

# PEER REVIEW in qibb

## PEER REVIEW: STRUCTURE FOR THE AUSTRIAN-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN THE QUALITY INITIATIVE FOR VET / QIBB

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## PEER REVIEW - What has Happened so far?

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Peer Review as a voluntary external evaluation tool for initial VET has been developed and tested at European level since 2003 in three Leonardo da Vinci projects that were coordinated by the Austrian Institute for Research in VET (öibf).<sup>1</sup> At the same time, pilot studies - in which Austrian schools were also involved - were conducted in different European countries in order to test the tool of Peer Review.

From the beginning, the European LdV projects concerning Peer Review were co-initiated and supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK), and more specifically, by the GD VET. At the same time it was a matter of concern as how to integrate possibly this external evaluation procedure within the Quality Initiative for VET (QIBB). The following steps were further taken in this respect:

- In March 2007, in the framework of a national LdV project meeting which was organised by the öibf and the GD VET, the launching event “Peer Review in VET” took place, during which an implementation of Peer Review in the framework of QIBB was discussed (approx. 100 participants - representatives from the ministry, from the regional boards, QIBB quality project managers, social partners, representatives from industry, experts from universities and higher education).
- At the beginning of 2008, the öibf was commissioned by ARQA-VET to conduct a feasibility study in order to examine the applicability of the international Peer Review procedure in the context of QIBB and in order to clarify the necessary preconditions and prerequisites for an implementation at national level.<sup>2</sup>
- Furthermore, in spring 2008, the öibf was commissioned by the GD VET to conduct a pilot study on Peer Review. In the framework of this pilot study, seven Austrian VET schools have been testing the Peer Review procedure. The results of the pilot study will be available in autumn 2009.<sup>3</sup>
- The teacher training college in Vienna (PH Wien) has also tackled the question of how to implement Peer Review in Austrian schools, i.e. in schools offering general and vocational education and training. This feasibility study is also available.

The results of both feasibility studies were presented to the GD VET in the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture. The QIBB steering group entrusted the unit II/8a (Research, Quality and Gender Mainstreaming in VET) and ARQA-VET to develop a structure for the gradual national implementation of Peer Review on the basis of the results of the two feasibility studies. A structure regarding the implementation of Peer Review in Austrian VET schools was presented to the QIBB steering group at the beginning of March 2009, and is explained in this paper in revised form.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.peer-review-education.net](http://www.peer-review-education.net).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.arqa-vet.at/fileadmin/download\\_files/Feasibility\\_Study\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_01.pdf](http://www.arqa-vet.at/fileadmin/download_files/Feasibility_Study_Executive_Summary_01.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.arqa-vet.at/qualitaet/peer\\_review/peer\\_review\\_in\\_oesterreich/](http://www.arqa-vet.at/qualitaet/peer_review/peer_review_in_oesterreich/).

## Peer Review in QIBB – Structure

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The structure, which is presented here (see Annex 1), aims to show the cooperation between the various institutions involved in Peer Review. A synergetic model has been developed which connects the findings and results of both feasibility studies as well as possible. There are two reasons for this. First, a procedure that follows Austrian-wide standards and is of high quality needed to be constructed (by making the best use of the available resources). Secondly, all relevant stakeholders and key players needed to be included.

The structure (see Annex 1) envisages three levels:

- **Strategic level:** The QIBB steering group, whose members decide about the implementation of Peer Review in VET schools, commissions a working group to oversee the strategy of the whole process.
- **Coordinating and supporting level:** The next level is ARQA-VET, whose central task it is to coordinate the process along Austrian-wide standards as well as to guarantee the implementation of the quality assurance of the whole process. Furthermore, ARQA-VET supports VET schools that conduct Peer Reviews and is responsible for the training of Peer Facilitators as well as - in cooperation with selected teacher training colleges - the training of Peers.
- **Operational level:** Schools decide - on a voluntary basis - to make use of a Peer Review or not, and conduct the Peer Reviews. The development of a Peer Review network among schools should be supported as much as possible by all levels.

This model aims to reach the following main **goals**:

- The participating VET schools receive the support and advice they need in order to use the procedure to their benefit and for their own quality assurance and development goals. The main goal of the whole procedure is school development and improvement.
- An Austrian-wide coordinating body (ARQA-VET) is responsible for a standardised and scientifically proven procedure at all schools involved in the process. It sees to it that standardised documents are used as well as standardised procedures and trainings carried out. Moreover, ARQA-VET develops quality assurance instruments with regard to the whole process. The outcomes are made available to the working group as a governance and strategic tool.
- The QIBB steering group - via the establishment of a working group - has the possibility to influence the Peer Review process strategically (e.g. as far as funding, for example, is concerned). By way of this, Peer Review can become an integrative part of QIBB.

## Peer Review in QIBB – Process

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In order to visualise the whole Peer Review procedure as well as the duties of the players involved, a Peer Review model from the school's point of view has been developed (see Annex 2). The procedure runs as follows:

Schools interested in a Peer Review get their first information via the homepage [www.peer-review-in-qibb.at](http://www.peer-review-in-qibb.at). Here, the whole procedure and methodology are described in detail. Information material and all the forms necessary for the process will be available electronically. For detailed questions ARQA-VET can be contacted.

As a next step, the school can inform the regional inspectorate about its intention to conduct a Peer Review but it is not obliged to do so. It is recommended that the school informs the regional inspectorate in the framework of the Management and Performance Reviews (MPR), for example by defining external evaluation as a focus of its development.

As a following step, the school applies to the working group to conduct a Peer Review. Every year, places will be allocated for Peer Reviews – therefore, if more schools apply than places are available, a selection procedure will be carried out. The working group then comes to a decision according to defined and transparent criteria. Here, there are two possibilities depending on the decision:

- (1) If the school's application corresponds to the defined criteria and if the school is selected by the working group, the school contacts ARQA-VET and starts the preparations for the Peer Review. If there are more applications than Peer Review places available, it can happen that a school, even though it fulfils the defined criteria, is put on a waiting list. Its application will then be considered in the next round.
- (2) If the school's application does not correspond to the defined criteria, the school will be encouraged and supported in revising its application and in re-applying.

ARQA-VET supports and advises the schools in their preparation of the Peer Review (e.g. in involving the colleagues, in writing the self-report, in selecting the Peers). If there is a transnational Peer Review, the school gets advice from ARQA-VET too (in particular concerning the search for and selection of transnational Peers).

The school selects its Peers from an Austrian-wide Peer register (online). It prepares everything for the Peer visit. After having conducted the Peer visit, the school keeps records of the results and starts to think about the follow up process (this can for example happen within a Management and Performance Review). Finally, the school is awarded a Peer Review certificate by the ministerial working group.

# Peer Review in QIBB – Roles, Duties and Responsibilities

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In order for the implementation process to be standardised, of high quality, as well as efficient, this model envisages a clear separation of roles and duties between the three levels:

## 1. Ministerial working group

The working group is responsible, in consultation with the QIBB steering group, for the strategic direction of the process. This means in detail:

- Clarification of the financial parameters and decision about the number of available places
- Selection of schools (following a transparent selection procedure)
- Decision about the inclusion of potential Peers into the Peer register
- Commissioning of selected teacher training colleges with carrying out Peer trainings
- Further development of the procedure, on the basis of the results of quality assurance and monitoring procedures as well as meta evaluation procedures
- Regular report to the QIBB steering group

## 2. ARQA-VET

The central task of ARQA-VET is to guarantee an Austrian-wide standardised and quality assured procedure, both as regards the process and documents as well as the trainings of Peers and Peer Facilitators (= Austrian-wide coordination). The tasks are as follows:

- Establishment of an information and download platform containing all documents/forms and information necessary for the process
- Designing a standardised training model (with support from the öibf) for Peers and Peer Facilitators
- Implementation of a standardised training model for Peers in cooperation with selected teacher training colleges
- Carrying out trainings for Peer Facilitators
- Developing measures for the internal and external evaluation of the whole process
- Collection of all relevant documents (self-report, Peer report etc.) for the evaluation and monitoring of the whole process
- Targeted dissemination of the process (workshops, conferences, presentations etc.) addressing principals, regional quality managers, school quality managers, regional inspectorates etc.
- Organisational duties regarding transnational Peer Reviews
- Reporting duties

Furthermore, as the institution entrusted with the operational support of the participating schools, ARQA-VET offers support and advisory services for schools undergoing a Peer Review. The tasks are as follows:

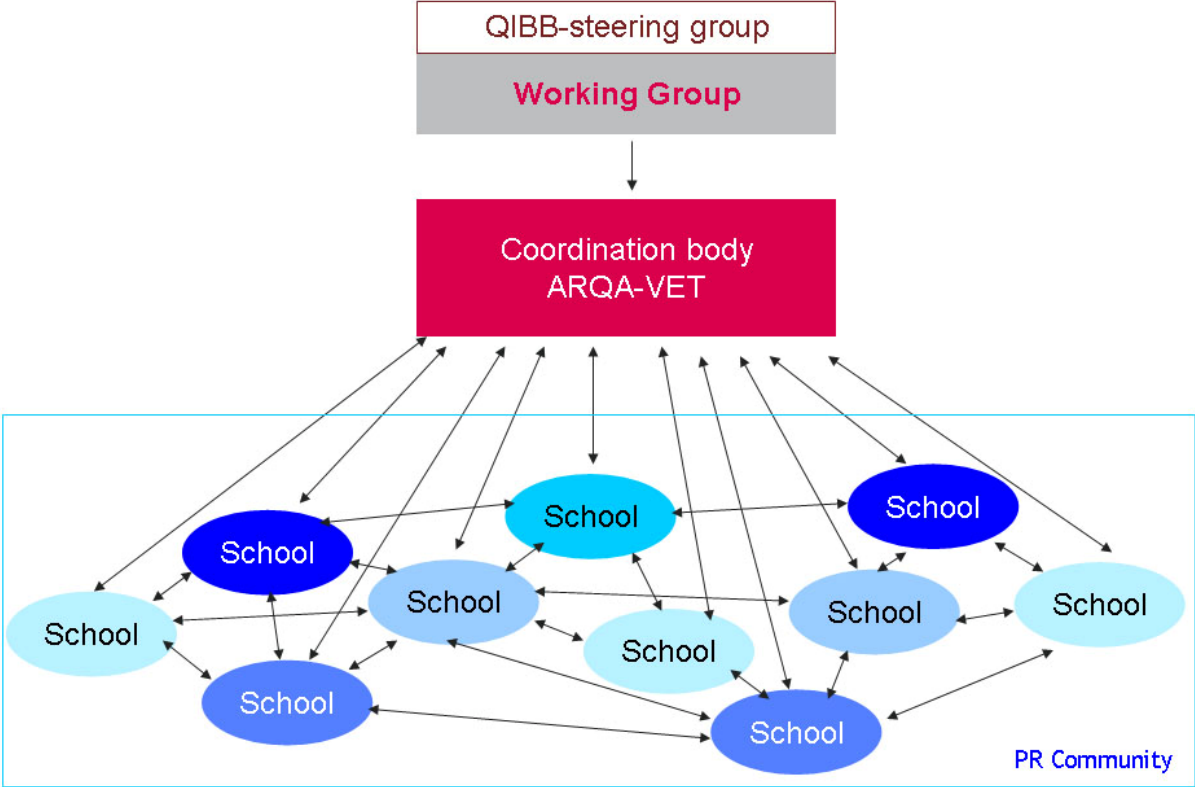
- Dissemination of information about the procedure to schools
- Support of schools in involving the teachers and all important stakeholders
- Support of schools in choosing the quality areas and questions for the Peer Review
- Support of schools in the drafting of their self-report
- Support in the selection of Peers and composition of Peer teams
- Ongoing administration (e.g. documentation, billing etc.)
- Networking activities (Peers - schools)

### 3. Schools

Schools as operational organisations fulfil the following duties:

- Getting informed about Peer Review and the possible uses of the tool via the ARQA-VET website
- Involving colleagues and other stakeholders in the process
- Selection of quality areas and suitable questions for the Peer Review
- Application to the working group for conducting a Peer Review
- Contacting ARQA-VET
- Writing the self-report
- Commissioning a Peer Facilitator at the school
- Selection of Peers from an Austrian-wide Peer register
- Organisation of the Peer visit at the school (agenda, rooms, target groups to be interviewed, organisation of replacement lessons, hosting of Peers etc.)
- Documentation of the whole process and thinking about the follow up process

Annex 1: Structure



School= VET Institution

Annex 2: Process

