

External partial review of the National Accreditation Agency of the Russian Federation (NAA)  
by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

**Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

July 2016

**1. Background and Context**

The National Accreditation Agency of the Russian Federation (NAA) was awarded the status “full member under review” in 6 March 2015 and was informed of the decision by a letter on 18 March 2015. The agency was given two years to undergo a new review process, allowing them to opt for a new review at an earlier stage. On 30 April 2015 NAA submitted an appeal to the ENQA Board against the Board’s decision. Following this, the Board took a decision at its meeting on 15 September 2015, to stand with its initial decision to designate NAA as a Full Member under review following the statement of the Appeals and Complaints Committee. In its letter of 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 NAA informed ENQA Secretariat that necessary enhancements have been already made and the agency is now ready to undergo an additional partial review.

Regarding the status of “member under review” the ENQA rules of procedure state the following:

*“(2) A further, partial review shall be carried out by the Board, or its nominated reviewers, at the end of the two-year period (or sooner, if the member agency so requests) and shall focus on the deficiencies mentioned in the report of the first review. The details of the partial review process are detailed in the ENQA procedure for partial reviews.*

*(3) The Board will take a decision regarding the renewal of membership based on the outcomes of the partial review. Should the outcome of the partial review be positive, membership shall be valid for five years from the date of the Board’s decision in which the status of member under review was granted.*

*(4) An agency that, in the opinion of the Board, following the further review, still does not comply with the ESG and thus ENQA’s criteria for membership shall, by confirmation of the General Assembly, be debarred from ENQA.”*

(ENQA Rules of Procedure, Article 7)

This partial review is carried out to assess the eligibility of NAA to the renewal of membership of ENQA. Should the partial review be successful, **NAA’s membership would expire 5 years after the completion of the full review (i.e. in March 2020).**

**2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation**

All elements identified as causes of concern by the ENQA Board as well as all elements identified by the panel as partially or non-compliant will be covered by the partial review. The Board decided in March 2015 to award NAA the status of “full member under review” expressing its concerns for the

elements in which the agency had demonstrated non-compliance or partial compliance with the following specific mentions:

### **ENQA Criterion 1 – Activities (ESG-2005 3.1, 3.3)**

#### **ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose**

- NAA should include trained international experts in the panels, especially as there are no legal obstacles to do so. The Board notes NAA's intention to involve international experts in the future.
- NAA should include students in the panels. Involvement of student will be a requirement in the revised ESG.
- The Board notes that *"experts mostly work alone during a site visit"*, and strongly supports the panel in recommending that experts work as a team *"in order to facilitate the inclusion of students and international experts in the groups and in order to avoid the risk of subjective assessments by separately working experts"*.

→ Some aspects or parts of the criterion/ESG standard are not met. The three reasons listed above lead to a finding of partial compliance.

#### **ESG 2.5 Reporting**

In 2008, the panel recommended NAA to make the expert panels' reports publicly available. Not much progress has been made in this area. As stated in the review report: *"The state accreditation process is not documented in a single report, but in a number of documents with different purposes and different readerships". "Expert reports on the individual programs are only communicated to the HEI under review and not made public. This means, that future students, employers, the academic community, or other stakeholders do not have the possibility to study the analyses and recommendations of the experts. This is important information, and it should be made available for the general public"*. The outcomes of state accreditation are not easily accessible: only the expert panel's conclusions and positive decisions of the AB are published. Negative decisions can only be found in the annual analytical report made by NAA. In addition to the lack of publication of full reports, HEIs do not have an opportunity *"to comment on the experts' reports, the joint conclusion of the expert panel, or the analytical report prepared by NAA for the Accreditation Board before the decision making process in the Board"*. The Board concurs with the panel in finding it *"inappropriate that HEIs do not have an opportunity to correct factual misunderstandings with potential importance for the overall conclusions"*.

→ The lack of publication of full reports, the lack of easy accessibility of accreditation outcomes and the lack of opportunity for HEIs to comment experts' reports on factual accuracy lead to a finding of partial compliance. The Agency is advised to promptly address these weaknesses as the revised ESG will be more challenging in terms of reporting.

### **ENQA Criterion 5 – Independence (ESG 3.6)**

- Rosobrnadzor, the official government authority, participates directly in the recruitment and certification of new experts for which NAA does not have full and formal responsibility.
- NAA selects experts from the database and does not have the authority to complete the composition of expert panels as the final composition of the panel, including the head of the panel, is approved by Rosobrnadzor.
- The Accreditation Board makes formal decisions *"to be considered as recommendations to Rosobrnadzor, who takes the final decision on accreditation. [...] Representatives from Rosobrnadzor are members of the Accreditation Board. The head of Rosobrnadzor is even chairing the board"*.

→ Independence is therefore not guaranteed from the evidence gathered in the review report. The three reasons listed above lead to a finding of non-compliance.

### **ENQA Criterion 6 – External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies (ESG-2005 3.7)**

The following deficiencies should be addressed:

- No student involvement as experts in panels. In addition, experts have to be approved by Rosobrnadzor.
- No publication of full reports and no permanent appeals procedure established as part of the state accreditation system. In addition, HEIs do not have an opportunity to correct factual errors in expert's reports.
- No follow-up procedure beside the reaccreditation processes after 1 or 6 years.

#### **The focus of the review shall be therefore the following:**

1. Criterion 1, sub-criterion (ESG 2.4): Processes fit for purpose
2. Criterion 1, sub-criterion (ESG 2.5): Reporting
3. Criterion 5 (ESG 3.6): Independence
4. Criterion 6, (ESG 3.7): External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies

The Agency shall also indicate in the SAR should there have been significant changes regarding any other standards since the last full review, and also these elements will be included in the partial review process.

### **3. The Review Process**

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews*, the evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the partial review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by NAA including the preparation of a self-assessment report (focusing only on the criteria and sub-criteria indicated in the article 2);
- A site visit by the review panel to NAA;
- 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;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations.

#### **3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

A review panel of 3 people will be employed for the task. The panel will include at least one academic, one student, and a representative of a QA agency. Wherever possible, one or more of the panel members will have participated in the previous full review, in order to facilitate the acquisition of a comprehensive picture of NAA. Reviewers will come from the ENQA pool of trained reviewers. In addition to the three members, the panel will be supported by the ENQA Secretariat review coordinator who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA expectations 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.

ENQA will provide NAA with the names of the nominated reviewers with their respective curriculum 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 NAA review.

### **3.2 Self-assessment by NAA, including the preparation of a self-assessment report**

NAA is expected to produce a self-assessment report focused on the criteria and sub-criteria listed in the article 2, indicating in particular the changes that have taken place since the last full review (in 2015), and addressing specifically to concerns raised in the letter of the ENQA Board of 18th of March 2015. In addition, the agency will indicate any eventual changes and developments beyond those listed under the criteria under scrutiny.

The report by the reviewers will concentrate on the same criteria and assess how the compliance has evolved since the last full review (in 2015). It will also assess any eventual changes that have been brought to the attention of the panel in the self-assessment report.

### **3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel**

The duration and the programme of the site visit will depend on the number of elements to be looked at by the review panel. In practice this is likely to mean a visit of 1-2 days. The approved schedule shall be given to NAA at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by NAA in arriving in Moscow, Russia.

The site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and NAA.

### **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 article 2. 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 NAA for comment on factual accuracy. If NAA chooses to provide a 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 NAA, finalise the document and submit it to NAA and ENQA.

## **4. Publication of the Report**

NAA will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board has made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. This review report will be annexed to the latest full review report.

## **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 Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether NAA can be reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to NAA and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by NAA, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. NAA may use the report at its discretion only after the Board has approved of the report. The approval of the report is independent of the decision on membership.

The Chair of the panel shall remain available to respond to questions of clarification or further information from the EQAR Register Committee provided that the ENQA Secretariat is copied in all such requests.

## 6. Budget

NAA shall pay the following partial review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	2,000 EUR
Fee of the 2 other panel members	3,000 EUR (1,500 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	1,500 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses <sup>1</sup>	2,500 EUR
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,000 EUR</b>

This gives a total indicative cost of 9,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 3 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, NAA will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to NAA if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

## 7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Terms of Reference and agreement with NAA	By August 2016
Appointment of partial review panel members and agreement on reviewer contracts, setting date for the site visit	August/September 2016
Completion of partial review SAR	November 2016
Site visit	Mid-January 2017
Draft of report to NAA	Late February 2017
Completion of report and submission to ENQA	March 2017
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board and decision	April 2017

<sup>1</sup> Calculation is based on four European return flights, and two nights in a hotel for each expert and ENQA coordinator.