

Project acronym: REVIVE VET

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Methodology**

(annex to deliverable R02 QA strategy and planning)

WP5: Internal Quality Assurance Strategy and Peer Review

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Short description of the deliverable

This is a complementary document to the QA strategy that was developed in the initial phase of the project. Since the peer review methodology has been outlined now, the peer review organisation can now be developed. This document therefore clarifies the part on peer review organisation that remained very vague in the initial QA strategy and can therefore be considered to be a supplement to the strategy

Practical Implementation guide of the Peer Review methodology

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Rationale

The REVIVE VET peer review methodology outlines extensively a framework in which peer reviews can take place between institutions and experts. However, to make the methodology feasible in the timeframe given and to make it coherent with existing frameworks that have been recognised through years of community building, this document aims to clarify the actual approach to implementation of the peer review process, considering all elements provided in the methodology but selecting carefully its different components on feasibility and implementation potential.

With the REVIVE VET peer review implementation procedure we aim to be coherent in process and approach with the ECBCheck certification scheme. ECBCheck is an accreditation and quality improvement scheme for E-Learning programmes and institutions in international Capacity Building, covering all types of professional and institutional development initiatives and therefore closely related to the VET sector in all its forms. It supports capacity building organisations to measure how successful their e-learning programmes are and allows for continuous improvement through peer collaboration and bench-learning.

Introduction

This practical implementation guide of the peer review methodology links both the methodology of peer review (WP3) with the strategy for implementing peer reviews (WP5) in the REVIVE VET project. While maintaining the extensive process for peer review drawn from the previous projects and the REVIVE VET peer review methodology based on this (WP3), it develops a practical solution for the set up of the peer reviews using existing and internationally recognised peer review tools and processes.

The approach harmonises the following activities of the REVIVE VET project

- Peer review methodology
- Expert community building
- Quality criteria development
- Case development methodology
- Peer review implementation

Coherence with methodology

Fixed procedures

This document outlines the concise procedures for carrying out the Revive VET Peer Reviews. This procedure stays in line with the **three** different, yet complementary **data gathering “virtual” methods**:

- “archive and documentation analysis” → through a self-assessment questionnaire
- “(Virtual) Interviews” → also included in the self-assessment in the form of commenting boxes and options to include attachments that describe in detail certain statements. The institution will be allowed to provide feedback and ask questions if things are not clear.

- “Observation” → By the peer reviewer that reviews the online self-assessment and attached documentation. The peer reviewer can provide further comments to its observation in the same questionnaire

The procedure also respects the **three-stage process** for the Peer Review:

1. An initial set-up phase: the institution that applies for a review, prepares the self-assessment through internal consultations
2. A subsequent phase of data gathering: the completion of the self-assessment
3. A final ‘analysis and synthesis’ stage involving the production of recommendations arrived at through collaborative reflection between the Revive-VET team and the hosting institution: through the appropriate commenting space in the assessment tool.

The checklists included in the methodology are integrated in the online tool as part of the self-assessment and information form. The checklists proposed in the methodology are; Interviewees checklists, Interview checklist, Positioning questionnaire, document checklist, logistical checklist: self-assessment

The content of the review will remain in the following areas

- Institutional strategy level
- Quality factor and criteria level
- Curriculum/course level
- Professional skills development level

Simplified processes

The major difference between the theoretical methodology and the implementation guide is the simplification of the stages and steps within the process.

Data collection

A face-to-face visit or virtual interviews have been excluded from the options due to time constraints of the reviewers. The major part of the data collection is done by the institution that requests to be reviewed via an extensive self-assessment questionnaire. The review consists in validating or questioning the data provided.

Selection of levels to be reviewed

The review is done on all four levels. However, institutions have the option to only complete one level and gather reviewers’ feedback on this part particularly. This approach is in line with the vision that all levels should be coherent and that a strong result on one level is often the result of a global strong context, hence we cannot separate course development from a solid management structure, nor from a coherent programme structure for example. The implementation guide furthermore stays in line with the following:

Stage	Implementation action
Preparation	Institution expresses interest in receiving a review by completing an application form
Peer review	First step: institution completes self-assessment Second step: reviewers analyse the peer review

Reporting and result sharing	The review results are compiled in a review report that provide concrete recommendations for improvement and identify existing strenghts Validation by a supervisory board and awarding of good practices (optional)
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People involved

The people involved are defined as follows in the implementation approach

From the side of the VET Institution

- Host: contact person responsible from institution side for completing the self-assessment and for getting the institutions support in undergoing a peer review
- Team chair: a senior person on the institution's side that validates the work of the host from institution's side

Peer reviewers side

- Team member: the first peer reviewer from another VET institution or from the project team
- Team member the second reviewer from another VET institution or from the project team

From project side

- The review manager is the person within the REVIVE VET consortium that organises and administers the peer review process

Process

The ECBCheck process on which the REVIVE VET peer review will be based:

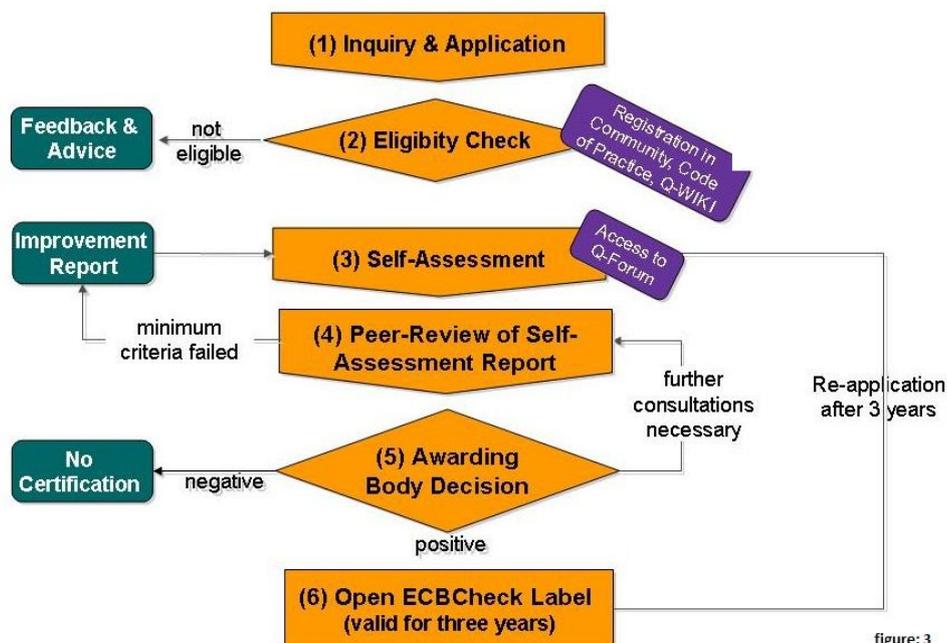


figure: 3

1. Application

The organisation to be reviewed, fills out an application form in which it provides information about the instituion and in whihc it defines which four levels it wishes to be reviewed.

2. Eligibility

The applying institution has to fill in a first brief questionnaire for a program/course to find out whether the institution or programme/course meets the scope of the REVIVE VET review objectives.

This application form is evaluated by the REVIVE VET project team (responsible person for the Peer Review organisation Work Package) and it is decided whether the institution or programme/course is eligible.

This eligibility application is of importance to make sure that an organisation understands that the process needs at least a certain level of seriousness to be completed and that the programme or institution has the potential to successfully complete the peer review process.

3. Self-Assessment

The organisation to be reviewed is provided with a ToolKit that is the foundation for the institution to perform an extensive self-assessment based on a catalogue of quality criteria. The criteria and the full ToolKit are available before starting the process due to the community architecture described previously

This self-assessment is evidence based and thus organisations that conduct the assessment are not only required to record self-evaluations for each criterion within the ToolKit but they are also required to provide proof for their rating. This proof may be provided in form of protocols, concept papers, curricula, information brochures or any other document that may proof the self-rating.

The self-assessment has two targets. On the one hand, it is an assessment of the quality of programmes/institutions. On the other hand, the self-assessment has a learning function for the organisation and will provide the organisation with the possibility to identify areas of improvement.

4. Submission of self-assessment

If the organisation performing the self-assessment for either the institution itself or a program/course believes that the self-assessment report is sufficiently completed, it can be submitted to the Open ECBCheck Administration Office.

5. Identification of peer reviewers

During the self-assessment phase, peer review managers also proposes two peer-reviewers that will receive the self-assessment report for review. These peer reviewers will be trained during one of the REVIVE VET training sessions and are part of an institution that has also submitted an application for peer review. The reviewers can also be experts from the community that have contributed to the development of the quality criteria.

While assigning peer-reviewers the peer review manager has to take into account that there are no known potential interest conflicts (e.g. the institution of the peer-reviewer may be a competitor of the institution providing the self-assessment; also the institutions may be close partners, a sign of possible positive prejudice).

Furthermore, the assessed institution may object to one of the proposed peer-reviewers in case significant reasons exist; institutions are also obligated to inform the peer review manager about any possible positive prejudice.

6. Peer review

When the self-assessment report is finished and the peer-reviewers are set, the peer-review process begins as the next step based on a peer-review guideline. For each criterion, the reviewers assess whether the rating of the organisation is reasonable with regard to the provided proof and description by the organisation. Within the process, it is not only assessed whether the required documents and proof are provided but also the provided information is reviewed on comprehensibility and possible areas for improvement are identified.

Three criteria need to be satisfied for a positive result of the peer-review, namely:

- Clarity (ease-to-understand) of provided information
- Comprehensiveness of provided information: relates to the question if all necessary information has been included to back up the rating of a criterion within the self-assessment
- Validity: related to the question, if the rating of a criterion is reasonable in light of the provided proof

However, not the programme/course or the institution are reviewed directly. Also, no peer-review team visit at the organisation is included as such a visit would likely be too time and resource consuming for most of the VET institutions, especially smaller ones operating in developing countries.

If data or details are unclear or unsatisfactory, peer-reviewers will have to ask the organisation via the peer review manager to provide missing or update incomplete parts of the self-assessment report. The additional data or details have to be provided within an acceptable timeframe defined by the REVIVE VET project team. Depending on the amount of revision necessary the timeframe is suggested up to two weeks.

7. Reporting

The peer-reviewers then write a peer-review report based on the provided self-assessment and materials to proof the results. This peer-review report contains three main areas.

- Firstly, the reviewers provide the organisation with a summary of the self-assessment review including most importantly all criteria where the peer-reviewers disagreed with the self-assessment rating with a corresponding reason.
- Secondly, the peer-review report includes a recommendation, whether an institution or a program should be considered to be a REVIVE VET best practice case interesting for a potential future awarding decision¹.
- Thirdly, the peer-reviewers write a detailed learning report that highlights those shortcomings and contains improvement possibilities and suggestions. As learning is one main goal of REVIVE VET, the learning report should provide the receiving institution with advice and best practice for each of the criteria where improvements are suggested.

As soon as the peer-review report is completed it is submitted to the attention of the Administrative Office.

¹ Awarding of successful cases has not been foreseen in the REVIVE VET project, however in view of future activities, this could be developed and should therefore already be considered as an optional activity when outlining the process in this document

8. Validation and awarding

All reviews will be vetted by a supervisory body, which will check to ensure harmonised quality and consistency between the various reviews.

A future result of the project could furthermore be to award the peer reviewed institutions with a quality label. In this case an awarding body will be set up to read through the anonymous peer-review report for a programme/course or institution. The decision whether a label is granted will be taken by simple majority vote of the Awarding Body and does not need to correspond with the suggestion of the peer-review report. The procedure to be developed for awarding will be based on standard awarding procedures, and more specifically the procedure that is used within EFQUEL for awarding ECBCheck certifications.

In practice

The tool

For implementing the above phases, an online tool will be made available, inspired by the ECBCheck online tool. The tool provides a straightforward form to fill in by all parties and draws automatically the review report from the results entered by the peer reviewers.

The tool will be different however from ECBCheck in terms of quality criteria. It will consist of the quality criteria identified by the quality criteria expert groups that have been working on this in the framework of WP3

Management of the peer review process

EFQUEL is responsible for WP5 “peer reviewing and quality assurance” and will therefore use the same procedure as it uses for ECBCheck.

Planning

The concrete time schedule that is foreseen in the project has been revised to the following timeframe:

Stage	Implementation action	Planning
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institution expresses interest in receiving a review by completing an application form• In the meantime the tool is developed including the criteria from REVIVE VET	September 2012 – January 2013 December 2012 – January 2013
Self-assessment and peer review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First step: institution completes self-assessment• Second step: reviewers analyse the peer review	February – March 2013 April – June 2013
Reporting and result sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The review results are compiled in a review report	July 2013