

External review of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency (SQAA) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

June 2014

1. Background and Context

The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA) is an independent public body established by the Republic of Slovenia to assure quality in higher education and to carry out development and consulting activities in this field. The Agency took over the tasks of the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia and started operations on 5 March 2010.

SQAA provides for the development and functioning of the quality assurance system in higher education in Slovenia. It operates responsibly in terms of form and contents and counsels all stakeholders and participants in tertiary education in line with the European and global directions of development.

SQAA shall, with its system of quality assurance development, contribute to the higher education in Slovenia being of high quality in terms of education and research, internationally recognisable, competitive and equally integrated in the global higher education area.

SQAA priority is the concern for the quality of Slovenian higher education as well as the integration into international environment and cooperation with relevant stakeholders while observing ESG.

SQAA is applying for the first time for ENQA Full membership.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This is a type A review, as defined in the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent SQAA fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether SQAA Full membership should be granted.

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

3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*.

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-evaluation by SQAA including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review panel to SQAA;
- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- 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.

3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of five members: four external reviewers (one or two quality assurance experts, representative(s) of higher education institutions, student member) and a review secretary. Three of the reviewers (including the review secretary) are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and are drawn from senior serving members of Board/Council or staff of ENQA member agencies. The fourth external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA). The nomination of the student member is asked from the European Students' Union (ESU). One of the panel members serves as the chair of the review.

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

ENQA will provide SQAA 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 the SQAA review.

3.2 Self-evaluation by SQAA, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report

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

- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation and is expected to contain, among others: a 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;
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which SQAA fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the ESG.
- The self-evaluation report is submitted to the ENQA Secretariat who has 4 weeks to pre-scrutinise before forwarding the report to the panel of experts. The purpose of the pre-scrutiny is to ensure that the self-evaluation 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 on pages 8-9 in the *ENQA Guidelines for External Review of Quality Assurance Agencies*, 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-evaluation 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 eight weeks prior to the site visit.

3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel

SQAA will draw up a draft proposal of the schedule for the site visit to be submitted to the review panel 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 days. The approved schedule shall be given to SQAA one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by SQAA in arriving in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

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

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. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. A draft will be submitted for comment to SQAA within two months of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If SQAA 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 SQAA, finalise the document and submit it to SQAA and ENQA.

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

4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report

SQAA will consider the expert panel's report and will publish it on its website once the ENQA Board had made its decision. The report will also be published on the ENQA website, regardless of the review outcome and decision by the ENQA Board. SQAA commits to preparing a follow-up plan in which it addresses the recommendations of the review panel and to submitting, if requested, 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.

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 to be used by the Board of ENQA for the purpose of reaching a conclusion on whether SQAA has met the membership criteria/ESG.

The review report is to be considered as property of ENQA only after being approved by the ENQA Board. Once submitted to SQAA and ENQA and until the decision by the Board is made, the report may not be used or relied upon by SQAA, the panel and any third party and may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of ENQA. SQAA may use the report at its discretion only after the Board decision has been made.

Should the review report be used for applying to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), 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

SQAA shall pay the following review related fees:

Fee of the Chair	4,750 EUR
Fee of the Secretary	4,750 EUR
Fee of the 3 other panel members	8,250 EUR (2,750 EUR each)
Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat	5,000 EUR
Experts Training fund	1,250 EUR
Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate)	6,000 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000.00 EUR for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, SQAA 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 SQAA if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

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 and protocol for review	June 2014
Appointment of review panel members	July 2014
Self-evaluation completed	Beg July 2014
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	September 2014
Briefing of review panel members	October 2014
Review panel site visit	November 2014
Draft of evaluation report to SQAA	Beg January 2015
Statement of SQAA to review panel if necessary	Mid-January 2015
Submission of final report to ENQA	End January 2015
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of SQAA	February 2015
Publication of report	February 2015