2021

ACEEU
ACCREDITATION COUNCIL FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL & ENGAGED UNIVERSITIES

Online & Hybrid Peer Review Visit

Guidelines

Introduction

This document presents the Guidelines for holding online and hybrid Peer Review Visits in response to extraordinary situations. The Guidelines apply to both institutional and divisional accreditation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Pursuant to recommendations and guidelines of ENQA and EQAR, carrying out an online peer review is deemed fully acceptable (ENQA, 2020). Both ENQA and EQAR support flexibility and deviations in the face of extraordinary situations.

It is important to note that the guidelines presented here have been developed for online and hybrid peer review visits replacing physical visits in extraordinary situations. Online and hybrid visits shall be the exception, not the norm.

While online and hybrid visits also have their positive sides (such as reduced carbon footprint), the lack of personal contact and lack of informal conversations together with the inability to examine facilities and original documents overweight this, so that online and hybrid visits are seen as not favourable for an institutional or divisional ACEEU accreditation. However, they represent a suitable approach to address extraordinary situations that are not changing in the short term.

While the format of the visits change, all relevant aspects such as external expertise, briefing of experts, independence, confidentiality and interviews with multiple stakeholders remain valid in the online and hybrid peer review visit.

CHARACTERISATION OF VISIT FORMATS

		Online	Hybrid
	Short description	Purely virtual peer review visit performed using web conferencing software solutions	Virtual peer review visit performed using web conferencing software solutions combined with a physical visit
	People involvement	Peer Review Team (PRT) Chair and Members online	PRT Chair and Members online + Physical visit of PRT chair or one PRT member (primarily to visit university facilities). Meetings might be added if the safety of the PRT chair/member is not affected.
	Length of physical visit	N/A	Half day to one day
	Length of online peer review visit	Single accreditation • 12 to 16 contact hours, spread across at least 3, preferably 4 days* Note: a physical peer review visit is 1 to preferably 1.5 days long Dual accreditation • 16 to 20 contact hours, spread across at least 4, preferably 5 days* Note: a physical peer review visit is 1.5 to preferably 2 days long. * peer review visits at the lower end of the time spectrum should make use of other means to acquire information and insights (e.g. document requests before the visit)	
	Extra costs online / hybrid peer review	€1.500 (e.g. to cover extra planning efforts; technical support; ACEEU facilitator in virtual meetings)	
	Travel costs	-	Costs of visiting PRT chair/member (see Travel and Reimbursable Expenses Policy)
	Example case	Full lockdown in applicant country; university facilities not accessible for visitors.	Health at risk in case of high number of personal contacts.

PROCEESS INFORMATION

The process for online and hybrid peer review visits involves 4 stages:

1. Request
   - The request for conducting a peer review visit online or in hybrid format shall be initiated by the applicant.
   - The request can only be made once the applicant institution has paid the peer review fee.
   - Simple request forms will be provided to standardise the process.
   - The requesting party outlines the grounds for the request in the request form.

2. Decision
   - The decision to accept or deny the request will be made by the ACEEU Chair/Vice-chair, the chair of the Accreditation Committee, as well as the chair of the PRT if already appointed.
   - In case of two decision makers (ACEEU Chair/Vice-chair + Accreditation Committee Chair), a unanimous vote is required to accept the request. In case of three decision makers, a majority vote for accepting the request is required.
   - The key decision-making criteria to be applied include:
       1. Provision of safety of the PRT chair and members as well as university stakeholders engaging in the peer review visit
       2. Likelihood that the visit could be performed in person within the next 4 to 6 months (if this is likely, an in-person visit shall be preferred)
       3. Existing technical facilities enabling a smooth online / hybrid peer review visit (e.g. internet speed)
       4. Other criteria deemed important by the decision makers
   - The decision is communicated in writing to the applicant, providing the grounds for the decision made.

3. Implementation
   - The focus of the peer review remains the same as in physical meetings, however, the format (e.g. length of

meetings, spread of multiple days etc.) will be adapted to the online environment.

4. Feedback
- A short questionnaire, and an interview with the accreditation manager of the applicant institution will be provided in order to gather feedback on the peer review visit. The information will be used to optimize ACEEU's procedures.

MEASURES TO ENSURE HIGH QUALTY PEER REVIEW VISITS

Virtual meeting setup:
- Virtual meetings shall be no longer than 60 minutes with breaks in between them
- A maximum of 10 people shall be in a meeting, preferably 4 to 7 people
- A co-host is always be available to take over should the main host have technical problems during a session
- A member of the ACEEU Office will facilitate all meetings from an administrative and technical perspective (e.g. admitting people to the virtual meting room)
- A second (backup) web conferencing solution shall be available if problems with the preferred solution occur
- Waiting rooms shall be used to ensure only the required participants are in the session
- All participants shall put their cameras on to ensure transparency
- Everyone who is not speaking shall keep the microphone off
- No recordings are made so all participants feel comfortable speaking honestly (as it is the practice in physical visits)

Prior to the meeting:
- The PRT chair and members shall make usage of requesting additional information in writing before the visit to reduce the online contact time
- In case of online visits in which no physical visit is taking place, the applicant shall record and provide videos of the key physical infrastructure (e.g. labs, entrepreneurship centre, university incubator ...), following a detailed request by the PRT chair
- ACEEU provides access and links to the web conferencing software to the applicant and PRT chair and members at least 5 business days before the visit so that everyone can undertake a test of the technical infrastructure

- ACEEU provides access to a cloud-based solution to the applicant to upload requested materials
- ACEEU provides guidelines for the peer review visit to the applicant who is responsible for sharing the information for all stakeholders involved from the applicant side (the guidelines shall include information on the technical infrastructure, behavioural guidelines etc.)
- ACEEU will provide the applicant with a consent form that shall include, but is not limited to:
  o Information on data privacy and protection
  o Information on the voluntary participation
  o The obligation of the applicant to verify the identity of all stakeholders present from the applicant institution's side
- The PRT chair, the ACEEU Office member facilitating the visit as well as the responsible accreditation manager of the applicant institution meet before the visit to discuss the procedures of the visit