



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Mr. Azamat Kassymkhanov
Director
Agency for Recognition and Quality Assurance in Education (ARQA)
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Kazakhstan

Brussels, 2 May 2023

Subject: Statement on validation of the external review report of ARQA

Dear Mr. Azamat Kassymkhanov,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting on 19 April 2023, the ENQA Agency Review Committee validated the external review report of ARQA. The committee concluded that the report has been produced in accordance with the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews and can thus be used to apply for ENQA membership and EQAR registration, as well as for any other purposes. This is in line with article 26, paragraph 2 of ENQA's Rules of Procedure, which states that the review report can be further used only once this statement of validation has been issued. The purpose of this statement is to set out the committee's views on the quality of the final report and consistency of the panel's evaluation on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The committee received the final review report that addressed the additional requirements as elaborated in the committee's letter to the panel dated 3 March 2023. Furthermore, the committee made the following observations on the final review report:

On the ESG 3.1, the committee noted that the agency only weakly translates its goals and objectives into the organisation's daily routine, and only modestly involves its stakeholders (including students) in the ARQA's governance and work. Following this, in the opinion of the committee, the standard can be considered only as partially compliant with the ESG, and not compliant.

Importantly, the committee wishes to use this opportunity to provide its views regarding standard 3.3 Independence, where its judgement differs from that of the panel as well. The committee noted that the agency's independence is not safeguarded since the agency's founder is deeply involved in the agency's various bodies and thus daily work. For a partial compliance on this standard to be reached, the agency should meet some aspects or parts of the standard, but equally important, the interpretation of the ESG standard should be correct, while the manner of implementation can be not effective enough (see ENQA's Guidelines on Agency Reviews, p. 25). Since the committee held no evidence that the agency's



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interpretation of the standard is correct, the committee found the agency to be non-compliant with the standard.

The committee notes that the final review report can now be further used to apply for ENQA membership and EQAR registration, as well as for any other purposes, as stipulated above.

This statement will be published on ENQA's website as an annex to the review report.

Thank you for your trust placed in ENQA to conduct this review. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alastair Delaney'.

Mr. Alastair Delaney
Chair of ENQA Agency Review Committee

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel and further discussed by the committee (where relevant), ARQA is recommended to take appropriate action, in so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 3.1 Activities, policy, and processes for quality assurance

The agency is recommended to consider greater involvement of students in its governance arrangements including membership of the Experts Council.

ESG 3.3 Independence

The agency is recommended to reconsider its governance structures to ensure that the organisational independence is formally secured by separating the roles of Founder and Director.

The agency is recommended to reconsider the remit of the Experts Council to secure its advisory role and organisational independence.

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

The agency should take a more in-depth approach to analysing findings from its accreditation procedures and publish these thematic reports on its website.

The agency is recommended to plan for future regular publications and provide the necessary resources for conducting research and preparing thematic reports.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

The agency is recommended to ensure that all documents are updated according to the deadlines stated.

The agency is recommended to implement developments to its IQA system. It is necessary that the agency ensures that the cycle of continuous quality improvement is completed. For example, with the incorporation of a plan of improvement actions.

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

The agency is recommended to include the consideration of information management in its procedures for programme accreditation.

The agency is recommended to develop a standard for public information in the procedures for programme accreditation.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

The agency is recommended to formally establish the internal processes to develop, review and update standards and criteria, including defining the internal and external stakeholders involved in the processes.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

The agency is recommended to publish the list of experts for all the categories on their website.

The agency is recommended to provide more periodic training for each category of expert.

The agency is recommended to ensure that the procedure for applying to become an expert is more clearly displayed on its website.

The agency is recommended to assure that the international experts have an equal role in the panel and participate in all the procedures regarding each review.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

The agency is recommended to confirm alignment of the criteria for outcomes in the Regulation on procedure for conducting program/institutional accreditation and Regulation on Accreditation Council, as well on the website, to ensure the consistent application of the information for decisions on formal outcomes.

ESG 2.6 Reporting

The agency is recommended to improve the accessibility and readability of the accreditation reports on its website.

ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals

The agency is recommended to separate the decision-making of the accreditation and appeals processes by allowing the Appeals Commission to overturn the decisions made by the Accreditation Council.