

Meeting of the Quality Board, Reykjavik September 14, 2015

Present: Barbara Brittingham (BB), Norman Sharp (NS), Rita McAllister (RM), Magnús Diðrik Baldursson (MDB), Frank Quinault (FQ), Tove Bull (TB), Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (SOS), Þorsteinn Gunnarsson (ÞG).

1. NS asked that Item 8 on agenda comes after 5. Then comes item 10. Agreed.
2. Meeting minutes from June 8 and 9. Starting with June 8. P. 7. last page, number 4. Staff collegiality. Faculty responses to developments in student-centered learning as well as role of HEI community.

Action items: SOS will continue to work on student selection procedures and conflict of interest.

Minutes from meeting June 9. Add page number to minutes. Para 16. 5a. should read "International comparability of SE". Last page: Action 4: Spell out COI.

Action items: SOS will keep working on QB website. Important for student access to materials in the future.

Research evaluation document: change the note on university A not wanting research evaluation.

It was announced that Einar Hreinsson from RU is coming into the QEF2 draft committee.

Siggi will publish minutes on Rannís website.

ÞG joins meeting.

Item 2. Retirement of Jean-Marie Hombert. Effective date August 14, 2015. All present agreed that the QB should look for research evaluation expertise in JMH's replacement.

3. Changes in secretariat. ÞG has retired, but will contribute 1 day per week until end of 2015. ÞG happy to do so. It is clear that the Secretariat will need more resources to carry out the proposed QEF2.

ÞG argued that the QB and Secretariat are moving in the right direction, for example in terms of more professional dedication of Secretariat and Rannís. If there is a lull in QB activities, then SOS would be available for other Rannís projects.

4. SOS has not had time to complete his review of the state of Higher Education in Iceland, but the presentation he will deliver at the IAA conference shows some of

the preliminary outcomes. NS asked if there was evidence overall that the individual units take the Subject-Level Reviews seriously. SOS responded in the affirmative, and that SLRs are getting more comprehensive and detailed over time although some variability is evident within and across institutions.

5. QEF2. NS described his work on developing a draft of QEF2, and RM voiced the QBs support for him taking that initiative. It was noted that SOS, PG, RM, and FQ provided feedback as well during the process. NS said he would like to produce a paper that the QB agrees on to take to MESC for their consideration. It should be sufficiently comprehensive for SOS to start drafting a handbook, and should allow the QB to cost out what is involved in the effort. That should be the product of the September QB meeting and the meeting with MESC.

Objectives for QEF2 should build on QEF1, and emphasize working with sector to move forward with what has been done in QEF1. The goal should also be to apply for ENQA membership, and that could be a part of an MoU with MESC. SOS observed that in a previous Quality Council Meeting, Einar Hreinsson from Reykjavik University had stated that it may not be possible to apply for ENQA because of statements in the Icelandic Constitution about how executive power can be transferred from ministers to other bodies. MDB will follow up with Einar Hreinsson to see what the nature of the problem is.

6. Conversation about the pros and cons of ENQA membership. NS noted that with ENQA membership come external review opportunities, that membership would put the Icelandic Quality system on the European map, and that it is a badge of respectability. The whole sector, QC especially, would also get access to networks, workshops, etc. MDB asked if the application process was time consuming. TB responded in the affirmative, and described that the application involved a formal report, a site visit, and a self-analysis.

7. Discussion on Paragraph 3. If MESC agrees that QEF2 is viable, the QB would then need to talk to QC and rectors before QB conference in November.

8. MDB noted that the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is creating a database (University key statistics) that will result in a white paper early next year. The data will come soon, in the next 2-3 weeks.

9. Discussion about confidential individual university matters.

10. Discussion on Paragraph 7 about resource implications of secretariat. PG suggested that it would be best to get an agreement with MESC on what Secretariat needs to do, and then cost it.

11. Discussion on Paragraph 24 about membership and operations of QB in QEF2.

a. QB should be international.

- b. JMH post will be filled. 6 members plus 1 student, ideally both European presence and US presence.
- c. Student and reserve. Student gets ½ QB fee plus expenses, reserve gets expenses. Appointed for 2 years at a time. One undergrad, one postgrad ideally.
- d. QB meet 4 times per year, ideally timed with IWRs. Timing is important. Meetings could be outside of Iceland to save on travel costs. That has been done before in Scotland.
- e. At each meeting, a meeting with MESC representatives should be part of the agenda. As soon as we have a schedule for 2016 meetings, we get on their calendar.
- f. Board will develop MoU with MESC as part of QEF2
- g. The Board will meet at least annually with the Rectors conference and representatives of the Student Associations and national union of students to reinforce current practice.
- h. Minutes of QB meetings to be public.

12. Discussion of possible annual meeting/conference to replace the post-IWR conferences. MDB noted that the QC was supposed to do it, but has no budget. Meeting agrees that QC, in collaboration with QB, will have regular conference/meeting/workshop on quality matters. The QB will support the QC for such an event annually.

13. Paragraph 22 on QEF Manager/Secretariat in QEF2. Extent of work: Public face of quality enhancement in Iceland and internationally. Liaison with NOQA, ENQA, and raises grants from them and attends their workshops. Maintains the good relationships with the Sectors, especially as the QB moves away from the day-to-day activities involved in quality enhancement. Manager services the QC and maintains relationships with individual members of QC

14. Paragraph 18. Current membership (and replacement of JMH) will be in post until July 2017. Then 2 retirements, and then 2 replacements every two years. RM added that the QB we may need to accelerate the pace of replacements after 2017 or 2019.

15. Paragraph 25. Shape of IWR will stay the same, with a Reflective Analysis and Case Study. Expert review visit (including first half-day programme determined by the institution) and report with judgments published.

16. Paragraph 26. IWR visits take as long as they need. If the assessment is risk-based, the IWR could take longer even for smaller institutions. Per meeting, maximum number of attendees should generally not exceed 10. Language of meetings and documents is English, in special circumstances it could be Icelandic provided that it is agreed beforehand and clearly stated in meeting announcements. Translations into English should not be expected as a general rule, but could be made as an ad hoc arrangement. Language in QEF2 handbook could be “translation or

abstract/summary can be arranged for, but only in exceptional circumstances, such as when review committees ask on site for certain documents to be made available.”

17. Review team membership. BB asked if there should be a vice-chair at IWR committees, as those have played a significant role in the past. RM noted that other team members tend to sit back when there is a request for info etc., but vice chairs have usually responded in the past. RM added that it is also good to have a VC in case of a replacement is needed for Chair, and that QEF2 has to have a general plan for replacing/subbing if a chair becomes available. NS stated that another QB member could step in. FQ noted that in the short term, it would be board member, then later the QB would have a cadre of experts to step in. The team Secretary would have to pick become chair if original chair withdraws after a visit.

18. Paragraphs 28-29 on QB Principles. NS observed that the QB cannot be termed proper peer review, as Board members are not legitimate peers. In terms of best international process, it has to be proper peer review. Paragraph 28 states that IWRs should be composed of teams of external peers. TB added that it would be best if chair is at the level that NS specifies in QEF2 working documents: “...international senior experts, normally at the level of Assistant Principal/Rector or equivalent with experience of institutional management of quality and standards in relation to teaching/learning and research and, desirably, also with experience of international review activities”. TB added that other members could come in from different levels, such as QA agencies. NS argued that IWR team members should be seen as senior experienced academics, and international means experience with at least one other country than their own.” NS then added that the draft could be changed so that “international” is removed, and read “normally senior academics, with considerable expertise in management of quality and standards.” FQ supported the notion that it should be an expectation that Chair would be at level specified by NS in the QEF2 working documents. In QEF2, the QB would create a cadre of experts, train them, etc. BB asked if the QB should look for specific focus areas of expertise, like arts, for example. RM noted that such experience would not be necessary for chair. NS added that the chair role is most important for cadre in the beginning. A list of experts could begin with the following, who all have worked with the QB in some capacity: Phil Wynn, Chrichton Lang, Jeremy Bradshaw, Bruce Mallory (?), Dorte Salskov-Iversen, Andrée Sursock, and Harald Walterhaug. SOS will also generate a list of people that did well in SLRs as externals.

19. Discussion of role of chairs and secretariat. NS argued that outside of site visits, Secretariat should be the first point of contact on everything. otherwise, chair and secretariat divide responsibilities for IWRs as follows (in relation to Paragraph 30 in NS QEF working document):

- a. Coordinating electronic discussion with the team on issues arising from the institution’s Reflective Analysis (RA) prior to the briefing meeting; SECRETARIAT

- b. Making contact on behalf of the team with the Institutional contact and, as appropriate, clarifying and matters on behalf of the team in relation to the RA; SECRETARIAT
- c. Requesting any additional material thought as essential for an effective review; CHAIR, THROUGH SECRETARIAT
- d. Drafting an agenda of issues for discussion at the briefing meeting; CHAIR
- e. Chairing that section of the briefing meeting focused directly on the particular review; CHAIR
- f. Drafting a schedule of meetings for the visit and a list of any additional information to be made available to the team during the visit; SECRETARIAT IN COOPERATION WITH CHAIR
- g. Liaising with the institutional contact on the draft programme for the visit. (This activity in most cases will have started in outline at least well in advance of the visit.) SECRETARIAT
- H. Agreeing with the team the schedule of chairing of meetings and responsibilities for provision of notes for sections of the report; H1: CHAIR SHOULD CHAIR MEETINGS AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTENT OF MEETINGS. H2: PROVISION OF NOTES: CHAIR WITH SECRETARIAT
- i. Liaison with the institutional contact throughout the visit; SECRETARIAT AND CHAIR. END-OF-DAY MEETING WITH QUALITY MANAGER, CHAIR AND SECRETARY.
- j. Maintenance of good communications and cordial relationships within the team and with the institution; CHAIR
- k. Following the conclusion of the meetings, agreeing with the team a full draft of the 'key themes' letter, the main points to be included in each section of the full report, and the timetable and individual responsibilities for the completion of the report; CHAIR
- l. Ensuring that the team completes the work of the report to the agreed schedule and to professional standards; CHAIR, WITH ASSISTANCE OF SECRETARIAT
- m. Signing off the full draft report with the agreement of the team;
- n. Leading and coordinating the response of the team to the institution's response to the draft report; CHAIR, WITH ASSISTANCE OF SECRETARIAT
- o. Signing off the final report for transmission to the Board on behalf of the team. CHAIR

20. Discussion of Paragraph 32. Meeting discussed role of IWR secretary. Meeting agreed that the general role of secretariat is maintenance of good relationships at all times, and particularly in the context of IWR visits.

21. Discussion of Paragraph 33. NS asked who should decide the roles for producing the actual IWR report and be in charge of editing. Should QEF manager have any

role, or option to add somebody to the Secretariat, maybe even part time? Another option would be temporary international review secretaries that would be trained like reviewers. FQ noted that the report is the responsibility of the whole team. RM also observed that there is a need for somebody with a specific skill set to function as secretary for minutes. PG stated that this was part of a general need for at least a half-time appointment that would be needed for ENQA membership to make agency more professional and ensure Quality Enhancement activities are properly resourced to accord with European Standards and Guidelines. NS stressed the need to increase ownership of Iceland in reviews, and also to meet ENQA criteria, and to make the reviews more effective. NS also reminded that the secretariat should not start taking a role in creating text for IWRs in QEF2, as that is the role of peers.

Discussion about process for producing an IWR report resumed. NS proposed the following arrangements: At end of briefing meeting, before visit, it is agreed who has responsibility for each section of the report (although the whole team is still responsible for content of whole report). That person is responsible for sufficient questions being asked, data provided, etc. to cover that area of the report. Then that person is responsible for leading discussion about that issue before writing headline letter. That same person is then responsible for outline of the area of that report before leaving the site. Chair is provided with that outline as well, and an internal review secretary would be appointed (either one for each team, or same one for all to ensure consistency). Team members fill out the outline, and that is pulled together by secretary (See paragraph 35). These would be transitional arrangements for beginning of QEF2, and for future the QB should be hoping to build Icelandic expertise. TB warned that there is a possibility of losing continuity even if the QB builds up a team of experts, because there is a need uniformity of procedure that only Secretariat can uphold.

22. Discussion about Paragraph 39 on a Guide for producing a Reflective Analysis (RA). NS suggestions for a general outline were as follows:

- a. Common Data Set
- b. Update on changes to: student intake; undergraduate/postgraduate course provision; staff resources; research resources (research as defined in QEF); collaborative provision
- c. Follow-up to last IWR and associated Action Plans
- d. Follow-up to SLRs – at departmental level; at institutional level
- e. Institutional overview – SWOT; critical evaluation of policy; future strategy
- f. Action Plan

SOS noted that he had prepared suggestions for preparation of RA that would contain more specifics, but would be mostly presented as suggestions rather than requirements for an RA. RM emphasized that the RA should always contain clear links to the institution's strategic plan. BB offered the opinion that the final suggestions in QEF2 for RA preparation would have to be in between the SOS

suggestions and NS suggestions. MDB noted that SLRs would often omit university-wide mechanisms for quality. FQ reminded the meeting that Andrée Sursock had challenged the QB to think about SLRs as occurring outside the QEF, and let the institutions be largely responsible for the SLRs and not be part of the framework as such. MDB noted that QB involvement would be important to ensure accountability. If not for QEF requirements, then why are the units doing this? That is a question that the Quality Managers will be asked. MDB hence recommends keeping SLRs in QEF2. BB noted that SLRs are a good topic for a conference.

23. Discussion turned to Paragraph 39 on a general Guide for drawing up the Reflective Analysis (but optional) emphasizing strategic plan/framework on headings. The meeting agreed that this guide would be helpful, and SOS suggestions should be added where appropriate. FQ noted that assessment of student work is very important, and he would like to see more emphasis on that even though that is not highly visible in ESG. NS responded that this topic will be taken up in the QEF2 drafting committee.

24. Discussion turned to Paragraph 40. BB offered the opinion that the general framework in that paragraph would serve as a starting point, and should be re-visited if and when QEF2 is approved before it is taken to the drafting committee.

25. Discussion turned to Paragraph 42 onwards on wording of judgments. NS offered that the QB use the same judgements as in QEF1, but some alternatives exist.

One option is to do what the Scottish QA does:

- a. The institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience are 'not effective'
- b. The institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience have 'limited effectiveness'
- c. The institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience are 'effective'.

Another model comes from the European University Association:

Grade	Description
AA	The unit has an effective quality culture. The Committee has full confidence in its capacity to develop and manage its present and future quality.
A	The unit has a reasonable quality culture. The Committee has confidence in its capacity to develop and manage its present and future quality.
B	The unit has a partial quality culture. The Committee has confidence in its capacity to develop and manage its present and future quality, in so far as the recommended adjustments are made.

C	The unit has a weak quality culture. The Committee has no confidence in its capacity to develop and manage its quality.
---	---

RM argued that the term “effectiveness” should be incorporated into any judgments, and NS agreed with that, and noted that research would be added to this list.

NS offered that wording should reflect that the review should not be about the QB judging what universities bring to the table. Rather, what does the evidence tell us in terms of these systems resulting in effectiveness? BB added that we need to judge if there is going to be future effectiveness. FQ offered that maybe the QB should just stay with the current wording, because people know it. FQ argued that “full confidence” should be left out. NS suggested that full confidence could be awarded if all 3 areas of review are satisfactory (research, standards, learning experience). NS further offered the suggestion that the Conclusion section of an IWR for that area could use the language of the Scottish QA agency or other standardized statements about quality. For example, the judgment could take the form of the Scottish QA system, with an added “...based on that, the QB grants you full/conf/lim/etc. SOS suggested that the summative statement could incorporate something about the evidence that the HEI provided. “The evidence made available to the team suggests that the (area) is ok/not ok, etc,” and SOS also noted that if the QB decides that Full Confidence is granted if all three areas are ok (standards of awards, student experience, and research), then full may not be the badge of honor that it was initially intended to be. FQ noted that his impression of the original intent of “Full Confidence” was for HEIs to achieve self-accreditation status. BB added that in light of these challenges, perhaps QEF should not have full confidence in Research?

26. Discussion about confidential individual university matters.

27. Discussion on Paragraph 50 about Complaints and Appeals. RM asked if people can only complain about IWRs. Can they complain more generally about the QB or individuals members? Complaints can apply to all board activities. RM added that the QB would need an external to respond to that. Also the time limit is 5 years, which seems a bit long. Also, should something be out of the boundaries? NS noted that a conversation should occur before formal complaint, and the complaint has to be about a matter of consequence to the Institution. First line of defense is to deal with the issue locally, with a complaint to secretariat. If the complaint is about a QB member, then it should be made to NS. However, there are not many options if the complaint is about NS. PG offered that there is a committee that handles student problems with HEIs. Only lawyers eligible, established by law. FQ asked if complaints could be made to a member and chair of the QC. MDB was not in principle opposed to the idea, but asked if input from a lawyer would be necessary. PG noted that any citizen can always go to MESC or the Ombudsman of the Parliament. MDB asked if the objective of appeals can only be about judgments, and complaints cover everything else. Group agreed that this should be the plan.

The following will be possible grounds for appeals:

- a. **Procedure.** 'Irregularity of such significance that the legitimacy of decisions are called into question', and/or
- b. **Available evidence.** 'Material which existed before the review completion, and which, for good reason, was not available to the Team but had it been available, had a high probability of influencing the Team's judgement.
- c. **Fair and equal treatment.** 'The audit process, as performed, brings into question the fair and equal treatment of higher education institutions'.

BB asked if no new evidence is accepted after the team leaves. NS responded that new information should be come out during the draft process at the latest. PG added that appeals should be possible against both no confidence and limited confidence judgments.

28. Discussion of paragraph 67 on Annual meeting of board members. BB asked if a system where experts would rotate to other HEIs for annual meetings would be feasible. FQ suggested that every cycle, the QB would change the allocation of QB members to HEIs. FQ further added that the QB needs to be clearer about what the annual meetings should be about, and encourage 2-way communication.

29. Discussion of core model of research evaluation. Group agrees on the following topics for review in core model:

- a. **Research strategy.** This would include for example:
 - Does the unit have a research strategy?
 - How does it relate to the institutional strategy?
 - How realistic is the strategy?
 - Policy levers?
 - Unit and institutional support?
 - Effective monitoring?
 - How does the unit monitor quality of research products that appear outside of peer-review? That is, how is the HEI monitoring the quality of products such as policy documents, program evaluations, reports commissioned by municipalities, etc?
 - How does the unit monitor quality of more applied outputs (products that lead to patents, etc.)?

30. MDB asked if evaluation of research would be in SLRs as well. NS responded in the affirmative. MDB further asked whether it would follow the core or extended model? NS responded that the expectation would be that individual departments would apply for the extended model. QEF2 would only have UNITS eligible for the extended model.

31. Discussion about timescales for development and implementation of QEF2. These will be items for discussion for MESC. QB needs to add research, management of research to SLRs, and it would be ideal to have some of that in place before 1st round of IWRs in QEF2. QB will need to identify IWR chairs, train them, and publish guidelines developed with QC. Application for ENQA should be spelled out in timescale as well. Core handbook about general structures could come out Sept 1 2016. Annual meetings for QEF1 would go as planned until Sept 2016. The following timeline draft is approved:

- a. New structure/membership of Board September 2016
- b. Inclusion of Research within SLR effective from 1st September 2016
- c. Definition and role of IWR panel members and associated selection and training effective from 1st September 2016
- d. Revised approach to annual meetings from 1st September 2016
- e. Publication of Student Guide September 1st September 2016
- f. Implementation of revised IWR from 1st September 2017
- g. Complaints and appeals mechanism effective from 1st September 2016

32. Discussion about confidential individual university matters.

Meeting of the Quality Board, Reykjavik September 15, 2015

Present: Barbara Brittingham (BB), Norman Sharp (NS), Rita McAllister (RM), Frank Quinault (FQ), Tove Bull (TB), Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (SOS), Þorsteinn Gunnarsson (ÞG).

1. Discussion about MESC meeting in the morning. Discussion about confidential individual university matters.
2. Discussion about confidential individual university matters.
3. IAA.. Ólöf Gerður will be the IAA rep to the QB.
4. QEF2 and MESC. Update on AM meeting with Una, Stefán, Hellen and Sonja. Timeline proposed in QEF2 appears to be in line with their thoughts. It was made clear that the QC would need more secretariat support.
5. BB asked if the QB can get a comparison for Secretariat support.. Also, ENQA membership is a clear reason for support of the secretariat, like Andrée Sursock pointed out. There is also a need for SOS to codify the workings of the secretariat, which demands resources. QC will need more resources as well.

6. Discussion turned to Redrafting the QEF2 paper. It will need an Executive Summary/Guide. SOS will look at NS Document and minutes from June and September meetings and produce a coherent paper with some structure, leaving out options we discard, and NS general thoughts. For now, SLRs should be kept within the framework because they are new, but the institutions should do them how they want, to a degree. FQ and RM are of the opinion that SLRs should be in QEF2. They should be done as before, with research added. NS noted that now there is maturity in the systems, then the HEIs can do it and take responsibility, but they have to follow some general guidelines. The position in the paper to the MESC should be that now the QB would like to delegate this to institutions, but the QB will state criteria. TB added that taking SLRs out of the QEF does not take away the remit of the QB to look at them. BB agreed that the focus should be about the QB creating a framework. NS cautioned that how the Board follows up on SLRS could be a question that could be asked as part of ENQA review. Perhaps the QB can say that this is evolving and that we need to consult the QC before we continue. Also as research is coming in, the QB may need to be more involved. FQ noted that the QB needs to be careful that if there is a judgment of limited confidence for not doing well with SLRs, the HEI could reply that there were no guidelines. RM offered the opinion that the QB needs to set a framework for adding research. TB noted that there are two issues. 1) Having research in SLRs means a need for guidance, help, support, etc. 2) If Iceland goes for ENQA, the QB runs into trouble if it is too involved in SLRs. FQ argued that this was a semantic issue, and financial, as 2 externals (1 for research specialization) in QEF2 will have financial implications. NS argued that the stance in the paper to MESC should be open to options for SLRs: It is a debatable point whether SLR should be within framework. There is no doubt it should happen. There are some essential items, such as report, externals, etc. The requirement for comprehensive SLR will remain. At the moment, it is at the SLR level that evaluation of research is being undertaken. That will be fully worked out by research advisory committee. The institutional-level follow-up of SLRs will then be evaluated in IWRs.

7. SOS will create a document that will be approved by NS to be sent to MESC:

1. Amend sept meeting doc in light of minutes
2. Draw out sections for document
3. Incorporate other documents, such as doc and minutes from June meeting

8. Discussion about confidential individual university matters

9. Discussion about confidential individual university matters.

10. Agenda item 6. November QB conference. Agenda for conference discussed. PG was pleased to see how easy it was to get people to speak at conference. A press release will be sent out to advertise. SOS will send draft of November conference agenda to MESC, and press release soon after that.

11. Discussion about confidential individual university matters

12. Assessment of research. MDB asked for QB suggestions for externals for a review of the system for evaluating research productivity at the public universities. QB suggests the following: (confidential list).

13. Discussion of arrangements for November conference. QB members arrive on 8th, home on 11th.

14. Proposed meeting calendar for 2016. QB agrees to, for now, sticking with suggested plan for QB meetings.

- February 1-2
- May 23-24
- September 12-13
- November 14