



European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Dr. Paul Thijssen  
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Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA)  
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The Netherlands

Brussels, 12 July 2023

**Subject: Statement on validation of the external review report of NQA**

Dear Dr. Paul Thijssen,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting on 28 June 2023, the ENQA Agency Review Committee validated the external review report of NQA. 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 minor revisions on the following standard: ESG 3.3.

On the ESG 3.3 Independence, the committee noted that the agency does not hold powers to appoint its experts, which is rather done by NVAO following the panel proposal by the higher education institution under evaluation. After considering the agency's collaboration agreement with NVAO, and the overall quality assurance context in the Netherlands, the committee concluded that the panel reached a complex yet fair judgment. Nevertheless, the committee asked the panel for an explicit reference to the justification why NVAO approves the panels and not NQA. This could have a potential impact on the agency's operational independence and should thus be clearly stated under the standard.

The committee received the final review report that addressed the additional requirements. The final review report can thus be further used to apply for ENQA membership, 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.



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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', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mr. Alastair Delaney  
Chair of ENQA Agency Review Committee

Annex: Areas for development

### **Annex: Areas for development**

As outlined by the review panel and further discussed by the committee (where relevant), NQA 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 panel recommends that NQA develops formal ways to involve stakeholders in its governance, above and beyond their involvement through direct client relationships.

The panel recommends that NQA makes its mission statement publicly available through its website.

The panel recommends that NQA should develop a suite of clear processes and statements (which are then published on the website) that outline how the consulting and assessment parts of their operations are separated and no conflict of interest or compromise of independence is ensured.

#### **ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis**

The agency is recommended to include regular thematic analysis in its plans.

The agency is recommended using the experience and knowledge of internal and external secretaries gained from various assessment procedures to conduct those thematic analyses.

#### **ESG 3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies**

The agency is recommended to develop plans to take fuller responsibility for meeting the ESG in its own right and to demonstrate how it achieves this [3.7].

#### **ESG 2.3 Implementing processes**

The agency is recommended to publish its procedures on its website to meet this standard more completely, for the purposes of transparency and public confidence in the quality and integrity of the procedures used to assess programmes.

#### **ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts**

The agency is recommended to further develop the training of panel members to include dedicated training for student panel members.

#### **ESG 2.6 Reporting**

The agency is recommended to take further action to meet this standard by, for example, listing the programme assessments it has coordinated on its own website with a link to the relevant report on NVAO's site.



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### **ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals**

The agency is recommended that complaints and appeals procedures are separated and revised more clearly and precisely to communicate the definitions and steps involved; the revision should address matters of independence or impartiality more broadly across the procedures. Reference to complaints and to appeals should be included in all manuals.