2) Objectives of the Peer Review Meeting

Please indicate the extent to which you think the objectives of the meeting have been met.

Please circle the relevant number, remembering that 1= To a very low extent and 5 = To a very high extent.

| Objectives                                                                                                      | 1 = To a very low extent<br>5 = To a very high extent |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Did the meeting provide an opportunity to identify learning points and practices for the host?                  | 1                                                     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Did the meeting highlight key success factors and challenges?                                                   | 1                                                     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Did the meeting provide an opportunity to exchange information and experiences?                                 | 1                                                     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Did the meeting allow for critical self-reflection for the host?                                                | 1                                                     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Did the meeting provide the host with sufficient guidance on to how to embed the learning in your organisation? | 1                                                     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Is there anything that could have made the meeting even more useful for you?

## 3) Information and support

Please indicate how satisfied you were with the organisation of the meeting.

Please circle the relevant number, remembering that 1= Very low and 5 = Very high.

| Workshop organisation                | 1 = Very low    5 = Very high |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Meeting venue and facilities         | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Comfort of hotel accommodation       | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Catering services                    | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Overall organisation of the workshop | 1                             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Do you have any comments regarding the organisation of similar Peer Reviews in the future?

(Please comment below)

### 2.3. Phase 3: Step 7: Peer feedback

**Step 7 is dedicated to peer feedback:** the peers will deliver their feedback and ideas for the improvement of the quality assurance measures to the host country.

**This will take place in two sub-steps:**

- ▶ **The peers will meet (without the host country)** - facilitated by the external expert - to gather their feedback and organize the process of giving feedback to the host country. It is preferred that peers give feedback as a group of peers, in a coordinated way, so that the feedback provided across the group of peers is consistent and integrated. To this end, a rapporteur should be nominated for each group of peers to report back at the final feedback session.
- ▶ **The peers and host country meet** and the feedback is delivered and discussed with the host country

A dedicated session for Peers to prepare for the final feedback session will be included in the Peer Review agenda (1.5 - 2 hrs session in the afternoon of Day 2, see example Agenda). Alternatively, Step 7 a and b can take place as separately ca. two weeks following the PR meeting (online).

#### Template for peer feedback

The host country documents the peer review Meeting outcomes including the peers' feedback. To this end, the group of peers will provide critical, constructive and supportive feedback to the host and concrete ideas for improvement of the quality assurance measures selected by the host based on everything they have read before, as well as what they have seen and heard during the peer review. Peers will provide their feedback via the following peer feedback template.

Peer reviewers will present their feedback at the final peer feedback session of the peer review.

An overview of the roles and responsibilities of the host and peer reviewers during the feedback phase is detailed below.

### Roles and responsibilities of the host and peer reviewers

|                            | Host Country                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Peer Reviewers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Peer Feedback Phase</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Take part in the final feedback session</li> <li>▶ Listen to the feedback of the peers</li> <li>▶ Comment on the feedback of the peers, clarify open questions or provide additional information as necessary</li> <li>▶ Document the peer review, including the peers' feedback</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Take part in a peer reviewers' session to prepare for the final feedback</li> <li>▶ Give feedback as single persons and work on common results as a peers group</li> <li>▶ Present peer feedback to the host country and the other peer reviewers in the final feedback meeting (if nominated as rapporteur)</li> </ul> |

Further reflections on providing valuable feedback are provided in the **Box 2.15** below.

#### Box 2.15 Peers' guidelines to provide valuable feedback

Peers should follow the following guidelines in preparing and providing their feedback to the host:

- Give feedback to every quality assurance measure included in the self-assessment report of the host country
- Focus on strengths and weaknesses of the selected quality assurance measures
- Base your feedback on available evidence from different sources (e.g. national context report, information and observations included in the host country self-assessment report)
- Take into account the host country situation and circumstances
- Try to use brief, clear and descriptive language

The indicative template for the peer feedback is provided below, for completion by the peer reviewers.

**Box 2.16 Template for peer reviewers' feedback****Section 1: Assessment of the quality assurance measures selected by the host country**

|                                            | <b>Assessment on strengths</b>                                                                                                                                  | <b>Assessment on weaknesses</b>                                                    | <b>Identification of key areas for improvement</b>                                        | <b>Key suggested actions and good examples</b>                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Measure 1/Selected QA system aspect</b> | Include a short description of the strengths observed based on facts and evidence from the self-assessment report and the information shared at the peer review | Include a short description of the weaknesses observed based on facts and evidence | Identify key areas where there might be room for improvement based on your own experience | Reflect on potential actions to improve the identified weaknesses by sharing your own experiences and information |
| <b>Measure 2/Selected QA system aspect</b> | Repeat as above                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                    |                                                                                           |                                                                                                                   |

**Section 2: Please include here additional questions for the host country you may have about certain facts:**  
(Indicative questions: *Could you tell more about the implementation plans for the future?, What type of mechanism have you defined for..?, What evaluation plans do you have for...?*)

**Annexes**

Annex documents about the examples provided, if available. Only annex documents or links in English language versions.

Following the peer review, a full summary of the main outcomes will be prepared within two weeks, summarising the key messages, examples and topics discussed during the meeting. The report will be prepared by the external expert in agreement with the host country.

**Template for peer review outcomes****Peer review report****Title of the peer review (hosted by country), dates****Section 1: Introduction to the topic of the Peer Review**

This section provides general information about the host country and the purpose of the peer review. Information about the country context in relation to the national VET system should be included here. It will also include information about the number of participants and participating peer reviewers.

**Section 2: Key Peer Review discussion outcomes**

The aim of this section is to reflect on the main discussion points covered during the peer review in relation to the topic of the peer review (e.g. challenges faced and possible solutions). Examples or evidence provided by the participating countries should be included.

**Section 3: Conclusions and next steps**

This section provides a list of the main findings.

## 2.4. Phase 4: Follow-up (duration depending on the host)

This phase includes **immediate follow-up** to the peer review as well as a **self-assessment of the impact at a later stage**. Consequently, there are three steps related to this last phase:

- ▶ **Step 8:** Review of peer review results and process
- ▶ **Step 9:** Developing an Action Plan and implementation of change process
- ▶ **Step 10:** Self-assessment of the impact of the peer review

### 2.4.1. Step 8 (Review of peer review results and process)

Peer Reviews are only meaningful and worth the time, efforts and resources invested, if the host country reflects on and takes account of peer feedback when they work on their future developments. Therefore, in this step, the host country goes through a process of reviewing the feedback received and deciding on its response and way forward.

**Please note: Peers reviewers are also expected to reflect on the results of the Peer review meeting and think about opportunities to work with the results in their own national contexts, using the same templates.**

As a first step, the peer feedback is analysed and reflected on, by the host institution and disseminated, as appropriate, to relevant stakeholders. Below are some questions for the host institutions (but also for peers) to reflect on after the peer feedback:

- ▶ What were the most important results of the Peer Review?
- ▶ What do the results mean to us?
- ▶ Have there been unexpected results?
- ▶ Is there good practice in other EU countries, which is worth thinking about when it comes to improvements?
- ▶ Which feedback/which proposals are not feasible for us and why?
- ▶ What could be changed easily and or quickly?
- ▶ What financial and other resources have to be considered when it comes to improvements?
- ▶ Which stakeholder groups should be informed about the feedback and which have to be informed when it comes to plans for improvement?

In addition, the host country reflects with the help of the external expert on the process of carrying out the peer review, its approach and methodology. This enables the host to reflect on the success and lessons learnt from the process of undergoing a peer review, informing the approach and methodologies of next peer reviews. The evaluation forms completed by the participants should also be used in this reflection.

The template below can be used to record the outcomes of this reflection.

**Template for the reflection on the Peer Review methodology and process**

| Item                                                                     | Expressed as numeric value 1-5 (1=very low/5=very high) <sup>10</sup> | Feedback |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall content of the peer review                                       |                                                                       |          |
| Overall organisation of the Peer Review (venue, accommodation, catering) |                                                                       |          |
| Overall support by the EQAVET Secretariat throughout the process         |                                                                       |          |
| Performance of the independent expert                                    |                                                                       |          |
| Utility of process and tools (Phase 1)                                   |                                                                       |          |
| Utility of process and tools (Phase 2)                                   |                                                                       |          |
| Utility of process and tools (Phase 3)                                   |                                                                       |          |
| Utility of process and tools (Phase 4)                                   |                                                                       |          |

Follow-up Action Point: Please send the completed template to the EQAVET Secretariat ([EQAVET.mutual.learning@icf.com](mailto:EQAVET.mutual.learning@icf.com))!

**2.4.2. Step 9: Developing an Action Plan, implementation of change process**

Concrete action points and recommendations are worked out together with the participants into an action plan for the host country. This could include further support from peers or other mutual learning services available through the EQAVET Secretariat support.

The **action plan** is not strictly mandatory or binding, it contains a list of concrete measures to follow up, with clear roles and responsibilities and timelines indicated. Once the action plan is agreed, the host country starts to implement the agreed changes.

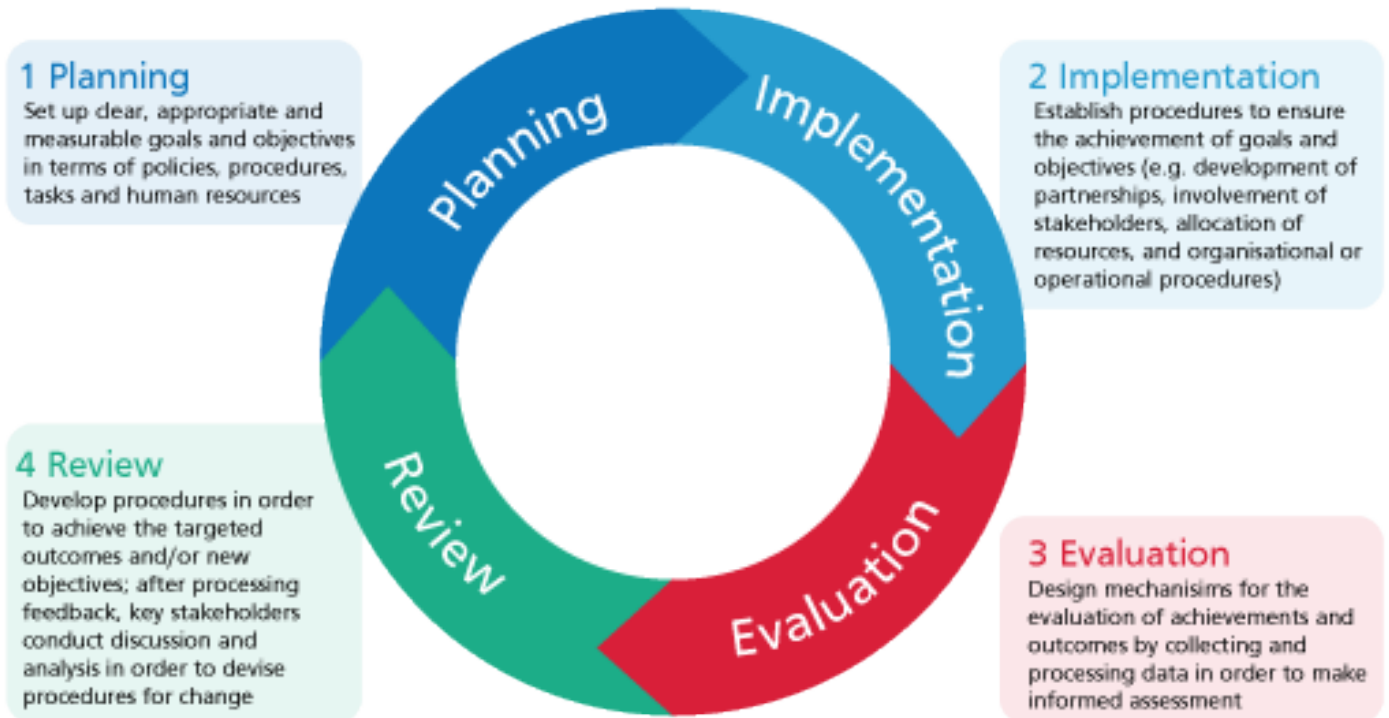
A standard template for the action plan is provided below.

**Template for the action plan**

The Action Plan template is a tool designed to help you to assess how you can make the best use in your country of what you have learned during the EQAVET Peer Review. The Action Plan seeks to transpose learning outcomes through the four phases (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Review), similar to the EQAVET quality cycle below.

<sup>10</sup> from feedback form, or own assessment

## The Quality Assurance Cycle



*Source will be added*

The Action Plan is intended to be flexible. The defined Actions will vary depending on what your country takes away from the Peer Review and what can be transferred.

Hence, not all sections of the template may be applicable in your case, and you may want to exchange sections or add new ones.



**Phase I: Planning phase**

**1**

**What have you learned from this peer review that is of specific interest to quality assurance of VET in your country and why?**

*[Note: if there are several areas of learning, each requiring a different area of change, please number them accordingly and cross-reference throughout the rest of the template]*

**2**

**What would you like to take forward within your country/organisation? What type of change/new initiative do you want to introduce?**

**Please describe how this directly affects the quality assurance of VET** (i.e. skills assessment, tailored learning, validation). *[Please try to formulate your answer as one or several 'SMART' objectives (S - Specific, M - Measurable, A - Assignable, R - Realistic, T – Timebound)]*

**3**

**For which priority target group(s) would this (these) initiative(s) be introduced?**

**4** Which stakeholders will be also affected by this change/initiative?

**5** What are the specific expected benefits or improvements for your country?

**6** What risks and/or challenges do you foresee in developing this initiative/change? How can you mitigate these?

**7** What factors can drive and support the introduction of this initiative/change? How can you capitalise on these?

**Phase II: Implementation phase**

**8** Who will have overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the initiative/change? *[Note: please give the organisation and a name and job title]*

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**9** Which other stakeholders will play a key role in developing the initiative/facilitating the change? What will their role(s) be? How will you involve them? *[Note: if possible, please give the concrete institutions and names / job title, as well as the anticipated role(s)]*

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**10** What actions will be undertaken to successfully develop the initiative/facilitate the change within your country? What will be the timeframe for each action? Which delegation member will be responsible for each action? *[Note: example actions could include setting up a network, initiating a pilot, undertaking a feasibility study, etc.; please focus on the main areas of action, and the name and job title of the responsible person(s)]*

| Actions | Timeframe | Responsible person(s) |
|---------|-----------|-----------------------|
|         |           |                       |
|         |           |                       |

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
| <i>You can add further rows, if needed</i> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
| <b>11</b>                                  | <b>Are there any other country or international organisations with which you could envisage working in order to obtain additional insights and support during the learning/change process? If so, which ones and how will you collaborate with them?</b> |  |
|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |

**Phase III: Evaluation phase**

**12** | How do you intend to measure the success of your initiatives?

**13** | What data/information will you collect and how will you obtain it?

**14** | Are there any key quantifiable indicators and/or milestones that you could use to measure success? If so, what are they?

**Phase 4: Review Phase**

**15** How will you use the lessons learnt from the initial implementation to refine and reflect on your initiative going forward i.e. to achieve a cycle of continuous improvement?

**2.4.3. Step 10: Self-assessment of the impact of the peer review**

The host country will be invited to report back to the progress made against its action plan to the Network at an agreed point in time (in 6, 12 and 18 months after the peer review), to the peer reviewers and the broader Network. This will take on the form of a brief self-assessment on progress made on the planned actions; and serves as a check on the impact of the peer review and action plan developed.

Please note: The peers will also be expected to reflect on their experience in participating in the peer review, and report on whether and how they used the opportunities to work with the results in their own national contexts.

## Template for the reporting on the impact of the peer review

### 1. Overview of general objectives and work steps agreed in the Action Plan

This section is to be completed 6 months following the PR.

#### 1.1 General objectives

*Please give an overview of the general objectives in relation to the outcomes of the PR that were set out by your country in the Action Plan.*

#### 1.2 Work steps

*Please list the (most relevant) concrete work steps agreed in the Action Plan (please list 3-5 steps).*

#### 1.3 Expected impact of activities

*For each of the steps mentioned in section 1.2, please describe its expected impact on improving QA in VET in your country (100-150 words).*

#### 1.4 Progress made after 6 months

*Please describe the progress you made in relation to the Work Steps (section 1.2) (200- 300 words)*

#### 1.5 Challenges and limitations encountered

*Please describe any challenges and limitations you encountered in relation to the Work Steps (max. 200 words)*

### 2. Progress update after 12/18 months

*This section below is to be completed 12 and 18 months following the PR (hence twice in total). Please don't repeat any information from the previous phases but describe only the progress made in the current reporting period. If no activities have taken place, please mention this. If possible, explain (other pressing items to tackle, conflicting agendas, etc.).*

#### 2.1 General assessment of progress after 12/18 months

*Please give a brief (ca. 200-300 words) assessment of progress in relation to the tasks specified in the Action Plan. What concrete steps were taken? Is this in line with the general objectives and the foreseen timing?*

#### 2.2 Success factors: What's helping to make progress?

*Please give a brief (100-150 words) summary of the factors that were conducive for progress (e.g. 'Progress was facilitated by the national policy initiative x which helped to raise awareness of the topic.')*

#### 2.3 Challenges encountered: What's hindering progress?

*Please give a brief (100-150 words) summary of the factors that were found to be detrimental (e.g. 'progress was hindered by a lack of funding/lack of coordination between ministries/other policy priorities etc...')*