

**Training of Reviewers**

**INQAAHE**

**Pre-Forum  
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# Outline

## **Part 1: Peers to Become Reviewers...**

Group Work & Reporting Back

## **Part 2: Things a Reviewer Does...**

What's New in Your System?

## **Part 3: Training Strategies...**

Training Resources...



**Training of Reviewers**

**Part 1: Peers to  
Become Reviewers**

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Audit Director**



**Australian Universities Quality Agency**

# Meaning of Peers

Generic term

Other terms: reviewers, auditors, assessors, evaluators,

....

- They are from the system, know the system...
- They share the language, the rationale, the codes and values of the institution or the discipline/ profession or the program being reviewed.
- They share the conceptual framework and are able to advise on what is being reviewed

# Extended Meaning

- ‘a person or group with similar knowledge, skills, experience and status in the relevant context’
- Simply another academic?
- Many QA agencies extend it to include other stakeholders such as industry

# Why Peer Review?

- Peers bring special skills and perspectives to the collective decision making
- Whole is greater than the sum of parts
- Synergy of different perspectives
- Value of professional knowledge

# What do we Need in Peers?

- Skills and knowledge
- Attitude and commitment
- Respect and confidence of the sector

We need the right people for the right job.

They also need the right tools.

Experts in their area of knowledge

but QA needs additional skills.

## Role of the Peers

- Roles and responsibilities of the peers need to be clear
- What is the role of peers in the overall QA mechanism?
- How will the agency use the result of peer review?
- Who makes the final decisions?
- Determine this well in advance.
- Even the best team will feel frustrated if its role is not clear

**Peers need to act on behalf of the QA body**

## Some Potential Pitfalls...

- Social bias: Peers might be influenced by social aspects such as the reputation of the institution.
- Intellectual bias: Specific orientations or methodologies preferred by the peers might influence their judgement.
- Random error: Low level of reliability and consistency of peer judgement might lead to a positive outcome. (Outcome is a matter of chance than the reliable result of peer review.)
- Training helps to sensitise the peers towards these criticisms

# Ensuring Credibility

Choose the right people

- Nominations or referrals or advertisements or a combination?
- What type of peers do you need?
- Subject specialists vs generalists
- National vs international reviewers
- How many do you need?
- How often will you use them?
- Pool or register of peers?

***Give them the right training***

***Give them the right tools***

***Ensure checks and balances***

# Group Work: Your National Context...

**Facilitators: Stella & Adil**

- Small groups around the tables
- Identify a rapporteur
- Share three major challenges you face in your country in identifying and training peers for the review role
- As a group agree on 'five challenges' of priority

***Twenty minutes for the group work***

***Three minutes for the rapporteur to share the challenges***

***Moderator: Adil***

**Training of Reviewers**

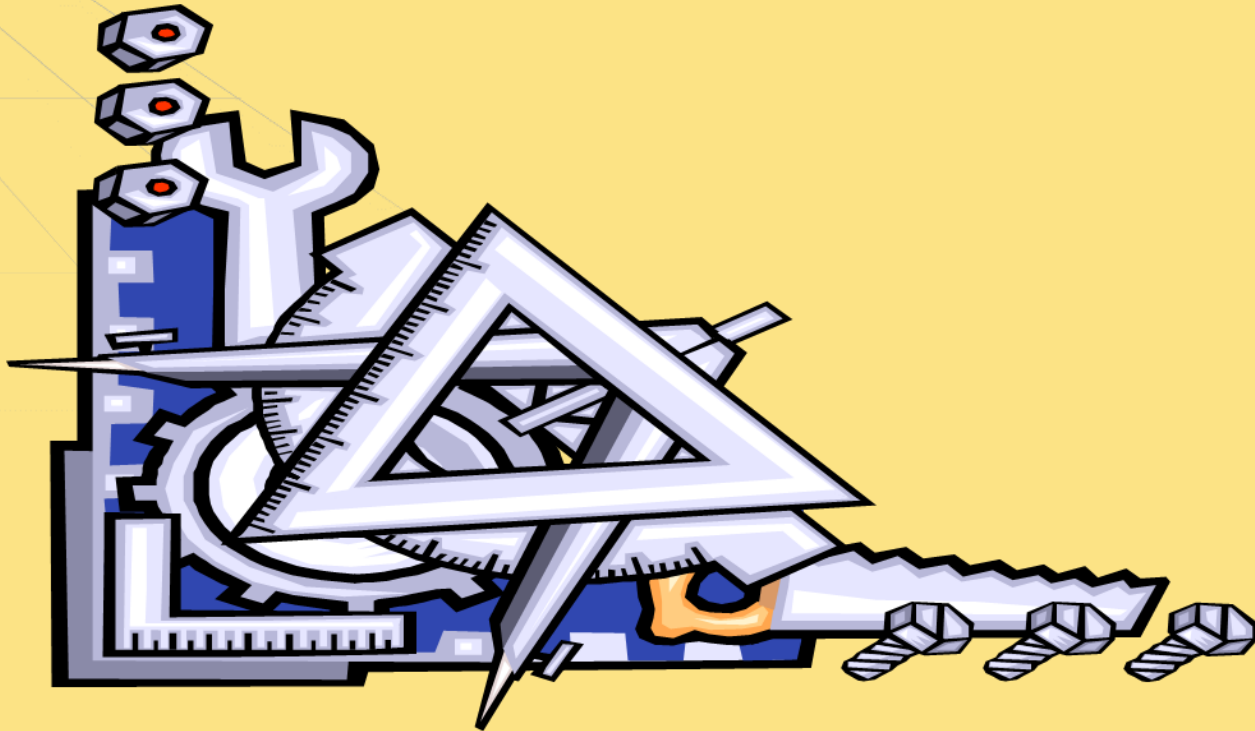
**Part 2: Things a  
Reviewer Does**

**Dr Antony Stella  
Audit Director**



**Australian Universities Quality Agency**

# Things a Peer Reviewer Does...



# Tools & Techniques

- Scope & Focus
- Review of evidence in documents
- Request for additional information
- Interviewing & Questioning techniques
- Sampling, Tracking or Trailing, and Triangulation of evidence
- Teamwork

# Interviewing & Questioning

- Essentially a hearing of the evidence
- Selection of people to interview:
  - Interview of key individuals (e.g. V-C)
  - Vertical & horizontal groupings (within & across faculties)
  - Homogeneous & heterogeneous groupings (all UG vs UG & PG)
  - Split-panel and 'in-situ' interview sessions ('Climate checks')
  - Triangulation of responses to same question from different groups.
- Types of questions:
  - Open ("tell us about...") & closed ("who is responsible for...")
  - Undirected and directed questions
  - Avoid: Asking multiple response questions; wordy preambles; anecdotes and 'own institution stories'; making suggestions or giving gratuitous advice.

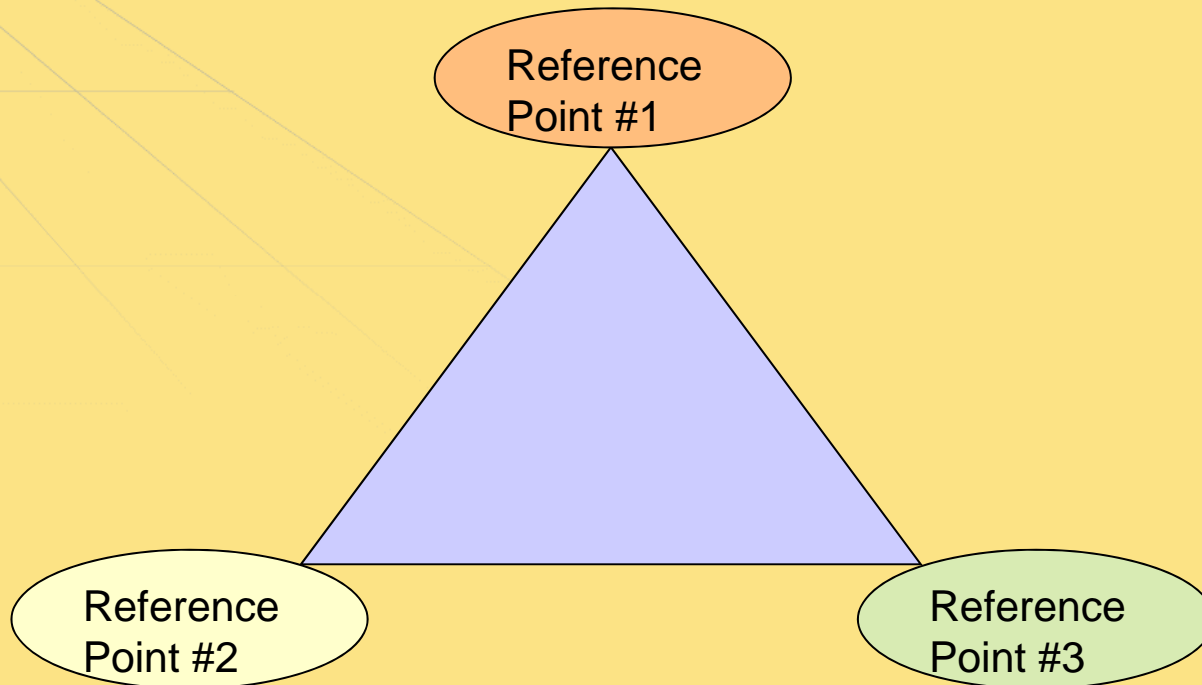
# Sampling, Tracking or Trailing, and Triangulation

- Need to avoid trying to ‘sample’ the whole institution! (neither ‘mile-wide’ nor ‘inch-deep’)
- Types of sampling:
  - Sampling of target organisational units/staff
  - Sampling of target programs/courses
  - Sampling of target stakeholder groups (esp. students and external stakeholders)
- Tracking/Trailing of targeted issues by use of document/paper trails
- Triangulation of evidence

**Identify appropriate targets for sampling!**



# 'Triangulation'



# Triangulation

A technique borrowed from trigonometry and used by map makers is the process of determining the location of a point by measuring angles to it from known reference points at either end. 'Triangulation' of evidence can be used to create '*a cone of confidence*' for QA findings.

For example: If you get the same response to a question on policy from three distinctly different groups of stakeholders (say external members of Council, sessional teachers, and 1<sup>st</sup> Year undergrad students), the probability is that the information being given is reliable (cf receiving three contradictory answers).

# Triangulation...

- b) If you read a policy document saying one thing, but you find contradictory statements from both a written management report and oral testimony saying another, the chances are that the policy is not being deployed properly.
  
- c) The university claims it is being successful in doing something, but the results available suggest that it is not, so you ask interviewees what they think needs to be improved and triangulate responses, and so on.

# Teamwork!

- Work as a member of a team
- Follow directions given by ‘the team captain’
- Observe the rules and conventions of the game as set out in the ‘official rule book’
- Cooperate and collaborate (e.g. by reaching decisions through panel consensus); and
- Have healthy respect for the opposition team!

# Part 3: Training Strategies

# Training Methods and Materials

Briefing notes

Manuals and Handbooks

Tips on Do's and Don'ts

Face-to-face workshops and meetings

Role plays and case studies

Post training support

# Post Training Issues

Register of Reviewers  
Keeping the Reviewers Informed  
Managing Conflict of Interests  
Role of the Agency Staff

# Managing Conflicts of Interests

- ‘Conflicts of interests’ are private interests and circumstances that may compete with official actions or duties.
- Three types of conflicts: personal, professional or ideological
- Good practice: Policy on eliminating Conflicts of Interests

# Role of the Agency Staff

## Various models

- From 'no role in panels' to 'leading the panel'
- Chair
- Full member
- Report writer
- Coordinator
  
- Staff profile varies depending on this role
- When staff have a major role they become peers in QA and bring the QA perspectives to the panel

# Post Training Support

Reviewers as Change Agents

Reviewers as Ambassadors

Annual meetings

Regular communications and updates

Involvement in other agency work

Fine-tuning policies and procedures

Involvement in orienting institutions

# Training Resources

INQAAHE

IIEP

Agency websites

Network projects

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# **Discussion**

## **Stella & Adil**

**Thank you**

