Welcome to [name of institution being audited]

**ESSA PROJECT**

European Students Sustainability Auditing

A guide for visiting student auditors

[Date]



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**Disclaimer**

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# Welcome

**Congratulations on being selected as a student auditor!**

This guide aims to assist you throughout the audit process, including preparing for the audit before you travel, visiting [*city/institution name*] and carrying out a successful audit by providing relevant information and advice for you. If after reading through this guide you still have questions about your audit visit, please get in touch with the project team at your institution before the audit starts.

Over the course of the audit week, staff and students from the university and the students’ association/union along with a team of host students will assist you throughout the audit and provide the necessary support for you to have an enjoyable and beneficial learning experience.

Remember to log in and join [*insert details of any group file sharing or communication sites*] to keep track of what’s going on elsewhere in the project.

We look forward to working with you on the ESSA Project.

Insert text here. Verdana 16pt

[COPY THIS PAGE AT THE START OF EACH CHAPTER]

# The auditing timeline

The timeline below tells you more about what will happen at each stage of the audit, and when.

|  |
| --- |
| **The auditing timeline** |
|  |

# Preparing for the audit

The ESSA project audits universities against the Benchmark Standards for University Social Responsibility (USR) that were developed as part of another EU funded project. The university being audited has uploaded the evidence they have gathered to meet criteria under the following themes into an online toolkit:

* Research, Teaching, Support for Learning and Public Engagement
* Governance
* Environmental and Social Responsibility
* Fair practices

A large number of criteria tend to refer to policies, publications, reports and other forms of written evidence. Before you visit [*name of university*], you’ll be reviewing some of this documentary evidence, partly to check it exists but also that the content meets the criteria within the USR benchmark standards. You can find the full list of criteria online [here](https://www.essaproject.eu/resources/usr-standards).

Some of these documents may be confidential therefore it will be important to ensure that the data is used for the purposes of the audit only and do not share any copies you may come into contact with. Documents will be marked as confidential where this applies. In some cases, the documents will be translated from their original language, and some may only be available in their original language but you will be given guidance on how to review these documents to ensure these items can still be assessed. Please refer back to the confidentiality agreement you signed after being recruited to be a student auditor and the discussions you had about research/audit ethics during your training.

## **The evidence map**

It is important to gather data in a coherent and organised way; in ESSA, evidence is organised through an evidence map. The evidence map gives an indication of what type of evidence you will be assessing during the audit.

Institutions being audited will detail and describe the evidence they are submitting under each of the benchmark standard criteria, as well as outlining why it is being submitted.

The example below shows a snapshot of an evidence map from each of the four themes within the Benchmark Standards for University Social Responsibility – a full blank version can be found in the annex [here](#_Audit_resources), and can also be downloaded as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet template [here](https://www.essaproject.eu/openeducationalresources/audit-manual). You can also use this map to record your analysis of the documents or other evidence you’ve reviewed.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evidence map example** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **RT001** | **The institution guarantees academic freedom for its staff and students.** | Academic freedom is the conviction that the freedom of inquiry by faculty members is essential to the mission of the academy as well as the principles of academia, and that scholars should have freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts (including those that are inconvenient to external political groups or to authorities) without being targeted for repression, job loss, or imprisonment. This extends to the opportunity for dissemination of information (such as research outcomes) to media and the public. Students and university staff should have the ability to have open debates in lectures, symposia etc.In many countries, academic freedom is a contested issue, and can therefore have limitations in practice.Click [https://www.ucu.org.uk/academicfreedom] to find out more about academic freedom in the UK, from the University College Union perspective. | Auditors may ask to view written policies. They may seek to speak to a number of academic staff from different departments about their experiences with regards to academic freedom. They may also ask to speak to some students from the university.Type of evidence: documentary evidence, on site interviews/focus groups | *[Use this column to provide links to online sources of evidence, or to direct auditors towards documents saved on an online filesharing site. You can list multiple pieces of evidence in each cell.]* | *[Use this column to provide auditors with brief descriptions of how each piece of evidence meets the criteria.]* |
| **GOV001** | **The institution encourages a culture of social responsibility with high ethical and professional standards and clear protocols to avoid conflict of interest.** | Social responsibility describes the way universities can make a difference to the social and economic well-being of their communities through their teaching, research, and public events and activities. Universities may like to prioritise their social responsibility activities - they could include carrying out impactful research, engaging with their communities, ensuring their students graduate with attributes that make them socially responsible citizens etc. Ethical standards refers to standard principles that encourage the greater values of trust, fairness and benevolence. Ethical standards may refer to responsibilities for some professionals. Ethical standards vary based on industry and a person's own moral compass. Different industries have ethical standards that determine how a person or organisation must act in order to be respected within the field. The medical and financial fields often have stricter ethical standards and guidelines than other professions. In relation to universities, ethical standards often relate to research undertaken (please refer to criterion 9 under research, teaching, support for learning and public engagement). | Auditors may ask to view protocols, communications and guidelines in relation to ethics, professional standards and responsibility. Auditors may also ask to interview staff from a range of disciplines at the university.Type of evidence: documentary evidence, interviews |  |  |
| **ESR001** | **The institution ensures its policies and practices minimise any negative impact on the environment caused by its activities or supply chain.** | An [environmental policy] is a core requirement of an [environmental management system]. It is an agreed documented statement of an organisation's stance towards the environment in which it operates.The policy is the cornerstone of its intent to reduce its carbon footprint, improve recycling, reduce reliance on packaging, minimising waste, improve efficiencies on finite natural resources in all of the company's operations and all departments.Sometimes organisations have good environmental practices embedded as part of general policies, e.g. sustainable travel options/procedures may be part of the travel policy, as opposed to having a standalone environmental policy. | Auditors will ask to see a copy of the university's environmental policy, or see that separate policies integrate environmental considerations.Type of evidence: documentary evidence |  |  |
| **FP001** | **The institution promotes and celebrates pluralism and diversity, and ensures equality regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, gender or sexuality.** | It is important that no unlawful direct or indirect discrimination occurs in the work place, and that diversity and equality in the workplace is celebrated. | Auditors may ask to see copies of procedures and policies that reflect the institution's approach towards equality. They may also ask to speak with staff and look at the university's website.Type of evidence: documentary evidence, on site staff interviews/focus groups, on site observation. |  |  |

##

## *[Insert details of how tasks will be divided to review materials]*

# The audit week

*[Confirm the times and dates of the audit].* Visiting Student Auditors will be reviewing documentary evidence, interviewing key stakeholders, facilitating focus groups and presenting their initial findings. This section provides essential information on the arrangements for the week.

Arriving for the audit

*[Provide details of where auditors will be based for the audit, including arrival time on the first day. Where possible, please include a map of the room/building within the university].*

Key contacts

Throughout your audit experience, there will be two key contacts. Please feel free to contact us for any problems or concerns about personal matters or related to the audit process.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Contact 1 | Contact 2 |
| *[Photo if possible]* | *[Photo if possible]* |
| *[Name]* | *[Name]* |
| *[Organisation]* | *[Organisation]* |
| *[Telephone/Mobile phone]* | *[Telephone/Mobile phone]* |
| *[Email address]* | *[Email address]* |

Alternative contacts

*[Please provide any other contact details that can be used by auditors for support throughout the audit week].*

Host students

Visiting Student Auditors will have support from [*insert number*] host students from [*insert university name*]. They will provide support throughout the audit week by providing information about the University, helping Visiting Student Auditors find the locations for interviews and focus groups, provide contextual information and ensuring Visiting Student Auditors have an enjoyable time.

The host students are…

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Subject |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Schedule overview

This section provides a general overview for Visiting Student Auditors for the audit week. *[One sentence summary of activities].*

*[Please edit the table below according to the final audit schedule].*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date | Activities |
| *Day 1:* | *Arrival** *Meet key contacts*
* *Campus visit*
* *Plan audit week*
* *Review the documentary evidence submitted*
* *Identify appropriate questions for interview with key stakeholders and for focus groups*
 |
| *Day 2:* | * *Review the documentary evidence submitted*
* *Interview preparation*
* *Interviews*
 |
| *Day 3:* | * *Interviewing key stakeholders (including staff and students), facilitate four focus groups*
* *Social event in the evening*
 |
| *Day 4:* | * *Interviewing key stakeholders (including staff and students) and review initial learning outcomes from the interviews and focus groups.*
 |
| *Day 5:* | * *Prepare presentation in the morning*
* *Present initial findings in the afternoon to a selection of key stakeholders*
* *Social event to celebrate the completion of the first audit.*
 |

A copy of the full schedule can be found below *[insert copy of schedule]*

**The audit team**

*[This section should be edited according to the system adopted for organising the auditor team].*

During the audit week you’ll be working with students from other [*universities/faculties/departments/countries*] in smaller groups and as an overall team to deliver the audit activities. Each member of the team will have their individual strengths and ways of working, some of which may be different to your own. Think about your learning from previous experiences of working in groups and have a look at the following resources to make sure you work effectively as a team:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/metallurgy-materials/about/cases/group-work/index.aspx>

[https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/FileStore/Filetoupload,663685,en.pdf](https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/FileStore/Filetoupload%2C663685%2Cen.pdf)

# Auditing

During the auditor training programme, you will have covered a range of aspects related to the audit process. Here’s a reminder of some of the tools and methods you’ll be using throughout the audit week, along with some top tips for delivery.

**Types of data**

Your role as an auditor is likely to involve reviewing a range of different types data, qualitative and quantitative, primary and secondary. Here’s a reminder of these different types, and the methods they most commonly involve.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Quantitative**  | **Qualitative** |
| * Quantifiable data involving numerical and statistical explanations.
* Quantitative methods are used to measure attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other defined variables – and generalise results from a larger sample population.
* Examples include surveys, interviews with closed questions, online polls, systematic observations.
 | * Qualitative research is closely associated with words, sounds, feeling, emotions and other elements that are non-quantifiable.
* Data collection methods include interviews, questionnaires with open-ended questions, focus groups, observation, game or role-playing, case studies etc.
 |
| **Primary** | **Secondary** |
| * Data which is produced ‘first hand’, using a range of techniques including surveys, focus groups, interviews.
* Data can be qualitative or quantitative.
 | * Data which has already been published e.g. in books, newspapers, magazines, journals, websites.
* Data can be qualitative or quantitative.
* Remember to think about the reliability and validity of the data presented – consider the date of publication, author and depth of analysis amongst other criteria.
 |

**Data collection methods**

Throughout the audit week, you’ll be using a range of different methods to collect data on the performance of the university being audited against the Benchmark Standards for University Social Responsibility. Here’s a reminder of how to approach some of the key methods.

**Interviews**

You’ll be using interviews to explore the perspectives of different stakeholders on university social responsibility. There are three main types of interview:

* *Structured* – uses a pre-determined list of questions that all interviewees answer in the same order, allowing comparison of the answers given.
* *Unstructured* – informal interviews with no pre-prepared questions, which can make comparison across different interviewees difficult.
* *Semi-structured* – uses a mixture of the above two techniques, combining a list of pre-prepared questions, but with additional questions formulated during the interview to clarify and expand on issues raised.

The diagram below gives you some suggestions to consider when formulating your interview questions, but always remember to make your questions unambiguous and unbiased and try to avoid questions that will result in yes/no answers.

|  |
| --- |
| **Interview question techniques** |
|  |

Top tips for carrying out interviews include:

* Think how you will record the information the interviewee is giving you - it can be useful to work in pairs with one person concentrating on taking notes. If you are interviewing alone, think about recording the interview, but you will need to gain permission from the interviewee and think about how recordings will be securely saved (remember to check with the audit staff team if you plan to do this).
* Summarise your interview immediately after it takes place to capture your feelings and thoughts about what was discussed – there will be a lot of information to consider during the audit week and it can be easy to forget what you first thought after the interview.
* Remember that interviewees might answer questions you plan to ask later at an earlier point in the interview, try to keep track of this and avoid repeating questions.
* Approach the interview with an open mind, refraining from displaying any agreements or disagreements with the interviewee. You can ‘understand’ but avoid letting your own opinions influence the interview.
* Have in mind other ways you could ask your questions in case your interviewees don’t understand in the first instance.
* Use body language to make your interviewee feel comfortable – smile, nod, maintain eye contact, and use confirmations such as ‘ok’ and ‘yes’ (but remembering to remain impartial).

*References*

Boyce, C & Neale, P, (2006). *Conducting in-depth Interviews: A Guide for Designing and Conducting In-Depth Interviews*. Pathfinder International Tool Series.

Connaway, L.S. & Powell, R.P. (2010). *Basic Research Methods for Librarians*, ABC-CLIO

Cohen,L., Manion, L. & Morisson, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.

**Focus groups**

Your audit data collection may also involve facilitating a focus group, with students or members of staff at the university being audited. Usually with 6-10 people, you’ll be capturing multiple perspectives on university social responsibility and can see how different perspectives interact. Again, it’s worth thinking about how you will capture the information from any groups you facilitate – it is tricky taking notes and managing a group of 10 people at the same time! Indeed most of the advice suggested for carrying out interviews above also applies to delivering a focus group so remind yourself of the points above before you start the group. The diagram below shows a suggested flow for the questions you will devise to pose to the group. Remember that in any group there are likely to be people who are more talkative and those who are quieter – try to make sure that everyone gets a chance to talk during the group.

|  |
| --- |
| **Focus group outline** |
|  |

*References*

Creswell, J.W. (2009*). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: Sage.

Remenyi, D, Money, A, 2004, *Research Supervision for Supervisors and their Students*, Academic Conferences Ltd.

**Site observation**

Observation, as the name implies, is a way of collecting data through observing. In structured or systematic observation data collection is conducted using specific variables and according to a pre-defined schedule. Unstructured observation, on the other hand, is conducted in an open and free manner in a sense that there would be no pre-determined variables or objectives.

You may find it useful to review the criteria and decide which ones you are going to gather evidence on through site observation. You might also find it useful to split into different groups within the auditor team, covering different buildings/faculties/departments.

Remember to take your phone or camera with you so you can record the things you’ve seen when observing evidence that might contribute towards the Benchmark Standards for USR criteria.

**Resources**

Cohen,L., Manion, L. & Morisson, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.

**Documentary review**

Documentary review will form a large part of your audit activities, studying policies, websites, reports and other documents related to the criteria of the Benchmark Standards for University Social Responsibility. Key points to think about when reviewing documents include:

* Who is the author?
* What is the purpose of the document?
* What audience is it designed for?
* When was it published?
* How complete is the data?
* Is the data/evidence supported by other documents, or are there contradictions?

Remember that the document you will be reviewing haven’t been created with your research agenda in mind, some documents might contain a small amount of useful data, others nothing at all. If you think there is a particular piece of information missing that would help you assess performance against the Benchmark Standards criteria, don’t forget to ask the audit staff team, in particular if there are likely to be documents that are not available in English.

*References*

Bowen, G. A. (2009). *Document analysis as a qualitative research method*. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27-40. doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027

O’Leary, Z. (2014). *The essential guide to doing your research project (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

**Analysing your data**

Over the audit week you’ll be exposed to an array of different types of data, all of which need analysing. Many of the methods describe above involve the collection of qualitative data, the analysis of which can sometimes be described as untangling a ball of string! Techniques covered by your training that you’re likely to employ are include the creation of categories or themes, and then coding data to identify occurrences or linkages between themes. It is likely that you will need to read and re-read documents or notes on primary research activities such as interviews and focus groups more than once to build up a full understanding of how the evidence relates to performance of university social responsibility. Remember to compare your findings across the different research methods you are using – do they align with or contradict each other? It is also important to consider how much evidence supports your conclusions – do multiple pieces of evidence support your conclusion, or are there just one or two pieces that suggest this?

*References*

Remenyi, D., Money, A, (2004). *Research Supervision for Supervisors and their Students*, Academic Conferences Ltd.

**Presentation skills**

Before drafting your presentation of your audit findings there are some key questions to ask yourself:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What?** | What is my presentation about?What are the audience objectives?What should the audience do or think after the presentation? |
| **Why?** | Why am I making the presentation?Why am I making it to this audience?Why should they be interested? |
| **Who?** | Who are you talking to?Who is involved in activities / actions / decisions?Who will benefit from the activities / actions / decisions? |
| **When?** | When will the presentation begin / end? |
| **Where?** | Where will the presentation take place? |

Top tips for making presentations include:

* Let your audience know what they will gain from the presentation
* Keep your speech short and simple
* Make sure any visual aids (e.g. PowerPoint slides) clarify and support what you are saying, avoiding long and detailed sections of text
* Give examples
* Make a final summary, reinforcing the main points of the presentation
* Rehearse your presentation so you can deliver it without thinking too much
* Be enthusiastic!
* If you feel nervous, that’s normal! Take deep breaths and try not to rush
* Try to make eye contact with a range of people in the audience to hold their attention – not just people in the front row
* Think about who will present from the auditor team – you may choose to have multiple presenters

*References*

Osborn, M., et al (2014). *Public Speaking*. Pearson.

<https://canvas.hull.ac.uk/courses/615/pages/presenting-tips?module_item_id=6254>

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/sk/presentationskills.html>

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/applying-for-university/university-life/6-steps-to-a-successful-presentation>

# After the audit

**Audit report**

After the audit week is over, and once you’re back at home, you’ll start work on a written feedback report to present the results to the relevant staff at the university that they are auditing.

This will be an account of what you and your fellow auditors observed as part of the audit and the conclusions you came to. It’s worth reminding yourself of some of the aspects of reporting covered during the auditor training programme, including…

|  |
| --- |
| **Reports are…** |
| * Formally structured
* Informative and fact-based
* Written with a specific purpose and reader in mind
* Each section is written in an appropriate style
* Include section headings and chapters to help readers navigate
* Use bullet points, tables and graphs to present information in an easy to understand way
* Offer recommendations for action
* Offer summaries for readers who need to access information quickly
 |

Top tips for writing your report include…

|  |
| --- |
| **Report writing should be…** |
| * *Accurate* – double check notes you have taken throughout the audit to make sure everything you write is factually accurate. Check with your fellow auditors or the staff team if you’re not sure.
* *Objective* – look at all sides of a situation without emotions or opinions before stating your conclusions.
* *Concise* – try to focus on the essential details, asking if things are necessary before you include them in the report. Also consider if information can be included as an appendix.
* *Clear and consistent* – Remember to proofread your report, or ask another auditor working on a different section to have a look at your writing with a fresh pair of eyes. Check for spelling, grammar and formatting – these elements should be consistent throughout the report.
* *Simple* – Keep readers in mind an ask yourself if they will understand what you are trying to say. Avoid pointless words which don’t add to the message or tone of a sentence.
 |

There is a [template](https://www.essaproject.eu/openeducationalresources/audit-manual) available which provides a suggested outline of the report structure, however this can be amended. If you do choose to amend the report structure, it’s a good idea to first check with the members of staff at your university and also the host university before progressing with writing the report.

Remember to spend time planning how you will approach writing the report once the audit week is over – make sure you have discussed the structure and content of the report, defined who will do what tasks, and by when before you finish for the week.

*References*

Crowther, D., and Güler, A. 2008. *Corporate Social Responsibility*. www.bookboon.com. Accessed 6 January 2016.

McNiff, J. 2010. *You and Your Action Research Project*. Routledge: London.

Meyers, A. 2005. *Gateways to Academic Writing: Effective Sentences, Paragraphs, and Essays*.

<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/reports>. Accessed 23 June 2019

**Assessment**

If you are completing the Certificate in Social Responsibility Auditing, you will have been completing your individual learning portfolio alongside participation in the auditor training programme and the audit itself.

Following the audit experience you’ll have the opportunity to submit a 1000-word Interim Reflective Report.  This report does not contribute to the final mark but is, rather, an opportunity to practice your reflective writing, understand the assessment process and criteria and to receive formative feedback. This formative feedback will help in writing the Final Reflective Report.

The Final Reflective Report is the summative assessed work for the course and determines the final mark and grade for the course. The Final Reflective report is approximately 2,500 words and should draw in the evidence collected throughout your experience of participating in ESSA.

*[Details of submission dates should be provided here]*

# Visiting *[insert city/town name]*

*[Please provide a summary paragraph to introduce the city/town where the university is located. Please include key points in history, key geographical or cultural highlights as well as an overall sense of what living in the city/town is like. Please include images where possible. Where relevant, include information on the university’s role in the town/city.]*

## **Further information**

Further information about [*insert name of city/town*] can be found here:

*[Insert links to tourist information office etc]*

# Essential information

Getting to and from the university

*[Insert information on the different options for travelling from the closest main transport hubs to the city/town centre. Please include information on ticket prices where possible and provide links to service provider websites and timetables.]*

Getting around during your stay

*[Insert information on public transport services in the city/town, including links to timetables and service provider websites. Please include information on ticket prices where possible.]*

Staying safe

As with any trip abroad, it is important that you pay attention to your personal safety while you’re travelling away from home.

You should be aware of the laws in the [*insert name of country, and link to any relevant websites*] while you are visiting here.

Within the welcome sessions when you arrive at [*insert name of university*], there will be an overview given of the nature of any particular risks that you may encounter and advice provided on how to avoid these. In the meantime, the following information may be of help in the very unlikely event that you require it.

*[Please insert details of the emergency services in your country, including police, fire and ambulance services. Please also provide information of any processes than need to take place in emergency situations within the university. Where relevant, please provide website links to university or external sites with relevant information].*

Local culture

*[Please provide information on the common culture and customs within work settings and social settings within the country].*

Common costs and money

# *[Please provide information on common costs which may be incurred during the visit, for example a meal out in an average-priced restaurant, a coffee etc. Please also provide details on ATMs, card payments, and currency exchange. Please provide a suggested budget in addition any financial support provided to student auditors, as well as details of any such financial support e.g. travel, accommodation, subsistence].*

# Things to see and do

*[Please provide a list of key sights and attractions in the city/town, including anything linked to the university itself].*

# Maps

[Name of city/town]

*[Insert map of the city/town]*

University

*[Insert map of the university]*

**[Insert name of institution]**

**About the University**

*[Please insert key details about the university, including history, specialisms, student population etc. Please include details of the main website for the university].*

About the students’ association/union

*[Please insert key details about the students’ association or union, including its role within the university, who and how it represents students. Please include details of the main website for the students’ association/union].*

**About higher education in [*insert name of country*]**

*[Please insert key details about the system of higher education in the country you are located in].*