



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Dr Christoph Grolimund
Director
Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ)
Effingerstrasse 15, Postfach, 3001 Bern
Switzerland

Gloucester, 28 April 2021

Subject: Reconfirmation of membership of AAQ in ENQA

Dear Christoph,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 21 April 2021, the Board of ENQA agreed to reconfirm the AAQ membership of ENQA for five years from that date. The Board concluded that AAQ 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.

The Board would like to use this opportunity to provide an articulation regarding standard 2.3 Implementing processes, where the Board reiterates the need to include a regular follow-up procedure for all accreditation decisions, not only those with the decisions on accreditation with conditions. The Board finds this to be particularly relevant due to the long approval period of AAQ accreditations.

In regard to ESG 2.6 Reporting, the Board shares the panel's call upon the agency to continue its efforts to publish all reports, as already flagged in the agency's 2016 review against the ESG.

Furthermore, the Board asks the agency to pay further attention to the ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance, where the agency should amend its standards in institutional accreditations and quality audits to ensure that ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes and ESG 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment are explicitly considered.

The Board would like to receive a follow-up report within two years of its decision, i.e. by April 2023.

The Board also encourages AAQ 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 from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable.



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews.

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

Please accept my congratulations for the re-confirmation of membership of AAQ.

Yours sincerely,

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

Douglas Blackstock
President

Annex: Areas for development

Annex: Areas for development

As outlined by the review panel, AAQ is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

The agency is recommended to extend the representation of the labour market representatives at the governance and expert panels' levels.

The agency is recommended to strengthen the stakeholders' involvement into its work and activities and take into account the external perspective at all levels.

ESG 3.5 Resources

The agency is recommended to hire people, first to fill the existing skills gaps and second to make sure that AAQ will be able to carry out all the activities defined by Law in the future in order to guarantee its sustainability, independently of the number of HEIs' requests.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

The agency is recommended to formalise and develop the feedback mechanisms and to embed them in its internal quality assurance system as a permanent feature.

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

The agency is recommended to work in order to have ESG 1.2 and ESG 1.3 explicitly included into its institutional accreditation and quality audit standards and ensure that both ESGs are systematically assessed.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

The agency is recommended to reflect on the criteria applied and include additional quality-oriented content when identified as necessary, jointly with stakeholders.

The agency is recommended to develop and extend the stakeholders involvement in the design of methodologies by bringing about more discussion opportunities.

The agency and SAC are recommended to increase the professional world involvement at all levels.

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes

The agency is recommended to include a regular follow-up procedure, not only for decisions of accreditation with conditions, considering the length of the accreditation validity and the lighter second cycle considered.



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The agency is recommended to detail the follow-up procedures in the accreditation guides.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

The agency is recommended to include a student member for all programme evaluation procedures, including for continuing education programmes. As mentioned by the panel in 2016, AAQ and SAC together with their partners should try to find ways and means by which the student perspective could be included in this procedure.

ESG 2.6 Reporting

The agency is recommended to publish negative reports.

The agency is recommended to alert the regulatory bodies on the existing risk that HEIs can decide not to authorise the publication of the external evaluation report because of no legal notice for this. In the meantime, the Agency should anticipate this risk with a process to apply if a HEI takes this type of decision.