



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Ms. Doris Herrmann
General Manager
Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes (AQAS)
Hohenstaufenring 30-32, 50674 Cologne
Germany

Gloucester, 9 December 2021

Subject: Reconfirmation of AQAS membership in ENQA

Dear Doris,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting on 7 December 2021, the ENQA Board agreed to reconfirm AQAS' membership in ENQA for five years from that date. The Board concluded that AQAS 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 explanation regarding standard 3.5 Resources, where its judgement differs from that of the panel. In the view of the Board, the agency's resources should be evaluated against their ability to enable the agency to organise and run its external quality assurance activities in an effective and efficient manner, and improve its activities, rather than providing an evaluation of prospects of such resources. Following this, in the opinion of the Board, the standard can be considered as fully compliant with the ESG.

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

The Board also encourages AQAS 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 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.



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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 AQAS' membership in ENQA. I look forward to our continued cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Blackstock', is positioned above the printed name.

Douglas Blackstock
President

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel, AQAS is recommended to take appropriate action, in 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 strengthen its strategic planning and consolidate the annual planning and reporting by linking and aligning all these instruments with the strategic objectives for the agency's development so the agency is clear about what services they will develop or enhance in order to better fulfil its mission and secure their sustainability.

The agency is recommended to identify ways to involve students and representatives of the business sector in the agency's governance.

Separation of activities between AQAS e.V. and AQAS ARCH GmbH should be clearly communicated through their respective websites.

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

The agency is recommended to widen its approach to thematic analysis by using the general findings of its external quality assurance processes more as a basis for analyses on good practice and trends of the higher education system in Germany, which is the primary market where AQAS operates. In this attempt, the agency should enhance the analytical part of its publications instead of simply discussing its own experiences.

The agency is recommended that the development of future thematic publications is part of the strategic planning or annual monitoring process to ensure that the production of such publications each year is covered in terms of staff workload and that there is a strategic approach to the selection of topics relevant to higher education institutions.

The agency is recommended to ensure the thematic analyses it publishes are available to all stakeholders, or at least to member organisations of AQAS, and not restricted by a paywall.

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

The agency is recommended to develop a more holistic approach to quality management and produce a Quality Manual which would extend beyond the goal of monitoring of AQAS compliance to the ESG only to also include the general processes of the agency and establish quality goals/benchmarks supported by the proper mechanism of implementation, monitoring, and performance improvement.



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ESG 2.3 Implementing processes

The agency is recommended to define and implement a consistent follow-up for recommendations as part of the current assessment rather than consider recommendations for the next review cycle.