



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Mr. Azamat Kassymkhanov
Director
Agency for Recognition and Quality Assurance in Education (ARQA)
19A Bauyrzhan Momysuly Avenue
010000 Nur-Sultan
Kazakhstan

Brussels, 6 March 2024

Subject: ARQA's appeal to ENQA and decision on ARQA's membership in ENQA

Dear Mr. Kassymkhanov,

I am writing to inform you of the outcome of the ENQA Board's decision of 28 February 2024 regarding the appeal ARQA lodged against the ENQA Board's decision of 21 September 2023 not to grant ARQA membership due to insufficient overall level of compliance with the ESG.

On 3 December 2023 and within the deadline set by ENQA's regulations, ARQA submitted an appeal against this decision. According to the submitted appeal, the panel failed to understand the founder's role within the agency and thus came to the wrong conclusion on ESG 3.3 Independence (partially compliant). Furthermore, ARQA disagreed with the ARC's view that the agency is non-compliant with this standard. Following the regulations, the Board decided on 7 December 2023 to ask the ENQA Appeals and Complaints Committee (hereafter ACC) to review the appeal. Enclosed in the request letter to the ACC were:

- The ENQA Board's decision letter to ARQA
- ARQA's letter of appeal
- The Agency Review Committee validation letter
- The expert panel's review report.

The ACC provided their analysis to the ENQA Board and proposed that the panel's original assessment on ESG 3.3 Independence should be upheld, thus the agency is to be judged as partially compliant against this standard. On the basis of the analysis and recommendation from the ACC, the Board decide to uphold ARQA's appeal.

In light of this, the Board considered how its decision affected ARQA's application for membership, and, following the outcome of the appeal, it decided to grant ARQA membership in ENQA for five years from that date. Overall, the Board concluded that ARQA is in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and thus fulfils the membership criteria according to article 6, paragraph 1 of ENQA's Rules of Procedure.

Nevertheless, the Board calls upon the agency to seriously consider the recommendations in the panel's report on ESG 3.3 and take immediate action to address them. The Board would like to receive a follow-up report within two years of the validation of the final external review report, i.e., by April 2025, and would like regular updates on the progress in implementing the changes. This report should explain how the agency has addressed the recommendations of the review panel, with particular attention to ESG 3.3.

The Board also encourages ARQA to take advantage of the voluntary progress visit – an enhancement-led feature in the review process. The visit would take place in about two to three years' time after the



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validation of the final external review report (and after submission of the follow-up report). The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The cost of this visit has already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

This letter will be published on the ENQA website together with the final review report as well as the Board's initial decision.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Please accept my congratulations for the confirmation of ARQA membership.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Blackstock', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Douglas Blackstock
President