

External review of the Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TRIPARTITE TERMS OF REFERENCE BETWEEN ECAQA, ENQA AND EQAR

27 October 2020

1. Background and context

The Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health care (ECAQA) is a non-governmental non-profit organisation with the purpose of ensuring the quality of higher education, including medical and other healthcare professions education, and development of national/regional reliable and transparent quality assurance system.

Non-for-profit organisation ECAQA was established in November 12, 2016. ECAQA has been registered as a non-governmental and non-profit organization at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Government Level) and at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Department of Justice in the Almaty City on February 3, 2017. These ECAQA's Certificate of Registration as a non-profit organization for activity and service in higher education are the legal basis for its activity as an external quality assurance agency in tertiary education in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

ECAQA was recognised by the decision of the Republican Accreditation Council of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan since March 5, 2018 and it has been included on the National Register of Recognised Accrediting Agency (Register 1) by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science' Order № 95 on March 13, 2018.

The ECAQA's Constitution defines the area of its responsibilities as external quality assurance in higher education institutions and educational programmes and carrying out institutional and specialized (educational programme) accreditation.

The main priorities of the ECAQA are: to ensure and improve academic quality; support of higher education institutions in their capacity building process; introduction of the quality culture within institutions; provision of the educational expertise in higher education, health professions education and public health; provision of all stakeholders with the relevant information about the quality of the higher education institutions and programme undergoing accreditation.

ECAQA has carried out and completed external evaluation of 30 higher education institutions: 2 universities, 1 Higher Nursing college, 27 National centres for clinical research (CPD Providers) and 13 educational programmes in Medicine and Health Sciences, Pharmacy: 4 Bachelor'Degree, 3 Master's Degree Programmes, 2 CPD programmes, 4 Vocational Professional Education and Training.

Currently 2 Undergraduate Medical Education Programmes (Bachelor of Medicine+Internship), 35 Postgraduate Speciality Training Programmes (Residency), 1 Master's Degrees, 1 PhD Programme are in progress.

ECAQA has been an affiliate of ENQA since 2017 and is applying for ENQA membership.

ECAQA has not yet been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and is now applying for initial inclusion on EQAR.

2. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

This review will evaluate the extent to which ECAQA fulfils the requirements of Parts 2 and 3 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether membership of ECAQA should be granted and to EQAR to support ECAQA application to the register.

2.1 Activities of ECAQA within the scope of the ESG

In order for ECAQA to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities of ECAQA that are within the scope of the ESG, i.e. reviews, audits, evaluations or accreditation of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to teaching and learning (and their relevant links to research and innovation). This is independent of whether the activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA and whether they are obligatory or voluntary in nature.

The following activities of ECAQA have to be addressed in the external review:

- (1) Institutional accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, including of:
 - higher education institutions for health professions education;
 - postgraduate medical education institutions;
 - organisations for continuing professional development (CPD providers);
 - higher nursing colleges;
 - non-medical higher education institutions.
- (2) Specialized (programme) accreditation of Bachelor' Degree, Master's Degree, PhD, Postgraduate Speciality Training (Residency), CPD and Vocational Professional Education and Training programmes, including:
 - Basic Medical Education (general medicine) programmes;
 - Master's Degree programmes in medical and health professions education;
 - PhD programmes in biomedical and health sciences;
 - Applied Bachelor Degree programmes in nursing;
 - Bachelor Degree programmes in nursing;
 - Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Technology and Industry programmes;
 - Public Health programmes;
 - Dental Education programmes;
 - Joint Degree programmes;
 - Postgraduate Speciality Training programmes (Residency).
- (3) Accreditation of the clinical skills centre (simulation based healthcare education) of medical higher educational institutions.

The other activities of the agency i.e. partnerships, Nursing Educator and Expert Competencies Developments are not external QA activities on themselves and should be commented on if they relate to ESG Part 2 and 3.

3. The review process

The review will be conducted following the methodology of ENQA Agency Reviews. The process is designed in line with the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation and agreement on the Terms of Reference for the review between ECAQA, ENQA and EQAR;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel by ENQA;
- Notification of EQAR about the appointed panel;
- Self-assessment by ECAQA including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to ECAQA;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the ENQA Review Committee;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Decision making by the EQAR Register Committee on the agency's registration on EQAR;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or the ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency, including a voluntary progress visit.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts (at least one of which is currently employed by an ENQA member agency), an academic employed by a higher education institution, a student member, and eventually a labour market representative (if requested). One of the members will serve as the chair of the review panel, and another member as a review secretary. For ENQA Agency Reviews at least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. An additional panel member may be included in the panel at the request of the agency under review. In this case, an additional fee to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses is applied.

The panel will be supported by the ENQA Review Coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA's requirements are met throughout the process. The ENQA staff member will not be the secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide ECAQA with the list of suggested experts and their respective curricula vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the ECAQA review.

3.2 Self-assessment by ECAQA, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

ECAQA is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-assessment report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a brief description of the national HE and QA system; background description of the current situation of the Agency; an analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a SWOT analysis; each criterion (ESG part 2 and 3) addressed individually, and considerations of how the agency has addressed the recommendations as noted in the ENQA Board's membership decision letter and the instances of partial compliance noted in the previous EQAR Register Committee decision of inclusion/renewal. All agency's QA activities (whether within their national jurisdiction or outside of it, and whether obligatory or voluntary) will be described and their compliance with the ESG analysed.
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which ECAQA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat which has four weeks to pre-scrutinise it before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The Secretariat will not judge the content of information itself but whether the necessary information, as stated in the guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews, is present. For the second and subsequent reviews, the agency is expected to enlist the recommendations provided in the previous review and to outline actions taken to meet these recommendations. In case the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to reject the report and ask for a revised version within two weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 EUR will be charged to the agency.
- The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of six weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A site visit by the review panel

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule which shall be submitted to the agency at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule is to include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is usually 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to ECAQA at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted in a site visit by the ENQA Review Coordinator.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on the ESG compliance of the agency or the granting or reconfirmation of ENQA membership.

3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each standard of part 2 and 3 of the ESG. A draft will be first

submitted to the ENQA Review Coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity and language, and it will be then submitted to ECAQA usually within 10 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If ECAQA chooses to provide a position statement in reference to the draft report, it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter, the review panel will take into account the statement by ECAQA and finalise and submit the document to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 40 pages in length.

When preparing the report, the review panel should also bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG* to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the consideration of the Register Committee of the agency's application to EQAR¹.

For the purpose of applying for ENQA membership, ECAQA is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation for applying for membership and the ways in which ECAQA expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be taken into consideration by the Board together with the final evaluation report when deciding on the agency's membership.

4. Follow-up process and publication of the report

ECAQA will receive the expert panel's report and publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has approved the report. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. As part of ENQA Agency Review follow-up activities, ECAQA commits to react on the review recommendations and submit a follow-up report to the ENQA Board within the timeframe indicated in the Board's decision on membership. The follow-up report will be published on the ENQA website, in addition to the full review report and the Board's decision.

The follow-up report could be complemented by a small-scale progress visit to the agency performed by two members of the original panel (whenever possible). This visit will be used to discuss issues, based on the ESG, considered to be of particular importance or a challenge to ECAQA. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or judgment of compliance of the agency with the ESG. Should the agency not wish to take advantage of this opportunity, it may opt out by informing the ENQA Review Coordinator about this.

5. Use of the report

ENQA shall retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the expert panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, shall be vested in ENQA.

The review report is used by the ENQA Board for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether ECAQA can be admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report is also used as a basis for the Register Committee's decision on the agency's registration on EQAR. The review process is thus designed to serve these two purposes. However, the review

¹ See here: https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2020/09/RC_12_1_UseAndInterpretationOfTheESG_v3_0.pdf

report is to be considered final only after being approved by ENQA. Once submitted to ENQA and until it is approved by its Board, the report may not be used or relied upon by ECAQA, the panel, or any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. The approval of the report is independent of the decision of the ENQA Board on membership.

For the purposes of EQAR registration, the agency will submit the review report (once approved by the ENQA Board) via email to EQAR. The agency should also include its self-assessment report (in a PDF format), a Declaration of Honour, full curriculum vitae (CVs) of all review panel members and any other relevant documents to the application (i.e. annexes, statement to the review report, updates). EQAR is expected to consider the review report and the agency's application at its Register Committee meeting in February/March 2022.

6. Indicative schedule of the review

Agreement on Terms of Reference	October 2020
Appointment of review panel members	November 2020
Self-assessment completed	31 January 2021
Pre-screening of SAR by ENQA Review Coordinator	February 2021
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	April 2021
Briefing of review panel members	May 2021
Review panel site visit	June 2021
Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA Review Coordinator for pre-screening	August 2021
Draft of evaluation report to ECAQA	September 2021
Statement of ECAQA to review panel if necessary	End September 2021
Submission of final report to ENQA	October 2021
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board	December 2021
Publication of report	December 2021
EQAR Register Committee meeting	February/March 2022