

Using the EPG in preparation for quality assessment

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A number of language institutions that are members of OPTIMA (the Bulgarian Association for Quality Language Services) use the electronic version of the EPG, the e-Grid, during the period preceding internal and external quality assessment procedures. More specifically:

- The e-Grid is used as a self-assessment tool by teachers as a means of improving their awareness of the required competences and qualifications
- The e-Grid is also used by teachers in peer assessment
- The self-assessments are discussed with managers and amended if appropriate
- The outcomes of the process are analysed and recorded in the institution's Internal Assessment Report
- The e-Grid is also used by academic managers to better target in-service training and to plan the next stages of teachers' individual development
- In some of the institutions, the EPG-based self-assessments form part of the performance review process for academic staff
- In one centre, AVO Language and Examination Centre, the EPG served as a model for developing the AVO Digital Competences Grid. It consists of three levels and is tailored to the needs of teachers to help them to work effectively with the AVO Online Zone.

A questionnaire on the EPG was completed by the managers of five of the institutions who went through OPTIMA's internal and external quality assessment procedures. The responses indicated the following:

All five schools used the e-Grid before the internal assessment

The e-Grid helped their teachers to assess their performance realistically

Four out of five schools stated that there were no considerable differences between the teacher self-assessment and the academic manager's assessment

It also helped the academic managers to better adjust the in-service training programmes to teachers' needs

Managers would like to see some additions to the EPG in the areas of young learners and English for academic purposes



Some difficulties were encountered by teachers when completing their self-assessments. Managers pointed out that it was necessary to go through the descriptors and clarify terminology in advance. Also, new teachers need extra help, which might possibly involve doing their first self-assessment together with a more experienced teacher.

Conclusions

The e-Grid is a useful tool for supporting the processes of internal and external quality assessment, in the areas of staff training and appraisal.

By using the e-Grid for self-assessment, language teachers can take better control of their own development priorities and identify pathways for professional growth relevant to their needs.