

# Practice guidelines

## “Formal consensus” method

### Rating rules and score analysis

December 2010

This document describes the rules for the rating and analysis of the scores used for developing practice guideline according to the “Formal consensus” method.

These rules are defined *a priori* and communicated to the rating group before the first round of rating. They are suitable for a group of at least 9 experts and can be adjusted if this group comprises more than 15 experts.

#### RATING RULES

- The members of the rating group must complete all the submitted items of the questionnaire to ensure that no values are missing
- Those who did not take part in the meeting between the two rounds cannot take part in the second round of rating and in subsequent meetings.
- Beside each item of the questionnaire there is a discrete numerical scale running from 1 to 9.
  - ▶ a value of 1 means that the assessor considers the proposal **totally inappropriate** (or not indicated, or unacceptable)
  - ▶ a value of 9 means that the assessor considers the proposal **totally appropriate** (or indicated, or acceptable)
  - ▶ values of 2 to 8 represent possible intermediate situations
  - ▶ a value of 5 means that the assessor is **undecided**

#### Meaning of the discontinuous numerical scale running from 1 to 9

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Totally inappropriate	↓ Undecided							Totally appropriate		

For each proposal, the assessor must give a response by ticking in one of the boxes between 1 and 9. Responses placed between 2 numbers or across 2 numbers are not accepted.

## SCORE ANALYSIS

### First round of rating

- The appropriateness or inappropriateness of the proposal is defined by the value of the median and the distribution of all the scores obtained on the scale of 1 to 9.
- Agreement among the experts can be defined on the basis of the distribution of all the scores obtained: there is agreement when the scores included are all  $\leq 5$  or all  $\geq 5$ .
- A proposal is deemed
  - ▶ **appropriate**, when the value of the median is  $\geq 7$  **and** the scores are all  $\geq 5$
  - ▶ **inappropriate**, when the value of the median is  $\leq 3.5$  **and** the scores are all  $\leq 5$
  - ▶ of **uncertain** appropriateness, when the value of the median is between 4 and 6.5 (undecided) **or** when there is no consensus among the members of the rating group (all other situations)
- If a value is missing (no response given for one of the proposals even though the assessor has filled in and returned this questionnaire), the proposal is deemed uncertain.
- Proposals for which there was a strong agreement are accepted as they are. They aren't discussed in a meeting, neither submitted for the second round of rating.

### Second round of rating

- The analysis is made on the basis of the available questionnaires from the members who took part in the meeting: if a member of the rating group fails to return the questionnaire, that member is excluded from the group, and the failure to respond is not counted as a missing value for each proposal.
- If missing values remain despite efforts to avoid them, the analysis is considered valid if at least 9 scores are obtained for a proposal (when the group initially comprises more than 10 persons, at least 80% of the responses must be obtained).
- If there are no missing values, one of the scores can be excluded from the analysis of the degree of agreement according to the following rules
  - ▶ the minimum value is excluded if the median is strictly greater than 5
  - ▶ the maximum value is excluded if the median is less than or equal to 5.
- The analysis leads to distinguish the proposals that are deemed appropriate and those that are deemed inappropriate or those on which the rating group remains undecided.

### Classification of the proposal according to the value of the median and the distribution of the scores

Proposal	Agreement among experts		Median
	Degree	Distribution of scores	
Appropriate	Strong agreement	[7-9]	$\geq 7$
	Relative agreement	[5-9]	$\geq 7$
Inappropriate	Strong agreement	[1-3]	$\leq 3$
	Relative agreement	[1-5]	$\leq 3.5$
Uncertain	Undecided	[1-9]	[4-6.5]
	No consensus	Other situations	