

External review of the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

March 2017

1. Background and Context

The Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) is formed in 2006 by the Law on higher education as an independent body of the National Council for higher education. It is the only formally recognised body responsible for the external quality assurance for higher education in Serbia. CAQA has 17 members from different scientific/educational fields from both, academic and professional sector supported by 8 members of administrative staff. It is financed by the accreditation fees, and the Ministry for education provides technical and administrative support. CAQA has operational and decision making independence from all stakeholders (Ministry, National Council, higher education institutions).

CAQA carries out the accreditation procedure for higher education institutions (HEIs) and study programmes (both periodical on 5 years), decides on the application for accreditation and issues a certificate of accreditation which is a prerequisite for licencing HEIs in Serbia. CAQA has a mandate to develop accreditation and quality assurance standards, and to run the processes of initial accreditation, periodic accreditation of study programmes and institutions as well as process of external quality control at the institutional level (auditing). In these processes CAQA uses pool of over 700 external experts. CAQA prepares the standards for all evaluation processes (accreditation at institutional and study programme level, auditing, initial accreditation, and self-evaluation of HEIs) together with accompanying procedures and guidelines. The first standards were developed in 2007 and in 2016 CAQA has prepared a revised version according to the changes in the ESG, minor changes in the Law on higher education as well as to the 10 years of experience in implementing the standards.

Since 2007, CAQA has completed 2 rounds of accreditations at both, institutional and study programme level: the first during 2007-2011 and the second during 2012-2016, as well as one round of the external quality control – auditing. In total over 200 HEIs and 1600 study programmes have been accredited in every accreditation round. Methodology used in these processes is also defined and strictly followed. For the accreditations, applications are first sent to the reviewers, then on-site visits to the institutions are organised with the participation of the CAQA members, students and labour market representative. Reports are prepared for adoption at the CAQA meeting. Accreditation decisions are: accreditation, if all the quality standards are met; act of warning, if the standards are partially met; and rejection, if the standards are not met. Reports on the decisions are then publicised. External quality control (auditing) is based on the self-evaluation reports that are peer reviewed and after the site visit expert team prepares the extensive report for the CAQA meeting. Positive report is publicised and in the case of the substantial problems in the quality, institution is submitted to the follow-up procedure. Using the method described above, CAQA has conducted since 2007 a total of **5234** (2233 in the period of 2007-2011, and 3001 in the period of 2012-2016) quality assessments, of which 465 (232 plus 233) were accreditation requests for HEIs; 4401 (1947 plus 2454) accreditation requests for study programmes and 126 (54 plus 72) requests for external quality control (audit) of HEIs. Since 2013 CAQA has received 19 requests for initial accreditation.

CAQA has also the role of advising HEIs on how to implement the standards of internal quality control, how to write the self-evaluation report and how to prepare for the external quality control. CAQA runs

seminars for the new peer-reviewers. CAQA has developed international cooperation with the agencies within the region and at the European level. CAQA has also developed the system of internal quality control by analysing questionnaires given to all its stakeholders on the regular basis (every 2-3 years). Since the last evaluation by ENQA, CAQA has published 3 system wide analysis and several reviews in which many aspects of its activities have been analysed. Majority of them are comparative analysis of the accreditation outcomes for 2 accreditation cycles in the different sectors. That enable the information on the effects of the process of external quality control on development of internal quality control mechanisms within the HEIs as well as on overall improvement of HEIs.

CAQA has been a member of ENQA since April 2013 and is applying for renewal of ENQA membership.

CAQA has been registered on EQAR since November 2014 and is applying for renewal.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This review, will evaluate the way in which and to what extent CAQA fulfils 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 CAQA should be reconfirmed and to EQAR to support CAQA application to the register.

The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting membership.

2.1 Activities of CAQA within the scope of the ESG

In order for CAQA to apply for ENQA membership and for registration in EQAR, this review will analyse all activities CAQA 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 regardless of whether these activities are carried out within or outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary.

CAQA is conducting 2 types of external evaluations: accreditation (at institutional and programme level) and external quality control (audit) based on the self-evaluation of HEIs. There are also 2 types of accreditations: initial and periodic (on 5 years). CAQA has developed, and recently revised standards for all those groups of standards with accompanying guidelines.

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

1. Accreditation of study programmes
2. Accreditation of HEIs
3. Initial accreditation
4. Audits

3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews* and in line with the requirements of the *EQAR Procedures for Applications*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-assessment by CAQA including the preparation of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to CAQA ;
- 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 by the agency, including a voluntary follow-up visit.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members: one or two quality assurance experts, an academic employed by a higher education institution, 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.

In addition to the four 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.

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

ENQA will provide CAQA with the list of suggested experts 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 CAQA review.

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

CAQA 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 II and III) addressed individually. 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 CAQA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the ESG and thus the requirements of ENQA membership.
- The self-assessment report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 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 4 weeks. In such cases, an additional fee of 1000 € 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

CAQA will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least two months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes 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 2,5 days. The approved schedule shall be given to CAQA at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by CAQA in arriving in Belgrade, Serbia.

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

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 with regards to each 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 CAQA within 11 weeks of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If CAQA 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 CAQA, finalise the document and submit it to ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will 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*, so as to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR.

CAQA is also requested to provide a letter addressed to the ENQA Board outlining its motivation applying for membership and the ways in which CAQA expects to contribute to the work and objectives of ENQA during its membership. This letter will be discussed along with the final evaluation report.

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

CAQA 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. CAQA commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting a follow-up report to the ENQA Board. 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 will be complemented by a small-scale 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 as of particular importance or challenge by CAQA. Its purpose is entirely developmental and has no impact on the judgement of membership and/or 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 Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether CAQA has met the ESG and can be thus admitted/reconfirmed as a member of ENQA. The report will also be used for registration on EQAR, and is designed so as to serve these two purposes. However, the review report is to be considered final only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to CAQA and ENQA and until it is approved by the Board the report may not be used or relied upon by CAQA, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. CAQA 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

CAQA shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,500 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,500 EUR
Fee of the 2 other panel members	4,000 EUR (2,000 EUR each)
Fee of 2 panel members for follow-up visit	1,000 EUR (500 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	7,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,400 EUR
Approximate travel and subsistence expenses	6,000 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses follow-up visit	1,600 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR VAT excl. for a review team of 4 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, CAQA 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 CAQA if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

The fee of the follow-up visit is included in the overall cost of the review and will not be reimbursed in case the agency does not wish to benefit from it.

In the event of a second site visit required by the Board and aiming at completing the assessment of compliance, and should the agency accept a second visit, an additional fee of 500 EUR per expert, as well as travel and subsistence costs are recoverable from the agency.

7. Indicative Schedule of the Review

Agreement on terms of reference	March/April 2017
Appointment of review panel members	March 2017
Self-assessment completed	By July 2017
Pre-screening of SER by ENQA coordinator	July 2017
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	August 2017
Briefing of review panel members	September 2017
Review panel site visit	October 2017
Draft of evaluation report and submitting it to ENQA coordinator for pre-screening	By December 2017
Draft of evaluation report to CAQA	January 2018
Statement of CAQA to review panel if necessary	January 2018
Submission of final report to ENQA	February 2018
Consideration of the report by ENQA Board	March/April 2018 (depending on the date of ENQA Board meeting)
Publication of report	March/April 2018