



The Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR)

(Based on the version at Macao during 22-23 January 2015, this third version was reversed based on the suggestions from the APQR Council on October 1, 2016)

**ASIA PACIFIC QUALITY NETWORK (APQN) and ASIA-PACIFIC
QUALITY NETWORK (APQN)**



The Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR)

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1. Introduction

The AGM of the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) has endorsed a proposal for the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Quality Register (APQR) as part of its Decennial agenda in 2012. APQR would be a register of external quality assurance agencies (QAAs) that demonstrated certain thresholds of maturity. An independent external review by peers would be the backbone of the APQR.

The pilot review was conducted for the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) in Sri Lanka in June, 2012. The APQR document with a three-year-long consultation with various stakeholders was released in special meeting at Macao during 22-23 January, 2015. Thus, APQR came into effect from January 2015, and the first meeting of APQR Council was held in Kunming, China during 17-19 April, 2015. The first formal review for the APQR was conducted for the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) in Suva during 24-26 June, 2015.

The QAAs who are interested in the international accreditation of higher education institutions (HEIs) and educational programs with APQN recognition are the primary clientele of APQR.

2. Purpose of the APQR

The Board of APQN considers the following as the primary purposes for establishing the APQR.

- 1) Provide an inspirational target
- 2) Serve as a quality hallmark and qualification to accredit HEIs/programs
- 3) Provide a basis for mutual recognition of cross-border operations of QAAs and HEIs
- 4) Offer a reference to global stakeholders on trustworthy external QAAs in in the Asia-Pacific Region

The QAAs who have been registered and accepted onto APQR by the on-site review panel can accredit international HEIs/programs in guidance/cooperation along with APQN.

3. Criteria for Recognition by the APQR

A modified set of 11 criteria that takes into account the APQN membership criteria as well as Chiba Principles are:

Criterion	Description
1. Organization Category	The QAA is a full member of APQN or is a QA body which is valid entity recognized by the appropriate authority in the relevant country/territory/region, and is accountable to stakeholders.
2. Operations	The quality assurance agency undertakes quality assurance activities (at institutional and/or program level) on a cyclical basis.
3. Mission and Objectives	The mission statement and objectives of the agency are understood consistently by its stakeholders.
4. Staff and Reviewers	The profile of the agency staff and the profile of the reviewers the agency uses are consistent with the Mission Statement.
5. Independence	The quality assurance agency is independent and has autonomous responsibility for its QA operations. The judgments and

	recommendations of the agency's reports cannot be changed by third parties.
6. Resources	The agency has sufficient resources to run its operations in accordance with its mission statement and objectives.
7. Process and Criteria	The description of the processes and criteria applied by the agency are transparent and publicly available and normally include: self-evaluation, site visit, public report and follow-up measure. The published standards and criteria are applied consistently and rigorously.
8. Appeals	An appeals mechanism is available for the institutions.
9. Quality Assurance	The agency has effective quality assurance measures in place to monitor itself and is subject to occasional review.
10. Monitoring and Evaluation	The agency undertakes research on internal and external quality assurance and provides information and advice to higher education institutions.
11. Agency Linkages	The agency cooperates and collaborates with other agencies and key players across national borders.

Recognition by or inclusion onto APQR is based on a review of the agency against its adherence to compliance with the above criteria.

Acceptance onto APQR requires “substantial compliance” with these criteria. Each criterion will be judged “**fully, substantially, partially or non-compliant**”; and substantial compliance with the whole set needs full or substantial compliance with each criterion.

Inclusion onto APQR will be valid for a period of five years. The governing body of APQR has the right to cancel the inclusion on APQR if there are circumstances and evidence that call into question the substantial compliance of the agency with the review criteria.

The logo of APQR Quality Label is as follows:



4. Process

An agency may

- 1) Request APQR to implement a review; or
- 2) Present the outcomes of another review and demonstrate that the review was rigorous and independent; or
- 3) Request APQR and another QA network/organization to implement a joint review.

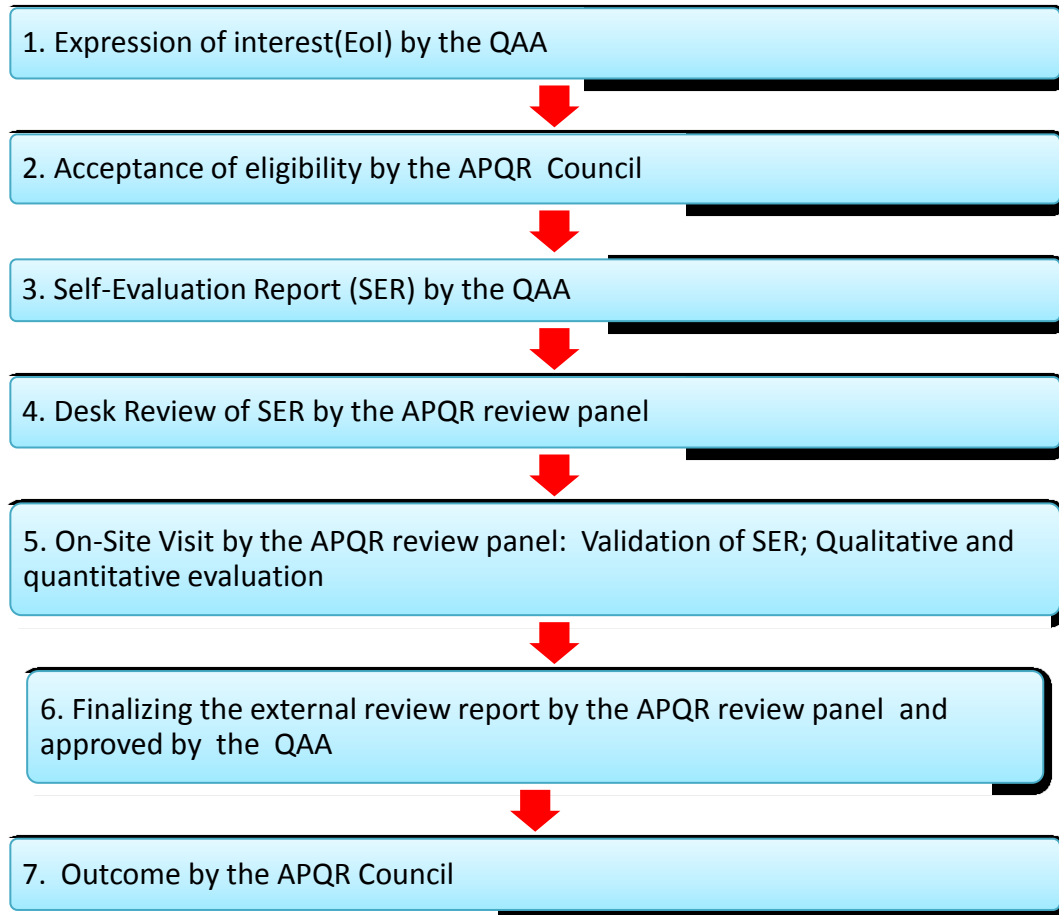
Options 1 and 2 are similar to arrangements the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) allows for its review of its members. However, APQR may decide to limit option 2 to reviews carried out by other QA networks that have an active memorandum of understanding with APQR. In other words, agencies cannot be accepted to APQR based on the outcome of any review but only the those ones where the review has been administered by an acceptable QA network, e.g. APQR or its

counterparts, such as the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). Option 3 becomes useful to QA agencies that wish to undergo a joint review by APQN and another network, such as INQAAHE.

For reviews by APQR, the procedures given below have been adapted from the INQAAHE procedures.

4.1 APQR Review

The APQR Council is responsible for organizing the review, ensuring good practice in the review process and selecting and briefing the members of the review panel to be responsible for the review. The flow chart below shows the process.



i. The agency should submit an expression of interest to the APQN Secretariat requesting an external review against the APQR criteria and demonstrating its eligibility for the review.

ii. The APQN Secretariat informs the APQR Council of the expression of interest. The APQR Council decides on the eligibility of the applicant. If there are doubts about any aspect of the credibility or maturity of the applicant the APQR Council will decide not to entertain the application without necessarily giving any reasons to the applicant.

iii. If the APQR Council accepts the expression of interest, the scope of the review is discussed with the applicant and a timeline and costing are agreed.

iv. The applicant agency submits a self-evaluation report at least two months prior to the proposed site visit.

v. The Secretariat forwards the submission to the APQR Council. If the Council finds the documentation in order, it asks the Secretariat to compose a review panel of three experts in consultation with the APQR Council and plan the schedule for the review.

vi. The applicant agency is responsible for the practical arrangements with respect to the review, including booking of and paying for travel and accommodation and organization of the on-site visit based on instructions from the panel chair.

vii. The review panel will read the review documents, conduct the on-site visit, and write the report of the review. The chair of the panel is responsible for developing the program for the on-site visit and communicating with the agency about the panel membership and other practical details related to the review such as provision of additional information and replies to questions from the self-evaluation report.

viii. The report of the review panel is provided to the APQR Council, which will make the final decision on the review process, and access to the public.

4.2 Cost

Some parameters are required for the fee to be charged by APQR Council. The fee must cover the services of the Secretariat and the honoraria of three panel members.

USD5000 is taken as an indicative figure for the Secretariat’s services, as well as income for APQN.

The nominal honorarium for one expert per day for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Bank is 600 to 800 USD. APQR can expect that the reviewers will be willing to accept a 250 USD per day, as they are prepared to donate some time to improving quality assurance in the region. For a three-day visit and one-day advance preparation, the honorarium per reviewer would be 1000 USD.

For the whole reviewing process, the indicative cost would be:

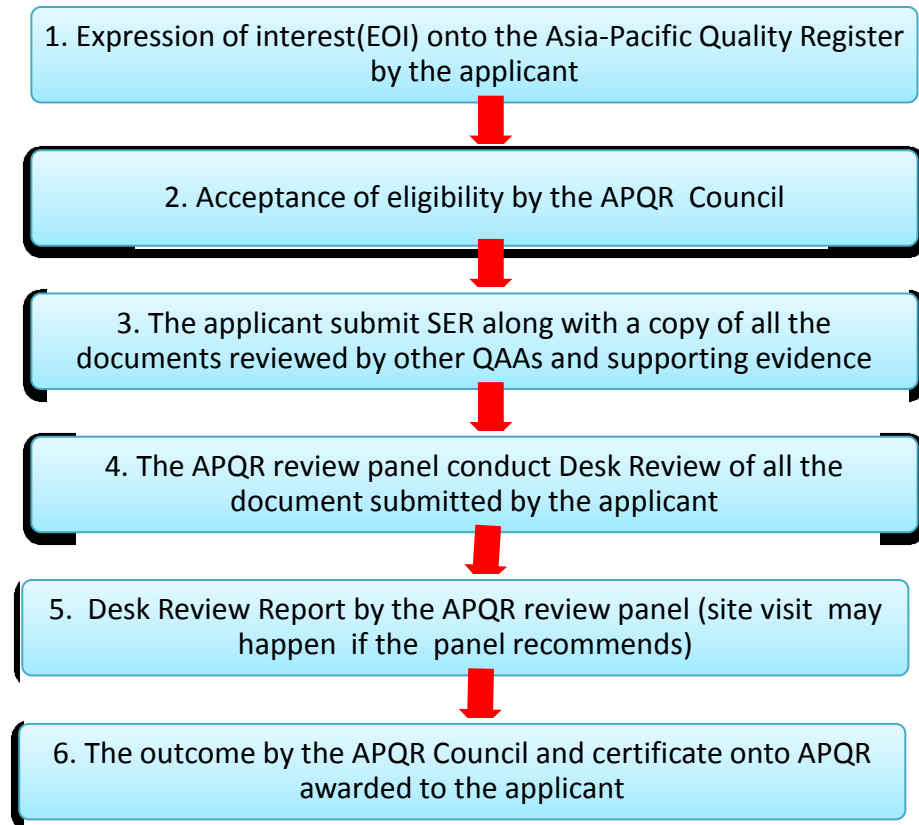
S/N	Item Amount	USD
1	Services of the Secretariat	3000
2	Honorarium for three reviewers (one reviewer 800 USD as a lump-sum amount)	2400
Total(USD)		5400

Note: Air fare and accommodation and all related expenses are to be borne by the applicant agency directly. Additional expenses may include the costs of visas and ground transport unless reviewers agree to pay for these themselves.

4.3 Acceptance of other Reviews for Inclusion onto APQR

APQR also accepts the reviews conducted by distinguished quality assurance organizations/networks that have collaboration with APQN, including the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and others. A QAA reviewed by such QA organizations/networks therefore can be considered to be accepted to the Asia-Pacific Quality Register.

To ensure the credibility of such external reviews, the QAA should complete the following procedure. The flow chart below shows the process.



The cost for this process would be the same for consideration of other reviews on APQR, except for travel and other expenses which may not occur if an on-site visit does not take place.

5. Structure of APQR Council

The first APQR Council will be appointed for a period of two to three years. Two members will be appointed for two years and two will be appointed for three years to provide continuity to the work of the Council. The proposed composition of a seven-member APQR Council is as below:

- i. President of APQN Board or a member of the Executive identified by the APQN Board as Chairperson and a Board member as Co-chair.
- ii. Two QA professionals with credibility to be identified by the Board from the Asia Pacific region, one within and one outside the APQN Board.
- iii. Three members from stakeholder groups or partners of the initiative such as UNESCO, Association of Universities or student bodies working at Asia –Pacific regional level (Two of members will be appointed for two years).
- iv. An international member from outside the Asia Pacific region, such as EQAR (appointed for two years).

The first APQR Council will be appointed by APQN Board with immediate past APQN president as Chairperson and APQN secretariat will be APQR Secretariat. The Council will have at least one face to face meeting per year in the margins of the APQN annual conference and will rely on electronic discussions to conduct its business.



6. Further discussion and directions

It is agreed that APQN should set up and mentor the APQR for initial 3 years as outlined above. As the number of registered bodies grows and stakeholders develop interest, it is expected that APQR can become an independent entity like EQAR.