

International Biodynamic Advisory Services

Peer Review Quality System – Guidelines and Regulations

<https://www.biodynamic-advisors.org/>

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1 Introduction and Vision

The **purpose** of the Peer Review Quality System for International Biodynamic Advisors is to establish a common basis for qualitative advisory work in biodynamic Agriculture. In this way, we aim to form a network of national and international advisers to strengthen and further develop the biodynamic movement. Advisers therefore commit to the jointly agreed principles of the biodynamic advisory services by signing a Charter (**see Section 2**).

The impulse for such a structure originally came from the Biodynamic Advisors Group. Developed through a participatory process, it was implemented with the help of the Section for Agriculture and the Biodynamic Federation-Demeter International (BFDI) in 2020.

The Peer Review Quality System offers future advisors an overview of the specific requirements and provides a mechanism for greater transparency. While there are some minimum criteria that have to be met in order to participate in the quality system, it also takes account of the different individual profiles. This kind of inclusive quality assurance and development demonstrates an appreciation of diversity as well as the demand for qualitative, self-responsible advice in biodynamics, as promoted by the Section for Agriculture and Biodynamic Federation-Demeter International (BFDI).

The Quality System combines the needs of a wide range of stakeholders: Advisors seeking a certain common commitment, especially in international advisory work; Prospective biodynamic farmers looking for advice who will find contact through this system, as well as more information and transparency; Associations, trade or major project managers who can better obtain the information they need in the online directory.

2 Quality Assurance and Quality Development

Participation in the Peer Review Quality System is open to all experienced biodynamic advisors who wish to transmit biodynamic knowledge at a national or international level. Applicants may choose to enter the Quality System with a Standard (Biodynamic) Qualification or may apply for Demeter Additional Qualification. Entry to the quality system requires a number of **minimum criteria** that must be fulfilled and documented accordingly depending whether these criteria apply to Standard or to Demeter Additional Qualification (see section 5).

High quality biodynamic advisory work can be provided through continuous self-reflection and periodic professional development. There are two main instruments for the Quality System:

2.1 The personal Portfolio

The continuous process of learning, both formal and informal is kept and recorded in the personal Portfolio. Throughout the years, the Portfolio stays the primary documentation instrument in the Quality System. Read more in **section 6**.

2.2 A Peer Review / Quality Development Review

A Quality Development Review with two colleagues takes place upon entry to the quality system. Furthermore, every three years advisors must undergo a process of **Renewal of Recognition** in the Quality System. The purpose of these reviews is to guarantee and further develop the quality of the

Biodynamic and Demeter advisory service and ensure the creation of transparency and trust. Read more about the process and specificities in **section 8**.

3 Charter of the International Advisory Group

The charter of the International Advisory Group presents the jointly agreed principles of the biodynamic advisory method. It is the basis of the quality system. The charter deals with ethical matters such as transparency, respect, freedom of choice and confidentiality, as well as professional and personal dedication to the biodynamic movement. The charter was drawn up in the 2015. The current version can be downloaded from the website www.biodynamic-advisors.org.

Note: If the charter is modified or rewritten, the advisor will automatically be requested to review and re-sign the charter at the login.

4 Application for Participation

Participation in the Peer Review Quality System is open to all biodynamic advisors. Requirements are the fulfilment of the minimum criteria, agreement with the principles of biodynamic advisory work (charter) and willingness to develop further.

4.1 The Application Process

There are a series of steps and condition involved in the process for participation in the Quality System. These may vary depending on the field of working, additional specificities will be documented below. Note that the steps listed below are summarized. Each component of this process is explained in more detail in this document.

The Application Processes consist of these following steps:

1. The applicant should **read** the guide of the Peer Review Quality System for International Biodynamic Advisors.
2. The applicant must **complete** the online registration (<https://www.biodynamic-advisors.org/en/>).
3. To make further steps the applicant must **confirm** that he/she meets the required the minimum **conditions** (see **section 5**)
4. The applicant is required to **organise** a **Quality Development Review** with two colleagues (peer-reviewers) from the quality system (see **section 7**). For the Peer Review the applicant must **create** an individual **portfolio** with advisory concept and competence profile (see **section 6**) and share it with his/her peer reviewers.

*Note: The Quality Development Review Process have particular specifications depending on the field of working (see **section 5**).*

5. Once the Quality Development Review has been carried out, a final **Admission of Decision** for entry to the Quality System is made by the reviewers. The peer reviewers will receive notice of **confirmation of or rejection link** for inclusion into the Quality System by mail. (see **section 6**)
6. The applicant can **create** a public profile online. The profile will be published online as soon as both peer reviewers have confirmed acceptance via the received email link. (see **section 6**).

7. In case the applicant is informed of a **Rejection** of his/her application, the applicant may appeal the decision or re-apply (see **section 9**).
8. Applicants, once confirmed in the quality system, are expected to **self-reflect** continuously on quality assurance and personal and professional development, supported by additional training (see **section 10**).
9. The advisor's portfolio should be updated regularly, public profiles in particular **should be updated at least once a year** (see **section 6**).

After three years, the advisor must undergo a **Renewal of Recognition** process (see **section 8**). Without a timely renewal of recognition, the public profile will be taken offline.

4.2 Financial Contribution

Possible financial contributions of participants of the Peer Review Quality System are not yet requested (May 2024) but may be part of the system in the near future.

5 Conditions for participation in the Quality System

5.1 Minimum criteria

Entry to the quality system requires **minimum criteria** to ensure an adequate level of practical experience and professionalism:

Education and professional experience

- Practical experience in biodynamic agriculture (vocational training on a biodynamic/Demeter farm or experience as a biodynamic farmer)
- AND vocational training in agriculture OR a university degree in agronomy OR comparable training or experience

Professional skills

- Expertise or proven experience in the listed fields of working/area of expertise/special crops (portfolio and online profile)
- Proven work experience in the listed countries/areas of work/languages (portfolio and online profile)
- Knowledge of biodynamic preparations and application practices in different situations (in relation to regions and area of expertise named in portfolio and online profile)

The minimum criteria must be fulfilled and documented. The documents must be presented to the chosen peer review colleagues at the first **Entry Quality Development Review** (see **section 5**). The documents are not additionally uploaded or sent to an organization but kept by the advisor itself as evidence (in the **portfolio**, see **section 6**). You will find information about the verification and the final admission decision in section 7.

5.2 Minimum criteria for Demeter Qualification

A Demeter Qualification offers the applicant the option of performing conversion advisory work for the International Certification Office (ICO) for Federation licensees. The Demeter Qualification will be visible in on the advisory website and on the BFDI website. The minimum criteria for the Demeter Qualification are as follows:

Education and Professional experience

- 5 years of practical experience in biodynamic agriculture, vocational training on a biodynamic farm/Demeter farm
- AND vocational training in agriculture OR a university degree in agronomy
- OR comparable training or experience

Professional and Conversion Process Skills

- Expertise or proven experience in the listed fields of working/area of expertise/special crops (portfolio and online profile)
- Proven work experience in the listed countries/areas of work/languages (portfolio and online profile)
- Practical experience in the field of working: (Co-) Author of at least 2 successful conversion projects
- Carry out a comprehensive diagnosis of the farm organism.
- Know and be able to explain in detail the requirements and stages of the conversion plan.
- Elaborate together with the farmer the stages of the conversion process in an accessible language. Accompany and guide a conversion process from beginning to end.
- Systematically and clearly document process and agreements.

Biodynamic Preparations

- Ability to advise in specific situations on how the use of biodynamic preparations and other biodynamic practices can be sustainably integrated on the farm.
- Hands on experience with the making of, the storage and the application of all Biodynamic preparations

Knowledge of standards and regulations

- Knowledge of Standards and Conversion
- Understand the origins and principles of the regulations and be able to explain the standards in a language that is clear for all.
- Assess the rigour of regulations according to the local reality of each farm and know how and when to apply for exceptions if necessary.
- Keep up to date with changes to the International Demeter Biodynamic standards.
- Familiarise his or herself with the broader organic certification standards relevant to the trading markets.

The **minimum criteria** for the Demeter Qualification must be fulfilled and documented in the Portfolio. The documents must be presented to the two selected **already recognized Demeter** peer review colleagues at the first Entry Quality Development Review meeting. In addition, the applicant must prepare an abstract (max. 2 pages/6000 characters) of his/her CV and portfolio and send it to his/her peer reviewers. The peer reviewers will send the documentation to the coordinator of the Advisory Qualification Committee. You will find information about the verification and the peer review process in **section 7**.

6 Portfolio

By periodically evaluating and critically examining our own activity and working methods it is possible to identify gaps in knowledge and to promote our individual development through suitable further training courses. The portfolio is a working tool to document diploma's, further training, self reflection, and additional professional development. On one hand the personal **portfolio** serves as a

tool to support this individual process on the other hand it forms both the base for the Peer Reviewers to verify the entry qualification as well as that it serves as ground work for the Renewal of Recognition Peer Review.

The personal portfolio does not need to be emailed or uploaded but it can be shared with the Peer reviewers in preparation for the Quality Development Review which takes place every three years. It should therefore be updated regularly and at least every three years for the Renewal of Recognition Peer-review. The portfolio contains two basic elements: The **Profile** and the **Advisory Concept**.

6.1 Profile

The advisory profile is based on the Curriculum Vitae with accompanying certificates and references, where the fulfilled minimum criteria must be documented. It also shows the experience, competences, and expertise in relation to biodynamic advisory work (professional skills, methodological skills, personal and social skills). Parts of this will be online visible as the Advisor's official Online Profile after successful entry.

The Advisor's profile – especially that which is online visible on the website, should be updated regularly! And it will be part of the Renewal of Recognition Review every three years.

Further training, participation in advisory meetings and reflection on current developments in biodynamics is expected. An **Archetypical Competence Profile** for biodynamic advisory has been developed to inspire advisors in their further development. The Archetypical Competence Profile can be downloaded from the website.

6.2 Advisory Concept

The advisory concept – as a further element of the portfolio – covers the important points of the adviser's own advisory practice. It can contain the advisor's basic attitude and advisory practice, reference to theory, aims, methodology, communication method, contract process, client feed- back, evaluation, etc. See the Archetypical Competence Profile for inspiration! The advisory concept should be updated regularly and at least every three years.

7 Entry Peer Review

A Quality Development Review done by two peers (colleagues) is the key tool of the quality system. The peer-review aims to guarantee and further develop the quality of the professional work as well as ensuring the creation of transparency and trust. A Quality Development Review takes place at the entry to the quality system and then every three years to renew the recognition (see **section 8**). The peer review fulfils partially or completely the task of a higher authority. Each participant, each peer reviewer thus assumes full responsibility for their decisions and reports.

7.1 Selection of the Peer Reviewers

There are some necessary criteria to consider when selecting peer reviewers. The Quality Development Review must always be conducted by two peer colleagues who are already recognized participants of the system and who have had their second peer review (after 3 years). For the qualification as Demeter advisor, two Demeter advisors must be chosen. These necessary criteria are automatically considered in the automatic selection.

The applicant is responsible for selecting and contacting the peer colleagues to organize the meeting. The names of peer review colleagues will be listed in the advisor's online profile. **The**

competence of the peer reviewers should meet the speciality of the to-be-reviewed applicant. The profiles can be viewed and studied in the directory.

- Additionally, the applicant **should** ensure that the peer reviewers meet the following **recommended** criteria:
 - Peer reviewers with whom he or she is relatively unfamiliar, to ensure peer reviewer neutrality
 - Peer reviewers with a strong anthroposophical knowledge base.
 - Peer reviewers with training qualification on reviewing techniques and methodologies.
 - Peer-reviewers cannot be advisors and inspector at the same time.

7.2 Documentation and Verification of Minimum Criteria

During the Quality Development Review, an interview will be carried out and colleagues will verify if the applicant fulfills the minimum criteria to apply to the quality systems (see **section 5.1**). Relevant information will be verified based on the personal **portfolio** and the **Entry verification checklist**. The compulsory minimum standards and the documentation submitted are reviewed within this framework.

After the Quality Development Review a confirmation of or rejection from inclusion in the Quality System will be officially communicated to the applicant by the colleagues via the confirmation/rejection link, received beforehand from the online system.

Specificities Demeter Qualification

During the Quality Development Review, an interview will be carried out and colleagues will verify if the applicant fulfills the minimum criteria to apply for Additional Demeter Qualification (see **section 5.2**). To verify the relevant information, the peer reviewers use the **Entry Verification checklist**. Additionally, the applicant for Demeter Qualification needs to create an abstract (max. 2 pages/6000 characters) from his or her CV and portfolio and is sent to his/her peer reviewers (see templates). The peer reviewers then send these documents to the coordination at BFDI.

After the Quality Development Review confirmation of or rejection from inclusion in the Quality System will be officially communicated to the applicant by the colleagues via the confirmation/rejection link, received beforehand from the online system in an email.

The final admission for the Demeter additional qualification inclusive appearance of the additional Demeter logo with the profile is a decision of the **Advisory Qualification Committee** and will be added through the confirmation link received by the coordinator (**see 7.3**). The coordinator from BFDI will send a confirmation/rejection letter to the applicant. This letter will serve as the basis for the following peer review on the Renewal of Recognition after 3 years.

7.3 The Process

After the Quality Development Review the applicant chooses the peer reviewers who conducted the peer review and enters the date of the peer review in the contract area (www.biodynamic-advisors.org). This generates an automatic email to the peer reviewers in which they can click on a link to confirm or can click on a link to reject the applicant. (PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT THE REVIEWERS CHECK THEIR SPAM)

- In case entry to the Quality System is **CONFIRMED by both peer reviewers** the Advisor will join the network of national and international advisor and will officially be able to publish his/her

public profile in the Quality System website (<https://www.biodynamic-advisors.org>). From this moment it is the advisor's own responsibility to fill in the public profile truthfully and to update it annually. The names of the peer reviewers are automatically listed in the advisor's public online profile.

Note: If any recommendation has been proposed in the written Report of the Quality Development Review, these will be reviewed during the Renewal of Recognition process (see section 10.)

- In case entry to the Quality System is **REJECTED** by one or both peer reviewer, the applicant can appeal the decision or re-apply (see **section 9.**)

Specificities Demeter Qualification

After the Quality Development Review the applicant chooses the peer reviewers who conducted the peer review and enters the date of the peer review in the contract area(www.biodynamic-advisors.org). This generates an automatic email to the peer reviewers in which they can click on a link to confirm or can click on a link to reject the applicant. (PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT THE REVIEWERS CHECK THEIR SPAM)

The peer reviewers send the **Entry Verification checklist**, and the abstract of the advisor's **portfolio** to the responsible coordinator at the BFDI. The final admission decision over the Demeter additional qualification – made visible with the appearance of the Demeter brand in the profile, will be made by the **Advisory Qualification Committee** (see **section 11**).

The Entry Verification Checklist of the Quality Development Review therefore needs to be sufficiently detailed to ensure that the Advisory Qualification Committee can follow how the required minimum criteria were verified. This can be done via a description by the colleagues and/or by adding appropriate annexes, for example, the Demeter conversion plans. In the case of a lack of clarity, the Qualification Committee may ask to see clear / specific proof. To prevent such circumstances from arising, please ensure that there is sufficient information and clarity so that verification can be carried out. For detailed information, please consult the additional document "Template Entry Verification checklist" on the website.

The **Advisory Qualification Committee** will communicate the final admission decision officially via a letter in which the confirmation or rejection decision is justified, and expectations or demands are recorded. This letter in turn serves as a basis for the Renewal of Recognition process (see **section 11.**) that every advisor must undergo after 3 years in the Quality System.

- In the event that entry to the Quality System within the Demeter Additional Qualification is **CONFIRMED by both peer reviewers** the Advisor will join the network of national and international advisor and will officially be able to publish his/her public profile in the Quality System website (<https://www.biodynamic-advisors.org>). From this moment it is the advisor's own responsibility to fill in the public profile truthfully. The names of the peer reviewers are automatically listed in the advisor's public online profile.
- The confirmation for the **Demeter Qualification** is made visible with the appearance of the Demeter brand in the online profile. Advisors who obtain the Demeter additional qualification in the Quality System, can use the **Demeter advisor logo** in their personal professional communication to which they have agreed during the registration steps in the Quality System. The logo will be sent with the confirmation letter by the coordinator at BFDI.

*Note: when requirements are fulfilled but there is nevertheless a condition made by **ONE** of the reviewers the advisor can be accepted in the Quality System with a clearly described task*

and a clear reporting to the coordinator. When the coordinator has received the report, the case will be closed.

- In the event that entry to the Quality System is **REJECTED** the applicant can appeal the decision or re-apply to the Quality System (see **section 9**).

8 Renewal of Recognition

After a period of three years, recognized advisors will be required to undergo a **Renewal of Recognition review**. The purpose of the process is to guarantee and further develop the quality of the Biodynamic and Demeter advisory service and ensure the creation of transparency and trust.

The Advisory Qualification System will invite every advisor with an automatic email at respectively **half a year** and **at 3 months** before the 3-year period finishes. This date is based on the date of the last peer review. This might be different for each advisor.

Please be aware that these reminders **COULD ALSO LAND IN THE SPAM FOLDER OF YOUR EMAIL PROGRAM**. As it is your own responsibility to renew your recognition in time - **PLEASE NOTE YOUR RENEWAL DATE FOR YOURSELF TOO**.

8.1 The Nature of the Process

The purpose of the Renewal of Recognition review is not to verify qualifications as this was done with the Entry Peer-review process. Rather, the Renewal Process is a personal development conversation that should focus on the processes the advisor has gone through during the last period. It is a **constructive process** that invites to reflect and to share common challenges and experiences among colleagues. The meeting should be considered as an *opportunity* for learning and development not only for advisors, but also for peers and colleagues.

Key Aspects of the Renewal of Recognition Process:

- The **online advisor's profile** should be reviewed together, is it up to date? Does it reflect the current practice of the advisor? Is it understandable and complete?
- If **conditions or suggestions for improvements** were proposed during the entry peer-review process, these should be identified and reviewed during the conversation. In the case of Demeter recognition, the received letter upon entry should be shared and discussed during the review.
- Relevant further professional training should be documented in the updated **Portfolio** and can be shared with the reviewers. Also, case descriptions, achievements and challenges can be described in the Portfolio to support the in-depth conversation with background information.
- **The Archetypical Competence Profile** (downloadable from the website) can be reviewed for its relevance as a preparatory reflection to the Peer Review.

All of the above is described in the **Template Renewal of Recognition Checklist** that can be used if preferred and that can be downloaded from the website.

At the end of the conversation:

- The advisor and the peer reviewers will define the key learning tasks for the next period.
- Peer reviewers may define further conditions for the next approval in 3 years.
- Peer reviewers will report relevant results and achievements.

8.2 Selection of the peer reviewers

The Renewal of recognition process is done by two peers (colleagues) and it is responsibility of the advisor who needs renewal of recognition to contact them to coordinate the meeting. The following are necessary criteria when the advisor is selecting colleagues as peer reviewers for the Renewal of Recognition process:

The advisor actively and consciously selects peer reviewers to ensure a constructive and positive learning experience. Based on this:

- Both peer reviewers must already be recognised in the quality system and at least for 3 years in the system (see www.biodynamic-advisors.org).
- **additional for Demeter advisors:** Both peer reviewers must already be recognized in the quality system (see www.biodynamic-advisors.org) as qualified Demeter advisors. (automatic).
- One of the peer reviewers should be from the Entry Peer Review process.
- At least one peer reviewer should be new to the process.
- The qualifications and experience of the peer reviewers should be conditional on the specific needs of the advisor.

8.3 The Process

1. The recognized advisor can find the possibility to organize a new Peer Development Review for the Renewal of Recognition once he/she logs in on the website www.biodynamic-advisors.org in the contracts area.
2. The recognized advisor is required to organize a new Peer Development Review with 2 colleagues (see above how to select colleagues).
3. The advisor and the peer reviewers define the main learning tasks for the next period. The peer reviewers can set further conditions for the next approval in 3 years. The most important information from the interview is captured in a common report or two individual written reports written by the peer reviewers. The reports must be accepted by all three parties. They will serve as a basis for the next Renewal of Recognition quality development review in 3 years.
4. Once the Renewal of Recognition Quality Development Review has been carried out, the recognized advisor enters names and review date in the contract on the website.
5. The peer reviewers receive an email notification from the website and are requested to confirm or reject the Renewal of Recognition.

additional for Demeter advisors

6. The peer reviewers notify the coordinator of BFDI in case renewal of Demeter recognition is requested of their conclusion of their review (confirmed or rejected Renewal of Recognition) through the report.
- 7.a. If no condition was formulated at the Entry Recognition and no further recommendations were formulated at the Renewal of Recognition, no involvement of the Advisory Qualification Committee will be requested. The coordinator will confirm Renewal of Recognition with a new recognition letter for 3 years.
- 7.b. In the case a condition or recommendation was formulated in the received letter upon Entry into the Quality System, the Peer Reviewers report their findings from the Renewal of Recognition review to the coordinator of BFDI. In case doubts arise on fulfillment, the report will be discussed in the Advisory Qualification Committee.

8.4 Non-response to Renewal of Recognition

The Quality System will automatically send two reminders to organize the peer reviews for the Renewal of Recognition, 6 months and 3 months before the entered date of the last peer review is passed. At precisely 3 years after the entered date is passed the online profile is taken offline and an information mail will be sent by the system automatically.

In the case the profile is taken offline but the Renewal of Recognition has been accidentally missed the advisors needs to contact the coordinator on behalf of the Advisory Qualification Committee to announce the intention to continue the work. As the profile will further exist at the backend of the system, an activation can be received by organizing and implementing a peer review for the Renewal of Recognition (see above). If you enter the internal website with your data, the system will request names and mail addresses of your peer review partners and the date of the peer review. After the confirmation of your colleagues, your profile will be seen on the list of biodynamic advisors again.

If there is no intention to further work as a recognized Demeter advisor and/or no contact has been made with the coordinator from the side of the advisor, a formal rejection letter is being sent by the coordinator (on behalf of the Advisory Qualification Committee) **6 months** after the profile was taken offline and the relevant organisations (in case of the Demeter recognized advisors) are notified on the non-recognised status of the previously recognised advisor.

9 Rejection/Exclusion

Applicants or advisors who do not meet the requirements or do not provide the required quality certificates, and therefore do not pass the Quality Development Review will know this during the Peer-Review with colleagues and/or will receive this in written signed in the Entry Verification Checklist. When nevertheless the date and the email addresses of the Peer reviewers are entered into the online registration, peer reviewers can use the rejection link in the email.

A rejection notification to be (temporarily) excluded may apply if, for example:

- Fulfilment of the minimum criteria could not be proved at the Quality Development Review.
- The Quality Development Review has not been organized.
- Common principles of the Charter for Biodynamic Advisers have not been respected.
- The public profile has not been filled in truthfully.

9.1 Appeal Process

If entry to the Quality System has been rejected for **appeals** must be made in writing within two weeks of receipt of the decision and must state, the reasons on which they are based. The first appeal shall be dealt with by the **Advisory Qualification Committee**. If the appeal is not upheld, this must also be justified and will be received in writing.

In the event of a repeated appeal, it shall be dealt with by the Ombudsperson. The objection must be substantiated in writing and must be made within a period of two weeks after receipt of the first rejection. The Ombudsperson shall examine the existing documentation and may invite both parties to submit written or oral statements. The decision of the Ombudsperson shall be made in writing, shall state the reasons on which it is based and shall not be subject to appeal. The decision shall be binding on all parties.

The Ombudsperson has an advisory or mediating function and is authorized to carry out all necessary clarifications. Legal steps are reserved for the parties involved.

The ombudspersons elected during the advisory meeting in Dornach on 09.02.2020 are:

- **Susanna Küffer Heer**
- **Thomas Lüthi**

9.2 Re-Application

If entry to the Quality System has been rejected in cases where the minimum requirements are not fulfilled, the applicant can do the following to re-apply for Standard and/or Demeter recognition:

- The applicant must first **fulfil the requirements** and update his/her portfolio accordingly.
- The applicant must coordinate a new **peer-review process**, inviting this time one of the **previous** (Demeter) recognised reviewers and one **new** (Demeter) recognised advisor.
- For Demeter additional qualification: The applicant must share the Advisory Qualification Committee decision letter so that this letter is part of the re-application and is known by the new reviewer.

10 Questions for Self-Reflection

In cooperation with biodynamic advisors, in February 2019 questions were worked out that could be of help in self-reflection and evaluation of one's own work, or in the creation of an individual portfolio. These questions can also be used to prepare for the Quality Development Review:

Professional skills

- How do I stay up to date on professional and associations issues? (e.g. DI newsletter, events)
- How do I develop my methodological and professional skills?
- What do I want to learn next year? What is my goal?
- How do I keep principles (Biodynamics, Demeter) alive?
- How do I deal with difficult advisory questions? Do I have the professional and methodological skills to do justice to the client? Do I know my limits?

Professional and methodological advisory skills

- How do I keep my portfolio and consulting concept up to date?
- How do I support my clients through the advisory process?
- What challenges do I face and how do I deal with them?
- How do I give my clients and others the chance to feedback to me?
- How do I myself judge the success of my advice?

Social and ethical skills

- With whom and how do I exchange advisory questions and biodynamic topics?
- How can I build an appropriate personal relationship with my clients and colleagues?
- What ethical, social or intercultural challenges do I face and how do I deal with them?

11 The Advisory Qualification Committee (AQC)

Aim

The aim of the AQC is to decide upon individual applications as a Demeter recognized advisor within the International Advisory Quality system. For this task, the AQC evaluates the peer reviewer's assessment using the completed Entry Verification checklist, and the abstract of the portfolio to decide on approval. The AQC decides on applications preferably by consensus but if not possible, through a simple majority of Committee Member votes. The members of the Committee shall determine whether a declared conflict of interest leads to an obligation to abstain

from voting in individual cases. All members of the committees sign a declaration of confidentiality and a declaration of conflict of interest.

Members & Duration

The AQC shall consist of a **minimum of three** but **no more than five** members. The committee is to be composed of independent experts with experience in advisory work, certification and assessment in biodynamic agriculture. The members are obliged to act to the best of their knowledge and beliefs, *i.e.* they are appointed as individual, independent persons responsible for their own actions and not as delegates or representatives of their country. Representation by a substitution of the person in the AQC is not permitted. Members have experience with peer reviews but abstain from doing peer reviews (except to renew their own) during the membership of the AQC.

Members of the committee serve for a term of three years, with the option of re-nomination only once. The election process is conducted in an open and transparent manner, with all advisors in the Quality System, as well as members of the ART committee, invited to nominate candidates. Candidates are approved by active advisors in the Quality System.

When nominating members for the AQC, the following criteria are to be applied:

- Aim is to reach a balanced composition in terms of gender, age, spread in geographical experience and in agronomic specialities.
- Minimum of one person with international certification experience at a certification or inspection body.
- Minimum one advisor out of a national Demeter advisory service.
- Each nominated advisor with Demeter advisory experience needs to add experience from other specific geographies not yet covered in the committee.

Working Method

A coordinator from BFDI shall be responsible for convening and preparing the agenda of the conference call meetings and, if relevant, the physical meeting. Conference call meetings take place once per quarter.