

<b>Subject</b>	Operating an External Quality Agency
<b>Segment</b>	Preparation of the Report
<b>Topic</b>	5.2 Purposes and Types of Review Reports

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**Please note that this is a text-only version. All links and animations are not activated in this version. It is recommended that you view the topic online for an interactive learning experience.**

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### 1. Introduction



Once the review is over, the institution must be informed of the outcome of the review. The team may share some preliminary observations with the senior management of the institution at a session before leaving the site but it disseminates its findings primarily through the review report. This topic discusses the purpose of reports and indicates the substance of what is generally included in them. You will also learn about different approaches to report writing for the varying circumstances of reviews and audits. Broadly speaking there are three broad types of report: accreditation, evaluation and audit but the general term 'review' report is used to cover all three unless otherwise specified.

#### **Objectives: Purposes and Types of Review Reports**

Upon completion of this topic, you should be able to

- identify the purpose of a review report
- discuss different guidelines pertaining to the substance of a review report
- describe different types of reports with special reference to the purpose of the review

### 2. Purpose of the Report

The report informs institutions of their performance and advises them what more they could, and in some cases, what they should do. The report normally includes:

1. **Recognition** of the effort that the institution has put into preparing for the review.
2. **Confirmation** of the good practices adopted by the institution in the design, development, delivery and management of its activities and programs.
3. **Appreciation** of the institution's initiative and future direction.
4. **A blueprint** for continuous improvement.
5. **Outcomes** of the review which may, or may not, have consequential impact on the operation of the institution / programs, depending on the purpose of the review.

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### 3. Substance of the Report

Below are some guidelines that indicate the substance of what is generally included in reports:

1. The report should present a clear justification for the approval, non-approval or setting of pre-conditions/requirements of a case, with reference to the standards/requirements stipulated in the review guidelines.
2. A report should clearly identify the evidence from which the determination was derived.
3. A report should have a clear logical development from evidence to determination.
4. It should be very clear to the recipient of a report what the areas of deficiency are and in cases where the purpose of the review permits, the areas of good practices.
5. A report may also serve the purpose of being an input to future re-accreditation or periodic review or re-evaluation exercises.

Let us look at an example of the scope of a report as set out by Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) which undertakes institutional-level audits of HEIs.



[Parameters of an Audit Report – AUQA](#)

#### **Parameters of an Audit Report – AUQA**

##### **The Audit Report**

##### **General Parameters**

Following the Audit Visit, AUQA produces a public written report on the audit. The report outlines the panel's findings, which it has reached through its interpretation of the specific evidence it has gathered. Reports note both commendable practices and areas for improvement. Reports do not comment on individual people (positively or negatively) or appeal to irrelevant standards. Reports attempt to address all relevant areas, but without excessive detail or presuming to be exhaustive.

Audit reports do not contain statements that cannot be substantiated. Hence, if the panel has formed the view that comment on a particular matter needs to be made, it has firm evidence on which to base its comment. Furthermore, firm views are stated firmly, avoiding excessive subtlety.

Source: AUQA Audit Manual version 5.0 Section 4.1

### 4. Types of Reports

Basically, a review report has to reflect the underpinning principles and philosophy of the review. Depending on the mission of the QA agency as well as the purpose of the specific review exercise, the review exercise can lead to action-based decision outcomes (say, the granting or denial of a request for accreditation) or an outcome that is in the form of opinion statement based on evidence.

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Reports may be categorised into three types to reflect the nature of the review:

- Accreditation report
- Evaluation report
- Audit report

Let us review these three reports in detail.

### **Three Types of Reports**

#### **Accreditation report**

If the purpose of the review is to establish the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, program or module of study, the outcome of the review would normally be a "yes" or "no" decision with or without conditions to be fulfilled by the institution by specified deadlines. This kind of report is commonly termed an accreditation report and will cover the essential information mentioned above.

Normally, the status granted is limited by time and hence the report also specifies a validity period and any other conditions to be met for the status to be maintained within the validity period.

#### **Evaluation report**

If the purpose of the review is to examine and pass a judgment on the appropriateness or level of quality or standards of an institution, program or module of study, the report will normally contain comments on the level of quality or standards achieved without giving any "yes" or "no" judgment. This type of report is termed an evaluation report.

#### **Audit report**

If the purpose of the review is to check that procedures are in place to assure quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes, the report is known as audit report. Normally audit is undertaken for the assessment of the quality standard of an institution with self-accrediting power but is now being used in some countries with private sector institutions. This type of report contains affirmations, recommendations for improvement and commendations.

It is generally the case that QA agencies that use the accreditation approach include the term Accreditation in their title, for example, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) and in the United States such as the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT). The report template of the HKCAAVQ (below) illustrates the essential information to be covered in an accreditation report so that the report meets its purpose.



[Accreditation report – HKCAAVQ](#)

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### **Accreditation report – HKCAAVQ**

*Accreditation report – HKCAAVQ 'This accreditation report is issued by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) in its capacity as the Accreditation Authority as provided for under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap 592) (AAVQO). This report outlines the HKCAAVQ's determination, the validity period of the determination as well as the conditions or restrictions, subject to which the determination is to have effect.*

...

*The HKCAAVQ grants the accreditation status as sought in this exercise to the aforesaid operator to operate learning program(s) accredited by the HKCAAVQ at Qualifications Framework Level(s) \_\_\_\_\_ during the validity period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (both days inclusive), subject to the following pre-condition(s) and requirement(s) as stated above.'*

An example of an evaluation report from the Taiwan Assessment Evaluation Association (TWAEA) follows. This agency has been commissioned by the Ministry of Education to evaluate university administration and universities of technology.



### [Evaluation Report – TWAEA](#)

#### **Evaluation Report – TWAEA**

Criteria for the evaluation of universities of technology comprise:

- integrated organisational management (30%);
- core academic activities □ (25%);
- academic administration (25%); and
- general administration (20%).

The TWAEA provides evaluation services to facilitate institutions to carry out self-improvement activities and achieve a good result from an external quality assurance exercise. Its evaluative report comprises two parts:

- (a) the quality level of individual faculties and departments within the evaluated institution;
- (b) evaluation report.

Evaluation reports are available in the public domain for transparency and accountability.

*Source: <http://utce.twaea.org.tw>*

Examples of audit reports include those provided by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) and the Quality Assurance Agency of the UK (QAA)

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## [Audit Reports – OAC and AUQA](#)

### **Audit Reports – OAC and AUQA**

#### **OAAA, Oman**

The Quality Audit Report...presents the Audit's Panel's findings and conclusions about the effectiveness of the HEI's quality assurance systems. It is the main output of the External Review process. The report does not include a summative result such as a pass/fail, grade or score of any sort. Rather it is a textual document that provides evaluative comments on a comprehensive range of issues, and includes formal conclusions in the form of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations. (*Quality Audit Manual: Institutional Accreditation, Stage 1, 2008, para 18.1*).

#### **AUQA, Australia**

"Quality audit" is defined by AUQA as a "systematic and independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable to achieve objectives". AUQA defines the audit report as follows:

*'The report outlines the panel's findings, which it has reached through its interpretation of the specific evidence it has gathered. Reports note both commendable practices and areas for improvement. Reports do not comment on individual people (positively or negatively) or appeal to irrelevant standards. Reports attempt to address all relevant areas, but without excessive detail or presuming to be exhaustive.'* (*Audit Manual 7.1 para. 4.1*)

## **5. Discussion**

### **Discussion: Purpose and Types of Review Reports**

Refer to the INQAAHE website to locate the websites of at least three external quality assurance agencies. Search these to locate guidelines or templates for preparation of reports by review teams. Compare the guidelines and approaches to determine what the differences are, for example

- what are the main differences and similarities?
- to what extent are the differences and similarities an outcome of the purposes of the review?.
- What improvements can you suggest for the guidelines or templates?

You might find it helpful to make a table to facilitate the comparisons

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## 6. Summary

### **This topic covered the following main points:**

- A review report informs an institution of its performance and advises it on what more can, or should, be done.
- Some guidelines that indicate the substance of what is generally included in reports:
  - The report should present a clear justification for the approval, non-approval or setting of pre-conditions/requirements of a case, with reference to the standards/requirements stipulated in the review guidelines.
  - A report should clearly identify the evidence from which the determination was derived.
  - A report should have a clear logical development from evidence to determination.
  - It should be very clear to the recipient of a report what the areas of deficiency are and in cases where the purpose of the review permits, the areas of good practices.
  - A report may also serve the purpose of being an input to future re-accreditation or periodic review or re-evaluation exercises.
- There are three types of reports based on the purpose of the review:
  - An Accreditation report is written if the purpose of the review is to establish the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, program or module of study.
  - An Evaluation report is written if the purpose of the review is to examine and pass a judgment on the appropriateness or level of quality or standards of an institution, program or module of study.
  - An Audit report is written if the purpose of the review is to check that procedures are in place to assure quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes.