



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Mr. Lasha Margishvili
Acting Director
National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE)
2 Merab Aleksidze St, 2nd lane
0193 Tbilisi
Georgia

Brussels, 2 April 2024

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

Dear Mr. Lasha Margishvili,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting on 26 March 2024, the ENQA Agency Review Committee validated the external review report of NCEQE. 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, 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 examined the provided review report and asked the panel for further information relating to the standard 3.3 of the ESG. The committee received the final review report that addressed the additional requirements.

Following the analysis of the additionally collected information, the committee noted that it is not acceptable for the director of the agency (or anyone else in the leadership of the agency) to hold a political role in the government. Whereas the panel justifies their decision by linking it to the educational governance in the country, the committee is of the strong view that this solution seriously undermines the operational independence of NCEQE. Thus, in the view of the committee, the agency is non-compliant with the requirements of the standard, and not partially compliant.

The final review report can 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.



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alastair Delaney', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

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), NCEQE 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 members of the Coordination Council should have longer mandates and preparatory materials regarding their role in the governance of the agency. As indicated in the recommendations by the 2018 visit, the agency should continue its efforts in increasing the role of CC within the agency. The power-balance in decision-making between the CC and the Director should be revised and the CC should apply a more proactive approach of taking matters into discussion.

The parallel systems of authorization and accreditation (including the cluster accreditation) should be revised and where possible optimised.

To bolster stakeholder confidence in the agency's procedures and processes while mitigating any potential conflicts of interest and doubts concerning nomination procedures, unambiguous provisions should be implemented aimed at preventing and managing conflicts of interest for all designated Council members. This recommendation applies equally to members of the Accreditation and Authorization Councils.

ESG 3.3 Independence

The Director of the agency or anyone else in the leadership of the agency should not hold a political role in the government of the country. Furthermore, there should be clear procedures, including with the involvement of the CC, which ensure that such practices which jeopardise agency's independence, can be prevented from happening in the agency in the future.

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

It will be important that the NCEQE takes the proposed methodology developed under the Twinning project and accordingly develops their strategic approach for conducting regular and systematic thematic analysis.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

The agency should develop a clear procedure on how complaints made internally within the agency are handled. Such procedures can include existing bodies of the agency (for example the CC) or be done by ad-hoc groups, however objectivity and transparency of such procedures should be ensured.

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

The agency should include a requirement in the authorization and accreditation standards for HEIs to make their QA policies publicly available. (ESG 1.1)

Fairness and transparency of the staff recruitment procedures should be included under the accreditation standard 4 (Providing Teaching Resources) of NCEQE. (ESG 1.5)

A standard/criteria should be added in the authorization and accreditation standards to reflect the cyclical nature of the external reviews undertaken. (ESG 1.10)

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

A commonly agreed vision should be created as to what will the newly implemented cluster accreditation lead to in regards to transition of the existing authorization/accreditation procedures.

The agency should revise and optimise the follow-up procedures, particularly the 3-year progress reports requested by the agency on the fulfilment of the recommendations provided for the HEIs/educational programmes.

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes

Ensure that all panel members, including the international expert are available to attend the site-visit when scheduling it. If the agency intends to apply a hybrid approach, a distinct procedure for this should be developed.

ESG 2.5 Peer-review experts

The agency should ensure joint interpretation, understanding and applications of the standards and requirements by the Authorization/Accreditation Council members.

The oral hearings of the Authorization/Accreditation Councils should be planned well in advance with a clear schedule and timing of the meeting made available to the attendees.

Documents should be sent to the Authorization/Accreditation Councils significantly in advance (more than seven days) to the scheduled public hearings. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring participation of international experts in the oral hearings.

The agency should ensure that the Authorization/Accreditation Council members rely solely on the external evaluation report, SAR and other supporting documentation when preparing for the oral hearings. This can be done through introducing a Code of Ethics for the Councils' members, or by highlighting the importance of trust towards the expert reports and criticising the practice of private information gathering (i.e. individual Council members conducting research) in the training of Authorization/Accreditation Councils.

The term of office of the Authorization/Accreditation Council members needs adjustments which can be made through further extension of the mandate length and/or a certain rotation system (e.g. some of the



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Council members are appointed at year 1, and some others at year 2; consequently such a timeline will ensure that there are always at least some members in the Council who have experience).

ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals

Procedures should be introduced for submitting complaints against the individual members of the Authorization and Accreditation Councils. Besides being communicated to HEIs, review experts and the public, information about these procedures should be included in the training offered to the Authorization and Accreditation Council members.