



European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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Brussels, 12 July 2023

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

Dear Ms. Vicki Stott,

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 QAA. 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 examined the provided review report and asked the panel for minor revisions on the following standards: ESG 3.1, ESG 3.6, and ESG 2.4.

On the ESG 3.1 Activities, policies and procedures for quality assurance, the committee wished to have learned more about the agency's consultancy work in the report, especially how the agency separates this type of service from its external quality assurance activities. Moreover, since the agency will use the review report for its registration in EQAR, the committee asked the panel to reflect on EQAR's previous decision on partial compliance on this standard, and to the issues that were highlighted.

Furthermore, regarding ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct, the committee noted that the panel referred to the agency's IQA Manual on several instances but was unable to find the document on the agency's website. Therefore, the committee asked the panel to clearly state where the document could be found or if it is an internal document of the agency, since the document is referred to by QAA as a significant one to the QA system in place.



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Finally, on ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts, the committee asked the panel to reflect on EQAR's previous decision on partial compliance on this standard, and to the issues that were highlighted.

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 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,

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), QAA is recommended to take appropriate action, in so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

### **ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis**

The agency is recommended to develop a clearer plan for thematic analyses for all of its external QA activities in the spirit of ESG 3.4 and to regularly implement this plan, leading to a systematic and nationwide production of such analyses in spirit of the standard.

### **ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct**

The agency is recommended to complement the internal QA system with clear feedback-related internal improvement plan that also includes a kind of quantitative “coordinates” which would allow QAA to track the success of its developmental efforts.

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

The agency is recommended to follow up more swiftly and effectively on any recommendations and suggestions stemming from their own external reviews against the ESG - and/or to communicate more transparently and proactively, when and why such follow ups need to be delayed or rethought.

### **ESG 2.3 Implementing processes**

The agency is recommended to formalise and (as far as possible) standardise their approach to follow up across methodologies and nations, in particular as some individual review types can be regarded as a best practice that could lead the way for others. Such a standardization effort would also make it more transparent where the responsibility of QAA begins and ends in comparison to that of the funding authorities.

### **ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes**

The agency is recommended to strongly reflect on its approach to ensuring the consistency of outcomes including the potential need to establish an independent commission that validates reports and makes the final decision. This role could be fulfilled by the two new groups at the agency: the Assessment and Review Group, and the Assessment and Review Operations Group. Alternatively, the agency could follow the model from its international reviews.

### **ESG 2.6 Reporting**

The panel emphasises the previous panel’s recommendation to develop an extended search functionality on the agency’s website, thus making it possible to customise search queries by year, by nation, by process.



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

The agency is recommended to reconsider its current processes for receiving and analysing complaints.