

## Guidance note for the role of Quality Assurance Advisor for decentralized evaluations

The role of the **Quality Assurance Advisor** (QAA) is to support the evaluation manager of a decentralized evaluation to assure its quality, given that the evaluation manager, while ultimately responsible for the quality of deliverables, does not always have the requisite professional knowledge and experience.

The main task is to provide support at the five quality control points below:

1. Preparation of the Terms of Reference
2. Selection of the evaluators
3. Review of the inception report
4. Quality control of the raw first draft – prior to the circulation for the stakeholder review
5. Quality control of the final draft – after the revision based on the stakeholder review

In addition, the QAA may provide advice when asked by the evaluation manager at any time during the process.

There could also be cases where the support is not required for all the control points.

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For each quality control point, the QAA could look at the following aspects in particular. The review will also be facilitated by a pre-defined checklist for each control point to enable a systematic assessment and to identify common quality problems.

### 1. Preparation of the Terms of Reference (TORs)

- Do the TORs provide sufficient information for the evaluation team to design and conduct the evaluation?
- Are the TORs clear on the purpose/rationale/use of evaluation – why should this evaluation be conducted for what purpose and use?
- Do the TORs clearly state the evaluation questions to be answered? The use of structured evaluation questions is preferred to a list of evaluation criteria – even if the criteria are used, they should be elaborated with questions. The questions, which can be nested, should be clear and specific, indicative of what benchmarks and yardsticks should be applied. For example, it is not enough to ask for value-for-money without indicating how to assess the “value”.
- Do the evaluation questions allow the evaluation to draw conclusions that would all together serve the purpose of the evaluation?
- Are the normative dimensions, such as gender equality, disability inclusion, environmental sustainability and the general “leave no one behind” principle, adequately and appropriately addressed?
- Is the budget and timeframe realistic, given the scope of evaluation, the possible methodologies to be used by the evaluators, the availability of the secondary data, and the context in which the evaluation is conducted?

### 2. Selection of the evaluators

- In the event that an adequate number of suitable consultants were not found in the Roster of Evaluation Consultants and the selection was therefore not sufficiently competitive, whether an effort was made to identify the most suitable consultants by broadly circulating the call for

applications? (If needed, the Evaluation Office could circulate the call to relevant professional associations.)

- Does the team leader have sufficient professional credentials as an evaluator? Does the evaluation team have an appropriate combination of expertise among its members?
- Is there no conflict of interest? Has the evaluator been used by the office previously and in what capacity?

### 3. Review of the inception report

- Does the inception report present an appropriate evaluation plan for the scope of evaluation, while being realistic in terms of budget and timeframe?
- Does the inception report propose appropriate and implementable methodologies to answer all the evaluation questions?
- Does the inception report consider most suitable methods, for example those which would allow in-process validations such as mixed-methods and group workshops?
- Does the inception report include an adequate stakeholder analysis?
- Does the inception report clearly articulate how each evaluation question and evaluation criteria will be addressed, for example with the use of an evaluation matrix?
- Has the evaluation team been given the necessary guidance documents?
- Does the inception report include sufficient tools (e.g. interview guides, focus group discussion guides) to be used for data collection? Are they relevant, and of good quality?

### 4. Quality control of the raw first draft

- Is the draft written clearly, logically and convincingly? Is it readable? Does it follow the guidelines in terms of the structure and the format?
- Does it answer all the evaluation questions posed in the TORs?
- Are the findings and conclusions supported adequately by the data and analyses? Is the draft structured in such a way that the reader can easily identify the data/analysis that support each finding/conclusion?
- Are the recommendations based on the findings or conclusions, reasonable and practicable, and not excessively prescriptive? Evaluators should avoid recommending too specific actions that belong to the management prerogative and should be in the management response.
- Do the conclusions and recommendations stay within the scope of evaluation? For example, an evaluation should refrain from recommending a budget increase for a particular office if it did not examine the budget allocation for different offices throughout the Organization.
- Are there any politically sensitive issues that need to be closely looked at, or has inadequate language been used?

### 5. Quality control of the final draft

- Has the draft been revised to adequately answer the comments from the stakeholder review? This could be done by examining the audit trail that recorded the comments and the evaluation team responses.

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