



European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Ms. Alina Zhumagulova
Director
Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR)
Baurzhan Momysuly avenue 2, EP-4G Nur-Sultan
Kazakhstan

Gloucester, 9 December 2021

Subject: Reconfirmation of IAAR membership in ENQA

Dear Ms. Alina Zhumagulova,

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting on 7 December 2021, the ENQA Board agreed to reconfirm IAAR's membership in ENQA for five years from that date. The Board concluded that IAAR 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 3.3 Independence, where its judgement differs from that of the panel. The Board calls the agency to redistribute its decision-making powers to formally provide for the organisational independence. Following this, in the opinion of the Board, the standard can be considered only as substantially compliant with the ESG, and thus the panel's second suggestion under this standard as a recommendation to the agency.

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

Yours sincerely,

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

Douglas Blackstock
President

Annex: Areas for development

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As outlined by the review panel, IAAR 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 that representatives of students are included as members in the supervisory board.

The agency is recommended to further define a strategy for its international activities so as to clearly define the scope and intended targets of these activities.

The agency is recommended to make explicit the way in which the vision and values stated in the strategy are translated into the daily work.

ESG 3.3 Independence

The agency is recommended to improve the culture of collegial decision-making in the agency, increasing the decision-making power of collegial bodies consisting of stakeholder representatives, where it is legitimate.

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

The agency is recommended to put more emphasis on assessing the effectiveness of implementation of ESG standards 1.3. Student centred learning, teaching and assessment and 1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification and that it strengthens its efforts to develop a good understanding of these standards by all stakeholders contributing to internal QA of HEI.

The agency is recommended to put more emphasis on strengthening the internal quality assurance of educational institutions by providing recommendations for improvement.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

The agency is recommended to consider the fitness-for-purpose of the five versus 7 maximum accreditation duration in the case of institutions undergoing accreditation for the first time by IAAR, as this practice is not based on the quality of performances and could hinder the principle of equal treatment.

The agency is recommended to consider the fitness for purpose of prescribing a post-accreditation report twice over a period of 7 years.

The agency is recommended to pursue its efforts to strengthen the relationship of the agency with significant stakeholder associations and establish a true exchange regarding the development and revision of EQA processes.

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes

The agency is recommended to review the multi-cluster-based approach used for the specialised (programme) accreditation and combined with institutional accreditation. The agency should ensure that the members of the external evaluation panel are able to contribute to the evaluation of the programmes in all clusters concerned, both in terms of content and time.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

The agency is recommended to ensure that the rules on the composition of external expert panels are followed while using the multi-cluster-based approach for the specialised (programme) accreditation: each cluster of programmes shall be evaluated with the involvement of at least one student expert.

The agency is recommended to ensure that in quality assurance of continuing education current students are involved whenever in any way feasible. In cases when this is impossible, the agency should involve graduates with as recent studying experience as possible.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

The agency is recommended to develop more explicit guidelines regarding how to arrive at a global assessment of a programme or an institution based on assessment of each individual standard.

ESG 2.6 Reporting

The agency is recommended to produce and publish a document justifying the final accreditation decision made by the accreditation council.

The agency is recommended to work on reinforcing the analytical character of the reports so that the logic leading from the evidence to the recommendations is transparent and clear to the reader.

The agency is recommended to establish a clear distinction between recommendations (addressing the non-compliance with the standard) and suggestions for further improvements in the accreditation reports.