



European Association for  
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Ms Marion Moser  
Managing Director  
Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN)  
Brandenburger Straße 2, 95448 Bayreuth  
Germany

Gloucester, 29 June 2021

**Subject: Reconfirmation of membership of ACQUIN in ENQA**

Dear Ms Marion Moser,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting of 24 June 2021, the Board of ENQA agreed to reconfirm the ACQUIN membership of ENQA for five years from that date. The Board concluded that ACQUIN 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 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance, where the Board reiterates the need to further strengthen the agency's governance through strategic forethought to achieve its overall goals and objectives.

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

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



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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 ACQUIN.

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, ACQUIN 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**

ACQUIN's Strategic Plan should extend beyond the two year period and contain a clear mission, vision, values, objectives for activities with a concrete measure of success timewise and by deliverables (follow the widely accepted format of such documents). It should be published.

The Strategic Plan, yearly work plans, and yearly activity reports should all be clearly linked.

Students should be represented in the governance of the agency.

### **ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis**

ACQUIN needs to fine-tune its policy on conducting thematic analysis and in line with this redefinition, to update the relevant part in the Quality Manual following the standard description of other processes.

Efforts on thematic analysis should be much intensified, reports should be published regularly. To show developments, as a starting point, ACQUIN should make a working plan for the next analyses to be done within the coming 2-3 years and follow it.

Analyses should focus on trends and areas of good practice as well as persistent difficulty across the higher education system; they should pertain to institutional, national and international contexts.

### **ESG 3.5 Resources**

The panel recommends the Board and the CEOs of the agency to revisit the question of the market strategy, including the overall package of services offered by ACQUIN, as well as its developmental needs, and financing in order to secure the agency's financial stability in the long run.

### **ESG 2.3 Implementing processes**

For transparency purposes, procedure guidelines should contain more specific information on all elements of the external review model.

ACQUIN should further develop their follow-up procedures more in line with the agency's improvement-oriented approach and beyond checking on whether formal requirements set by the GAC or the Accreditation Commission have been fulfilled.

#### **ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts**

Student members should be included in all panels for all procedures implemented both within Germany and abroad (including procedures done jointly with other quality assurance agencies and in certification).

The principles on selection of experts for international procedures should be documented more clearly. Principles and procedure(s) for expert selection both domestically and internationally should be published on the agency's website.

#### **ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes**

In its relevant procedure descriptions and the Quality Manual, ACQUIN should establish clearly in which cases conditional accreditation is given and how the term for a higher education institution to attend major deficiencies is established.

The possibility to ask and be granted a suspension of the accreditation procedure should be more clearly described and communicated to institutions.

#### **ESG 2.6 Reporting**

The agency should take a consistent approach to drafting and publishing of all external review reports.

Despite the fact that now final decision making for procedures in Germany is vested in the GAC, ACQUIN has its own responsibilities towards publishing of reports and transparency that should be duly attended. All reports should be published fully.