



ENQA QUALITY ASSURANCE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK



Introduction

This document represents the latest efforts of the ENQA Staff Development Group, as a follow-up to our initial report in April 2014 where we identified, at a high level, the common core competencies of quality assurance and quality enhancement professionals in ENQA member agencies.

For this latest work we examined in detail the competencies as a basis for developing a framework that agencies could use in job design, recruitment and staff development activities. We have identified competencies for both new entrants to our sector and for experienced professionals, and a broad range of activities that agencies can use to develop their staff.

We hope that agencies will find it a useful tool that they can adapt for their own purposes and for ENQA in scheduling future activities.



Douglas Blackstock
Chair, ENQA Staff Development Group

Quality assurance professionals – core competencies

KNOWLEDGE

Higher education sector knowledge

- Higher education system, and institution and provider types
- The 'legal' framework
- Agency procedures

Quality assurance and enhancement

- National reference points and external review methods
- Internal quality arrangements of institutions/providers
- Agency work in other countries, the European dimension

SYSTEMIC/TECHNICAL

Analytical/Problem solving

- Identifying issues and resolving them
- Investigating
- Collecting and analysing information from different sources to inform recommendations
- Probing and interpreting evidence

Project management

- Managing and coordinating work
- Project management
- Financial management

SOCIAL SKILLS

Communication/Teamwork

- Report writing
- Presentation skills
- Influencing and negotiation
- Team leadership and coaching

Autonomy and resilience

- Using judgement, discretion and initiative
- Professional values
- Integrity and resilience under pressure

Detailed competencies synthesised from frameworks of ENQA member agencies

KNOWLEDGE COMPETENCIES

	HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR KNOWLEDGE		
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General knowledge of national higher education system • Operational understanding of universities and colleges, and other higher education provider types • Understanding of higher education in other countries is beneficial • Awareness of the different stakeholders in the domestic higher education sector 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentation</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience within the higher education sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk-based research including relevant legislation and agency documentation • Peer coaching • Informal discussion • Shadowing review coordinators • Shadowing team meetings • Attendance at relevant seminars, workshops, courses and forums
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth understanding of the national higher education system • Appreciation of challenges presented across the sector and internationally • Political awareness and appreciation of the drivers of the domestic higher education context • Understanding of the global nature of higher education including cross-border education 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of complex issues with Board members • Delivery of presentations and workshops to HEIs on writing a self-evaluation report, setting up internal QA teams, development of procedures and development of learning outcomes • Delivery of training for national and international reviewers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at international seminars, conferences and workshops, and dissemination of the information gathered to colleagues • Participation in and collaboration with international projects • Participation in national higher education sector, including liaison visits and field research • Undertaking further study • Mentoring of junior colleagues • Being mentored by senior colleagues

NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of the basic concept of the national system for quality assurance and enhancement and of the internal quality practices of institutions 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentation</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work experience within the higher education sector Work experience in a similar regulatory environment Willingness and ability to gradually take responsibility for more complex assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk-based research including relevant legislation and agency documentation Peer coaching Informal discussion Shadowing review coordinators Shadowing team meetings Attendance at relevant seminars, workshops, courses and forums Gradual delegation of more complex assignments by line manager Observation of review/evaluation/audit procedure Shadowing of a colleague leading to participation as a review secretary in an institutional audit/review
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth understanding of the national quality assurance system Understanding of implementation of quality assurance techniques in a broad range of types of higher education providers Ability to act as 'expert' in one or more quality assurance areas 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references, colleague feedback</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of complex issues with Board members Delivery of presentations and workshops to HEIs on writing a self-evaluation report, setting up internal quality assurance teams, development of procedures and development of learning outcomes Delivery of training for national and international reviewers and for audit secretaries/coordinators Development of quality assurance instruments Quality of thematic analysis Contribution to working groups responsible for the development and improvement of quality assurance Contribution to national and international quality assurance discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at international seminars, conferences and workshops, and dissemination of the information gathered to colleagues Participation in and collaboration with international projects Participation in national higher education sector, including liaison visits and field research Completion of INQAAHE Quality Assurance Professional Development Programme (QAP) Mentoring Reading specialised publications

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with the concept of the European Higher Education Area • Understanding of the existence and role of the European Standards and Guidelines in quality assurance 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentation</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience within the higher education sector • Knowledge of the European Standards and Guidelines, and the role of ENQA in European quality assurance • Willingness and ability to develop knowledge and understanding and to gradually take responsibility for more complex assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk-based research - reading relevant documentation • Peer coaching • Work shadowing • Involvement in preparation for the agency's ENQA review • Gradual delegation of assignments involving international perspective by line manager • Networking
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive knowledge of how national quality assurance fits within the context of the European Standards and Guidelines • Understanding of national quality assurance in a wider, international context • Ability to operate confidently in the international quality assurance arena 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of evaluation and assessment procedures in line with the European Standards and Guidelines • Dissemination of information regarding changes and developments in the international context, including development of the European Standards and Guidelines • Contribution to activities from an international perspective, either as project leader or team member • Coordination of the agency's ENQA review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent monitoring of and research into developments in the international higher education area • Attendance at international and national seminars and workshops • Attendance at training events for ENQA experts • Participation as an expert in an ENQA review • Participation in national or international ESG-related projects

SYSTEMIC/TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES

PROJECT MANAGEMENT (ORGANISATIONAL AND PLANNING SKILLS)			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic organisational and planning skills • Ability to manage own workload and to work effectively with other teams/colleagues, meeting deadlines • Ability to plan ahead and to anticipate challenges 	<p><i>Interview, presentations, written test, references</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous project experience • Quality and throughput of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervised practice • Work shadowing • Peer coaching • Constructive feedback through progress meetings with line manager • Contribution to project work • Training on project management training
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in project management, including the development of a project scope, time management, budgetary responsibility, quality assurance, communications, risk assessment, procurement and human resource considerations 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to define the scope of and launch a new accreditation/evaluation cycle • Ability to achieve time efficient realisation of project outcomes • Ability to achieve cost efficient realisation of project outcomes • Production or supervision of production of high-quality material for publication • Ability to effectively engage others in project work to achieve results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in international projects • Knowledge exchange visits to other ENQA member agencies to gather insight into areas of good practice for implementation in the national agency • Formal training (internal or external)

IT AND DATA SKILLS			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working knowledge of standard office software packages Awareness of and adherence to data protection and security measures 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, tests</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Software training Peer coaching Information security and data protection training
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working knowledge of standard office software packages Ability to interpret a wide variety of data and make recommendations Understanding of statistical parameters Comprehensive knowledge of information security and data protection regulations Demonstration and encouragement of good practice in information processing and storage 	<p><i>Application form, interview, references, tests</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of analytical reports IT responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development into 'expert' role for specific area of quality assurance Software training Peer coaching Information security and data protection training

PROBLEM SOLVING/ANALYTICAL SKILLS AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING SKILLS			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to grasp new concepts, and comprehend approaches and systems Ability to process and interpret complex data and information from a wide variety of sources, distilling essential information from non-essential information Ability to formulate results-focussed recommendations and make decisions based on analysis Ability to define parameters and desired objectives Ability to anticipate potential challenges and opportunities through consideration of environment and data Ability to think and operate flexibly to meet changing demands and to seek innovative solutions 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, written test</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous work experience Psychology test at interview Evidence of ability to develop in-role, and to assume more responsibility Ability to develop into role, with a view to working independently within one year of appointment Coaching Secondment to other departments or organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk-based research Work shadowing Attendance at relevant workshops, conferences and training events Peer coaching by senior colleagues Participation in working groups
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to grasp new concepts quickly, and to comprehend approaches and systems Ability to comprehend complex interrelationships, identifying individual components and interplay between them and the individual, workable issues arising Ability to direct and coordinate complex projects with various stakeholders Ability to process and interpret data from a wide variety of sources, distilling essential information from non-essential information Ability to define and articulate parameters and desired objectives, encouraging others to adopt and deliver on those objectives Ability to formulate results-focussed and relevant recommendations and make timely, accurate and well-informed decisions based on analysis Ability to anticipate potential challenges and opportunities through detailed comprehension of internal and external environment, and both the national and international contexts Ability to structure, organise and communicate ideas and information in a way that is accessible, useful, and encourages others to adopt them 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references, written test, published work</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of written work and of proposals and decisions Development of standards and criteria for evaluation and review Ability to synthesise evaluation reports by scientific area Development of method handbooks and evaluation procedures Development of reporting and summary reporting methods Knowledge sharing based on experiences at a national and international level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development into 'expert' role for specific area of quality assurance Formal training Participation in working groups Secondment to other departments or organisations Knowledge exchange visits to other ENQA member organisations to gain insight into examples of good practice Continuous professional development and education

INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL SENSITIVITY			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to communicate tactfully, using appropriate behaviour and reasoning patterns in the event of conflict Awareness of the political sensitivity of review and audit outcomes Demonstration of respect and professionalism when expressing and accepting criticism 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references, psychometric testing</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with sensitive information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer coaching Specific training Shadowing of an audit/review and/or participation as an audit secretary
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to communicate tactfully, using appropriate behaviour and reasoning patterns in the event of conflict Awareness of the political sensitivity of review and audit outcomes Well-developed interpersonal skills which ensure high-quality outcomes 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references, group discussion</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder and partner satisfaction survey Informal feedback from colleagues and board members Demonstration of proactivity further to feedback Ability to encourage and engender a respectful and professional working environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal training Contribution to working groups and meetings

COMMUNICATION (ORAL AND WRITTEN)			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to listen actively • Ability to articulate ideas and concepts clearly, concisely and factually, both orally and in writing • Understanding of the need to share relevant information, and the constraints within which information can or cannot be shared • Ability to feed back constructively to others, and openness to receive constructive feedback • Ability to adapt to different audiences, ensuring that messages are clearly articulated in plain, intelligible language • Ability to construct clear reports • A very good practitioner level knowledge of a second language, and/or professional practitioner level knowledge of English 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, written test, language test, references</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous work experience • Ability to communicate with different audiences for different purposes • Ability to comprehend and to communicate information • Ability to develop in-role, and to assume more responsibility • Quality of written reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work shadowing • Supervised practice • Peer coaching • Desk-based research - reading reports created by other colleagues • Presentation skills training • Working in a multilingual team environment • Language instruction
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to listen actively and to distil and communicate key issues from lengthy conversations/ presentations • Ability to comprehend and persuasively articulate complex ideas and concepts clearly, concisely and factually, both orally and in writing • Understanding of the need to share relevant information, and the constraints within which information can or cannot be shared • Ability to feed back constructively to others in a way that is developmental, and openness to receive constructive feedback and act upon it • Ability to communicate to different audiences, ensuring that messages are clearly articulated in plain, intelligible language • Experience of communicating complex or sensitive information in an appropriate manner • A very good practitioner level knowledge of a second language, and/or professional practitioner level knowledge of English 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references, feedback from colleagues and stakeholders, group discussion</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous work experience • Ability to communicate with different audiences for different purposes • Ability to comprehend and to communicate information • Willingness to commit to continuing personal and professional development • Quality of written reports and meeting minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation skills training • Assignment of complex quality assurance tasks • Assuming Chairmanship responsibilities for working groups • Working in a multilingual team environment • Language instruction

PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willingness to take responsibility for own professionalism, including seeking information before taking action Ability to communicate respectfully Awareness of own role in relation to the internal and external environment Considerate in the use of resources Service-focussed, and able to empathise with stakeholder needs and expectations Commitment to providing the best possible service through flexibility and compliance with procedure Adherence to the agency's values and principles Appreciation of importance of demonstrating commonly-accepted professional conduct, values and principles at all times 	<p><i>Interview, presentations, references</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude and behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer coaching Training on agency values and principles Review/audit shadowing and/or participation as an audit secretary
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willingness to take responsibility for own actions, and for those of direct reports Ability to communicate respectfully and model agency values and principles Service-focussed, and able to the need for flexibility to meet stakeholder needs and expectations Comprehension of procedural and resource requirements and awareness of need to balance compliance with flexibility 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer references Attitude and behaviour Design of 'fit for purpose' procedures Design of processes and instruments which meet stakeholder need Representation of the agency at national and international level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer coaching Training on agency values and principles Review/audit shadowing and/or participation as an audit secretary Attendance at national and international workshops

TEAMWORK AND FLEXIBILITY			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to working collaboratively for the benefit of the organisation • Solutions-focus • Willingness to take responsibility for own actions and activities • Ability to organise resources to accomplish tasks with maximum efficiency • Ability to integrate into and contribute effectively to teams that work together to perform tasks • Ability to use appropriate teamworking methods to steer other team members towards set goals 	<p><i>Interview, presentations, references, written test</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous work experience • Ability to develop in-role, and to assume more responsibility • Informal feedback gathering from colleagues and external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadowing of coordinators • Participation in project team work
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to working collaboratively for the benefit of the organisation • Commitment to continuous improvement, and to identifying and developing strengths and skills in others • Solutions-focused taking responsibility for own actions and activities, and ability to encourage others to do so • Ability to organise resources to accomplish tasks with maximum efficiency, including the management of projects within specified budgetary restraints • Ability to use appropriate teamworking methods to steer other team members towards set goals 	<p><i>Application form, interview, presentations, references, group discussion</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from stakeholder and partner satisfaction surveys • Informal feedback from colleagues • Contribution to working group meetings which achieve desired results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in senior level meetings • Work experience

PERSONAL RESILIENCE (STRESS AND PRESSURE RESISTANCE)			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to manage emotions and demonstrate integrity under pressure • Ability to adopt a considerate approach to others • Ability to manage conflict and take responsibility for and resolve matters • Reflective approach to own role and its interrelation with others, as well as to own strengths and weaknesses • Ability to accept and act upon constructive criticism and reflect upon own behaviour 	<p><i>Interview, presentations, written test, psychometric test</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous work experience • Ability to develop in-role, and to assume more responsibility • Informal feedback gathering from colleagues and external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific training on stress in the workplace • Constructive feedback in progress meetings with line manager
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to manage emotions and demonstrate integrity • Collegiate, considerate and empathetic in approach • Ability to manage conflict, both with and between others, constructively • Ability to take responsibility for and resolve matters • Ability to both maintain personal resilience and integrity and encourage this in others whilst under pressure • Reflective approach to own role and its interrelation with others, as well as to own strengths and weaknesses • Ability to accept and act upon constructive criticism and reflect upon own behaviour 	<p><i>Interview, presentations, written test, psychometric test</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal feedback from colleagues • Contribution to working groups and senior level meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific training on stress management • Specific training on conflict management • Constructive feedback in meetings with line manager

AUTONOMY AND PROACTIVITY			
	Competency level	Demonstrated by/ assessed through	Development activities
ENTRY LEVEL STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to identify patterns and trends from diverse sources and perspectives Ability to formulate recommendations for, or where appropriate to develop, creative and innovative programmes, projects and activities Ability to resolve work problems independently although more senior staff will usually be available to provide help and support should it be required 	<p><i>Interview, presentations, references</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous work experience Evidence of ability to develop in-role, and to assume more responsibility Informal feedback gathering from colleagues and external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work practice
EXPERIENCED/SENIOR STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to identify patterns and trends from diverse sources and perspectives Ability to develop creative and innovative programmes, projects and activities Ability to anticipate challenges and opportunities and develop appropriate responses Ability to exercise discretion and judgement in interpreting guidelines, regulatory or other statutory requirements - choosing the appropriate course of action within those parameters 	<p><i>Application form, interview, references, feedback from colleagues and supervisors</i></p> <p>Evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to working groups and senior level management groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work practice

ENQA Competencies Route Map

